AN ACT
RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT - BLACKSTONE VALLEY ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION ACT OF 2016

Introduced By: Representatives Tobon, Maldonado, Barros, Coughlin, and Johnston

Date Introduced: March 25, 2016

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Title 42 of the General Laws entitled "State Affairs and Government" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

CHAPTER 42.3
BLACKSTONE VALLEY ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION ACT OF 2016

42-64.3-1. Short Title. -- This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Blackstone Valley Economic Revitalization Act of 2016."

42-64.3-2. Statement of Intent. --
(a) It is the intention of the general assembly to grow the economy and create jobs in the Blackstone Valley and throughout the state via the creation of the Pawtucket and Central Falls commuter rail station, located near the intersection of Dexter Street and Barton Street.

(b) The general assembly recognizes that, for the better part of a decade, a comprehensive inter-governmental and public-private partnership, including the Rhode Island department of transportation (RIDOT), the Federal Transit Authority (FTA), the cities of Pawtucket and Central Falls and the firm Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., has worked tirelessly through preliminary planning and engineering to create this commuter rail station on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor (NEC) and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA's) Providence commuter rail line.

(c) The general assembly recognizes that the new station is within one hour of Boston;
thereby alleviating congestion at the Providence and South Attleboro stations and creating fast, convenient, and frequent service to employment centers, education opportunities, and leisure activities, including the Blackstone National Park.

(d) The general assembly recognizes that the local economic impact will be enormous in that:

(1) Hundreds of construction jobs and service jobs will be created in the construction of the commuter rail station and thousands more once the station is complete;

(2) The commuter rail station will connect residents to much-needed job and educational opportunities in this state, as well as the nearby Boston and Providence job and education market.

(3) The station will transform a deteriorated neighborhood into a beacon of redevelopment. In addition to low-cost, multi-family homes, the area immediately surrounding the site of the proposed station contains over two million square feet of vacant and underutilized mill space.

(e) The general assembly recognizes that the station will be an economic catalyst for the city, the state and the region. The 2016 Brookings Institute Report "Rhode Island Innovates: A Competitive Strategy for the Ocean State," identifies the commuter rail station in its recommendations to boost Rhode Island's economy and states that, "Improving Rhode Island's rail connectivity...would increase demand among and improve reliability and convenience for occasional business travelers coming into the state. Over time, these investments could lead to efficiency gains for daily commuters and their employers who benefit from-and increasingly demand-close proximity to one another throughout the region. Likewise, longer-term service upgrades and station improvements could attract greater numbers of riders and deliver higher property values in transit-rich neighborhoods." "Since its creation in 2001, Maine's state-supported [rail] service has leveraged approximately five million ($5,000,000) dollars in annual state operating support to...bring nearly one-hundred thousand (100,000) visitors to Maine each year who contribute twenty-nine million ($29,000,000) in economic impact, including direct spending in local businesses and service and spur more than three-hundred fifty million ($350,000,000) in public-private development."

(f) The general assembly recognizes that the station's strategic location between Boston and Providence will allow easy access to both economic capitals, providing connectivity to residents and opportunity to developers; the trifecta of inexpensive real estate, generous regulations, and proximity to transit will create a surge in real estate investment, invigorating the area with people and businesses.

(g) The general assembly recognizes that the project is reaching the final stages of
preliminary design, engineering, and environmental review and is in need of funding for final
design, construction and appropriate matching funds for applications submitted and to be
submitted to the federal government.

42-64.32-3. Fund created. -- The general assembly hereby appropriates ten million
dollars ($10,000,000) into a restricted account at the department of transportation known as the
Pawtucket and Central Falls commuter rail station fund (the "fund"). The fund shall be used
expeditiously for site acquisition and furthering design of the station in cooperation with Amtrak,
MBTA and the relevant authorities and a minimum of five-hundred thousand dollars ($500,000)
shall be set aside for the creation of a master plan identifying and regulating private development
around the station.

42-64.32-4. Equality of opportunity. -- No bid provided for as a result of the
appropriation in §42-64.32-3 shall be deemed complete nor awarded if the bid fails to include a
specific written plan for the bidder to be in conformity with §37-14.1-6: ensuring that minority
business enterprises reach a minimum of ten percent (10%) of the dollar value of the bid. The
aforementioned written plan should be submitted on forms created and distributed by the director
of administration.

42-64.32-5. Rules and regulations. -- The department of transportation is hereby
authorized to promulgate such rules and regulations as are necessary to fulfill the purposes of this
chapter, including the procedures to ensure ongoing compliance with the terms and conditions of
the fund established herein, including procedures to safeguard the expenditure of public funds and
to ensure that the funds further the objectives of the fund.

42-64.32-6. Reports. -- By December 31, 2016, and each year thereafter, the department
of transportation shall provide a detailed report of expenditures to the speaker of the house of
representatives and the president of the senate. Such report shall include any determination
regarding the commuter rail station's impact on stimulating business development; retaining and
attracting new business and industry to the state; creating good-paying jobs for Rhode Island
residents; assisting with business, commercial, and industrial real estate development; and
generating revenues for the state and local governments.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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This act would appropriate ten million dollars ($10,000,000) into a restricted account at the department of transportation known as the Pawtucket and Central Falls commuter rail station fund. The fund would be used for site acquisition and furthering the design of the station. This act would take effect upon passage.