



## Diversion Service Policy for MBTA Regional Rail

**Effective January 1, 2026**

MBTA Regional Rail<sup>1</sup> service may be disrupted from time to time as required to allow maintenance and construction activities on or near the right of way. Service disruptions may occur for varying lengths of time, may be continuous or intermittent, and may affect individual stations, portions of a line, or an entire line. This Diversion Service Policy for MBTA Regional Rail service establishes standards and considerations for providing substitute service during a pre-planned disruption of scheduled Regional Rail service.<sup>2</sup>

### **a. Overview**

During a pre-planned disruption to regional rail service, the MBTA will consider anticipated ridership during the disruption and will provide alternative or substitute service commensurate with expected demand. When providing alternative service, the MBTA will match the span, capacity and frequency of scheduled service as closely as is reasonable, with a goal of reducing excess journey time and providing a trip that is as similar as possible to regularly scheduled rail service.

As a general matter, the MBTA does not guarantee 1:1 replacement service, but strives to provide reasonable alternatives during a planned service disruption, where what is reasonable varies based on the factors described in this policy. The MBTA will first evaluate the availability of existing, fixed route alternatives to accommodate affected passengers. Fixed route alternatives may include bus, subway, or ferry service, or may include alternate Regional Rail service, taking into account the availability of nearby stations on the same or another rail line. Where fixed route alternatives are insufficient, the MBTA will provide shuttle buses and/or vans to fill gaps in coverage. Individual stations with significantly low demand or stations that cannot be safely accessed by shuttle bus may not receive diversion service. The MBTA may make case-by-case adjustments when determining whether and how to offer replacement service based on the unique circumstances of a closure, including seasonality, special events, other projects, and local or regional considerations. This policy is not a guarantee of replacement service but a set of guidelines to shape decision-making.

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<sup>1</sup> MBTA Regional Rail is also known as Commuter Rail. The shift in language reflects the MBTA's broader vision for more frequent, all-day service across its rail network.

<sup>2</sup> This Diversion Service Policy replaces the Bus Diversion Policy for Weekend Regional Rail Service adopted by the MBTA Fiscal and Management Control Board on July 31, 2017. This policy is intended to complement the companion Diversion Service Standards for pre-planned subway diversions adopted in November 2023.

The MBTA is committed to communicating in advance with customers concerning all planned Regional Rail service disruptions. The guidelines established in this policy may not apply during an emergency closure.

### **b. Substitute Service Standards**

During a pre-planned rail diversion, the MBTA strives to provide substitute service according to the following standards. These diversion service standards are intended only for Regional Rail diversions. The following may not apply in full during an emergency.

#### **1. Service Availability**

- Other, existing MBTA service (bus, subway, ferry, other regional rail line or nearby stop on the affected line) is the preferred substitute service option during a diversion.
- Pedestrian diversions are considered a substitute service option. The MBTA strives to keep pedestrian diversions to less than 0.25 miles distance whenever possible. Pedestrian diversions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and reviewed regularly for suitability and accessibility.
- Shuttle bus and/or van service will be provided if other MBTA services, including pedestrian diversions are insufficient. Individual stations with significantly low demand or stations that cannot be accessed by shuttle bus or that do not allow for safe boarding of shuttles may not receive diversion service.

#### **2. Frequency of Service**

- The MBTA is committed to reducing additional customer journey time during diversions.
- Substitute service should operate at least as frequently as the service it is replacing and may be offered at even greater frequency when possible to reduce additional journey time.
- When appropriate and feasible, the MBTA may add additional service on an existing route to substitute for diverted rail service.
- Substitute service should be scheduled to meet applicable train connections.

#### **3. Span of Service**

- Substitute service will approximate the same span of service as the service it is replacing whenever practicable. This may include adding or extending service on another fixed route that has been designated as replacement service for the affected rail line. There may be instances where off-peak demand of a particular

rail line or segment is insufficient to warrant substitute service across the full span of scheduled service.

#### **4. Capacity**

- Substitute service should provide capacity to support anticipated ridership during the disruption, based on analysis of historical demand on the corresponding rail segment, and understanding that based on historical data, fewer people will travel during a diversion.

#### **5. Accessibility**

- All substitute service vehicles are 100% ADA compliant and will include low-floor, ramp-equipped buses wherever possible. Accessible coach buses will also be allocated as appropriate in consultation with the Department of System-Wide Accessibility.
- All substitute service operators will be trained to provide accessible service to older adults and individuals with disabilities.
- Substitute service will not terminate at an inaccessible stop or station, including a station that is temporarily inaccessible due to a planned or unplanned elevator outage.
- At impacted stations, there will be a safe and accessible path between an accessible entrance and the substitute service.
- Where other existing MBTA service is used as substitute service, all stations and/or stops to which riders are directed shall be accessible.
- Supplemental, accessible vans may be provided when the pedestrian path of travel between the impacted station(s) and substitute service is complex.
- Accessible buses and high-capacity vans will be able to safely accommodate two wheeled mobility device users simultaneously. If a vehicle cannot accommodate two users, supplemental vehicles will be provided to ensure equivalent service.

#### **6. Customer Information**

- The MBTA will strive to make information about an upcoming diversion public at least two weeks before the start of the diversion.
- Operational or emergency circumstances may occasionally limit the ability to meet the two-week notice goal, however pre-planned diversions that impact more than 25% of the business days in each month shall be planned and announced to the public no later than the 15th of the preceding month to permit

riders to make educated purchasing decisions, such as choosing to purchase a different pass or not purchase a pass at all.

- The MBTA, through its regional rail operator, strives to make passenger assistance personnel available at critical junctures along a diversion. The operator will not staff every impacted station along a diversion.
- Information about diversions will be made available through multiple communications channels, including the MBTA's website, T-Alerts, electronic displays, in-station announcements, station posters, banners, schedule distribution, shuttle directional signage, on-train announcements, press releases and advisories, and other methods. The MBTA is continuously working to improve the availability of real-time information concerning diverted rail service and the availability of substitute service and may make updates to customer communications practices over time.
- Diversions with short notice periods will have enhanced outreach to notify affected customers. Customers are encouraged to sign up for T-Alerts to receive updates as soon as they're available.

## **7. Fares**

- Fares will not be higher for substitute service than for the same trip with regular service.