

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



Department of Agricultural Resources

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NOTICE

Pursuant to the provisions of the Rights-of-Way Management Regulation, 333 CMR 11.00, in order to apply herbicides to control vegetation along railroad rights-of-way, a five-year Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) and a Yearly Operational Plan (YOP) must be approved by the Department of Agricultural Resources. Therefore, notice of receipt of a YOP and procedures for public review are hereby given as required by Section 11.06 (3).

A Yearly Operational Plan has been submitted for: Keolis Commuter Services, LLC (Keolis). This plan has been prepared and submitted to the Department of Agricultural Resources by Benesch of Portland, Maine.

Municipalities identified in the Keolis YOP as locations where the rights-of-way will be treated with herbicides during the 2025 calendar year are:

Abington, Acton, Andover, Ashland, Avon, Ayer, Bellingham, Belmont, Berkley, Beverly, Billerica, Boston, Boxborough, Braintree, Bridgewater, Brockton, Brookline, Cambridge, Canton, Chelsea, Cohasset, Concord, Dedham, East Bridgewater, Easton, Everett, Fall River, Fitchburg, Foxborough, Framingham, Franklin, Freetown, Gloucester, Grafton, Halifax, Hamilton, Hanson, Haverhill, Hingham, Holbrook, Hopedale, Ipswich, Kingston, Lakeville, Lawrence, Leominster, Lincoln, Littleton, Lowell, Lunenburg, Lynn, Malden, Manchester, Mansfield, Medford, Melrose, Middleborough, Milford, Millbury, Milton, Natick, Needham, New Bedford, Newbury, Newburyport, Newton, Norfolk, North Andover, Norwood, Plymouth, Plympton, Quincy, Randolph, Raynham, Reading, Revere, Rockport, Rowley, Salem, Saugus, Scituate, Shirley, Somerville, Southborough, Stoughton, Swampscott, Taunton, Tewksbury, Wakefield, Walpole, Waltham, Wellesley, Wenham, West Bridgewater, Westborough, Weston, Westwood, Weymouth, Whitman, Wilmington, Winchester, Woburn, and Worcester.

Keolis' vegetation control program for 2025 will be consistent with the VMP as approved by the MDAR and involves an Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) approach. Tree and brush control will be limited to manual and/or mechanical cutting in sensitive areas and sensitive area buffer zones. In non-sensitive areas and outside the sensitive area buffer zones a combination of manual and mechanical cutting and MDAR approved herbicide will be used to control trees, brush, and vegetation growth within and adjacent to the shoulder of ROW. The IVM approach incorporates both chemical application and manual/mechanical trimming or removal of vegetation to ensure safety of assets and operations as required under the Federal Railroad Authority [49 C.F.R. §213.37] for maintenance of ROW.

One selective herbicide application will take place in the non-sensitive and sensitive area buffer zones along the roadbed portion of the right-of-way using a MDAR approved herbicide mixture. This program is targeted toward the eradication of woody and herbaceous plant species germinating within the roadbed and around other fixtures including but not limited to: switches, signals, signs, and highway grade crossings. This application will be followed by a late summer brush and/or touch-up application in areas of heavy vegetation growth. There will be a standalone basal and/or cut stump application throughout the growing season to areas receiving manual control.

Hi-rail vehicles equipped with herbicide application equipment will be used to treat the rights-of-way. Public notification (by certified mail) will be provided to the chief elected official, Board of Health, and Conservation Commission in each affected municipality at least twenty-one days prior to any herbicide application.

"Sensitive" areas as defined by the Rights-of-Way Management Regulations will receive the full protection afforded by those Regulations. All herbicide applications will be done by an applicator properly licensed by the MDAR Pesticide Bureau and fully trained in herbicide mixing, handling, and application methods.

The applicant has described the following rights-of-way as sites that have been scheduled for the implementation of the IVM approach including herbicide treatment and mechanical cutting in 2025.

EASTERN ROUTE MAIN LINE

(Newburyport to Boston)

Newburyport Beverly Revere
Newbury Salem Chelsea
Rowley Swampscott Everett
Ipswich Lynn Somerville
Hamilton Saugus Boston
 Wenham

GLOUCESTER BRANCH

(Gloucester to Beverly)

Rockport Manchester
Gloucester Beverly

WESTERN ROUTE MAIN LINE

(Haverhill to Boston)

Haverhill Tewksbury Melrose
North Andover Wilmington Malden
Lawrence Reading Medford
Andover Wakefield Somerville

NEW HAMPSHIRE ROUTE MAIN LINE

(Lowell to Boston)

Lowell Wilmington Medford
Tewksbury Woburn Somerville
Billerica Winchester

WILDCAT BRANCH

(Wilmington to Wilmington Junction)
Wilmington

FITCHBURG MAIN LINE

(Fitchburg to Boston)

Fitchburg Boxborough Waltham
Leominster Acton Belmont
Lunenburg Concord Cambridge
Shirley Lincoln Somerville
Ayer Weston Boston
 Littleton

STOUGHTON BRANCH

(Stoughton to Canton)

Stoughton Canton

DORCHESTER BRANCH

(Readville to Boston)

Boston Milton

FRANKLIN BRANCH

(Milford to Boston)

Milford Norfolk Westwood
Hopedale Walpole Dedham
Bellingham Norwood Boston
 Franklin

NEEDHAM BRANCH

(Needham to Boston)

Needham Dedham Boston

RANDOLPH INDUSTRIAL TRACK

(Braintree to Randolph)

Braintree Randolph

GREENBUSH BRANCH

(Braintree to Scituate)

Braintree Cohasset Hingham
Scituate Weymouth

MIDDLEBOROUGH MAIN LINE

(Boston to Middleborough)

Boston Holbrook E. Bridgewater
Quincy Avon Bridgewater
Braintree Brockton Middleborough
Randolph W. Bridgewater Lakeville

PLYMOUTH BRANCH

(Braintree to Plymouth)

Braintree Whitman Plympton
Weymouth Hanson Kingston
Abington Halifax Plymouth

WORCESTER LINE

(Boston to Worcester)

Boston Brookline Newton
Weston Wellesley Natick
Framingham Ashland Southborough
Westborough Grafton Millbury
 Worcester

GRAND JUNCTION RUNNING TRACK

(Boston to Everett)

Boston Somerville
Everett Cambridge

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225 Turnpike Road, 3rd Floor, Southborough, MA 01772

www.mass.gov/agr



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MIDDLEBOROUGH SECONDARY

(Middleborough to Taunton)

Middleborough Lakeville
Raynham Taunton

NEW BEDFORD MAIN LINE

(Taunton to New Bedford)

Taunton Berkley
Lakeville Freetown
New Bedford

FALL RIVER SECONDARY

(Berkley to Fall River)

Berkley Lakeville
Freetown Fall River

PUBLIC REVIEW

MDAR seeks the verification of sensitive area locations reported in the Yearly Operational Plan (YOP). The Department itself has a limited ability to survey the geography, land use, and the water supplies, in all the communities through which the rights-of-way are located. Municipalities, however, have most of this information readily available, and the knowledge with which to better certify the sensitive areas in their communities. Therefore, the Department requests, and urges, the assistance of the affected municipalities, in reviewing the completeness and accuracy of the maps contained in the submitted document. MDAR has established the following procedures for this review.

The YOP may be viewed online at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/rights-of-way-vegetation-management-vmps-yops-and-notice> and at <https://www.fdcerrailroadvegetation.com/>

An announcement containing an internet address where the Yearly Operational Plans (YOP) and a copy of this Notice will be sent by the applicant to the Conservation Commission, Board of Health (or designated health agent), and to the Head of Government (Mayor, City Manager, Chair of the Board of Selectman) of each municipality where herbicides are to be applied along the Rights-of-Way during the calendar year and where applicable the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. Municipal agencies and officials will have (45) forty-five days, following receipt of the YOP to review the maps contained in the document that indicate the location of "sensitive areas" not readily identifiable in the field for inaccuracies or omissions. "Sensitive Areas" will be defined as in Section 11.01.

Municipal agencies and officials are requested to forward the YOP to the appropriate officials(s) in their municipality qualified to certify the accuracy of sensitive area locations as indicated on the maps. The maps should be "corrected" and returned to the applicant, also a copy of the maps with these corrections indicated should be sent to MDAR at the address listed below within the forty-five (45) day review period. If a city or town needs more time to carry out this review, it should send a written request for an extension to the MDAR and cite why there is a "good cause" for requesting additional time.

All corrections will be required to be made by the applicant, and corrected maps sent back to the city/town before the YOP can be considered "approved" by the Department for vegetation maintenance in that municipality. Any dispute on the part of the applicant regarding corrections made by the municipal authorities, should be indicated in writing to the Department and to the city/town which requested the disputed changes within (15) fifteen days of receipt of the request. The Department will decide whether the YOP should be approved without the requested changes. MDAR will consider the "final approval" of a YOP individually for each municipality.

The final (21) twenty-one days of the public review period may serve concurrently to provide public notification as required by section 11.07 of the Rights-of-Way Management regulation, if the applicant has an approved VMP and if all the requisite city/town offices which have received copies of the YOP have completed their review and corrections have been duly made by the applicant and approved by the Department.

A failure by the city/town to respond to the applicants' submission of the YOP within the forty-five (45) day public review period, will automatically be considered by the MDAR to indicate agreement by municipal officials with the sensitive area demarcations as provided by the applicant in their YOP.

Any questions or comments on the information provided in this Notice and the procedures established for the municipal review as outlined above, should be addressed to:

Right-of-Way Program
Massachusetts Pesticide Bureau
225 Turnpike Road, 3rd Floor,
Southborough, MA 01772

Any additional questions or comments on any information provided in the proposed YOP should be addressed to:

Matt Donovan
Benesch
19 Ocean Avenue, Unit 5
Portland, Maine 04103

A copy should also be sent to the ROW program at the above address.

COMMENT PERIOD ENDS AT THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS, APRIL 11, 2025.