MBTA Late-Night Service
Proposed Service Changes
Public Meetings - January 2016
Meeting Purpose

• The MBTA Fiscal and Management Control Board has recommended that Late-Night service be discontinued due to low ridership and high costs

• This meeting is an opportunity to present the public with information on the challenges of running Late-Night MBTA service and to seek public comment on eliminating the current Late-Night service and/or providing lower-cost alternatives

• Additional information and ways to comment are available on the homepage of the MBTA website: www.mbta.com
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 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)
Context: T Operating Budget Pressures and Late-Night Costs

• MBTA projected operating budget deficits are large, growing, and unsustainable
  – FY2017: $242 million deficit
  – FY2018: $335 million deficit
  – FY2019: $391 million deficit
  – FY2020: $427 million deficit

• Overall operating cost for Late-Night service is $14 million per year

• Private contributions to support Late-Night service were time-limited and insufficient to meaningfully offset operating costs; anticipated contributions did not materialize
Late-Night operation reduces much-needed hours for system maintenance

- Reduced access to tracks and right-of-way for maintenance

- Usual five hours/night of system maintenance (approximate) is reduced to three hours/night of system maintenance on early Saturday and Sundays

- The MBTA is prioritizing system maintenance and upgrades; maximum overnight access to tracks and right-of-way is crucial to meeting maintenance goals
Findings - Low Ridership

• Ridership has been low relative to overall MBTA ridership

  – 16,000 average nightly Late-Night riders (over two hours) at launch

  – 13,000 average nightly Late-Night riders (over two hours) 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 two additional hours of T service likely offers an insufficient transportation alternative for many third-shift workers
Findings - High Costs

• Operating costs are high relative both to ridership and to the costs of non-Late Night MBTA service

• Late-Night requires a per-passenger subsidy of $13

• MBTA service during regular hours requires a subsidy of $1.43

• The net cost of providing Late-Night service is $19 million annually

• The net marginal cost of providing Late-Night service is $14 million annually
Conclusions

• Late-Night service makes it difficult for the MBTA to meet its goals for maintaining its tracks and rights-of-way

• Ridership is low and declining

• The MBTA must economize in order to invest in core services

• The cost of Late-Night service, relative to the demonstrated ridership, is unaffordable for the MBTA

➢ The MBTA Fiscal and Management Control Board – responsible for stabilizing and strengthening the finances of the MBTA – has directed that Late-Night service in its current form be eliminated
Service Change Options

1. For the MBTA to eliminate current Late-Night service with no subsidized replacement, leaving the provision of late-night trips to taxis and ride-sharing services

2. For the MBTA to issue a Request for Proposals to solicit private providers to operate a modified Late-Night service requiring a substantially less expensive MBTA subsidy
Equity Analysis

- The MBTA and the Central Transportation Planning Staff have conducted a federally required equity analysis to try to determine whether the cessation of Late-Night service will have a disproportionate impact on minority and low-income riders relative to non-minority and non-low-income riders.

- Initial conclusions indicate that the cessation of service will disproportionately impact minority and low-income riders.

- Due to the age and limitation of the available data, the MBTA is concerned that the results of the analysis may be incorrect.

- Nevertheless, the MBTA is seeking public suggestions for lower-cost alternatives to the current Late-Night service and/or mitigation measures that could benefit minority and low-income riders.
Next Steps

• Further review the results of the equity analysis
  – Collaboration with the Federal Transit Administration
  – Develop a mitigation strategy, if needed

• Compile public input and comments and present that information to the MBTA Fiscal and Management Control Board
  – Interested in your ideas and feedback

• The Fiscal Management and Control Board will vote on whether and/or how to continue Late-Night service.
To Provide Comments

Email: latenightservice@mbta.com

Web: www.mbta.com

Phone: (617) 222-3200

TTY: (617) 222-5146

Mail: MBTA Late-Night Service Committee
10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116