



# mass.transit

NUMBER 10

WINTER 1989

## Commuter Rail Fares Go Up; Subway Fare Increase Next?

MBTA commuter rail riders will pay higher fares this spring -- up an average 26% for one-way tickets starting March 1, and 24% for monthly passes starting with the April pass. (For details of the new fares, see "Car-Free Update" on page 4.) The T has also proposed raising rapid transit (subway) fares by 25%, from 60 cents to 75 cents.

The commuter rail fare hike was announced by the T on November 10 -- two days after the presidential election and less than six weeks after MBTA General Manager James O'Leary was quoted in the Boston Business Journal as saying that commuter rail and subway fares would stay steady "for the foreseeable future."

Yet the foundation for that fare increase was actually laid in December 1987, when the MBTA Advisory Board cut the T's 1989 commuter rail subsidy. The Advisory Board consists of mayors, selectmen, and their designees, from the MBTA district's 78 cities and towns. The Advisory Board must approve the MBTA budget each year, and it can cut or delete any item.

The budget approved by the Advisory Board is the subsidy; it does not include revenues from fares or from sources such as parking, advertising, or real estate leases. When the budget is cut, the T can either cut service, improve efficiency, or increase revenues. In this case, the Advisory Board recommended a revenue increase.

MBTA officials at first said they would charge a \$1.00 parking fee at commuter rail stations, where parking is now free. But on

November 10, the T announced its plan to hike all commuter rail fares by 50 cents.

At the public hearings in December, many people said that a 50-cent, across-the-board increase was not equitable; riders in inner zones (who usually can't get seats) would pay 40% more while riders from further away would pay just 11% more. The MBTA Board did make some adjustments; actual new fares range from 40 to 75 cents higher, or 17 to 32% more; and Zone 1B fares did not go up at all.

The process followed by the T in hiking commuter rail fares raises some disturbing questions. Why was the MBTA in such a hurry, when it had almost a year's notice that revenue would have to go up? Why was there no real planning? Why did the T choose a simplistic approach without evaluating alternative fare structures? And what happened to the proposed parking fee?

Testimony at the hearings raised issues such as ridership impacts, traffic impacts, alternative revenue sources, and relationships between commuter rail fares and other transit fares. But these do not appear to have been studied by the T.

By contrast, for the proposed subway fare hike, the MBTA has agreed to an environmental review, which will address issues such as ridership and traffic impacts. The public will be able to help determine this review's scope and to comment on the review, which will be for the state Environmental Affairs Office.

Public hearings on the subway fare hike will be at Quincy City Hall on Mon. Feb. 27, in Boston at 10 Park Plaza on Tues. Feb. 28, and at Malden City Hall on Wed. Mar. 1, all from 3:30 to 7:00 PM.

## Cape Cod Trains Dead?

The Cape Cod & Hyannis Railroad's popular trains from Braintree to Hyannis, which have operated for the last five summers, may not return this year. No subsidy for the trains was included in the state budget submitted by Gov. Dukakis in January. The railroad's owner, Mark Snider, subsequently said he is going out of business and selling the line's equipment. He indicated he might reconsider if funds become available.

Last year the railroad carried 89,000 passengers on the Boston-Hyannis route.

## A.P.T. Annual Meeting March 22

Will public transit be the solution to Boston's transportation problems? Andrew Hamilton, staff scientist at the Conservation Law Foundation, will discuss Gridlock in Boston at A.P.T.'s annual meeting on Wednesday, March 22, 5:30 PM at 10 Park Plaza, Conference Room 1, 2nd floor, in Boston. Admission is free and the public is invited. For more information, call A.P.T. at 547-3332.

## Commuter Rail, High Speed Trains: Will South Station Have Room?

By any standard, commuter rail has to be an MBTA success story. Over the last five years, ridership has grown at an average 20% a year, and it shows no signs of slowing. As soon as new cars or trains are added, they fill with riders.

In response to growing demand, the MBTA has greatly expanded service and is planning even more expansion. (See article below.) If all the talked-about extensions actually happen, Boston's commuter rail system could grow from 258 miles to 446 miles. Up to 90% of this growth will occur on South Station routes, where mileage could nearly triple. Besides these new services, more trains will also be needed on existing lines.

South Station is also used by Amtrak intercity trains, and it would be the terminus for high speed rail service to New York. Fast, hourly trains on this route have been proposed as a way to reduce Logan Airport congestion, and they would attract thousands more travelers to South Station every day.

This growth in rail travel has aroused concerns that South Station itself might not be capable of handling the traffic which will come to it in future years. One study has warned that at South Station, "both commuter and intercity operations in the year 2000 will require the utmost in discipline."

The irony is that, when it was built in 1900, South Station was America's busiest

rail terminal, handling over 800 trains daily on 28 tracks. Just a decade ago, the station still had 16 tracks. But ridership then was at its all-time low, so planners for the new South Station Transportation Center included only 11 tracks.

This year is a crucial time for Boston's future rail operations, because at both North and South Stations, architects are now drawing up plans for air rights developments to be built over the tracks -- a sports arena at North Station; a bus terminal, offices, and a parking garage at South Station. Designs for these projects will set each rail station's maximum capacity for the next century.

But is the MBTA a transportation agency or a real estate developer? If, as it seems, the T's quest for real estate profits is coming at the expense of Boston's future transit options, then the MBTA's priorities have become reversed.

It is essential that South Station plans be modified to accommodate more tracks, which will almost certainly be needed for both commuter and high speed rail services. North Station plans also need careful examination. Ridership figures should be estimated to err on the high side, perhaps radically so.

It would be a bitter consequence indeed if short-sighted transportation planning now were to thwart our need for high quality rail service in the 21st century.

## Commuter Rail Extensions Under Consideration

The MBTA is now working on plans for two commuter rail extensions:

The Old Colony Commuter Rail project will restore rail service to the South Shore from South Station. At Braintree, the route will split into three branches: the Greenbush Line to Scituate via Weymouth, Hingham, and Cohasset; the Plymouth Line via South Weymouth, Abington, Whitman, South Hanson, Halifax, and Kingston; and the Middleborough Line via Holbrook/Randolph, Brockton, and Bridgewater.

North of Boston, plans call for extending the Ipswich Line to Rowley and Newburyport.

State funding for both the Old Colony and Newburyport projects was passed last year by the legislature, and the MBTA hopes to obtain 50% federal funding for the Old Colony lines. Although the Old Colony project has received vocal opposition, polls and referenda show it is supported by a large majority of residents in each town it would serve.

The T is also studying the feasibility of several other commuter rail extensions:

\*\* The Stoughton Line to Easton and Taunton, and possibly to New Bedford and/or Fall River;

\*\* The Franklin Line to Milford;

\*\* The Needham Line, via a branch from Needham Jct. to North Bellingham; and

\*\* The Framingham Line to Worcester.

Finally, transit advocates in Nashua NH have suggested extending the Lowell Line to the state line in Tyngsborough MA. A study by the Nashua Regional Planning Commission estimates that a station near Nashua would draw 380 to 530 riders daily, making it one of the 10 busiest commuter rail stops north of Boston.

But no clear funding source appears to be available for this extension. The MBTA has said that New Hampshire must pay the entire cost, even though the study shows that the best station site is in Massachusetts, just across the state line from Nashua.

### Short Items...

Construction on the new Green Line subway at North Station, originally planned to start this winter, has been delayed by planning for the sports arena to be built behind existing Boston Garden. The subway is now planned to open in 1994 or 1995.

In a related matter, MBTA Construction Director Peter McNulty writes A.P.T. that "no such plans have been made ... to terminate the present Green Line service between Causeway St. and Lechmere" during subway construction. However, a draft MBTA report says just the opposite. Some clarification appears to be in order.

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The MBTA recently commissioned a study of trackless trolleys for the long-delayed Washington Street replacement service. The T is proposing that the electrically-powered buses operate from Dudley Sq. in Roxbury, via Washington St. in the South End and an unused subway tunnel in the Theatre District, into Boylston and Park St. stations, where riders could transfer to subway lines for free.

\*\*\*\*\*

The remodeled JFK/UMass Red Line station has two inbound platforms; overhead lights in the upstairs mezzanine show where the next inbound train will arrive. The light comes on at least a minute before the train comes into the station -- time enough to walk downstairs like ladies and gentlemen, rather than having to run down to the train. Good job!

\*\*\*\*\*

Compliments go to Vermont Transit for its winter timetable brochure, which features an attractive, easy-to-read format and a color-keyed map of the company's routes.

New "Type 7" streetcars can now be used on the Green Line-B (Boston College), because electrical circuits have been upgraded to supply additional current required by the new cars. Construction work continues, in order to permit future use of 3-car trains.

\*\*\*\*\*

Help for Green Line riders is on the way from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The MBTA is cooperating with MIT Civil Engineering Professor Nigel Wilson on a research project to examine existing Green Line operations planning and operations control procedures, and to develop new procedures for the T's use.

\*\*\*\*\*

Following up on last issue's article on Red Line service, the MBTA indicates that a recent study recommends specific maintenance facility expansion and construction for the line, and another consultant has been chosen to study propulsion system failures in the older "01400" cars. To maximize car availability at peak hours, some maintenance staff have been moved to the night shift.

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The last issue of "Mass. Transit" incorrectly stated that the proposed Old Colony commuter rail would not serve Braintree. The commuter trains will offer express service from Braintree to South Station.

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A.P.T. members, and others who are interested in public transit, are encouraged to attend our monthly board meetings, which are usually held in Kendall Sq., Cambridge, on a Wednesday at 5:30. Please call 547-3332 or write to us for dates and location.

## Join Us!

Mass. Transit is published quarterly by the Association for Public Transportation, Inc. (A.P.T.), a non-profit tax-exempt organization founded in 1973 to encourage the use and improvement of public transit in Boston. We support transit because it is ecologically sound, because it is less disruptive of neighborhoods, and because it is the only transportation available for many people.

We also publish "Car-Free in Boston," the guidebook to public transit in greater Boston and New England.

A.P.T. depends on donations from its members and friends to continue its activities. Membership is \$15 a year, or \$5 for students and persons on fixed incomes. Members receive Mass. Transit, as well as a copy of the next edition of "Car-Free" when it is published. All contributions are tax-deductible.

We welcome your ideas, comments, letters, and articles on transit issues. Please send them to Mass. Transit, c/o A.P.T., P. O. Box 192, Cambridge, MA 02238.

### Association for Public Transportation, Inc.

P.O. Box 192, Cambridge, MA 02238

I'd like to join A.P.T. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of \$15.00 (\$5.00 for students and persons on fixed income)..\$\_\_\_\_\_

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ copies of "Car-Free in Boston" @ \$3.95 ea. (\$3.00 for members); plus \$1.25 postage per order.....\$\_\_\_\_\_

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A.P.T.'s guidebook "Car-Free in Boston" contains complete listings of all Boston-area transit services. "Car-Free" is sold at bookstores and newsstands, or use the mail order coupon in this newsletter. Below are transit service changes since Update #9 in November. For a copy of Updates #8 & 9, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to A.P.T.

- Red Line                   JFK/UMass station is now a stop for all trains, both Ashmont and Braintree branches.
- Green Line               Night construction now complete; regular train service at all times.
- Green Line-B            (Boston College). Sunday service temporarily operated by buses between Kenmore and Boston College.
- T-Bus 78                 Now operates Arlington Heights-Harvard via Park Circle Mon.-Fri. until 6:00 pm; Arlmont-Harvard via Park Circle nights and weekends.
- T-Buses 441/442        (Marblehead-Haymarket). Some rush hour trips now serve Swampscott commuter rail station.
- Harbortrans Ltd.       (Long Wharf-Charlestown Navy Yard). New service, 13 trips daily.
- Andre Coachlines       (Newton Corner-Framingham). Same service as former Marathon Line route. (Boston-Milton), from Copley Sq. and South Sta. via SE Expwy, E. Milton Sq., Pleasant St., Reedsdale Rd., Brook Rd., Blue Hill Pkwy., Quisset Brook, Robbins St., Blue Hill Ave. New service, 1 rush hour trip.
- Interstate Coach       (Boston-Middleboro). Now operates on weekends also.
- Kennedy Library Shuttle (JFK/UMass-Kennedy Library). Operates approx. every 10-15 min.
- Marathon Line           (Newton Corner-Downtown Framingham) now operated by Andre Coachlines. Reminder: (Boston-Framingham-Worcester) now operated by Peter Pan.
- McGregor-Smith        Now operates additional rush hour trips on all routes: Boston-Haverhill, Boston-Newburyport, Boston-Amesbury-Seabrook NH.
- Peter Pan                (Boston-Southbridge). Now operates 4 trips daily.
- Plymouth & Brockton   (Boston-Plymouth Center). Sat. & Sun. service discontinued.
- Priority Express        Reminder: (Boston-Framingham, express) now operated by Peter Pan.

----- **COMMUTER RAIL FARE INCREASE** -----

Zone	One-Way		Monthly		Zone	One-Way		Monthly		
	Old	New	Old	New		Old	New	Old	New	
1A	.60	.60	\$22	\$22	6	2.50	3.10	\$79	\$ 96	One-way fare increase is effective March 1; monthly pass prices go up for April passes. Surcharge for paying fare on train (if a ticket office is open) goes up from 25c to 50c on March 1.
1B	.75	.75	22	22	7	2.75	3.35	84	102	
1	1.25	1.65	40	52	8	3.00	3.60	89	108	
2	1.50	1.90	48	61	9	3.50	4.25	94	114	
3	1.75	2.25	56	70	10	4.00	4.75	99	120	
4	2.00	2.50	65	80	11	4.50	5.25	104	126	
5	2.25	2.75	74	90						

Car-Free<sup>(R)</sup> is a registered trademark of the Association for Public Transportation, Inc.



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