



Charles D. Baker, Governor
Karyn E. Polito, Lieutenant Governor
Stephanie Pollack, MassDOT Secretary & CEO
Luis Manuel Ramirez, General Manager & CEO



Pete Butler
Regional Administrator – Region 1
Federal Transit Administration
55 Broadway St.
Cambridge, MA 02142

Les Fiorenzo
Regional Administrator – Region 1
Federal Railroad Administration
55 Broadway St.
Cambridge, MA 02142

July 20, 2018

Re: Replacement of Natick Center Stairway (Outbound Platform)

Dear Administrator Butler & Administrator Fiorenzo

On behalf of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), I am writing to make you aware of an emergency repair that will be made to a set of stairs at Natick Center Commuter Rail Station and our intention to address any associated accessibility-related obligations.

Station Background:

Natick Center station is located in the City of Natick on the Worcester lines. The station platforms are located approximately 20 feet below street elevation and are serviced by a single set of stairs to each of the inbound and outbound platforms. While the set of stairs to the inbound platform is in relatively good condition, the stairs to the outbound platform are in far worse condition and are visibly observed to be suffering severe steel corrosion.

The station serves the transportation needs of approximately 1,100 weekday patrons each day. It is not identified as a key station under the ADA.

Assessment of Outbound Stairs:

Over the past few years, the MBTA and Keolis have taken a number of measures to keep the degrading stairs in safe working order without ordering significant structural repairs and/or replacement. Spot repairs, new treads and other minor repairs have kept things in place. However, based on numerous complaints from both employees and customers over the past weeks, a formal assessment of the stairs was ordered to determine what, if anything, could keep them in safe working order, short of a full replacement.

On Wednesday July 18th, HNTB met with Keolis and MBTA officials out at Natick Station to inspect the stairs on the north (outbound platform) side of the station. HNTB was tasked with making an independent engineering recommendation based on the observed condition of the stairs.

The engineering team lead by HNTB noted the following observations:

- 100% section loss to multiple stair treads plates and steel plate risers,
- 100% section loss to multiple stair angles connecting and supporting tread plates to risers,
- Multiple failed locations where previous steel repairs/patches were made
- Bolts connecting riser to treads missing at multiple locations,
- Bolts loose and easily turned by hand at multiple locations and
- Bolts with heavy deterioration and rusting throughout.

HNTB's Senior Structural Engineer who provided the opinion and recommended that the stairs be closed off until structural repairs can be made.

[See attached photos.]

HNTB was then asked to re-examine their observed conditions and recommendation and to present any interim repairs that could be made to extend the life of the stairs. HNTB was asked to determine the feasibility of providing temporary underpinning support of the failing stairs. HNTB pointed to the fact that there had already been multiple plate welded repairs to the stair treads and, as such, the existing stringers in their current condition would not have the capacity to accept the added dead loads of additional repairs.

HNTB also went on to point out that the primary losses to stairs are to the individual stair treads and that any underpinning support would need to pick up the loads from each stair tread versus a typical underpinning of the stair stringers. The repair would also need to alter each tread with the addition of steel plates and other miscellaneous steel members to provide both a level walking surface free of trip hazards and provide suitable steel to tie in the underpinning supports. The extent of the corrosion of the stair tread alone would make localized repairs infeasible and as the construction exposed more of the existing steelwork additional areas of advanced section loss will likely be exposed requiring additional repairs to maintain safety.

HNTB concluded by stating: "We do not believe an underpinning repair approach is appropriate for the conditions witnessed in the field."

Plan for Accessibility:

Despite the fact Natick center is not a key station, in 2015, the MBTA and Town of Natick began developing conceptual designs to make the station fully accessible. This decision was made, in part, to get out ahead of the aging stairs. Since then, the MBTA has earmarked adequate funding in its CIP to bring the design to 100%.

Currently the design is at the 30% mark and the 60% is expected in Fall 2018. The current scope calls for full high-level platforms, elevators and ramps, as well as significant track work. The MBTA intends to seek capital funds for construction as part of its FY '20-24 CIP cycle.

Decision:

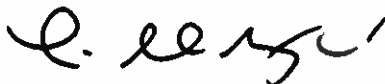
Faced with the facts above, the MBTA has been presented with a difficult decision:

1. Leave station as is and risk injury to customers on stairs
2. Close stairway, thereby closing station, until which time station can be rebuilt as fully accessible
3. Rebuild stairs to keep them in safe working order while the design for an accessible station moves forward

Based on the urgency stemming from the stairs' safety risk, the MBTA has decided to replace the stairs as quickly as possible. The stairway will be replaced this coming weekend. The MBTA does not believe it is reasonable to close the station either, so long as we advance plans to bring accessibility to Natick Center as quickly as possible. Likewise, the MBTA is committed to advancing its Plan for Accessible Transit Infrastructure (PATI) whereby we are working towards our goal of full access, beginning with high-impact projects such as Natick Center.

Thank you for your continued support. Should you have any questions, please contact me at LMRamirez@mbta.com.

Sincerely,



Luis Manuel Ramirez
General Manager and CEO

Cc by E-mail:

Peggy Griffin, Civil Rights Officer, FTA

Selene Dalton-Kumins, Acting Associate Administrator for Civil Rights, FTA
Calvin Gibson, Civil Rights Officer FRA

Attachment:

Photos of Outbound Staircase at Natick Center Station. HNTB contact should there be any questions:

Gregory Synnott, P.E., LEED AP
Senior Structural Engineer/Project Manager
Tel (617) 532-2284









