

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today Congressman John W. Olver announced that \$30 million for the Fitchburg Line has been included in the President's fiscal year 2009 budget. The funding, a Small Starts grant from the US Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration, will be used to make track improvements to improve the commuter line rail from Fitchburg to Boston.

"Only 13 Small Starts projects nationwide made it into the president's budget, most of which were funded at \$10 million or under. The Fitchburg rail project stood up to rigid scrutiny, and was selected as one of the best Small Starts projects in the country. All we are waiting for now is the state bond bill so this project can go forward," Congressman John Olver said. "We can be in construction within 18 months after it passes," he added.

The goals of the project are to reduce travel time from a maximum of 90 minutes to approximately 60 minutes, to improve reliability from 83% to over 95% on-time schedule adherence, and to attract new riders to MBTA.

The Federal Transit Administration's Small Starts program awards grants for capital costs associated with Light Rail projects, streetcar, trolley, and commuter rail projects that do not exceed \$75 million in Small Starts funds. Small Starts projects may not exceed \$250 million in total cost.

The total project cost is \$150 million, split evenly between state and federal funding. To date, Congressman Olver has secured \$7.866 million in federal earmarks that count toward the \$75 million federal commitment. Added to the \$30 million New Start grant, the current federal contribution amounts to \$37.86 million.

The President's budget for the FTA still needs to be approved by Olver's subcommittee and the House and Senate before funding will be made available.

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