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State Financial Situation Threatens Some MBTA Services

After improving and expanding service for nearly a decade, both the MBTA and subsidized private transit operators have had to cut services as a result of Massachusetts' continuing state fiscal crisis. The T has also had to constrain its capital spending, and further cuts may be necessary.

** Gov. Dukakis' proposed Fiscal Year 1991 budget would eliminate all off-peak and weekend commuter rail service to 23 stations, including Gloucester, Lowell, and Attleboro. Riders on the remaining rush hour trains to these stations would have to pay a 15% fare increase. [See "Short Items" for a complete list of stations affected.]

** Also cut by the Governor's budget are privately-operated but subsidized bus routes

serving towns such as Marlborough, Whitman, and Bridgewater, and some rush hour trips to New Bedford and Newburyport.

** Service frequencies on 12 MBTA bus routes and 5 subsidized private routes, plus weekend subway service, were reduced in December in order to save \$853,000.

** Some subway station entrances have been closed, causing inconvenience for downtown commuters and safety worries at Alewife, where nearby residents must now enter the station through a dimly lit, isolated underpass. Several muggings have occurred near the tunnel, and commuters have fallen on ice and snow which accumulated there this winter.

** A capital spending limit imposed by the legislature has resulted in postponement of some projects, including commuter rail extensions and the new Lechmere station, and it may affect the proposed Old Colony commuter rail restoration. This spending cap may also affect new equipment purchases needed to expand service or to replace older cars.

** And of course rail service from Boston to Cape Cod was eliminated last summer.

MBTA General Manager Thomas Glynn is actively seeking ways to cut costs without cutting service. But the bottom line is that major cuts in the T budget will have direct impacts on riders. Since fixed costs cannot be cut, the only options are (1) to reduce service, (2) to reduce maintenance, thereby reducing service reliability, or (3) to cut capital spending, which will affect both the quantity and quality of future service.

[For A.P.T.'s view on this issue, see the editorial on page 2.]

T Proposes New Subway Line To Serve South Boston Piers

Although some of the real estate developments once proposed for South Boston's piers have been put on hold, the MBTA has announced preliminary plans for a new subway line to serve the Piers area.

The T's "preferred alternative" calls for the new subway to connect existing stations at Boylston (Green Line), Chinatown (Orange Line), and South Station (Red Line/commuter rail) with the new development areas across the Fort Point Channel from downtown Boston.

The T proposes to use either trackless trolleys or "dual mode" diesel/electric buses in the new subway and on the planned Washington St. replacement service. These "electric buses" would provide through service between Roxbury and the Piers, operating on the surface from Dudley Sq. to a new tunnel portal south of the Theatre District.

The MBTA proposal must be approved by the state Environmental Affairs office, and a source of funding must be found for it. But the T is eager to get approval by the end of 1990, so that parts of the transit tunnel can be built simultaneously with the depressed Central Artery.

Continued on page 3...

A.P.T. Annual Meeting Mar. 27

"Funding the MBTA in the 90's" will be the topic when James E. Smith, of the MBTA's Board of Directors, speaks at A.P.T.'s annual meeting on Tues., March 27. The meeting will be at 6:00 PM in the State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 & 3, at 10 Park Plaza in Boston (Green Line to Boylston). Admission is free and the public is invited. For more information please call 547-3332.

Transit: It's Not Just the Riders Who Benefit

Should MBTA riders pay a greater share of transit operating costs, as some legislators and newspaper writers have suggested?

It sounds logical, but higher fares would likely result in reduced ridership -- and in more cars on our highways.

Every work day, 300,000 Massachusetts citizens take the T to work, school, shop, or other business. That's 300,000 fewer cars on our roads, as well as fewer pollutants in our air and less imported oil to be burned.

The MBTA Advisory Board recently reported that if every commuter on the Red Line Braintree branch drove into Boston instead, their cars would fill all 3 lanes of the Southeast Expressway, bumper to bumper, for 25 miles -- from Boston to Hanover -- leaving no room for the people who now drive into the city! And if they made it to Boston, they would occupy nearly every legal downtown parking space.

The story is the same for every commuter rail, subway, and bus line. Employers, retailers, real estate developers -- and those who drive -- all benefit from public transit. And everyone who benefits should pay.

Rather than cutting service or just raising fares, it is time to provide secure funding for public transit, including the MBTA in greater Boston and Regional Transportation Authorities (RTAs) elsewhere in the state. We suggest starting with the gasoline tax.

There are already proposals in the legislature to raise the state's present 11 cent gas tax to 21 cents. By state law 15% of gas tax revenue is dedicated to mass transportation. This 10 cent increase would thus raise about \$48 million for Massachusetts transit.

An additional 5 cent tax, dedicated solely to transit, would generate another \$140 million, for a total of \$188 million.

But we must ensure that increased transit funding results from this added revenue. The plans for a 10 cent gas tax increase now call for all the money -- including the transit share -- to be spent on highway repairs. By making bookkeeping adjustments, transit money will be taken from other accounts, so it can be said the \$48 million is spent on transit, even though transit funding stays the same.

We also urge private sector sources to assist the state in raising transit money. Employers, for example, should offer transit subsidies as a benefit instead of parking.

Public transportation is essential to everyone's access to jobs and shopping. But for transit to work, it must provide a reliable level of service at a reasonable price.

Cutting service, or just raising fares, will make the commute more difficult for everyone, and have adverse economic impacts on everyone. We must fund our trains and buses, just as we must rebuild our roads and bridges.

Nine years ago, Massachusetts faced another fiscal crisis by drastically cutting MBTA service and tripling its fares. A quarter of the T's riders abandoned the system, and it has taken almost a decade to catch up. We cannot afford to repeat that error today.

MBTA Bus Routes Changed

On December 30, for the first time in a decade, the MBTA made major bus route changes not related to a new subway line opening. Some changes are service cuts due to budget restrictions, but others are actually service improvements. And even some of the service cuts have been restructured to offer better service for less cost.

Notable among the changes are these:

**** Direct service from Harvard Sq. to Brighton and Brookline.** T-Bus 66 now links Harvard with Union Sq., Coolidge Corner, Brookline Village, and Brigham Circle. T-Bus 86 now operates to Cleveland Circle instead of Union Sq., connecting Harvard with Western Ave., Brighton Ctr., and Chestnut Hill Ave.

**** Direct service from Mattapan to Forest Hills.** New T-Bus 31 offers a faster connection from Mattapan Sq. and Blue Hill Ave. to the Orange Line than the old T-Bus 29.

**** Direct service between Kenmore Sq., the Longwood Medical Area, and UMass/Boston.** T-Bus 8 parallels much of the route of T-Bus 47; it connects with the Orange Line at Ruggles and the Red Line at JFK/UMass.

Although the T conducted an information program through newspaper ads and handouts, some commuters appear unaware of the changes. Many Mattapan riders, for example, still get off the Orange Line at Ruggles instead of using the faster bus from Forest Hills. And a North Waltham resident told A.P.T. that, due to inaccurate signs on buses and a confusing map on the schedule card, ridership there was down despite more frequent service.

The extended Harvard-Brookline T-Bus 66 -- which has the potential to be one of the T's busiest routes -- was publicized only as a footnote at the bottom of a list of service cuts. After A.P.T. mentioned this oversight to T officials, we were told that more extensive marketing will be done this spring.

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Piers Subway ...continued from page 1

One drawback of the T's proposal is that the link between Boylston and South Station would be built last, and no timetable has been proposed for its construction. Without this segment, both the Piers subway and the Washington St. replacement service would be substantially less attractive to riders, and ridership goals could not be met.

At the same time, the introduction of a new vehicle mode to the MBTA system could result in operational and maintenance problems. Both dual mode buses and the proposed subway guideway are relatively new, untested technologies. And either kind of electric bus would need a new maintenance facility which might draw personnel and energy away from the upkeep of the rest of the T system.

Instead of electric buses, a new Green Line branch -- extending east from Boylston along the same route that the T now proposes -- might be a better idea. Such a plan would offer through service from Green Line points, including the Back Bay, to South Station, the financial district, and the Piers. And while a Green Line branch might cost slightly more to build, compatible equipment and shared maintenance facilities could mean operating cost savings and better reliability.

A.P.T. has also commented that the MBTA's estimate that 50% of the workers in the Piers developments would commute by transit is premature and unrealistic. This aim might be realized through the use of traffic and parking restraints.

Finally, communities along the Washington St. route are opposed to the T's electric bus proposals; they prefer streetcars in their neighborhoods as well.

Short Items...

Commuter rail stations which would lose all service, other than at rush hours, under Gov. Dukakis' proposed budget are: Rockport, Gloucester, W. Gloucester; Ipswich; Haverhill, Bradford, Lawrence, Andover, Ballardvale; Lowell, N. Billerica; Gardner, Fitchburg, N. Leominster, Shirley, Ayer, Littleton/495, S. Acton; Forge Park/495, Franklin; Attleboro, Mansfield; and Stoughton.

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Advocates of high speed rail service are concerned about the name of the new "Dedham Corporate Center/128" station on the Franklin Line commuter rail. The similarity in names could cause confusion for New York-bound travelers looking for nearby Route 128 Station.

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The Registry of Motor Vehicles has ceased issuing its non-driver ID cards, apparently because underage persons were using forged cards to buy alcohol. This new policy creates a disadvantage for handicapped persons and other non-drivers who need positive IDs to cash checks and for other purposes.

Bus Changes ...continued from page 2

Unfortunately, Cambridge city officials have put the stop for T-Bus 66 at Dawes Island, 2 blocks away from Harvard Sq., instead of in the square itself. And reduced night and Sunday service has discouraged both former users and possible new riders who could take this bus to classes, movies, dining, and shopping, or to jobs in those fields.

[For a list of recent MBTA changes, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to A.P.T.; for schedule info, call the T at 722-3200.]

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 major transit changes since Update #13 in November.

Note: Space does not allow listing all the recent MBTA bus service changes. Send a stamped, self-addressed long envelope to A.P.T. for more information on the changes below, plus changes to T-Buses 3, 14, 16, 33, 34E, 40, 47A, 52, 55, 58, 59, 59A, 64, 74, 75, 78, 84, 94, 96, 212, 236, 302, 304, 429, 451, and a copy of previous Car-Free Updates (#8-13).

MBTA Monthly Pass for Hingham Commuter Boat is \$136, also valid for Combo Plus services.

- Franklin Line** New station at **Dedham Corporate Ctr.**, Allied Dr. off Route 128, exit 14.
- T-Bus 8** Now operates (**UMass/Harbor Pt.-Kenmore**) via JFK/UMass sta., Boston City Hosp., University Hosp., Dudley Sq., Ruggles sta., Longwood Med. Area.
- T-Bus 29** Now operates (**Wellington Hill-Ruggles**), rush hour only. Portion between Morton St. & Mattapan discontinued; use T-Bus 28 or 31 instead.
- T-Bus 31** (**Mattapan-Forest Hills**) via Blue Hill Ave., Morton St. New route, very frequent service, daily; replaces former T-Bus 29.
- T-Bus 44** Now operates (**Jackson Sq.-Ruggles**) via Columbus Ave., Humboldt Ave., Dudley Sq. (Franklin Park service on this route is discontinued.)
- T-Bus 47** Now operates (**Central-Boston City Hosp.**). Portion between City Hosp. & Andrew discontinued, use T-Bus 10 (or T-Bus 8 to Red Line at JFK/UMass).
- T-Bus 61** (**Lexington-Waltham**). Route discontinued; use T-Bus 70A or Lexpress 2.
- T-Bus 63** (**Cleveland Circle-Central**). Route discontinued; use T-Bus 64, 70 or 86.
- T-Bus 66** Now operates (**Harvard-Dudley**) via Union Sq./Allston, Brookline Village, Brigham Circle. Frequent service Mon-Sat; every 40 min. nights & Sun. Harvard Sq. stop is at Dawes Island (Mass. Ave. & Garden St.).
- T-Bus 70A** (**N. Waltham-Central**) via Watertown Sq., Waltham/Central Sq. Replaces former T-Bus 61; connects at N. Waltham w/ Lexpress 2 to Lexington Ctr.
- T-Bus 86** Now operates (**Sullivan-Cleveland Circle**) via Harvard Sq., N. Harvard St., Western Ave., Market St. (Use T-Bus 66 to Union Sq./Allston.)
- Hudson Bus** Special buses to **Rockingham Park** depart from 12 Boston-area locations including Wonderland, Suffolk Downs, Haymarket, Sullivan, Medford Sq.
- LIFT #5** (**Framingham-Hopkinton**). Service has been restored on this route.
- Peter Pan** (**Boston-Framingham-Worcester**) local via Rte. 9 (former Marathon Line service). Now operates approx. every 2 hours (9 trips) Mon-Fri.
(**Boston-Framingham**) (formerly Priority). Some trips now serve Westboro.

Plymouth & Brockton (**Boston-Plymouth Ctr.**). Midday service discontinued.

The Providence RI intercity bus terminal has moved to 1 Bonanza Way, at I-95 exit 25, 2 mi. north of downtown, phone 401-751-8800. Bonanza buses to/from Boston stop both at the terminal and downtown at Kennedy Plaza. Logan Airport buses stop only at the terminal.

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