Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

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About

Summary of outreach methods and findings for Focus 2050 Phase 1 public engagement.

Phase 1

Focus 2050
Public Engagement

Public Engagement

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Public Engagement

Overview

Overview

What is Focus 2050?

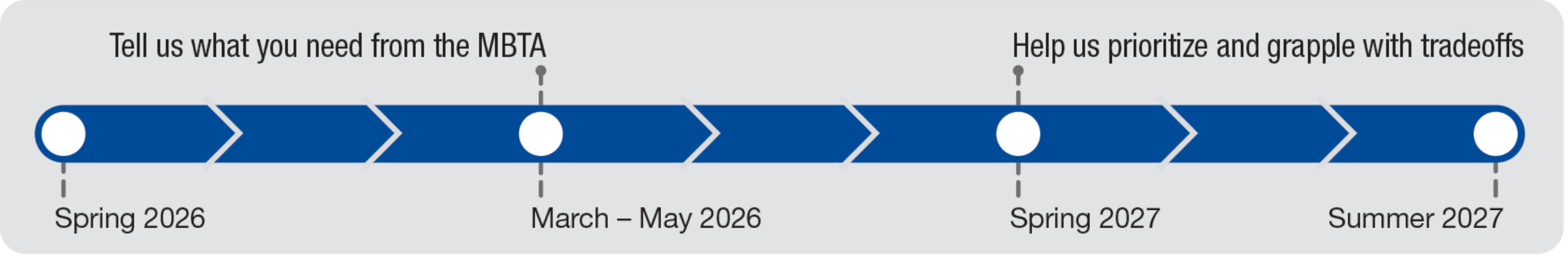
Decisions we make today will shape how people move around Massachusetts for decades. Focus 2050 will set the long-term direction for a safer, more reliable, more accessible MBTA through the year 2050.

Focus 2050 is the MBTA's long-term plan for transit investments. It is the latest update to the Program for Mass Transportation, a plan required by state law.

This document outlines the MBTA's engagement strategy, spanning March through May 2026.

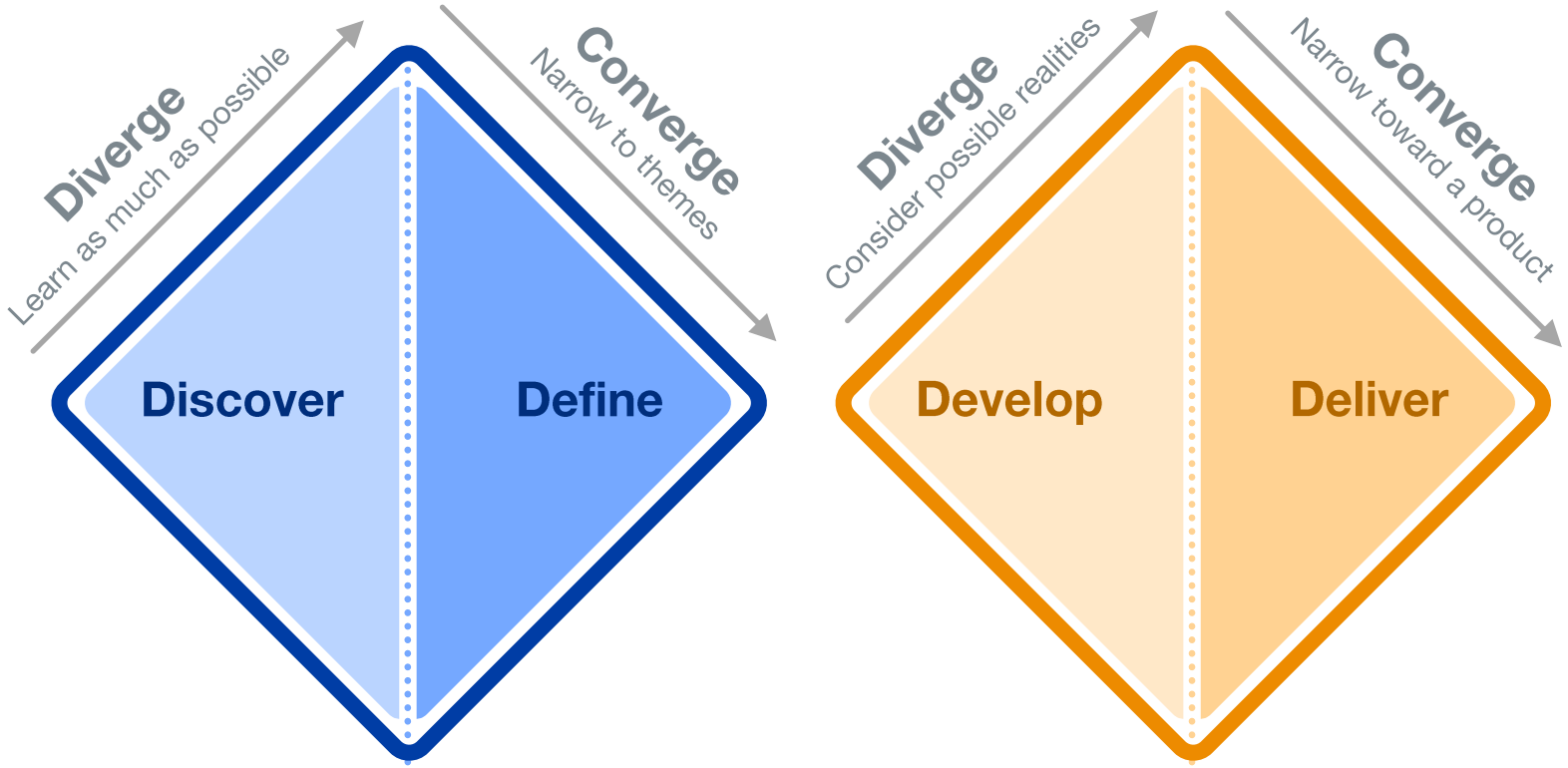
Focus 2050 will:

- Help guide decisions by the MBTA and ensure our decisions are smart and keep long-term goals in mind.
- Connect the MBTA's strategic goals with the Capital Investment Plan.
- Identify fiscally unconstrained investment priorities and potential capital improvements.
- Look beyond today's needs to prepare the system for the needs of the Commonwealth, accounting for future growth, climate impacts, and changing travel patterns.



Overview

Strategic Approach



March – May 2026

Public Engagement

Learn what people think about, and want from, the MBTA.

Summer 2026

Themes

Define the themes and patterns that we heard.

Fall 2026

Tradeoffs + Scenarios

Develop an adaptive approach that responds to changing realities.

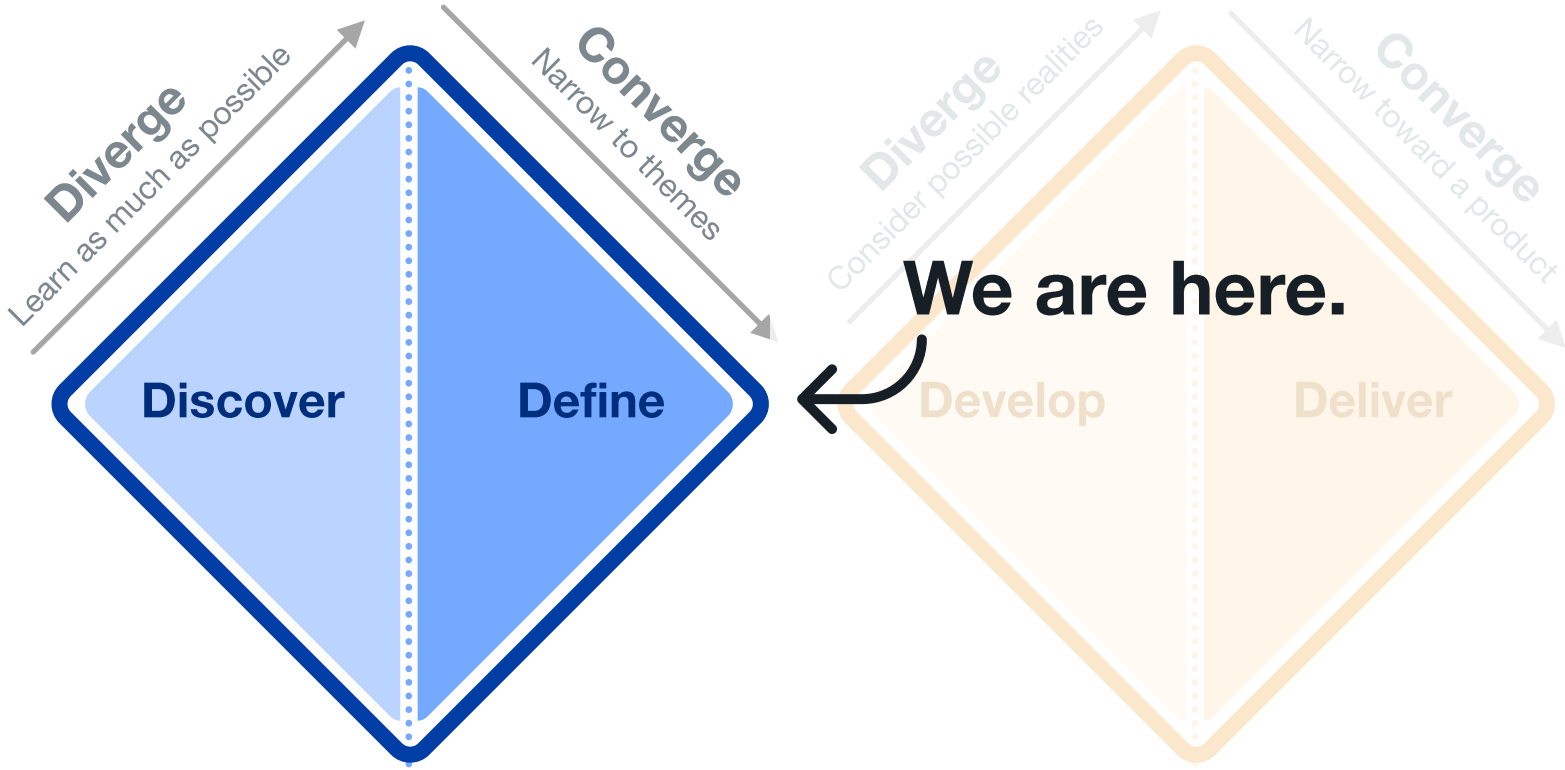
Winter 2026

Production

Outline potential investments that make the most sense.

Overview

Strategic Approach



March – May 2026

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Learn what people think about, and want from, the MBTA.

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Overview

Public Engagement
By the numbers

1050+

public comments received through feedback forms and open houses

24

pop-up events hosted across the MBTA system, meeting riders on the system

10

media mentions across state, regional, and local news outlets

146

attendees at in-person and virtual open house events

57

municipal, regional, and federal stakeholders engaged through workshops

100+

public comments received through the Focus 2050 inbox

8

public meetings (open houses, virtual events) and workshops for planning partners

2

ride-alongs on the Commuter Rail, interacting with 250+ riders

02

Public Engagement

Outreach Methods

Overview

Outreach Methods

Public Events

The MBTA held four public open houses, one virtual and three in-person: Chelsea, Boston, and Lawrence. Planning staff were also present at two public meetings of the FY 2027–2031 Capital Investment Plan.

Stakeholder Workshops

The MBTA held two workshops, one virtual and one in-person, specifically for planning staff, which engaged 57 municipal, regional, and federal stakeholders. These sessions produced regional project priorities.

Digital Materials

The MBTA project webpage was viewed more than 3,600 times during the March–May 2026 public engagement push. Social media posts resulted in >112,000 impressions and >2800 engagements.

Media Engagement

Following the MBTA's press release, Focus 2050 drew 10 media mentions. Coverage spanned a major outlet (the Boston Globe), trade and regional press, two TV segments, and two advocacy-authored opinion pieces.

Station Pop-ups

The MBTA heard directly from riders at 24 pop-up events in stations across the system. This work was complemented with two ride-along events on the Commuter Rail: Framingham and Brockton.

Feedback Form

The MBTA created a "Rider Feedback Form" in print and digital formats. The form was distributed at all public engagement events and resulted in more than 1,050 public comments.

Outreach Methods

Public Meetings



Virtual Open House *Via Zoom*	Wednesday March 18th
In-Person Open House *La Colaborativa* (Chelsea)	Wednesday April 15th
In-Person Open House *ABCD* (Boston)	Thursday May 7th
In-Person Open House (Lawrence)	Tuesday May 19th
Virtual Meeting FY27-31 CIP	Tuesday March 31st
In-Person Meeting FY27-31 CIP *10 Park Plaza* (Boston)	Monday April 13th

Outreach Methods

Station Pop-ups

Where did we go?

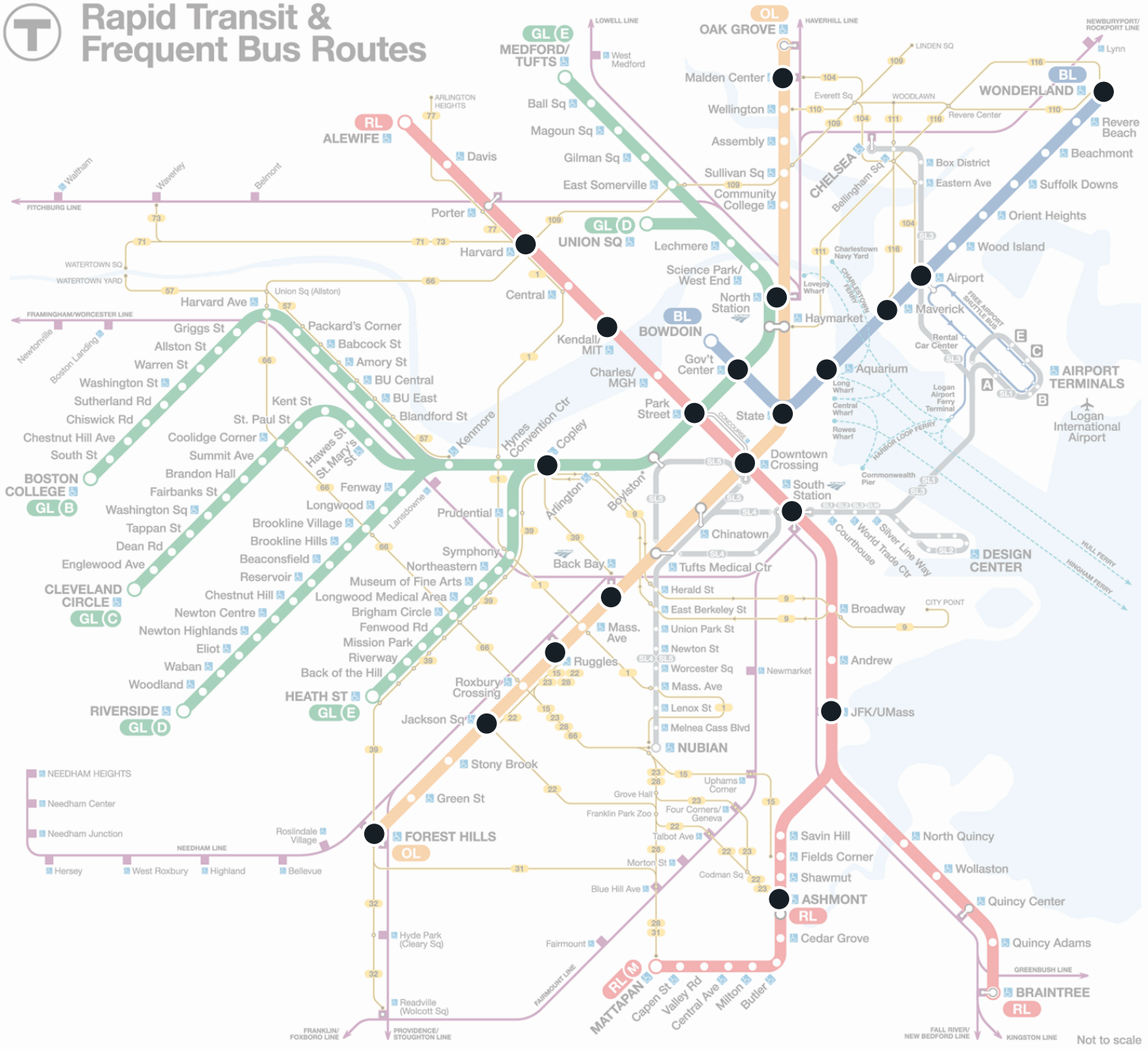
MBTA staff—including public engagement staff and the Focus 2050 planning team—conducted **24 station pop-ups** across the system.

Pop-up locations were chosen to provide a proportional number of hours of outreach to our ridership across the system (for example, 50% on heavy and light rail and 35% on bus).

Each pop-up lasted for 2 hours and took place from March to May 2026.

We also conducted ride-alongs at Framingham and Brockton to supplement feedback in areas with fewer responses.

Note: Stations with 2x pop-ups include: North Station, South Station, Ruggles, and JFK/UMass.



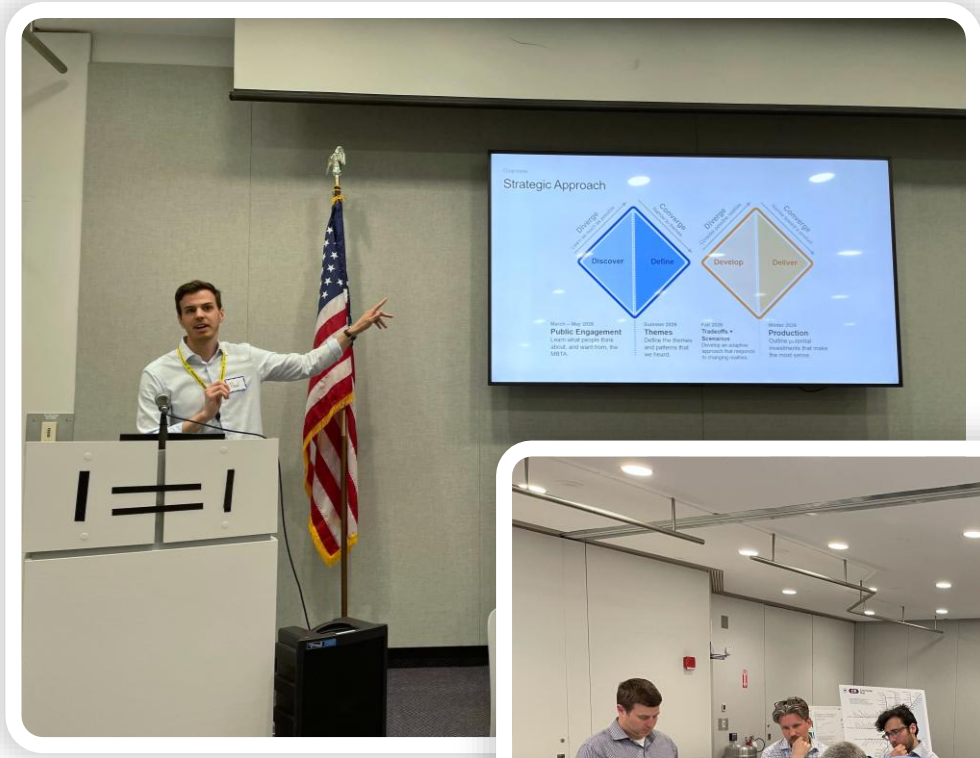
Outreach Methods

Stakeholder Outreach

MBTA staff hosted **two sessions** for public sector stakeholders, one virtual and one in-person. These forums were opportunities for municipal and regional planning staff to share the big ideas and priorities of their communities.

MBTA staff also met with transit advocates, the MBTA Advisory Board, regional and municipal partners, and hosted a legislative briefing for elected officials and their staff.

Collectively, these sessions represented **57 municipal, regional, and federal stakeholders.**





03

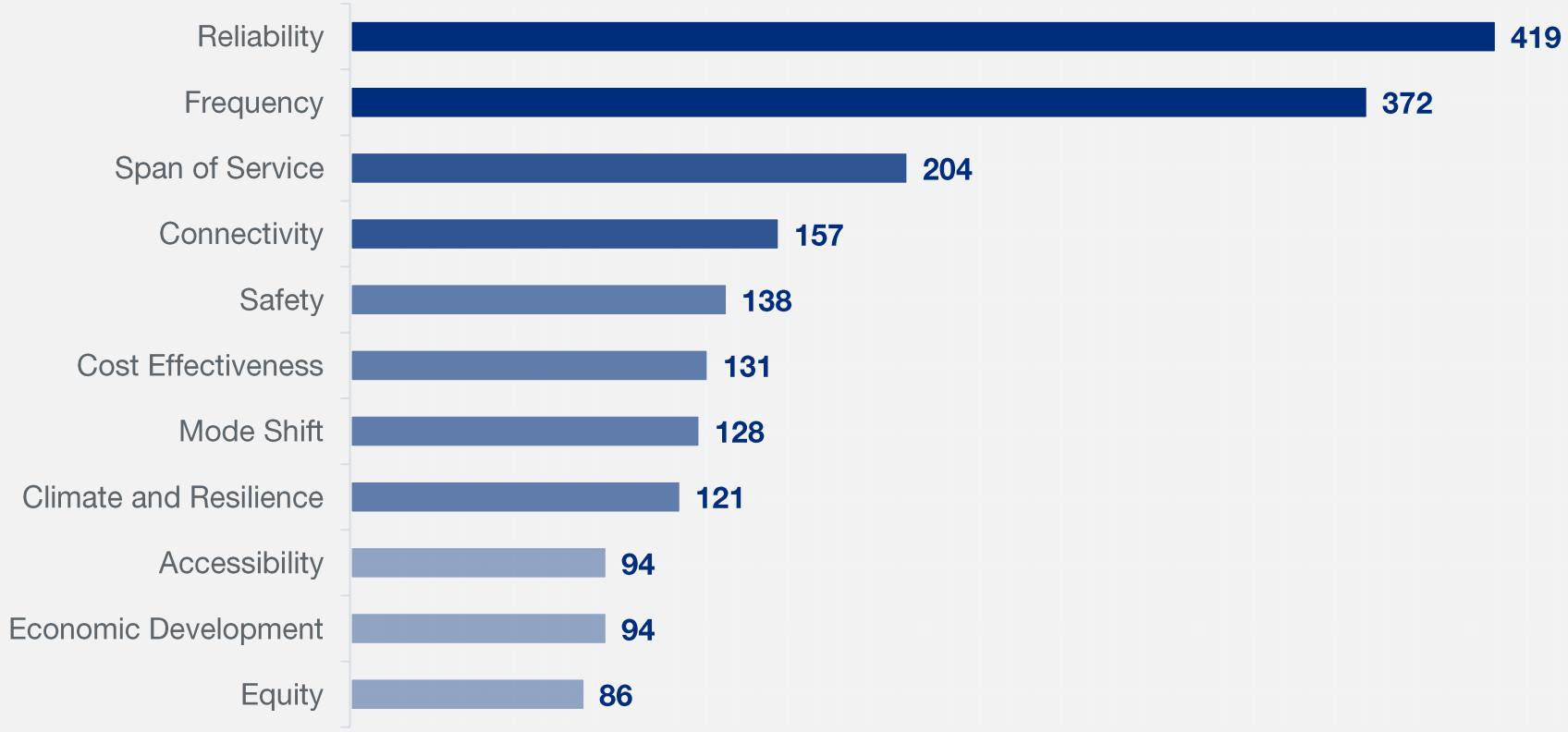
Public Engagement

Results & Findings

Our riders' priorities

Reliability and Frequency are Top Priorities for Riders

Across 11 options, with up to three picks per rider, Reliability and Frequency drew the most selections by a wide margin, with Span of Service a clear third.



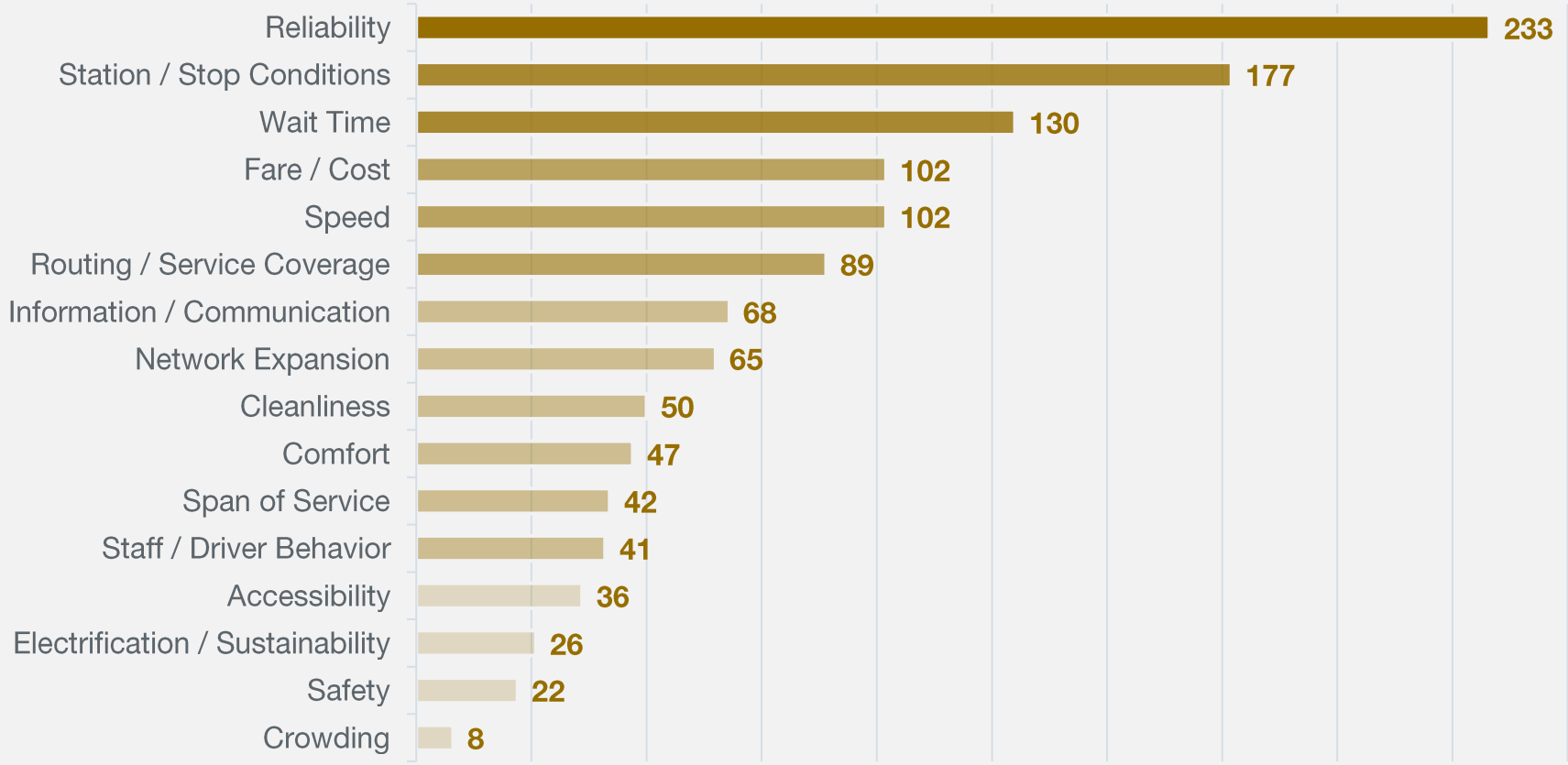
Source: Rider Feedback, Focus 2050.

Notes: Counts reflect respondent selections for each priority, with up to three selections total. N = 633 feedback forms with ≥1 priority selected. Total selections = 1,944 (1,739 form selections + 205 public event selections)

Themes we heard

Riders Care Most About Reliability

Of 16 themes identified across riders' open-ended comments, Reliability ranked highest by a clear margin, with Station & Stop Conditions and Wait Time a clear second and third.



Source: Rider Feedback, Focus 2050.

Notes: A comment may mention multiple themes; counts are not mutually exclusive. N = 1057 comments.

Results & Findings

Expansion Projects

We are aware of ~45 ideas for system expansion, including discrete capital projects, and network-topology projects like circumferential transit.

→ About **1-in-6 comments** called for expanding the system.

→ People who emailed raised expansion ideas at roughly **5x** the rate of those we heard from at public events and station pop-ups.

Source: Rider and Emailed Feedback, Focus 2050.

Notes: 70 comments mentioned "Regional Rail" which includes any Commuter Rail-related ask for faster, more frequent, all-day, or modernized service (e.g., stations, rolling stock, electrification). This is logged as a service enhancement, not a system expansion idea.

Connectivity Megaprojects Among Top Expansion Ideas

Network expansion ideas, with a threshold of 10 or more total mentions, yielding the top seven ideas.

	Expansion idea
	Circumferential Transit
	North–South Rail Link
BL	Red–Blue Connector
OL	Forest Hills to Roslindale / W. Roxbury
BL	Wonderland to Lynn
	SL/Bus Transit Priority
RL	Alewife to Arlington

Stakeholder Workshops
Cross-cutting themes

High-Quality, Frequent, All-Day Service Across Modes

More frequent, more reliable service across all modes; modernized stations and infrastructure in state of good repair; improved accessibility; promote mode shift so transit is competitive with driving

Electrified Commuter Rail

A fully electrified, frequent Commuter Rail service that serves the region (Rail Modernization Plan)

Improve Access to Our Public Transit Network

Better multimodal connections and first/last-mile access at MBTA stations and stops; improved coordination with RTAs and municipalities to close regional gaps

Plan for Long-Term Resilience

Align investments with long-term regional goals, such as climate resilience, transit-supportive land use, station-area growth; strengthen coordination between MBTA, RTAs, MassDOT, and regional partners



04

Public Engagement

Feedback by Mode

Modal Summary

BL Blue Line

What we heard.

Across ~50 comments and emails referencing the Blue Line, we heard a **consistent message about connectivity**. The Red-Blue Connector is one of the most broadly supported capital expansions across emailed comments and feedback forms. A northern extension to Lynn appeared as a strong second. Access to the airport was a frustration; our riders mentioned no easy single-seat trip to Boston Logan from much of the region.

Day-to-day service complaints were relatively mild compared to other lines: signal delays, rush-hour crowding, and weekend frequency. Several riders commented on the Blue Line positively ("Blue line is on time [and] fast"; "Blue line is the best line!"). Station-level asks include brighter lighting, police presence, platform gap fillers, and platform heating.

Major capital ideas mentioned:

- **Red–Blue Connector**: a direct link between the Blue and Red lines (toward Charles/MGH). The most-mentioned Blue Line idea.
- **Northern extension to Lynn / Salem**: extending the line past its current terminus, most often to Lynn and in some comments onward to Salem.

In the words of our riders:

- "Red line and Blue line don't connect."
- "Eliminating signal problems, connecting Red & Blue lines directly, and expansion of the Blue Line into Lynn and Saugus."
- "Extend the Blue Line further into Lynn and into Salem."
- "MBTA Blue line works well! Smooth ride."
- "…a feasibility study for the expansion of the blue line into Lynn and Chelsea…"

Note: Based on ~50 comments naming the Blue Line or its stations. These comments are directional, not necessarily representative.

Modal Summary

RL Red Line

What we heard.

Across ~85 comments and emails referencing the Red Line, the dominant theme we heard was an **erosion of reliability** across the line. Riders described breakdowns, disabled trains, and outages as routine; several reported missing Commuter Rail transfers or abandoning the T for driving because of it.

The Red Line drew more unprompted negative comparisons than any other line. The most common asks among riders were for new cars, fixed track, and consistent rush-hour headways, with the branches each drawing specific frequency complaints. Several riders expressed a need for early-morning and late-evening span (service before 6 AM for shift workers). Feedback about the condition of our stations was prominent: Alewife leaks, Ashmont ceiling and cold platforms, and Central Square elevators, for example.

Major capital ideas mentioned:

- **Alewife to Arlington extension**: the most-mentioned Red Line idea, driven by a wave of email submissions from the Arlington corridor plus form comments.
- **Mattapan Line conversion to heavy rail**: extending Red Line subway service to Mattapan, in place of the legacy trolleys.

In the words of our riders:

- → “The Red line consistently breaks down and I have missed my commuter rail almost twice per week because of the red line trains getting disabled and breaking down.”
- → “Red line outages, while not frequent, have meant I no longer count on the T to get between JP & Cambridge and drive instead.”
- → “All the trains need to be replaced because most of them are old, especially the red line.”
- → “Can we please add more Ashmont Trains during Rush hour?”
- → “Extend RL to Arlington.”

Note: Based on ~85 comments naming the Red Line or its stations. These comments are directional, not necessarily representative.

Modal Summary

OL Orange Line

What we heard.

Across ~70 comments and emails about the Orange Line, we heard a **generally positive turnaround story**: riders repeatedly credit the slow-zone elimination and new cars (“the orange line speedups have helped my life meaningfully”; “Orange line is great”). The Orange Line is held up as the standard that other lines should meet.

Complaints center on maintenance diversions and their communication: confusing shuttle signage, glitchy announcements, recurring construction closures, plus unreliable end-of-line departures. Station safety and cleanliness draw pointed mentions at Downtown Crossing, Chinatown, and Back Bay.

Major capital ideas mentioned:

- **Forest Hills to Roslindale Village / West Roxbury / Needham**: replacing or supplementing the Needham Line corridor with rapid transit; a top-mentioned capital expansion idea.
- **Sullivan Square to Everett spur**: rapid transit to Everett, explicitly preferred over a Silver Line solution by some.

In the words of our riders:

- “Since the reduction of the slow zones things have been great on the OL.”
- “Orange line should have no signal problems and depart from the ends at reliable times.”
- “I wish… the orange Line would go to the commuter rail in Boston stops up to the West Roxbury train stops.”
- “Focus on clean + safe stations, especially Orange Line: Downtown Crossing, Chinatown, + Back Bay.”
- “System connectivity, especially the [conversion] of the Needham Branch CR to Orange Line… are very compelling transit, housing, and economic development stories for the commonwealth.”

Note: Based on ~70 comments naming the Orange Line or its stations. These comments are directional, not necessarily representative.

Modal Summary

GL Green Line

What we heard.

Green Line feedback (~80 comments and emails) centered on one key element: its speed. Making the Green Line faster appeared in many variations, and our riders cite red lights, street traffic, car interference on the E and B branches, and stop spacing as specific concerns.

Reliability appeared as a close second: delays, breakdowns, mid-day stoppages, and crowded rush-hour trains (“bigger trains during rush hour”). We also heard accessibility as a distinct concern; malfunctioning ramps on the vehicles frustrate riders with disabilities. Email writers mentioned more technical feedback, including core-tunnel capacity upgrades between Government Center and Kenmore.

Major capital ideas mentioned:

- **E-branch: Heath Street to Hyde Square (Jamaica Plain)**: the most-mentioned Green Line project.
- **D-branch extensions**: Union Square to Porter Square, and Newton Highlands to Needham Center.

In the words of our riders:

- “Challenge: Green line needs to be faster!”
- “Please make the green line faster and plus stop shutting it down.”
- “Green Line needs to improve handicap ramps on cars. Frequently they do not work or get stuck.”
- “We need more frequent trains… Green line: every 4 minutes. This could even try to be solved before 2050!”
- “The green line for me can stop too much. I wish all the lines (red, orange) came more often but I know that's hard to do.”

Note: Based on ~80 comments naming the Green Line or its stations. These comments are directional, not necessarily representative.

Modal Summary

Commuter Rail

What we heard.

We heard ambitious feedback for Commuter Rail (~240 comments and emails), much of which converged on a single vision: stop running a commuter railroad and **start running regional rail**. Riders consistently mentioned a desire for electrified, frequent (15–30 minute headways), faster, and more affordable service.

Frequency was the top day-to-day priority for our riders (“trains multiple times per hour”) followed by reliability: breakdowns, snow-related signal failures, and delay notifications. Cost also emerged, with $8 one-way fares specifically called out as losing to driving.

Major capital ideas mentioned:

- **North-South Rail Link**: connecting North and South Stations; the most-mentioned discrete Commuter Rail project.
- **Regional Rail transformation**: faster, more frequent, all-day, modernized service; including system electrification, but not required.

In the words of our riders:

- “Turning commuter rail into an all day electrified regional rail.”
- “Enhance ridership and reliability by doubling the number of trains that run on the commuter rail on the most used lines - target every 30 minutes.”
- “Change the pricing on the commuter rail… right now it’s probably more expensive to take the commuter rail than it is to pay for gas and drive.”
- “The train is so packed in the morning and we would love an express train at least once a morning during peak hours.”
- “Signal and switch issues on the MBTA commuter rail every time it snows makes commutes difficult.”

Note: Based on ~240 comments naming the Commuter Rail or its stations. These comments are directional, not necessarily representative.

Modal Summary

SL Silver Line

What we heard.

The Silver Line drew a small but pointed set of ~19 comments and emails during our outreach. The through-line is identity: riders and advocates express that the Silver Line **isn't delivering rapid-transit performance**. Riders mention how vehicles get stuck in traffic, with specific mentions about the airport and Washington Street corridor. The most substantive recurring idea is converting the Silver Line to light rail (or full subway), often paired with reactivating the Tremont Street tunnel.

Day-to-day feedback included unannounced service changes, morning SL2 capacity, and East Boston/Chelsea students wanting stops closer to schools.

Major capital ideas mentioned:

- **Conversion to light rail / subway**: upgrading the right-of-way beyond bus operations, including Tremont Street tunnel reuse.
- **Chelsea to Sullivan Square extension**: linking SL3 onward to the Orange Line.
- **SL4/SL5 corridor extensions**: including a Silver Line 5 extension to Mattapan.

In the words of our riders:

- → "Actually make the Silver Line a subway."
- → "… a greater connectivity to the airport without having to go to south station and taking the silver line, which gets stuck in traffic."
- → "Can you please add more SL2's in the morning?"
- → "Silver Line is good bus service."

Note: Based on ~19 comments referencing the Silver Line or its routes. These comments are directional, not necessarily representative.

Modal Summary

Ferry

What we heard.

We received limited feedback about the MBTA ferry (8 comments and emails) but this feedback was uniform in tone: **our riders like the ferry and want more of it**. MBTA ferries were described as more reliable and more pleasant than land modes, and riders asked for scale: more boats, more drop points, and year-round and weekend service.

Our riders expressed practical friction points: schedules are hard to find, and the first/last-mile connection from ferry terminals to the rest of the network is a weak link.

MBTA note on interpretation: Given the small number of comments, we will also consider findings from public outreach conducted for MassDOT's comprehensive Water Transportation Study. Learn more here.

Major capital ideas mentioned:

- **Expanded Inner Harbor and Seaport service**: more routes, more frequency, year-round operation.
- **More vessels and landing points**: grow the network beyond current terminals.

In the words of our riders:

- → "We need more boats, drop points, etc. Ferry is more reliable, more enjoyable, and lower cost per passenger."
- → "Schedule planning for island ferry service — hard to find when service runs."
- → "A lot of people rely on ferry to get to work. Very grateful water transpo study under way."
- → "I take the Ferry to Green Line and it is challenging to have to walk the first/last mile."

Note: Based on 8 comments referencing ferry service. These comments are directional, not necessarily representative.

Modal Summary

Bus

What we heard.

Bus feedback (~200 comments and emails) **centered on frequency**. Our riders' dominant complaint is infrequent and unreliable service: 45–60 minute headways, dropped trips, and bus bunching. Riders often asked for more trips, weekend service, and late-night coverage for shift workers.

At the same time, we heard good news equally as clear: riders expressed enthusiasm toward our rollout of Bus Network Redesign and dedicated bus lanes ("Bus lanes are huge!"; "the 104 & 109 are amazing — need this x10"), with our riders urging faster rollout, lane enforcement against parked cars, and coordinated timed transfers at hubs. The big structural feedback we heard is crosstown service: riders across the region want to move between neighborhoods without detouring downtown.

Major capital ideas mentioned:

- **Circumferential transit**: crosstown rapid connections (Longwood, Seaport, Everett, Chelsea, Allston, Dorchester) rather than downtown-radial routes.
- **Transit priority: dedicated lanes, signal priority, and enforcement**: expanding and protecting what the Better Bus Network started.

In the words of our riders:

- "Frequency of service - buses running only every 45 - 60 minutes on some lines is ridiculous."
- "Several times I encountered no bus showed up as scheduled for an hourly interval… I am a senior citizen. Bus is not reliable."
- "Increase bus frequency and make schedules more reliable. Bus lanes are huge! I love the protected ones on the 22 route."
- "I don't use buses too much b/c they aren't frequent or reliable enough to make planning convenient."
- "It is hard to complete a multi-bus journey… when a bus that's supposed to run every 10 minutes instead makes me wait 45+ minutes."

Note: Based on ~200 comments referencing bus service, stations, stops, or specific routes. These comments are directional, not necessarily representative.

05

Public Engagement

Conclusion

Public Engagement

Early Takeaways

Respondents asked for service they can count on, improved stops and stations, and a better-connected region.

Dependable, frequent service

41%

of priority picks went to Reliability or Frequency, the top two of 11 options, with Span of Service a clear third.

Reliability was also the most common theme in open-ended comments. Riders want service that arrives on time, comes often, and runs earlier, later, and on weekends.

Stations and stops

17%

of comments noted station or stop conditions. Among comments that mention the Commuter Rail, that share rose to 36%, about twice the overall rate.

For example, riders asked for working elevators and ramps, cleaner and safer stations, and clearer information during disruptions.

A better-connected network

5 in 6

comments and emails focused on the existing network. Just 1-in-6 comments asked us to expand the system.

Many ideas have been shared, including: circumferential transit, the North–South Rail Link, and the Red–Blue Connector. Riders also asked for faster, more frequent Regional Rail and first/last-mile access.

What's working: Riders appreciate the Orange Line's slow-zone fixes and new cars, new bus lanes, and Bus Network Redesign. Many riders asked for more of these improvements.

Source: Rider and Emailed Feedback, Focus 2050.

Notes: Findings are directional, not representative. One comment may support several ideas.

Thank you!

Contact Us

Email us

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Visit our website

mbta.com/focus2050