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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2016

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A N A C T

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:

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

3 CHAPTER 42.32

4 BLACKSTONE VALLEY ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION ACT OF 2016

5 **42-64.32-1. Short Title.** -- This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the
6 "Blackstone Valley Economic Revitalization Act of 2016."

7 **42-64.32-2. Statement of Intent.** --

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

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

18 (c) The general assembly recognizes that the new station is within one hour of Boston;

1 thereby alleviating congestion at the Providence and South Attleboro stations and creating fast,
2 convenient, and frequent service to employment centers, education opportunities, and leisure
3 activities, including the Blackstone National Park.

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

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

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

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

14 (e) The general assembly recognizes that the station will be an economic catalyst for the
15 city, the state and the region. The 2016 Brookings Institute Report "Rhode Island Innovates: A
16 Competitive Strategy for the Ocean State," identifies the commuter rail station in its
17 recommendations to boost Rhode Island's economy and states that, "Improving Rhode Island's
18 rail connectivity...would increase demand among and improve reliability and convenience for
19 occasional business travelers coming into the state. Over time, these investments could lead to
20 efficiency gains for daily commuters and their employers who benefit from-and increasingly
21 demand-close proximity to one another throughout the region. Likewise, longer-term service
22 upgrades and station improvements could attract greater numbers of riders and deliver higher
23 property values in transit-rich neighborhoods." "Since its creation in 2001, Maine's state-
24 supported [rail] service has leveraged approximately five million (\$5,000,000) dollars in annual
25 state operating support to...bring nearly one-hundred thousand (100,000) visitors to Maine each
26 year who contribute twenty-nine million (\$29,000,000) in economic impact, including direct
27 spending in local businesses and service and spur more than three-hundred fifty million
28 (\$350,000,000) in public-private development."

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

34 (g) The general assembly recognizes that the project is reaching the final stages of

1 preliminary design, engineering, and environmental review and is in need of funding for final
2 design, construction and appropriate matching funds for applications submitted and to be
3 submitted to the federal government.

4 **42-64.32-3. Fund created.** -- The general assembly hereby appropriates ten million
5 dollars (\$10,000,000) into a restricted account at the department of transportation known as the
6 Pawtucket and Central Falls commuter rail station fund (the "fund"). The fund shall be used
7 expeditiously for site acquisition and furthering design of the station in cooperation with Amtrak,
8 MBTA and the relevant authorities and a minimum of five-hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000)
9 shall be set aside for the creation of a master plan identifying and regulating private development
10 around the station.

11 **42-64.32-4. Equality of opportunity.** -- No bid provided for as a result of the
12 appropriation in §42-64.32-3 shall be deemed complete nor awarded if the bid fails to include a
13 specific written plan for the bidder to be in conformity with §37-14.1-6: ensuring that minority
14 business enterprises reach a minimum of ten percent (10%) of the dollar value of the bid. The
15 forementioned written plan should be submitted on forms created and distributed by the director
16 of administration.

17 **42-64.32-5. Rules and regulations.** -- The department of transportation is hereby
18 authorized to promulgate such rules and regulations as are necessary to fulfill the purposes of this
19 chapter, including the procedures to ensure ongoing compliance with the terms and conditions of
20 the fund established herein, including procedures to safeguard the expenditure of public funds and
21 to ensure that the funds further the objectives of the fund.

22 **42-64.32-6. Reports.** -- By December 31, 2016, and each year thereafter, the department
23 of transportation shall provide a detailed report of expenditures to the speaker of the house of
24 representatives and the president of the senate. Such report shall include any determination
25 regarding the commuter rail station's impact on stimulating business development; retaining and
26 attracting new business and industry to the state; creating good-paying jobs for Rhode Island
27 residents; assisting with business, commercial, and industrial real estate development; and
28 generating revenues for the state and local governments.

29 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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

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

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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