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# Wheels of change in motion on waterfront



JESSICA RINALDI FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

**Northern Avenue during rush hour in Boston.**

**By Nicole Dungca** | GLOBE STAFF JANUARY 22, 2015

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To relieve traffic congestion in the quickly growing South Boston Waterfront, the state and city should improve the Silver Line, give drivers access to a restricted service road, and place new Hubway stations in the neighborhood, according to a report released this week.

The South Boston Waterfront Sustainable Transportation Plan was put together by a coalition of city and state agencies whose members say they will work toward adopting those suggestions and others to address the rapid growth and increasing congestion in the neighborhood.

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“This is laying out a blueprint and identifying strategies so we don’t see that economic opportunity stall, and we find a way to address those mobility issues,” said Rick Dimino, the executive director of A Better City, the nonprofit that managed the study.

The South Boston Waterfront has been one of the fastest-growing urban areas in the state, adding more than 4,100 new residents, 7,700 jobs, and 10 million square feet of development from 2000 to 2013, according to the report. Another 17 million square feet of development is underway or planned for the next two decades.

The intense growth has become a challenge for the area, known for heavy traffic congestion during peak hours, a headache for drivers, and a deterrent for some cyclists. The report says the transportation challenges are expected to get worse, with trips to and from the waterfront projected to increase by 63 percent by 2035.

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## State to propose opening S. Boston Bypass Road to all

A proposed pilot would allow all drivers to use the trucks-only road to help relieve congestion in the Seaport District.

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The report points out several issues, including packed Silver Line buses that often frustrate commuters who cannot board. Currently, the MBTA has the capacity to shuttle about 3,900 passengers through the South Boston Waterfront during the peak hours of the morning commute, and about half of those seats are on the Silver Line, according to the report.

The report makes the following immediate recommendations:

- Consolidate private shuttles used by businesses in the neighborhood;
- Improve signals for the Silver Line at D Street;
- Provide real-time arrival information for the Silver Line;
- Install more Hubway stations near major company offices, including Thomson Place, the Procter & Gamble offices at Gillette Park, and Channel Center;
- Open the South Boston Bypass Road to cars for a trial period of six months.

# Proposed change in South Boston

To relieve congestion, the state would open the South Boston Bypass Road for a six-month trial period. During that time:



SOURCE: South Boston Waterfront Sustainable Transportation Plan      GLOBE STAFF

During the trial period, drivers would have 24-hour access in both directions of the bypass road between Richards Street and West Service Road. The eastbound stretch of the road, between West Service Road and Interstate 93, would be open to traffic during peak morning hours.

The six-month trial would also give all vehicles access to the northbound HOV lane on Interstate 93 to the Ted Williams Tunnel.

The report also includes longer-term recommendations and infrastructure investments, including expanding ferry service to North Station and reopening or replacing the Northern Avenue Bridge, which was closed in December.

The report also suggests the MBTA acquire a minimum of 60 new Silver Line buses to help meet demand.

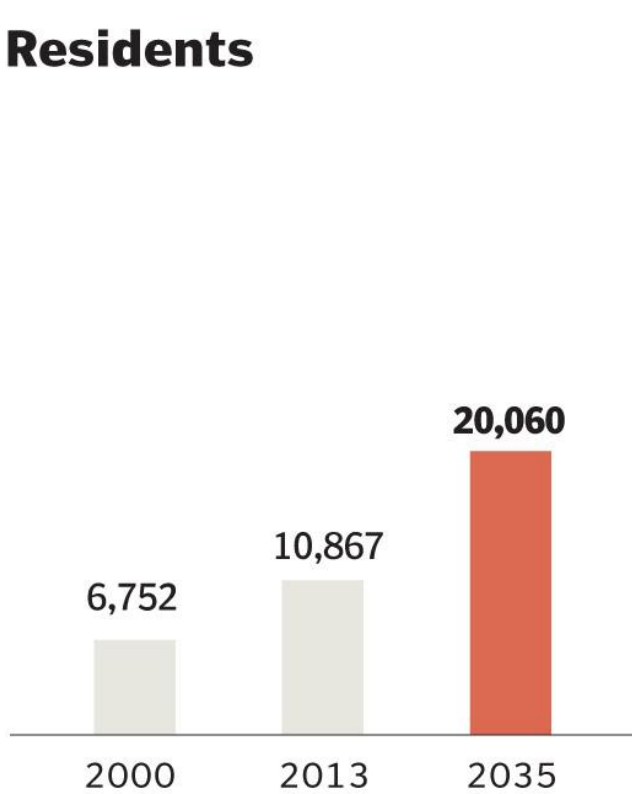
A Better City, a nonprofit backed by business and civic institutions, led the yearlong effort to compile the report. Officials from MassPort, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority, and the Boston Redevelopment Authority pitched in \$250,000 each for the study, with private companies adding about \$110,000.

Vivien Li, president of the Boston Harbor Association, praised the report, saying it rightfully focuses on more than just cars.

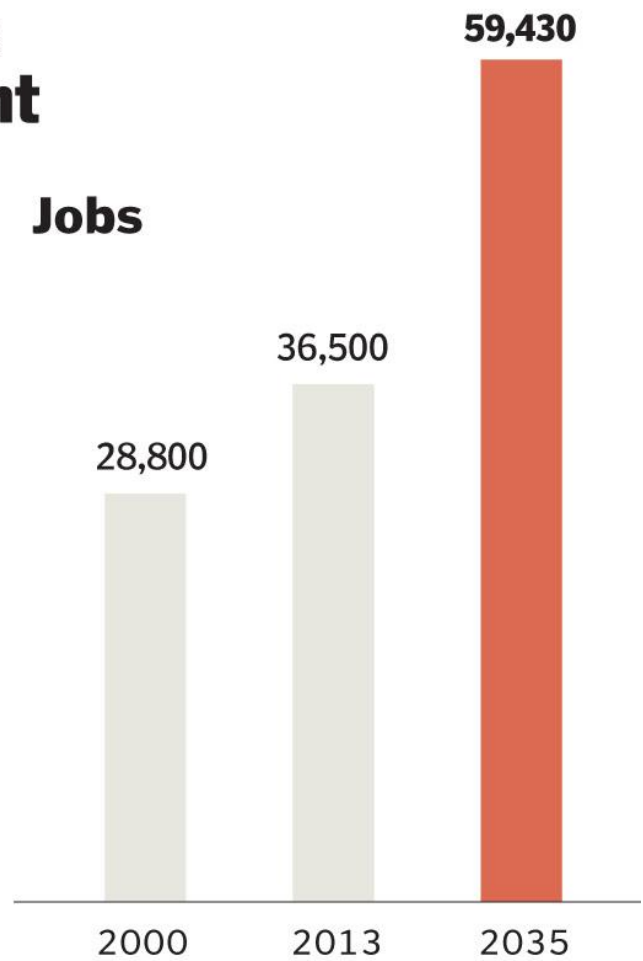
“It’s unusual that it’s not only road-oriented,” she said.

## Projected growth of the South Boston Waterfront

### Residents



### Jobs



SOURCE: South Boston Waterfront Sustainable Transportation Plan

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Jon Ramos, the head of advocacy group Southie Bikes, said the report excels at outlining what is wrong with bicycle infrastructure in the neighborhood: The report noted that restaurant-related delivery activity creates conflict between drivers and cyclists along Seaport Boulevard at night, for example.

But Ramos said some of the language in the report is too vague. Instead of specifically recommending a cycle track, which would separate car and bike traffic on a portion of Summer Street, for example, the report asks for the “highest level of bike accommodation.”

“The advocates will just have to continue to apply pressure for these things,” Ramos said.

Dimino said he understands those concerns but promises officials from the agencies involved in the report will continue to listen to policy and infrastructure suggestions.

“One of the things we want to make perfectly clear is that this is not a static document,” he said. “It’s a living document, and we’re looking forward to working with stakeholders in the area to make sure we help improve access to the economy and a better quality of life.”

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*Nicole Dungca can be reached at [nicole.dungca@globe.com](mailto:nicole.dungca@globe.com). Follow her on Twitter [@ndungca](#).*

*Correction: An earlier version of this story had an incorrectly identified photo. The photo showed the Seaport Boulevard bridge.*

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