

Resolution

To our Members of the Massachusetts General Court,
Governor Baker

RE: MBTA service cuts, aka “Forging Ahead”

Whereas...

- The MBTA has cut service frequency temporarily for many bus and rail routes, citing low ridership during the pandemic;
- The MBTA simultaneously suspended service on at least nine bus routes, leaving some underserved areas without good transit alternatives;
- The MBTA has a history of never reinstating suspended routes;
- Expected savings from MBTA service cuts made during the pandemic total only about \$21M in the current fiscal year
- Federal pandemic assistance for the MBTA totals nearly \$2 billion within the last twelve months;
- To date, the MBTA has put most of its federal pandemic-related funds into its capital budget or held funds for post-pandemic operating costs
- Members of the Massachusetts congressional delegation have expressed significant concern that federal funding has not been allocated to reversing these cuts¹
- ~~Commuter rail conductors are subject to permanent furloughs in a precarious economy exacerbating same;~~
- Overcrowding on some extant routes has already been documented since the service reductions, which as it continues will discourage ridership worried about COVID transmission;
- These cuts affect thousands of lower-income residents, who depend on public transit, including a disproportionate number of people of color, non-English speakers, and people with disabilities—precisely those most impacted by the pandemic and resulting recession
- Unreliable or infrequent transit pushes users to seek alternatives, many of which have greater impacts on our environment, on our public budgets, and on household expenses;
- The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) noted in its comments to the MBTA that these cuts have a direct impact on the Commonwealth’s need to produce more housing, and without transit, new housing will increase sprawl;
- Congestion is already increasing on highways into Boston as the region slowly returns to work;
- To fight climate change and recover from the pandemic, access to public transit must be increased, not decreased;
- The MBTA Fiscal and Management Control Board has voted to restore service as soon as possible, although the MBTA is constrained in its capacity to do so;

Therefore:

¹ https://edition.pagesuite.com/popovers/dynamic_article_popover.aspx?artguid=8f3389e6-147c-4c7f-b0af-2704dca774ae&appid=1165

We ask our representatives and senators in the General Court to join us in demanding the MBTA reverse the “Forging Ahead” cuts and restore service to pre-pandemic levels as soon as possible, and to enact legislation to fund MBTA operations and capital investment to support public transportation service that is critical to economic recovery.