



**Massachusetts Bay  
Transportation Authority**

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# **Commuter Rail Zone Study**

**Update and Policy Questions**

**June 10, 2019**



## Overview

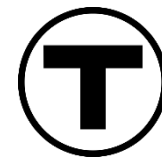
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### Goals of presentation

- Outline Commuter Rail Zone study topics and timeline
- Get policy input

### Outline

- Legislative mandate
- MBTA fare policy background
- Key policy questions
- Timeline



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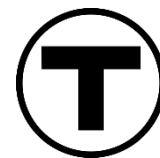
## Bill H.4828 - An Act Relative to Commuter Rail Fare Rates

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The Massachusetts Department of Transportation shall complete a comprehensive review and study of the current methods utilized to set fare rates on the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority commuter rail. The study shall include, but not be limited to, an examination of:

- (i) the fairness and equity of the current distance based fare system that utilizes fare zones;
- (ii) pricing based on track distance from the terminal station;
- (iii) the impacts of commuter rail fare price on passengers' transportation choices, considering frequency of service, travel time and parking costs, between commuter rail, motor vehicle transportation, public bus and subway service;
- (iv) the potential for lower interzone fares to encourage ridership outside core central stations;
- (v) the potential for discounted fares for riders in gateway cities or similarly situated municipalities;
- (vi) the potential for utilizing a variable pricing system based on the time of day; and
- (vii) the impact on any of these changes on fare revenue.

To complete the study, the department shall utilize, to the extent possible, updated passenger counts at all commuter rail stations for the most recent calendar year, including data collected using an automated passenger count system from all commuter rail cars. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority shall use the outcome of the study and the data collection to inform fare policy decisions. The department shall submit a written report of its findings, including recommendations, with the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives, the senate and house committees on ways and means and the joint committee on transportation not later than **March 15, 2020**.



## MBTA fare policy background

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MBTA fare policy is to balance revenue, ridership, and equity.

### **Current Policy for fares by mode**

Commuter Rail fares (outside Zone 1A) > Rapid Transit > Bus fares

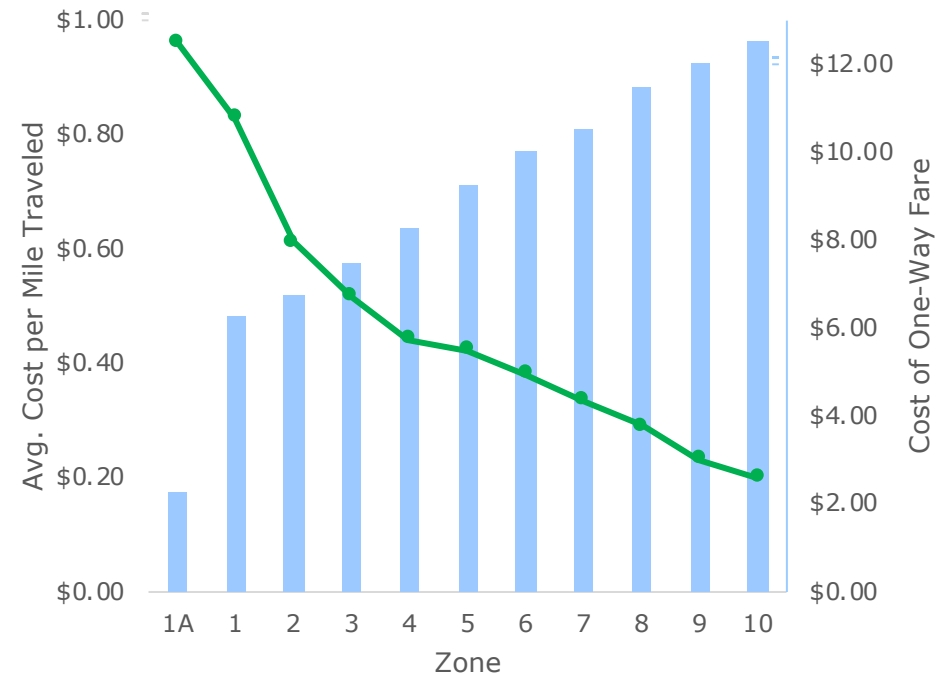
### **Current Policy Principles for Commuter Rail fares**

- Distance-based fares using zones
- Pricing based on track distance from terminal station
- Lower interzone fares to encourage ridership outside central stations (Zone 1A)
- Rapid Transit fare for trips within Zone 1A



## Problems with existing structure

- High jump in fare from Zone 1A to Zone 1
- Some inconsistencies in Zone based on track distances
- High fares from/to non-CBD Zone 1A stations discourage ridership because interzone fares don't apply
  - Examples
    - » Chelsea (Zone 1A) to Lynn (Zone 2) = \$6.75
    - » Newtonville (Zone 1) to Boston Landing (Zone 1A) = \$6.25
- Inconsistency in where Zone 1A is parallel to rapid transit stations





## Policy framework

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### **Commuter Rail currently has three types of fares:**

1. Commuter service fares to Zone 1A
2. Interzone fares outside of Zone 1A
3. Rapid Transit fares for trips within Zone 1A

### **Key Problem**

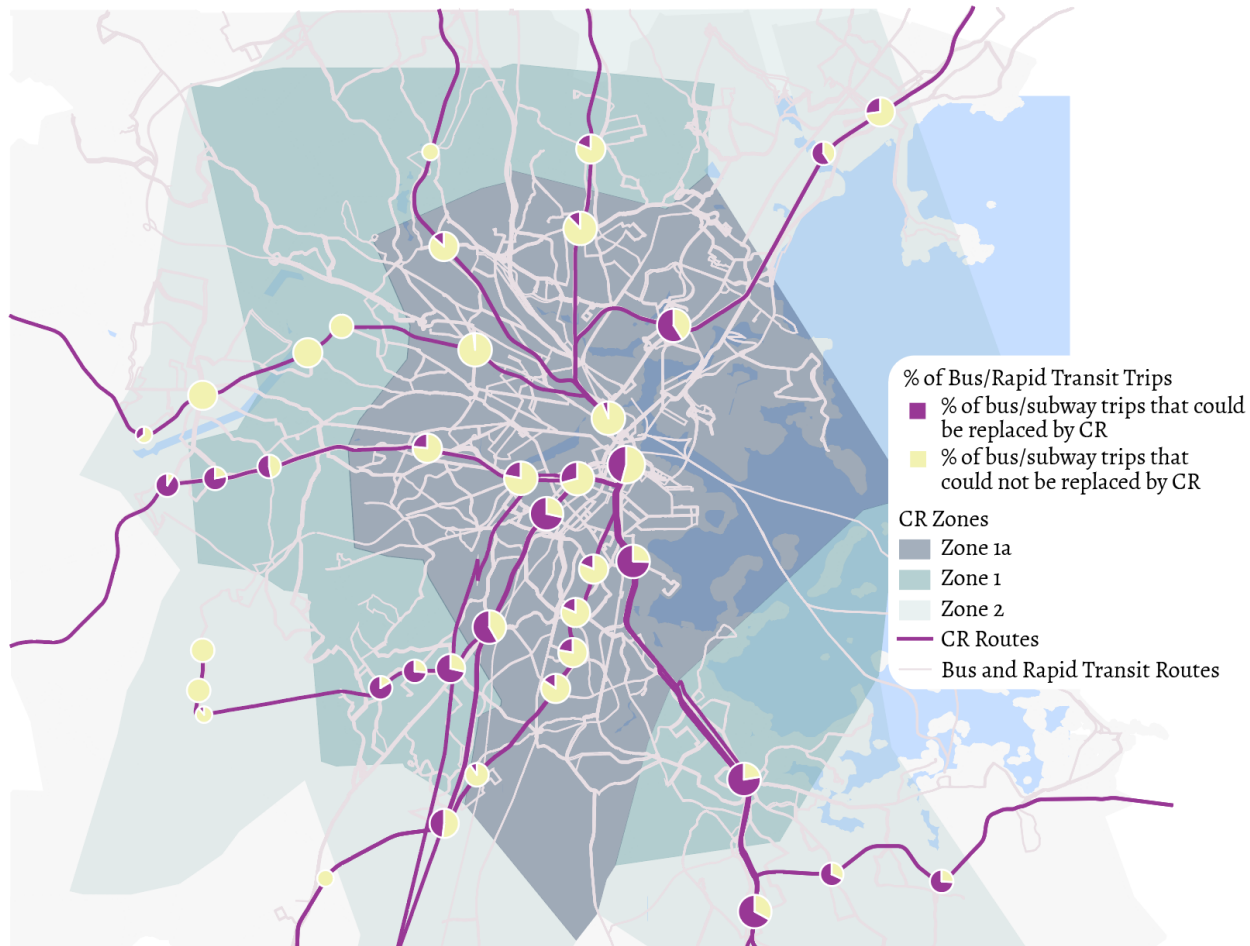
Zone 1A is serving two purposes: where to charge rapid transit fares and full fares to Central Business District

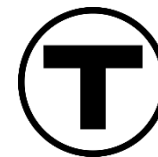
### **Questions**

1. Should we explore new structures that serve these two purposes separately?
2. In what geographic area should commuter rail fares be the same as rapid transit fares? Should we have higher fares for higher-speed service where parallel to other MBTA service?

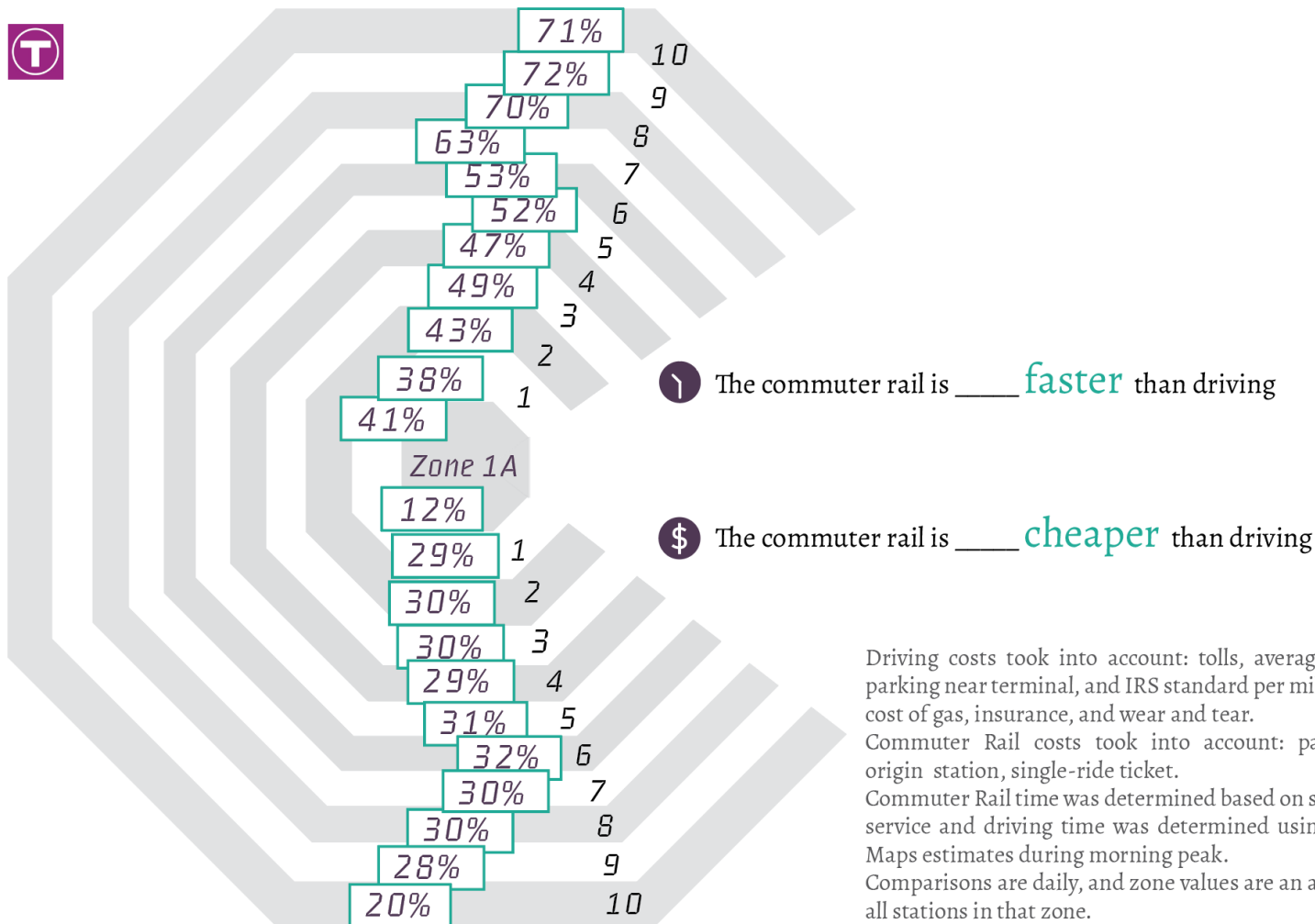


## Evidence of substitution between Commuter Rail and Bus/Subway





## Commuter Rail is competitive with driving to terminal stations



Driving costs took into account: tolls, average cost of parking near terminal, and IRS standard per mile rate for cost of gas, insurance, and wear and tear.

Commuter Rail costs took into account: parking at origin station, single-ride ticket.

Commuter Rail time was determined based on scheduled service and driving time was determined using Google Maps estimates during morning peak.

Comparisons are daily, and zone values are an average of all stations in that zone.





## Opportunities for changes

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### Opportunities with Automated Fare Collection (AFC) 2.0

- Transfers to the rest of the system
- Lower fares to increase off-peak or off-direction ridership where existing capacity
- Ability to rethink zone structure and relationship between interzone and full zone fares

#### **Initial AFC 2.0 implementation**

- Transfers
- Off-peak fares
- Limited zone changes

#### **Larger AFC 2.0 fare structure changes**

- Rethink zone structure

#### **Rail Vision implementation**

- Fares to align with service model



## Timeline

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Today: Policy input

Summer 2019: Continue analysis

Fall 2019: Finish ridership and revenue model

October 2019: Present possible scenarios to model to FMCB

Winter 2020: Determine revenue impact of possible scenarios

Spring 2020: Report back to FMCB, finish report

March 15, 2020: Submit report to Legislature