



TRANSITMATTERS

July 31, 2017

Dear Chairman Aiello, Secretary Pollack, General Manager Poftack and Board Members:

I write on behalf of TransitMatters to formally support the proposed overnight bus proposal, known as “NightBus,” which may consist of both late night and early morning bus transit service solutions. We have been working hard on this issue since the moment the announcement was made to discontinue the previous late night service. We are extremely grateful for the consideration of the FMCB and the many hours that the MBTA staff and our co-sponsors have already committed to this project. We are also inspired by the support this proposal has received from the business community, industry groups such as the Massachusetts Restaurant Association, organizations like the Barr Foundation, whose hard work in the best interest of this region is so well known, and elected officials acting in the best interest of their constituents.

There are many reasons why this service should be adopted by the MBTA, chief among them being the demonstrated need by disproportionately low-income members of our region. Our 24/7 economy relies in many ways upon the hard work of residents who are increasingly squeezed by rising housing costs. During the day, this demographic is heavily reliant on transit service, specifically bus service. Overnight, these would-be riders are forced to spend precious portions of their budget on alternative transportation or forgo their employment opportunity. Some workers reported that they have no alternative but to travel while the T is open, meaning they arrive hours too early for work or wait for several hours after their shift for the first bus in the morning. It is understandable that these workers would be very hard-pressed to be present at a daytime FMCB meeting to voice their support, but the data gathered by the MBTA and our co-sponsors proves that they exist and that there is a latent demand for this service. The people who need the service most regularly – and most dearly – should figure prominently in your consideration of how to move forward.

Further, I would impress upon the board the outsized value that the region will derive from this service. For a fraction of the cost of the prior weekend late night service, our region could have a 24/7 transit system for the first time in living memory. It is hard to overstate the type of impact this service can have on our city, provided that it conforms to the preferences laid bare in the collected data and known principles of effective transit: the service should be relatively frequent, reliable, legible, proximate to demand, provide timed connections, and should be integrated into the existing MBTA fare regime. Like any trustee of public resources, the FMCB must be a wise steward. Part of this responsibility means recognizing that some higher subsidy portions of our system and services have outsized value because they make the whole network more useful. For example, far fewer peak hour riders would use the T regularly if they couldn't also rely on it

when they occasionally have to ride it during lower ridership parts of the day. Similarly, overnight and early morning service can be thought of as part of the overall cost of having a useful, equitable system. Thankfully, the cost of overnight bus service will be relatively low, and will have a negligible impact on the average per rider subsidy of the system or on the MBTA's multi-billion dollar budget.

We look forward to a night when residents can take the T to their necessary overnight destinations. We ask that you direct the MBTA to move forward with the next steps of specific route and service planning.

Sincerely,



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