



MBTA Late-Night Service

Proposed Service Changes
Fiscal & Management Control Board

February 29, 2016



Massachusetts Bay
Transportation Authority

massDOT
Massachusetts Department of Transportation

Late-Night Service Proposed Service Changes



History of Late-Night MBTA Service

- In 2001, the MBTA introduced a bus-only Night Owl service that ran a limited schedule until 2:30am
 - Cancelled in 2005 for budgetary reasons
- In March 2014, the MBTA launched a new Late-Night pilot program to:
 - Offer longer hours of public transportation for nighttime workers
 - Support the restaurant and entertainment industries
- MBTA service was extended from the usual 12:30am closing time until 2:30am on Friday and Saturday nights/early mornings
 - All subway and trolley lines
 - The Silver Line
 - 14 Key Bus Routes
- In June 2015, Late-Night service was cut back to a 2am closure time, and service was eliminated on the five least-used bus routes (the 15, 22, 71, 73, and 77)



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Current Service - Negative Impact on

Maintenance

- Late-Night operation reduces critical time for system maintenance
 - Reduced access to tracks and right-of-way for maintenance
 - Usual five hours of system maintenance (approximate) is reduced to three hours of system maintenance on early Saturdays and Sundays
 - The FMCB has charged the MBTA to prioritize system maintenance and upgrades; maximum overnight access to tracks and right-of-way is crucial to meeting maintenance goals



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Current Service - Low Ridership

- Ridership has been low relative to overall MBTA ridership
 - 16,000 average nightly Late-Night riders (over 120 minutes) at launch
 - 13,000 average nightly Late-Night riders (over 90 minutes) by December 2015

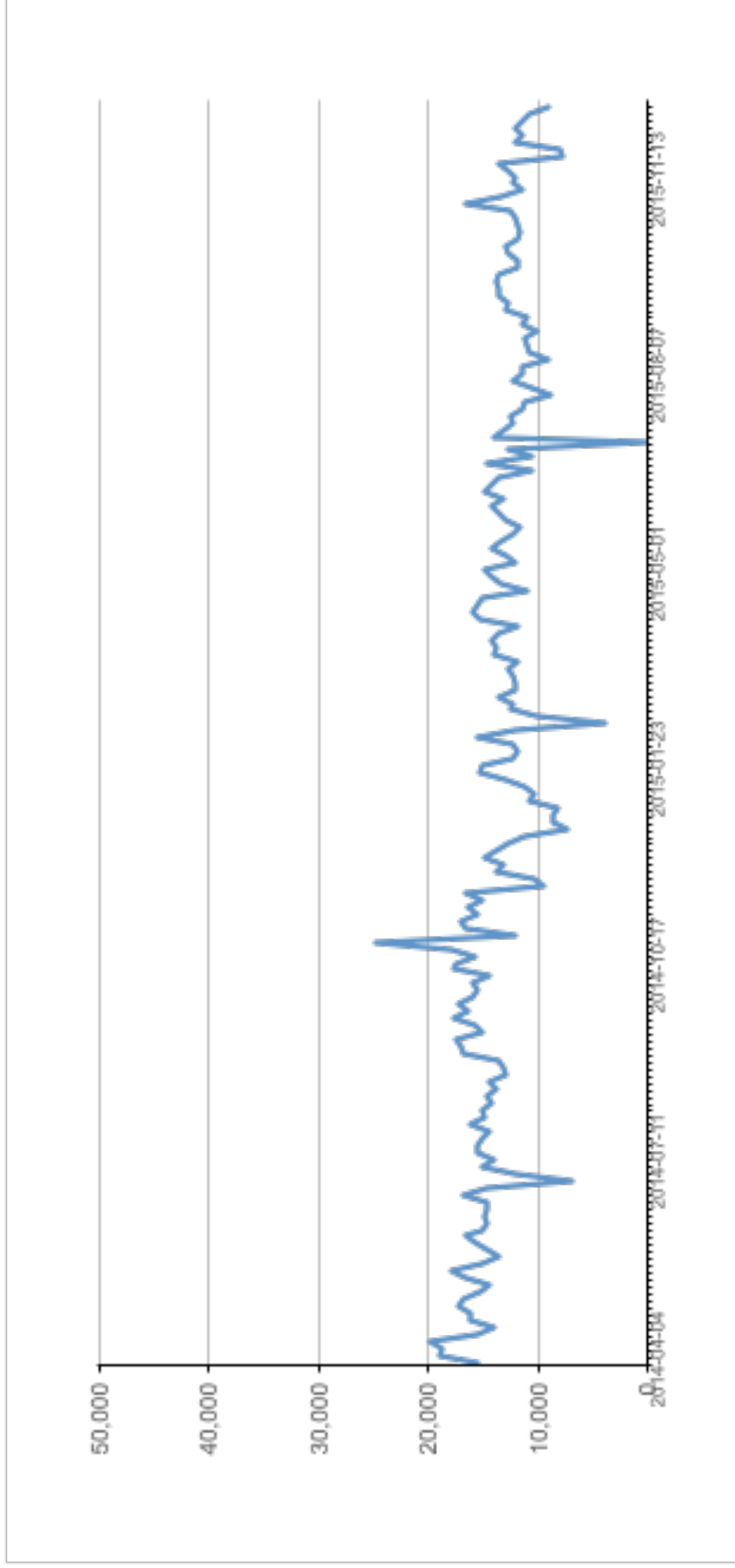
Comparisons

- Ridership during the 5pm weekday hour is 72,711
- Ridership during the 3pm Saturday hour is 33,271
- Ridership during the 5am weekday hour is 14,562
- Two nights/week of 90 additional minutes of T service offers an insufficient transportation alternative for many third-shift workers

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Declining Ridership





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Current Service - High Costs

- Operating costs are high relative both to ridership and to the costs of non-Late Night MBTA service
- Private contributions to support Late-Night service were time-limited and insufficient to meaningfully offset operating costs; anticipated contributions to sustain service did not materialize
- Late-Night service has been removed from the proposed FT2017 MBTA operating budget, resulting in a direct savings of \$9 million



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Public Input

- The MBTA held three public meetings, which 80 people attended
 - January 19th at 10am - Boston
 - January 19th at 5pm - Boston
 - January 20th at 6pm - Cambridge
- The T also received 272 comments by email, phone, and social media



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Public Input

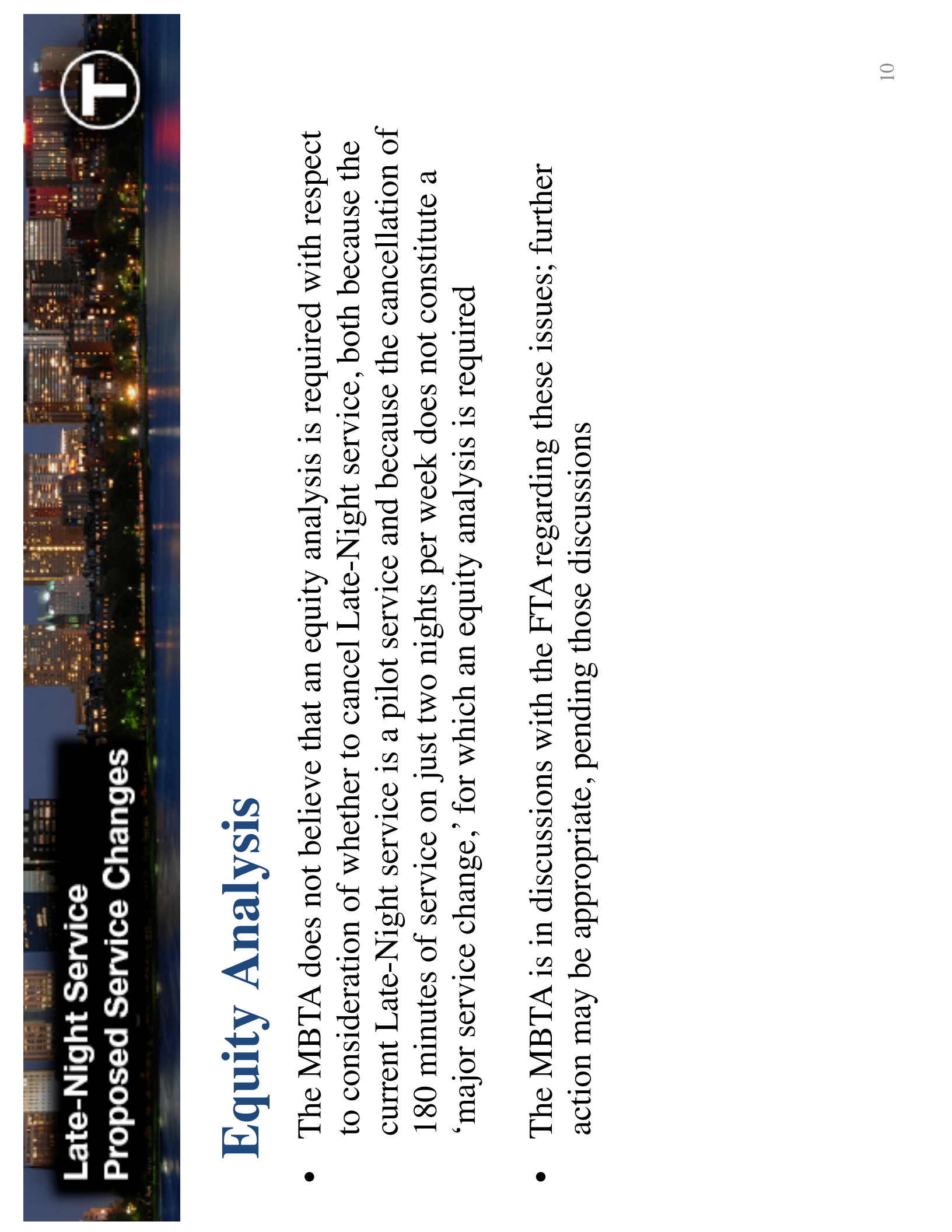
- Most comments were supportive of maintaining Late-Night service for the following reasons:
- Offers an affordable transportation option for late-night employees
- Is a perceived safer alternative to walking and taxis
- Reduces impaired driving
- Provides economic benefits by making Boston attractive to tourists and people who want to stay out late
- Supports the entertainment and restaurant industries
- Provides late-night access to Logan Airport for employees and travelers



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Public Input - Recommendations

- Some commenters provided ideas for preserving Late-Night service:
 - Charge higher fares
 - Increase private/institutional sponsorships
 - Reduce service
 - Increase ridership through more advertising of the service
 - Require universities to subsidize



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Equity Analysis

- The MBTA does not believe that an equity analysis is required with respect to consideration of whether to cancel Late-Night service, both because the current Late-Night service is a pilot service and because the cancellation of 180 minutes of service on just two nights per week does not constitute a ‘major service change,’ for which an equity analysis is required
- The MBTA is in discussions with the FTA regarding these issues; further action may be appropriate, pending those discussions

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Conclusions

- Late-Night service inhibits the ability of the MBTA to meet its goals for maintaining its tracks and rights-of-way
- Ridership is low and declining, but is popular with some (as shown by the public comments)
- At only three additional hours per week, Late-Night service does not provide meaningful transportation for workers
- Due to the overall fiscal situation of the MBTA, the T must prioritize investment in core services; accordingly, the T cannot continue to subsidize Late-Night service to such a significant extent due to the failure to attract both significant third-party funding and high ridership



Service Change Options

1. To cancel the current Late-Night service in mid-March
2. To continue the current Late-Night service, with or without further service changes
3. To cancel the current Late-Night service, but to instruct MBTA staff to continue working with respondents to the Late-Night service RFI to see if a privatized, less-subsidized alternative can be developed