

Statement and Call to Action on Potential MBTA Service Cuts

30+ Supporting Organizations Listed Below

In the wake of COVID-19 the MBTA is facing a \$300-\$600 million shortfall in the fiscal year that begins July 1st, 2021. Public transit has been a critical lifeline throughout the pandemic, allowing essential workers to get to and from their jobs and enabling thousands of people to access health care, grocery stores, and economic opportunities—it has kept the economy moving, even as many people continue to stay home. Transit is *essential* now, and robust transit service will be *critical* to the economic recovery of the Commonwealth.

Our broad and growing coalition is calling on decision makers to take action *now* to ensure the MBTA has the proper resources to protect rider and employee safety, keep transit moving, and bolster the state's long-term economic recovery. Cuts to transit service could not be coming at a worse time, and the damage caused by service reductions could take years to reverse.

We urge the MBTA's Fiscal and Management Control Board and MBTA leadership to make the following commitments:

- 1. Make no permanent or long-term decisions regarding service, especially potential cuts, before the legislature concludes its current session.** Taking action before the end of the year would mean doing so without a meaningful, robust, and equitable process—especially when the proposed service cuts will dramatically impact lives and livelihoods. There is also continued uncertainty around how and when ridership will return, what that ridership will look like, and what financial resources, if any, will be available from the federal government in 2021. For the foreseeable future, to allow for adequate physical distancing, the MBTA should continue to run increased service over fall 2019 baseline conditions—with operational flexibility where it is most needed. Service changes should not pit riders of one community against those of another. Where scheduling modifications make sense due to changes in ridership, service cuts should only be made if service can be quickly re-deployed to support lines and modes where ridership has proven resilient during the pandemic.
- 2. Advance affordability for all transit riders.** MBTA bus fares have increased by 300% since 1991, more than double the rate of inflation. Asking riders to pay more will put an added

financial burden on transit-dependent individuals and households. This is especially true now, when the most consistent ridership is based in communities hardest hit by the pandemic. Rather than raising fares, which will negatively impact riders who need public transit most, now is the time to expand opportunities for affordable mobility through implementing policies such as a means-tested fare program.

- 3. Ensure critical transformative capital investments, climate justice, and air quality improvements move forward in 2020 and 2021.** Stalling vital projects like the Better Bus Project, fleet electrification, modernizing bus maintenance facilities, Rail Vision and Regional Rail, and upgrading infrastructure to be resilient to a changing climate won't solve the MBTA's short-term budget shortfall. Continuing to invest in these important initiatives will help build a 21st-Century transit system and advance the Commonwealth's air pollution and greenhouse gas emission goals.

We urge the Legislature to make the following commitment:

- 4. Sustainably fund transit in the short-term and long-term.** The Legislature must step-up with additional resources for the MBTA and transit statewide. Long before the pandemic, our transit systems were chronically underfunded. The MBTA needs immediate support—but it also needs more than a short-term fix. In its current session, the House and Senate must advance a balanced revenue package that provides our transportation system statewide with dedicated revenue to keep transit moving and get our economy back on track.

We must ensure that our transit authorities provide *enough* service to allow riders and essential workers to maintain physical distancing during the pandemic. We caution against increasing fares and making permanent service cuts that will reduce service for essential workers as we continue to fight COVID-19, and will take years to reverse. The Legislature and the MBTA must support recovery today, be prepared for the return of riders in 2021, and be there for all residents of the Commonwealth when we return to the robust, dynamic state we had pre-pandemic. Even those who do not regularly ride the MBTA benefit from a transit system that reduces pollution and congestion, supports our economy, and keeps our neighbors, caregivers, and loved-ones safe. Decision makers must recognize the essential nature of transit service and act accordingly.

Supporting Organizations

A Better City
Alliance for Business Leadership
Action for Equity
Allston Brighton Health Collaborative
Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE)
Boston Cyclists Union
Chelsea Collaborative
Community Labor United
Conservation Law Foundation
Environmental League of Massachusetts
Green Justice Coalition
GreenRoots
Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP)
International Association of Machinists District 15
Kendall Square Association
League of Women Voters of Massachusetts
LivableStreets Alliance
Massachusetts AFL-CIO
Massachusetts Public Health Association
Massachusetts Senior Action Council
MASSPIRG
MassBike
Massachusetts Sierra Club
Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition (MFFC)
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Transportation for Massachusetts (T4MA)
Transportation Working Group of 350MA
WalkBoston
Transit Matters
United for a Fair Economy, UFE