



**Massachusetts Bay
Transportation Authority**

Forging Ahead Update

Fiscal and Management Control Board

November 23, 2020

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Overview

- Public Engagement Update
 - Virtual Public Meetings To Date
 - Community Liaison Meetings
 - Online Feedback
- Key Takeaways from Public Comment
- FMCB Questions and Answers



Public Engagement Summary

- 6 Virtual Public Meetings to date:
 - Metro West – 11/10/20
 - Minuteman – 11/12/20
 - Boston & Milton – 11/14/20
 - Inner Core – 11/17/20
 - Mystic River – 11/18/20
 - Official Public Hearing – 11/19/20
- 5 more Virtual Public Meetings upcoming
- 23 Community Liaison meetings
- 1,000+ online comments submitted
- 700+ emails received

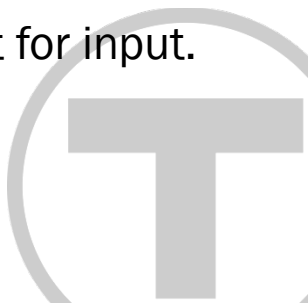
| Virtual Public Meeting | No. of Participants |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Metro West | 167 |
| Minuteman | 236 |
| Boston & Milton | 135 |
| Inner Core | 197 |
| Mystic River | 88 |
| Hearing | 291 |
| Total | 1,114 |



Public Engagement Summary

Key Takeaways from Public Comment:

- Varying perceptions about the future in terms of COVID, the economic recovery, and ridership behavior are widespread, and there is a sense that the MBTA should wait and see what happens.
- Customers are concerned about social distancing and that reduced frequency on some services may lead to increased crowding on vehicles.
- Riders are skeptical about how the T can assess increased demand for services that are eliminated, i.e., ferry service, commuter rail weekend service and weekdays after 9pm, because there will be no ridership to monitor.
- Customers and stakeholders are concerned that temporary service cuts may actually become permanent.
- There is a sense that the MBTA will be implementing service cuts right when the pandemic is ending and ridership will be returning.
- General concern for the few riders who are still using the lower ridership services where service reductions are proposed, since they are likely transit critical riders without alternatives.
- People feel like the process is moving too quickly and are skeptical as to the sincerity of the T's request for input.
- Riders want specifics of changes, not just percentages.



The RIDE

What are the changes to the RIDE scheduling window?

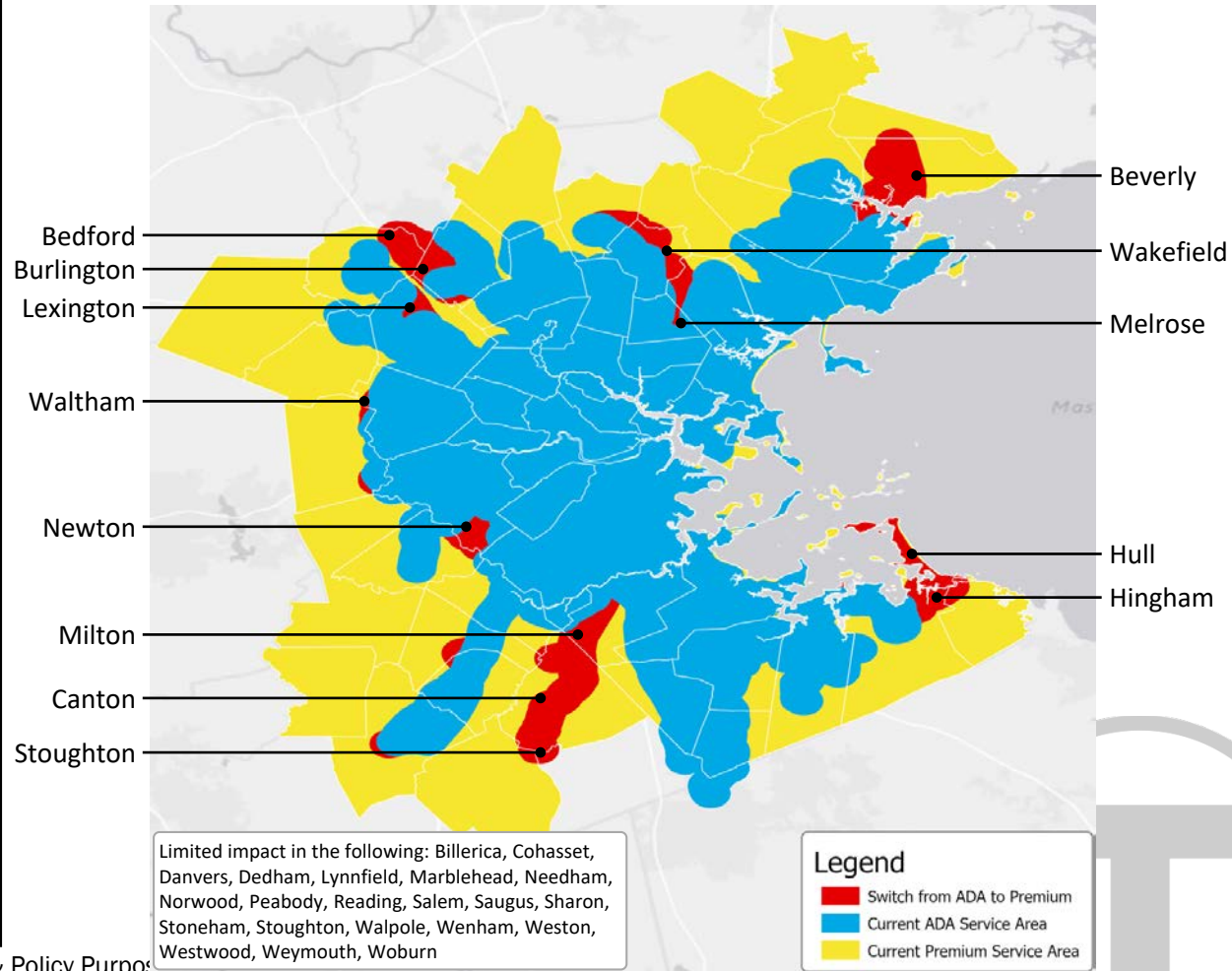
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) allows a 2-hour scheduling window (trip can move up to +/- 1 hour from the request time), but the **MBTA has traditionally used a 30-minute scheduling window** (in a single direction), as a benefit to customers.
- Increasing the scheduling window increases our ability to match trips together, thereby reducing the total number of driver hours needed to serve our customers.
- We have proposed **increasing the scheduling window by 10 minutes** (from 30 min to 40 min).
- For example, a requested 9am drop-off could be scheduled any time between 8:20am and 9am, and a requested 5pm pick-up could be scheduled any time between 5pm and 5:40pm.
- Customers would still be called the night prior and given an exact pick-up window, and they can still call back to “negotiate” to a window closer to the original request (Note: ability to move the window is not guaranteed and is based on available capacity).



The RIDE

What communities and service areas will change to premium rates?

- The ADA requires paratransit service within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of a fixed bus or subway route. The RIDE provides a premium service to some areas beyond that requirement.
- Due to changes in the fixed route bus schedule, parts of some communities will no longer be within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of a bus route.
- Instead of eliminating paratransit service in these areas, we propose converting it to premium service, which is defined as beyond $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of a fixed bus or subway route.
- The start/end time for premium service will be based on when the first/last commuter rail trains enter/leave the premium service area (est. 5am-10pm).



Accessibility – Commuter Rail

Is there any information on accessibility challenges at the stations we are diverting customers to along all modes?

- Commuter Rail station alternatives are fully accessible:
 - 5 of the 6 Commuter Rail stations proposed for closure (Plimptonville, Prides Crossing, Silver Hill, Hastings, Cedar Park) are inaccessible today.
 - The sixth Commuter Rail station proposed for closure, Plymouth, is accessible. However, the next closest stop is Kingston Station which is fully accessible via full high-level platforms.



Accessibility – Ferry

Is there any information on accessibility challenges at the stations we are diverting customers to along all modes?

- Ferry terminal alternatives are fully accessible:
 - Charlestown ferry customers would be diverted to the route 93 bus.
 - Hingham ferry customers would be diverted to the Greenbush Commuter Rail line, which is fully accessible.



Accessibility – Green Line E-Branch

Is there any information on accessibility challenges at the stations we are diverting customers to along all modes?

- 4 of the 5 Green Line E-Branch stops that would no longer be served are inaccessible today.
- E-Branch customers traveling beyond Brigham Circle will be diverted to the route 39 bus.
- All buses are accessible, and all bus stops are generally accessible.



Accessibility – Bus Stops

Is there any information on accessibility challenges at the stations we are diverting customers to along all modes?

- Roughly 850 bus stops are proposed for closure.
 - 350 (41%) have an alternative stop nearby
 - 500 (59%) have no alternative stop nearby
- Service Planning is working with System-Wide Accessibility to compare the accessibility of each stop slated for closure relative to the accessibility of the closest alternative.
- Alternative bus stops deemed to be significantly less accessible than their closed counterpart will be addressed as part of high-priority bus stop upgrades.



Accessibility – Wayfinding

How are the wayfinding projects being affected? Do we know for sure that there are no accessibility issues with this plan?

- The primary cost savings measure for scaling back the Wayfinding initiative will be to use vinyl overlays on existing signs rather than new porcelain/enamel signs at stations not currently in construction.
- All new vinyl signs will be compliant with MBTA accessibility standards.
- Plans to install new signs at strategic locations throughout the remaining stations, often drawing a distinction between the accessible and inaccessible paths, will be put on hold along with general signage upgrades and station brightening improvements.



Commuter Rail

How do the parking rates at Commuter Rail lots correspond to the assumption that those riders will have the ability to drive to another station?

- 4 of the 6 stations proposed to close currently have little or no parking
- Alternative stations have available parking with prices ranging from free to \$4/day

| Station to Close | Price | Availability | Alternative | Price | Availability |
|------------------|-------------|----------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Plimptonville | n/a | No parking | Walpole | \$4/weekday | 345 spaces (<15 cars/day) |
| Prides Crossing | n/a | No parking | Beverly Farms | free | 25 spaces, City of Beverly |
| Silver Hill | n/a | No parking | Kendal Green | free | 57 spaces, Town of Weston |
| Hastings | free | 6 spaces, Town of Weston | Kendal Green | free | 57 spaces, Town of Weston |
| Plymouth | \$2/weekday | 96 | Kingston | \$4/weekday | 1,030 spaces |
| Cedar Park | \$3/weekday | 82 spaces, City of Melrose | Wyoming Hill | \$3/weekday or free after 12pm | 30 spaces |



Commuter Rail

How do the parking rates at Commuter Rail lots correspond to the assumption that those riders will have the ability to drive to another station?

- Based on recent observations, parking occupancy at these stations is zero to minimal. (3 of 6 have no parking; the 3 with parking have little to no occupancy.)
- However, parking occupancy at these stations is not necessarily indicative of ability to drive to another station, as riders can walk, bike, or be dropped off in lieu of parking.
- Car ownership rates in the service area are a better proxy for ability to drive.
- Customer survey data from 2015-2017 below shows percentage of households with zero to 0.5 vehicles per capita. (Note: the number of riders at these stations—and therefore the number of surveys—is so small that it's not a statistically significant sample.)

| Line | Station | % with 0-0.5 vehicles per capita | Survey responses with zero cars |
|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Franklin Line | Plimptonville | 0% (n=3) | 0 |
| Newburyport/Rockport Line | Prides Crossing | 44% (n=16) | 0 |
| Fitchburg Line | Silver Hill | 0% (n=2) | 0 |
| Fitchburg Line | Hastings | 0% (n=6) | 0 |
| Plymouth/Kingston Line | Plymouth | 14% (n=7) | 0 |
| Haverhill/Reading Line | Melrose/Cedar Park | 12% (n=34) | 1 |

Transformation

How will the Transformation projects be changed?

- Next year, MassDOT/MBTA plan to issue a five-year FY22-26 CIP, reflecting updated funding sources and uses aligned with COVID scenario planning.
- Through the FY22-26 CIP development process, the MBTA expects to revisit scope, timeline and expectations for major transformation programs, including:
 - **Green Line Transformation:** Reassessing approach and timeline for full fleet replacement and capacity expansion given financial realities and uncertain ridership return.
 - **Rail Transformation:** Rail investments are proposed to focus on “no regrets” investments while Rail Vision is re-imagined to align with current service projections. Fleet investments proposed to scale back until customer demand and capacity needs are better understood, planning will continue for future fleet.
 - **Bus and Bus Facilities:** Plan to reassess fleet replacement plan to focus on high-impact investments (Silver Line Replacement, Battery Electric bus procurement), construction of Quincy Bus Garage, and upgrades to N. Cambridge Bus Garage to accommodate electric vehicles.
 - **Red Line/Orange Line Program:** The RL/OL program will continue to invest over \$1B in new vehicles, signals, and infrastructure, including nearly \$240M in signals and \$196M in infrastructure improvements. Funding to begin planning and design for the Orange Line SW Corridor Slab Replacement (P0675) remains in the CIP for \$7.5M (FY21-25).



Rail Transformation

How will the Transformation projects be changed?

- The FY21 CIP included \$20M for Rail Vision Early Action items. Through the Forging Ahead Capital Reallocation proposal, this project has been recommended to be scaled down to 50%.
- Rail Transformation Planning Studies (P0934) remains in the CIP with an authorized budget of \$2M.
- Rail Vision Early Action funds were programmed to fund 8 small turn track and platform projects to facilitate more urban- and regional-rail-style services, using existing diesel rolling stock.
- With the proposed reduction of funding, Early Actions will likely be reduced to 1 or 2 small projects.
- The hiring freeze has delayed staffing of the Rail Transformation office (6 FTEs planned; 1 currently filled), but we now have the ability now to use capital funding for planning staff.
- The plan is now to use the \$2M of Rail Transformation Planning Studies funding still programmed in the CIP, plus some of the Early Action funds, to support planning efforts, including hiring planning staff.



Bus Transformation

How will the Transformation projects be changed?

- Proposed changes affecting Bus Transformation initiatives:
 - Pause on hiring for Bus Transformation team will limit ability to coordinate and implement
 - Delay of \$50M Municipal Bus Lane Challenge fund
 - Elimination of Network Redesign Pilots, either cancelled or delayed indefinitely
 - Loss of additional funding to add peak service using recently purchased additional 60 buses
- However, a number of efforts continue:
 - Bus Priority program continuing, but reprioritized based on COVID impact on ridership (focusing on most durable ridership routes).
 - Network Redesign still underway
 - Silver Line bus replacement program for SL1, SL2 and SL3
 - \$20M of FHWA funds repurposed for bus priority
 - Development of transit priority dashboard



Future Service

How is basing service realignment on “durable revenue” to match current and future ridership patterns consistent with preserving essential services?

- **Essential services** are the buses, trains, and trolleys that serve high transit critical populations AND have high ridership potential.
- The essential services are **covered by the statutory Base Revenue Amount (BRA)** and will **not be eliminated or reduced** to the point where they do not meet service standards.
- The MBTA is proposing a **"base service"** that represents quality service for **all essential services**, as well as a **reduced amount of non-essential service** that is still viable for many of those who depend on it.
- Any services we do bring back in response to increases in ridership and durable revenue will be **in addition to the essential services** we will continue providing.



Future Service

How is basing service realignment on “durable revenue” to match current and future ridership patterns consistent with preserving essential services?

- We will add back some **non-essential services** in an iterative way in response to ridership and demand
- To monitor demand for **non-essential services** not being provided, the MBTA will use a combination of indicators like:
 - Ridership on existing services (e.g., for evening Commuter Rail after 9pm, ridership on the last train)
 - Community feedback
 - Customer and employer surveys
 - Vehicle traffic and congestion on nearby corridors
 - Changes in COVID-related travel restrictions
 - Key indicators of economic recovery
 - Resumption of downtown and late night events
 - General travel data (from MassDOT Highway or anonymized cell phone data)



Future Service

What is the cost of mothballing the fleet?

- Commuter Rail:
 - \$750K, dependent on how long vehicles would be out of commission; discussions will continue over the next few months
- Ferry:
 - \$650K for 12 months



Future Service

Specifically, what is the plan to monitor crowding?

- **Bus and Rapid Transit:**
 - Daily ridership reports for bus (via APCs) and rail (via fare gates), including % of passenger minutes in crowded conditions
 - Feedback from operators (full bus reports via TransitMaster, platform attendants, inspectors) and passengers (complaints, social media)
- **Commuter Rail:**
 - Continue regular passenger counts
 - Spot audits of trains to determine crowding
 - Feedback from conductors, operations staff, and passengers (e.g., complaints, social media)
 - Monitor ridership trends on other modes
- **Systemwide:**
 - Monitor reopening of schools (K-12 and universities)
 - Monitor roadway congestion
 - Monitor reopening of offices
 - Use the employer panel survey to monitor office reopening plans
 - Track reopening of major entertainment (e.g., sporting events, concerts)



Outreach – Briefings & Community Meetings

Which advocates have been briefed or will be briefed on service changes?

- United Spinal Greater Boston
- Fenway Civic Association
- Somerville Community Corporation
- Union Capital Boston
- 495/MetroWest Partnership
- Commuter Rail Communities Coalition
- Downtown Framingham, Inc.
- Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association
- Columbia-Savin Hill Civic Association
- Mt Bowdoin Betterment Association
- St. Marks Area Civic Association
- Jeffries Point Neighborhood Association
- North End/Waterfront Residents Association
- West Broadway Neighborhood Association
- Downtown North Association
- Shape Up Somerville
- Community Action Agency of Somerville
- Union Capital Boston Spanish Network Night
- Union Capital Boston English Network Night
- Charlestown Family Support Center
- Neighborhood Association of Back Bay
- Brookline Council on Aging
- QCAP - Head Start



Outreach – Correspondence & Outreach

Which advocates have been briefed or will be briefed on service changes?

- Brighton Allston Improvement Association
- Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition
- Allston Brighton Health Collaborative
- Neighbor to Neighbor
- Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
- Boston Disabilities Commission
- Youth on Board
- Alliance for Business Leadership
- Chinese American Heritage Foundation
- Chinatown Main Street Program
- Chinatown Residents Association
- Kendall Square Association
- Advocates Inc
- Concord-Carlisle Community Chest
- Foundation for MetroWest
- Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce
- La Alianza Hispana
- Chinatown Residents Association
- Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council
- North End/Waterfront Neighborhood Council
- Blackstone/Franklin Square Neighborhood Association
- T4MA
- Indian Society of Worcester
- Mutual Aid Medford and Somerville
- Chinese Culture Connection
- Bay State Community Services - Blue Hill RCC
- Y2Y
- Age Strong Commission
- Charlestown Coalition
- Quincy Planning Department

