

# Webinar for People with Disabilities

## [Slide 1 – Ride with us – Accessibility at the MBTA](#)

Hello and welcome to our webinar on Accessibility at the T. This webinar is a self-paced tutorial for anyone looking to learn more about the accessibility of the T and how you can plan and enjoy a safe and accessible trip virtually anywhere within the Boston area.

## [Slide 2 – Opening video](#)

Hi there. I am Laura Brelsford from the Department of System-Wide Accessibility at the MBTA. When it comes to accessibility, the T is a very different transit system than it was just 15 years ago. Thanks to some incredible advocacy by a number of riders, as well as the Boston Center for Independent Living, in 2006, the T committed to a full transformation in the way that it thinks about access and inclusive design. Because of this, today, the T is an option for more older adults and those of us with disabilities than ever before. If it has been a while since you have ridden, or if you never have, here is some important features that you will love.

## [Slide 3 – Accessibility at the T today](#)

Some of the most significant accessibility improvements at the T occurred in the past decade:

- Today, there are more accessible stations than ever before with over 15 planned for major renovations within the next few years. Many stations now include redundant elevators.
- All buses are now low floor and ramp equipped, making it much easier for anyone using limited mobility or anyone who has difficulty climbing steps to board and exit

- Automated audio and visual announcements help ensure that everyone has access to important information at stations and on board of vehicles
- Priority seating signs for older adults and individuals with disabilities are clearly marked on board of every vehicle
- There are benches available at every station and many bus stops
- Employees are available at many stations throughout the system to assist with your questions or if you are asking for accommodation

More information about accessibility is provided on the T's website at [www.MBTA.com/accessibility](http://www.MBTA.com/accessibility)

#### Slide 4 – Key accessibility policies

The MBTA's commitment to accessibility is reflected in official policies and procedures. Those guarantee that people with any type of apparent or non-apparent disability can access programs and services at any time.

- MBTA staff honor all reasonable requests for assistance. These may include things like deploying kneelers, ramps, or bridge plates; providing assistance to navigate stations, finding priority seating, helping purchase tickets or passes at fare boxes and fare vending machines. If you should ever need any help on your trip, just ask.
- Every customer has the right to use accessibility equipment at MBTA stations and on board of vehicles. Accessibility equipment includes things like elevators, escalators, ramps, bridge plates, mobile lifts, high level platforms or accessible fare gates

- The T respects your privacy. MBTA employees will never ask about the nature of one's disability. People with non-apparent disabilities are not obligated to share that information to use accessibility equipment or features of the system
- Customers who use service animals are welcome in all MBTA vehicles, stations, and facilities during hours of operation. However, animals are not permitted in seats and have to be in control of their owners at all times
- Schedules and public meeting materials are available in alternate format upon request

#### Slide 5 – New system milestones coming soon

As part of the T's \$8 billion, [5-year capital investment plan](#), the T is renovating stations, modernizing fare collection systems, vehicle fleets, upgrading services for our buses, subways, and ferries, and improving the accessibility, safety, reliability of the entire system.

Most notably, in the next few years people will experience

- Accessibility improvements on the Green Line at over 15 stations including Symphony and Hynes
- Station consolidation on the Green Line's B branch
- The Green Line will extend into the northern end of its current terminus at Lechmere with a total of 6 new stations to Union Sq. in Somerville and to College Avenue in Medford
- All cars on the Red and Orange Lines will be replaced with state-of-the-art vehicles
- Updated accessibility training for all employees will make sure that every customer on the system has a safe, pleasant and accessible journey

- Roll-out of a new travel training and mobility information program that provides comprehensive mobility information and wrap-around services for customers with disabilities and older adults

#### Slide 6 – The MBTA’s system is extensive

Boston is first for many things, including the first subway ride in 1897. From its humble beginning, today the T provides 1.3 million trips on a weekday across 176 cities and towns. On the T you can get to most any place in Boston and far into its distant suburbs. Destinations include museums, restaurants, world class medical facilities, universities, grocery stores, malls, parks, and beaches.

This spider map might be familiar to you. It shows the main lines for subway, commuter rail, bus rapid transit and ferry. The color coding of the lines on the map corresponds to the color of vehicles and signs at stations as the picture of the Green Line trolley shows at Newton Center. The T also provides paratransit service to customers who cannot ride the fixed route some or all of the time. It is called the RIDE.

#### Slide 7 – Important steps in your journey

This webinar is a response to the most frequently asked questions we collected from Riders with Disabilities over time. During this webinar we will review the major steps of a typical journey and show you how to use all system features and tools we offer to get to your destination safely and on time. You will learn about

- How to plan your trip over the phone, laptop or smart phone,
- How to pay your fare,
- Ask for help while in motion on the system,
- Ride a bus, subway and commuter rail, and

- How to connect to other community transportation services, if the bus, subway or train does not directly go to your desired destination
- How to get in touch with our travel trainers, if you need help navigate the system or have additional questions.

Lastly, there are great opportunities to provide input to the T and get involved with building out a more accessible system of services.

#### Slide 8 – Plan your trip by phone

Before you embark on your journey, I will show you easy ways to plan your trip. That is, you can find out which bus, subway, commuter rail line, ferry or a combination of modes can take you to your desired destination and whether there are any service alerts for your trip.

One option is the phone. The MBTA's Customer Service Center representatives are always happy to help you. Please be prepared with information about your trip, including the address of your starting location, destination, date of travel, and departure time. If you have a disability and require a fully accessible trip while traveling, please let the customer service representative know. The number for the Customer Service Center is 617-222-3200. For people using TTY, call 617-222-5146 or use the video relay service.

#### Slide 9 – Plan your trip by MBTA trip planner

You can plan your trip by using the MBTA Trip Planner on your computer, tablet or phone. The Trip Planner allows you to put in your preferences for your journey. In this example, we travel from the Museum of Science to Logan Airport. You can specify the time you want to leave or arrive, mode of transportation, fewest transfers, least walking, or wheelchair accessibility. The trip planner also provides you with the total fare you have to pay for your trip. Additionally, you can

double check to see if there are any service alerts by more of transportation. You can also receive information about elevators or escalators being out of service (or planned to be) by checking the service alert page and clicking on the Access icon.

#### [Slide 10 – MBTA-endorsed apps for smart phones](#)

You can plan your trip on a smart phone. The functionality of the app is similar to that of the trip planner available through a computer. In addition to the trip planner, there is a variety of MBTA-endorsed applications that help you buy Commuter Rail tickets, pay for parking, and report safety concerns to T Transit Police. The list of MBTA-endorsed apps can be found at the web link provided on this page. The apps are available for free download in the App Store for iPhones or in Google Play for Android phones.

#### [Slide 11 – Paying reduced fare](#)

People with disabilities are eligible for reduced fares with a Transportation Access Pass (TAP). Customers who are legally blind travel for free on all modes. Other beneficiaries of discounted travel are older adults 65+ years of age

To get a TAP card:

- You need to complete a TAP application
- Present a valid government-issued photo ID
- Present eligibility documentation as required by the application
- For people with doctor-certified permanent disabilities, TAP cards are valid for 5 years. For temporary disabilities, cards are valid for 1 year.

To get a Senior Charlie Card,

- You need to complete an application and present a valid, government-issued photo ID

- The card is valid for 8 years

To get a Blind Access Card,

- You have to present a Mass Commission for the Blind ID card or Certificate of Blindness
- The card is valid for 5 years.

All reduced fare cards are issued by the CharlieCard Store. The Store is located at [Downtown Crossing Station](#), on the underground concourse. Store hours vary, so please check the website or call customer service.

To make the application for reduced fare cards easier, the T is rolling out on-line applications in 2021. Please check the T's website periodically for updates.

#### Slide 12 – Loading money onto a Charlie card

Once you received your TAP card, you need to load funds on your card. You can buy a monthly pass or pay by the trip. You can add value to your card in the following ways:

- At station vending machines – cash, major credit cards, debit cards and the MA Electronic Benefit Transfer card are accepted. Vending machines are located throughout the system at every station in the lobby before the turn style. Follow instructions on the machine. Vending machines are audio equipped for individuals with low vision or who are blind.
- You can pay on board of buses or Green Line vehicles but the fare box only accepts cash. The T's friendly vehicle operators will help you in case you run into difficulty adding value to your card.
- You can also load your card on-line. The link on this slide will take you to the page where you can sign up and establish an electronic payment account with the T. From then on, you can add value to

your card via computer or tablet at any time from the comfort of your home.

Improvements to the payment system are coming soon. Please check the T's website periodically for updates.

### Slide 13 – Asking for help

No matter how accessible the system is, we understand that there will always be times where you may have questions, or need some additional assistance from a trained MBTA employee. Customers have many ways to interact with our system, in-person or via phone.

- The most important phone number to remember is the customer service hotline 617-222-3200. Service Center representatives answer your questions live every day of the week
- MBTA staff at stations or on board of vehicles answer your questions and assist if you need accommodation
- Transit Ambassadors wearing a red jacket or t-shirt with the T logo are part of the T's Customer Outreach program. They work at busy subway and bus stations. Ambassadors can assist with buying tickets and passes, and advise you on the best way to get to your destination
- If there is no MBTA staff nearby, there are call boxes located at stations. You will find old and newer style call boxes throughout the system as shown on the slide. By pushing the button, customers can speak directly to an employee at the control center who will assist immediately. And remember, all reasonable requests for assistance will be honored.
- You can also dial the elevator/escalator hotline where up-to-the-minute information about down equipment is available by station



- If you see something suspicious or experience an emergency, say something and call Transit Police at 617-222-1212

#### Slide 14 – Let's take a ride on a bus

Okay so you have planned out your trip, now let's get on board!

The bus is the most popular mode of transportation on the T. Over 150 bus lines connect neighborhoods in Greater Boston with each other, and offer service to several surrounding suburbs from Lynn to Lexington to Braintree.

The first link on this page takes you to the Bus Guide and provides detailed information about how to identify a bus stop, where to wait for the bus, how to pay your fare, how to signal to the driver to get off at your stop, lists rules and etiquettes on board, tells you what to do in case of an emergency and more.

If you are worried about the boarding and exiting process on the bus, need help with using the fare box, or require assistance with finding priority seating while traveling, do not worry. Bus operators are professionally trained to assist with all reasonable requests for assistance during your journey. For more information, please check out the Accessibility Guide for the Bus listed in the second bullet on this page.

#### Slide 15 – Where is my bus?

To improve the rider experience, the T is rolling out more real-time vehicle arrival information at subway stations, Green Line stations and bus stops throughout Greater Boston. Riders can find real-time arrival information on many types of screens and panels. We show a countdown clock and an E-ink screen at two bus stops here. To see whether there is a sign at a bus stop near you, please visit the website on this slide.

## Slide 16 – How crowded is my bus?

Bus crowding information is another new tool to improve the rider's experience and safety. This tool is especially valuable during the time of the pandemic, because the information allows people to make informed decisions about when they can ride safely with social distancing in mind.

Crowding information is provided for a dozen bus routes for now, but it is being rolled out for new lines on a continuous basis. Information about crowding is available on the T's website by bus route number, on E-Ink panels and in the Transit App.

The little icon depicting 3 people filled in with different colors indicate the level of crowding. 1 green icon indicates a bus that is not crowded, 2 orange icons indicate some crowding, and 3 red icons mean that the bus is crowded and there is probably no room for social distancing.

## Slide 17 – Riding the subway

The subway is the largest part of the public transit system, with more than 700,000 trips per average weekday.

- There are 4 main subway lines – the Green, Blue, Orange and Red lines – with 128 stops.
- It is easy to make connections between lines as all intersect in downtown Boston - at Park Street, State Street, Government Center and Downtown Crossing
- All stations on the Orange and Red Lines are accessible. The Blue line is fully accessible except for Bowdoin station.
- The Green line – being the oldest in the system – is partially accessible today but accessibility improvements are rolled out continuously. System maps at stations with a wheelchair icon indicate accessible stations. This information is also available on

the T's website. Please check out station accessibility information when you plan your trip

- The comprehensive subway guide provides useful information about trip planning, time tables, fares, stops announcements, connections, what to do in case of emergency and more.

### Slide 18 – Riding the commuter rail

The commuter rail is an easy and fast way to reach destinations as far as Worcester, Fitchburg, Rockport or Plymouth.

- There are two terminus stations in Boston: North and South Stations
- Most, but not all, stations along the 13 CR lines are accessible – information about accessible stations and schedules are on the T's website
- Each CR station is in a Zone, determined by its geographic distance from Downtown Boston. Stations in Boston and nearby communities are in Zone 1A, while stations at the end of each line are in Zones 8,9 or 10. Your fare will depend on how far you travel
- There are no discounts for buying round-trip tickets but people with TAP cards pay reduced fare on the Commuter Rail
- Tickets can be purchased at ticket windows in North, South, and Backbay Stations, retail stores throughout the region, on board of trains and via a mobile app called mTicket
- Detailed information about stations, schedules, tickets, train car features, popular destinations and more is available in the Commuter Rail Guide

## Slide 19 – ADA paratransit service – The RIDE

While this webinar is predominantly about riding the fixed route – that is, the bus, subway, trolley and commuter rail that operate along a predetermined route and schedule,- we should not forget about options for people who cannot ride the fixed route all or some of the time.

For individuals with disabilities the MBTA operates a door-to-door, shared-ride paratransit service called The RIDE in 58 cities and towns. Hours of operation mirror operating hours of the fixed route system, generally from 5AM to 1AM every day.

ADA paratransit service functions as a ‘safety net’ for people whose disabilities prevent them from using public transit all or some of the time. It is not intended to be a comprehensive system of transportation that meets all travel needs. The service is distinct from medical or human services transportation.

Eligibility assessments are conducted by the The RIDE Eligibility Center. To set up and interview, call 617-337—2727 or e-mail to the address above.

Additional information about the interview process, fare schedule, and how The RIDE operates is available on the website on this page.

## Slide 20 – MBTA’s website and call center

All information and latest updates are available on the T’s easy-to-use, accessible website and main number. The website provides you comprehensive information about all aspects of service. If you have questions and you prefer using the phone, the T customer service representatives stand by to answer your questions at 617-222-3200. If you use TTY you can reach us at 617-222-5146. Or by using the video relay service.

## Slide 21 – If the T cannot take you there...

Despite its extended reach, the T may not run in your home town, does not go to your destination, or you may live miles from the nearest bus stop.

- In those cases transportation service could be provided by a Senior Center or Council on Aging. Eligibility for the service varies but older adults (60+) and individuals with disabilities can reserve a ride 24-48 hours in advance and the service is door-to-door. You can ride to a grocery store, doctor's appointment, or other destinations of daily living. Check for service details in your own town
- Another option is a volunteer driver program, which is free of charge but does not run in every town of the Greater Boston area. Find out about the availability of this service via the website
- If your destination is outside the Greater Boston area, 15 regional transit authorities provide bus service throughout the Commonwealth

You can also use taxi, Uber or Lyft service to any destination where public and community transportation cannot take you.

## Slide 22 – Find your ride in your community and beyond

Do you want to find your ride inside and outside of the T service area easily? Add RideMatch to your toolbox! It is an on-line inventory of all public and private transportation services available not just in the Greater Boston area but throughout the Commonwealth. You can check out how you can get from Boston to Worcester or to Cape Cod without driving. The website lets you search by origin to destination or by town. You can choose from the resulting options and contact the provider directly with questions or log on to the provider's website for

further information. Please remember, you cannot reserve your ride directly on RideMatch but will learn about your travel options and can contact the provider for more information.

[Slide 23 – The T’s Travel Instruction Program can help you navigate MBTA services](#)

I hope this webinar provided you with new information about the T and gave you tools about how to navigate the rich transportation resources near you.

Please remember, public transit is an essential link to our communities and we are committed to making sure the MBTA is an option for all, regardless of disability.

- The T’s travel instruction program teaches skills about how to ride the bus, subway, and commuter rail, how to plan your trip, how to buy your fare and more. We constantly update our teaching material!
- We offer these instructions in person or via Zoom to groups or to individuals one-on-one. No matter the setting, the training is always free and flexible.
- Please reach out to us via phone, e-mail or social media. We can help you determine which training program is be the right fit for you, sign you up, and answer any travel-related question.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Also, please check out the pages following this webinar to access resources on-line.

[Slide 24 – How to stay in touch with the T?](#)

Lastly, the more we hear about riders’ experience on the T, the better we can design and build out accessibility features for the future.

Please join the Riders' Transportation Access Group, R-TAG, and become a member. Membership is open to the public and free.

Members meet periodically with T officials to provide input on policies and procedures affecting people with disabilities, to review station renovation plans, new vehicle design, and to discuss new technology designed to improve access. Sign up and become a member today!

(You can also follow R-TAG on Twitter @R\_TAGtweets)

#### Slide 25 – MBTA resources (I)

- Accessibility on the T- <https://www.mbta.com/accessibility> (p.3)
- Key Accessibility Policies - <https://www.mbta.com/accessibility/key-policies> (p.4)
- MBTA trip planner - <https://www.mbta.com/trip-planner> (p.9)
- MBTA service alerts - <https://www.mbta.com/alerts/access> (p. 9)
- MBTA transit app and other endorsed apps - <https://www.mbta.com/mbta-endorsed-apps> (p.10)

#### Slide 26 – MBTA resources (II)

- CharlieCard Store - <https://www.mbta.com/fares/charliecard-store> (p.11)
- Reduced fare application - <https://www.mbta.com/fares/reduced> (p.11)
- Electronic payment account/Reloading CharlieCards - <https://charliecard.mbta.com/CharlieCardWebProgram/pages/charlieCardCenter.jsf> (p.12)
- How to ride a bus - <https://www.mbta.com/guides/bus-guide> (p.14)
- Accessibility on the bus - <https://www.mbta.com/accessibility/bus-guide> (p.14)

- Where is my bus? - <https://www.mbta.com/projects/solar-powered-e-ink-signs> (p.15)
- How to ride the subway - <https://www.mbta.com/guides/subway-guide> (p.17)

#### Slide 27 – MBTA resources (III)

- System map - <https://cdn.mbta.com/sites/default/files/2020-05/subway-map-june2020-v34a-GLX-shuttle.pdf> (p.17)
- Subway station accessibility - <https://www.mbta.com/schedules/subway> (p.17)
- Commuter rail guide- <https://www.mbta.com/guides/commuter-rail-guide> (p.18)
- RIDE information - <https://www.mbta.com/accessibility/the-ride> (p.19)
- Travel Training: <https://www.mbta.com/accessibility/travel-training> (p.23)
- R-TAG: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScSw7GzsMp-JqqDYul\\_LpOG9gr55sjZExmEZPcWcQfwSHTGEg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScSw7GzsMp-JqqDYul_LpOG9gr55sjZExmEZPcWcQfwSHTGEg/viewform) (p.24)

#### Slide 28 – Resources for Community Transportation

- Council on Aging statewide directory - <https://mcoaonline.com/what-is-a-coa/coa-directory/> (p.21)
- Volunteer driving programs - <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/volunteer-driver-programs> - (p.21)
- Regional Transit Authorities - <https://www.mbta.com/accessibility/regional-transportation-authorities> - (p.21)
- RideMatch - [www.massridmatch.org](http://www.massridmatch.org) – (p.22)