



THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

March 29, 2021, via email

Re: 68 Bus in Cambridge

To the MBTA Fiscal Management and Control Board,

We write to once again express our objection to the elimination of the 68 bus in Cambridge and to respectfully request that this service be restored as quickly as possible.

While we recognize the COVID-19 pandemic caused the MBTA's Fiscal Management and Control Board (FMCB) to approve a number of service cuts as part of the so-called "Forging Ahead" process, the recent passage of the federal American Rescue Plan means the MBTA will be getting another massive infusion of financial support. In total, the MBTA is expected to receive over \$2 billion in pandemic relief. For comparison, all of the recent service cuts are expected to save an overall total of \$21 million through the end of the current fiscal year.

Public transit is a public good, and clearly, there is now ample financial support from both the federal government and the Commonwealth to sustain a return to pre-pandemic service levels. We are thankful that the MBTA announced last week that it will provide funding for pre-COVID service levels on bus and subway lines in the FY22 budget, and we want to highlight and emphasize the need to restore the 68 bus in Cambridge as overall service levels are restored in the coming months.

The 68 bus starts in Kendall Square and runs along Broadway up to Harvard Square and back. However, what's most important about the 68 are all of the stops and neighborhoods it passes as it makes its way along Broadway. As the bus leaves Kendall, it passes through the Port and Wellington-Harrington neighborhoods in Cambridge. This puts it in very close proximity to the Newton Court and Washington Elms public housing projects and the Port Landing affordable housing building. The 68 bus also passes by the Squirrel Brand building and Squirrelwood apartments, and it stops directly at the George Close building — all of these properties are home to substantial quantities of deed-restricted affordable housing.

The Port neighborhood in particular is among the most diverse in Cambridge. **In fact, the diversity index for the Port shows that the Port is home to highest proportion of Black residents as compared to all of the other twelve neighborhoods in Cambridge**¹. The City has also documented notably higher rates of poverty in the Port and in the Wellington-Harrington neighborhoods as compared to other parts of the city². For these reasons, we feel the elimination of

¹ See "2019 Neighborhood Profile," published by the City of Cambridge, pages 63-69, *available at* https://www.cambridgema.gov/~media/Files/CDD/FactsandMaps/profiles/demo_profile_neighborhood_2019.aspx (showing that the Port's diversity index, when comparing Black residents to residents of all other races, is 0.32; the next highest figure is 0.20, and the citywide average is 0.19).

² See "Cambridge Needs Assessment," published by the City of Cambridge, pages 27-29, *available at* <https://cambridgecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Cambridge-Needs-Assessment-20170123.pdf> (showing that the individual poverty rate in the Port is 21%, which is tied for highest in the city; the Wellington-Harrington poverty rate is 19%, which is above the citywide average of 15%).

the 68 bus raises serious economic justice, racial justice, transit justice, and environmental justice concerns. **It is important to note how this line connects some of our most disadvantaged and marginalized communities to major civic destinations, such as the City Hall Annex, the main branch of the Cambridge Public Library, the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS) complex, and other social services.**

To be sure, we very much appreciate that the MBTA is currently running two trips on the 68 bus line on weekdays to accommodate the needs of students going to and from CRLS. Furthermore, we appreciate that the T has been working closely with the City of Cambridge to monitor the needs of students and any changing schedules at CRLS. However, we respectfully suggest that the equity interest in restoring the 68 bus extends beyond the level of service that is currently being offered.

At present, the MBTA suggests that riders of the 68 bus consider the Red Line, the 69 bus, or the 64 bus as alternatives. However, due to the unique pattern of the street grid in this area, these alternatives are not very helpful. For many residents of the Port, the walk to either the Central or Kendall Red Line stops is more than half a mile away, as is the walk to the 69 bus on Cambridge Street. And while the 64 bus does cover some of the stops we've lost with the 68, it turns on Prospect Street before reaching any of the important civic landmarks in the vicinity of the main public library and CRLS. In short, Broadway is too important of a corridor to not have full public transit service.

As the FMCB now looks to build back the MBTA service budget and transit schedule with the help of federal funding, we are once again respectfully asking you to consider the equity and transportation justice concerns of this particular route, which uniquely connects some of Cambridge's most racially and economically diverse neighborhoods with some of our key civic landmarks and government buildings.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours in service,



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