



CITY OF BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
THOMAS M. MENINO

January 27, 2012

Secretary Richard Davey
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Secretary Davey:

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) provides absolutely critical services to Boston residents, commuters, and visitors. As the transportation hub and economic engine of the region, Boston is uniquely affected by the state of our public transit system. I understand the difficult decisions facing the MBTA. Many administrations have simply passed the buck onto the next administration – and now the MBTA must find a way to operate with an enormous structural deficit. However, riders should not be forced to shoulder the entire weight of this debt, and I am deeply concerned about the MBTA's current proposal to increase fares and reduce services.

Many T riders have indicated that they would rather accept modest fare increases than lose access to critical transportation routes, but I am concerned that some riders face a disproportionate burden. The two scenarios propose to double the cost of passes for seniors and students, representing an increase of 100 percent. While some fare increase may be necessary, elders and students are typically on fixed budgets. Elderly riders may be forced to choose between daily essentials and the ability to leave their home, visit family and friends, and be active members of society. In addition, we must make sure our transit system continues to serve people with disabilities. I applaud the MBTA for all of the work being done to make stations more accessible, but the RIDE should maintain its current level of service for those with the most severe disabilities who are unable to use the fixed route system. While I realize that the current paratransit system needs reform, I encourage you to explore more cost effective modes of transporting disabled passengers rather than cutting services or denying eligibility. Potential options are to contract with taxicab companies for those with less severe mobility impairments, and offer travel training programs for people with disabilities who are unfamiliar with the accessibility improvements made in recent years.

I am most concerned about the proposed elimination of services under both scenarios. I strongly oppose the cuts to bus routes proposed in Scenario 2, which would eliminate 101 routes, including 33 that service Boston neighborhoods. My understanding is that many of these routes experience high ridership and eliminating them would make public transit virtually inaccessible for thousands of Boston residents who do not have alternate modes of transportation. I also strongly urge you to reject the proposal to eliminate the bus routes (#275 and 276) that service the homeless shelter on Long Island. Homeless shelters in Boston already serve a statewide constituency with limited resources. These two bus routes transport approximately 300 guests per day to the shelter and other programs on the island, and another 200 guests from the Pine Street Inn. Unfortunately, the unique nature of the passenger base, weight limits on the bridge, off hours service, and the geographic location of Long Island may present challenges in getting a reliable vendor to assume operations of these routes. This again underscores my point that bus service, in many cases, is not an alternative mode of transportation but the only mode of transportation for many riders. Eliminating these routes would shut off our most vulnerable population from essential services at a time when they need it the most. I know when you accompanied me on my annual Homeless Census in 2010 you saw firsthand that this could be a matter of life and death for some people.

Eliminating services would dismantle Boston's transit system and significantly diminish our ability to foster economic development, smart growth, and a sustainable environment. Both scenarios propose to eliminate E-Line and Mattapan trolley service on weekends. The E-Line is a major transit mode for many of Boston's educational, cultural, and medical institutions. In the Longwood Medical area alone, more than 18,000 students, 44,000 employees, 2.2 million patients and 3 million visitors rely on E-line services. Also, the Mattapan line is often the only option for many low-income residents who work evening or weekend shifts and do not have any other reliable forms of transportation. Eliminating these trolley lines result in a savings of merely \$1.5 million, which is less than one percent of the MBTA's one-year deficit. While every bit of savings is important, these cuts will negatively impact our regional economy, especially alongside the proposed elimination of commuter rail service on nights and weekends.

Economic development in Boston is thriving along the city's waterfront, and ferry service is critical to our region's long-term growth. We launched an innovation strategy for the South Boston waterfront, and made it a hub for new jobs and new products and services. More than 90 new companies have located there, bringing 2,800 jobs. It's also home to the largest privately-financed construction project in the country – the new home for Vertex. Opportunities for growth in East Boston represent another half a billion dollars of development, and the Charlestown Navy Yard continues to flourish. Eliminating inner harbor transport yields only \$500,000 in savings but is estimated to cause 100 layoffs. Both inner and outer harbor water transit is ripe for growth, not cuts; as we pursue these new areas of development. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to ensure its availability now and for the future.

As an alternative to fare increases and service reductions, I am eager to work with you, Governor Patrick and the legislature to identify solutions that will address the long-term fiscal deficit at the MBTA. Transportation Reform has allowed the Commonwealth to operate much

more efficiently, but we also need a targeted investment in our entire transportation infrastructure. Despite the severity of the current proposal, it represents a one-year band aid. We are in desperate need of a dedicated revenue source and immediate action is needed to identify sustainable funding for the MBTA. I have long supported efforts to increase the gas tax and am very willing to discuss other revenue options as well. I also hope you consider efforts that may help relieve some of the Big Dig-related debt load that has been unfairly saddled on the MBTA.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues. I hope that we can continue to work together to ensure a reliable and sustainable public transit system. I applaud your willingness to listen to the public through community forums and respectfully request that you schedule an additional meeting in Allston-Brighton to ensure that voices are heard across the City of Boston. If you would like to further discuss these issues, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. You can also reach Jennifer Cruickshank in my Office of Intergovernmental Relations at (617) 635-4478 or Commissioner Tom Tinlin at the Boston Transportation Department at (617) 635-3073.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas M. Menino", written over a horizontal line.

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor of Boston

cc: Governor Deval Patrick
Senate President Therese Murray
Speaker Robert DeLeo
General Manager Jonathan Davis
Boston Delegation