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High Speed Rail Advances

Recent Congressional actions will mean faster speeds for Amtrak's Boston-New York trains; but there is still no consensus about whether electrification is needed to cut the trip time to under 3 hours.

The House-passed version of the Transportation Appropriations bill includes \$16 million to purchase 4 dual-mode locomotives. These engines, similar to those now used between New York and Albany, could operate on unelectrified track north of New Haven as well as in New York City's electric tunnels. The engine change at New Haven — now scheduled for 17 minutes, but sometimes requiring up to 40 minutes — would not be needed.

The Senate version of that bill has \$125 million for track and signal improvements north of New Haven, but no funds for engines.

At a July 30 press conference, Sen. John Kerry said the final bill will probably have money for both track upgrading and dual-mode locomotives. This would mean significantly faster service within just 2 or 3 years.

Amtrak wants the line electrified, but CONEG, the Coalition of Northeastern Governors — including Massachusetts Gov. Dukakis — says that expense isn't justified. Amtrak and CONEG both propose using tilt-body cars, which could take curves at higher speeds, without causing passenger discomfort, on the existing rails. Neither of the bills now in Congress contains money for new cars.

A Swedish firm, ABB Traction, says it can electrify the line for \$150 million, and supply 60 tilt-body cars for \$200 million. But there is no money yet to accept this offer, and state officials are skeptical about ABB's electrification cost estimate.

Some track and signal improvements south of New Haven would also be necessary to reduce the overall trip time to 3 hours.

Three-hour rail service, from South Station to midtown Manhattan, would be competitive with air shuttles and could ease pressure on Logan Airport. Between New York and Washington, where 3-hour trains now operate, Amtrak has almost 40% of the market share. The Boston-New York route is just 6 miles longer than New York-Washington.

Auditorium Station Renamed In Surprise Move

Auditorium station, on the Green Line, has a new name — Hynes Convention Center/I.C.A. — because the nearby Hynes Auditorium is now called the Hynes Convention Center. The station name change was voted by the MBTA Board of Directors and took effect in April.

There was no opportunity for the public to comment on the change, but the T did ask some local interest groups for comments.

At 9 syllables and 30 characters, the new name is the longest on the MBTA system. Both riders and T employees would be better served by a shorter, more easily pronounced name — such as "Convention Center" or "Hynes."

Most T station names are just one or two words, without "Square," "Street," or other additions. The station at Logan International Airport, for example, is "Airport;" the station at Harvard University is "Harvard."

The abbreviation "I.C.A." makes the name more awkward; and it raises a question of how long the Institute of Contemporary Art will stay at its present location. A few years ago, the museum was talking about a move to another part of the city.

A new secondary name — "Newbury St." — is also on station signs, after a request by some nearby merchants. Since the Newbury St. shopping area is also served by Arlington and Copley stations, it is unclear why this particular station has received the designation.

While all traces of the old name have been removed from the station, "Auditorium" still appears on maps in every other subway station. The old name is also still used by many MBTA employees and by other Bostonians. This confuses riders who aren't familiar with the T, including guests at the nearby Youth Hostel. Signs reading "formerly Auditorium" would be a great benefit to these users.

A more troubling issue, however, is the absence of public input into the name decision. In 1985 the MBTA adopted a station name change procedure, which includes public hearings; but this process was ignored in the

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New Bus Stop Signs Are Tested by MBTA

Experimental bus stop signs, which have a map of the route, fare information, and a detailed schedule, have now been installed on 6 MBTA routes. If the signs prove successful, they may be erected throughout the T system.

The route map and schedule are printed on cardboard inserts, which can be read through a clear window in the plastic frame. When schedules change, new inserts can be placed in each sign. The signs also include the route number in braille, and the heavy-duty plastic is supposedly vandal-proof.

The new signs are at eye level, facing the sidewalk, and are in addition to the "Bus Stop/No Parking" signs already in place.

The signs are a considerable improvement over the old ones, which have no schedule information. Some, but not all, of the old signs show the route number and destination.

The new signs will, however, need regular updating as MBTA schedules change 4 times a year. As the MBTA Advisory Board recently pointed out, the T does not now have a program to review and update its bus stop signs. Many signs still stand along routes that were abandoned almost 10 years ago; others show incorrect information for routes that have been renumbered or changed.

Ironically, the new signs show Spring 1990 schedules -- which have some minor differences from Summer schedules now in effect.

A.P.T. suggests that the new sign inserts should have the season (such as Summer 1990) printed on them, so that riders can easily tell whether they are still up to date.

The T will also need to negotiate with the City of Cambridge, which is the one community that, until now, has not permitted the installation of MBTA signs. T stops in Cambridge are marked instead with city "No Parking" signs, with "Bus Stop" in small print.

Look for new signs on these T-Bus routes:

- 11 City Point-Downtown Crossing via Bayview.
- 30 Mattapan-Roslindale.
- 52 Dedham Mall-Watertown via Newton Centre.
- 110 Wonderland-Wellington.
- 112 Wellington-Maverick.
- 236 Quincy Ctr.-South Shore Plaza via Braintree.

With the new signs, potential riders can tell at a glance where the bus is going, when it operates, and how much it will cost. By making it easier to use the T, the new signs should attract increased ridership.

Commuter Rail News Briefs

MBTA officials are discussing the possibility of weekend service cuts on all commuter rail lines starting October 1. Service on some lines may be cut by up to 33%.

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The one-way fare experiment on the Lowell Line has been a success, the T claims, saving \$50,000 in operating costs. A similar trial began July 30 on the Framingham Line, with one difference -- Framingham fares will be collected on outbound trains only. Since inbound trains are free, the outbound one-way fare will be twice the old fare. Twelve-trip tickets will be punched twice; monthly pass users will see no difference.

* * * * *

A new station at South Attleboro (Exit 2A off I-95, on the Rhode Island state line) was opened on July 30. The station, with parking for 500 cars, is served by all rush hour and all Saturday Attleboro Line trains, and by some midday and night trains. Opening of the station was delayed for almost 2 years due to disagreements over the design of platforms to provide access to all commuters.

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The design of an access platform has also been a source of problems at Salem. Because the platform was built too far from the other station facilities, commuters who wait under the station's shelter have to run a dash to catch their train. Also, the most convenient pedestrian approach to the platform is via the auto entrance, which has no sidewalks.

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New services for commuter rail riders include newspaper recycling barrels and express monthly pass lines at North Station, South Station, and Back Bay Station. Pass buyers can drop off a check at a designated window in the morning, and pick up their pass in the afternoon, with a shorter wait in line.

* * * * *

Special commuter trains to sports events and concerts have been profitable for the T, and more of them are operating this summer. "Fenway Flyer" trains to weekend Red Sox games run on the Attleboro, Fairmount, Franklin, and Framingham lines, with weeknight service from some Framingham Line stations. Trains are also being run to Foxboro Stadium concerts, and will operate to Patriots games when the season begins in the fall.

On the other hand, special Sunday trains on south side lines during the 1989 Christmas shopping season (and Saturday trains on the Framingham Line) lost more than \$86,000, and they will probably not be operated this year.

Ferry Service Update

Employees (and new owners) of Bay State Cruise Co. merit congratulations for rescuing that company's popular boats and services. Mismanagement by a previous owner had led the company into bankruptcy; hard work by crewmembers convinced a bank to let them buy the boats and reorganize the line.

The new company operates most services of the former Bay State Cruises, including Provincetown, Nantasket Beach, and Harbor Islands cruises, with new service to Thompson Island. Discontinued are the luxury, high speed boats to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, which caused the old company's financial problems.

A new commuter ferry serves Chelsea and North Shore residents. The ~~Winnisimmet~~ Ferry sails to Rowes Wharf from a park and ride lot on Marginal St., near Routes 1A, 16, and 1. Rush hour boats are every 30 minutes; there is some midday service. Call 800-660-1631.

Another new commuter boat quit service in July after just 2 months. Harbor Trans Ltd. ended its Boston-East Boston run due to low ridership. Unanswered phones and a lack of signs at the Boston dock may have contributed to the line's demise. This is Harbor Trans' second attempt at running a commuter ferry.

Several boat line owners were quoted recently in the Boston Business Journal on the need for subsidies to keep their operations afloat. The Hingham and Charlestown commuter boats are a success thanks to MBTA dollars; but the popular Airport Water Shuttle is now losing money since its Massport subsidy was ended on July 1.

A.P.T. News

The 7th edition of A.P.T.'s guidebook "Car-Free in Boston" will be released in late August. The price will be \$4.95 in stores or \$6.20 by mail. All A.P.T. members will be sent a free copy.

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.

Auditorium ...continued from page 1

Auditorium renaming. In fact, the first public notice that a new name was planned was the announcement of the final decision.

After A.P.T. complained about the lack of public process, MBTA General Manager Thomas Glynn indicated that the 1985 procedures were no longer effective. If this is true, then new procedures should be adopted.

The T also claims that no further station name changes are anticipated within the next 5 years; but in fact, name changes will be needed, for example, when the New England Aquarium moves to Charlestown.

Over the last decade, the T has received several requests to change station names -- some approved, and some rejected. The nature of these requests shows that institutions see MBTA station names as a form of free advertising. In order to balance this tendency, the views of the commuting public must be heard. A defined process is needed to ensure an opportunity for public comment, and to increase public awareness of name changes.

Join Us!

Mass. Transit is published 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 and Car-Free Updates, as well as a copy of the next edition of "Car-Free" when it is published. Contributions in excess of \$5 per person per year 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)...\$ _____

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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 #14 in February. For a copy of Updates #8-14, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to A.P.T.

- Attleboro Line New stop at South Attleboro, see article on page 2.
- T-Bus 78 (Arlmont-Harvard). Rush hour buses operate (Park Circle-Harvard) only; see T-Bus 84 below.
- T-Bus 84 (Arlmont-Alewife). Rush hour service restored, every 30/17 minutes.
- Harbor Trans Ltd. All service discontinued until further notice.
- Winnisimmet Ferry (Boston-Chelsea). New service, sails from Rowes Wharf; see article on page 3 or call 800-660-1631.
- ABC Bus (Boston-Providence), local. Departs from South Sta., call 401-353-2100.
- American Eagle (Boston-New Bedford). Friday only, direct service to Billy Woods Wharf, through tickets to Martha's Vineyard via Cape Island Express Line ferry.
- Andre Coachlines (Boston-Milton). Service discontinued.
- Bonanza New phone number: 720-4110. New terminal at Back Bay Sta., see below.
- Braintree Livery (S. Weymouth-Braintree). New service, replaces Weybus Blue Line, rush hour only, every 30-40 minutes. Call 848-6511.
- C & J Trailways (Boston-Portland ME). New service, 8 trips daily from Peter Pan Terminal and Logan Airport. Call 426-7838 or 800-258-7111.
- Carey's (Boston-Hingham). Service discontinued.
- Concord Community New phone number: 508-369-1538.
- Gray Line (Logan Airport-Back Bay hotels). Service discontinued.
- Logan Express Now operates (Logan Airport-Braintree) instead of (Logan Airport-Quincy Adams). Parking lot at Forbes Rd. off Rt. 37, exit 6 from Rt. 128/I-93.
- McGregor-Smith Now known as "The Coach Company"; no change in service or phone numbers.
- Weybus All service discontinued; for commuter bus see Braintree Livery Service.

PLEASE NOTE: Effective immediately, Car-Free Updates will no longer be a regular feature in this newsletter. Separate Car-Free Updates will be mailed to all A.P.T. members. For more details, see the next issue of this newsletter.

Summer Sizzler Returns

The MBTA's Summer Sizzler pass special is offered again this year. On weekends in July and August, any T pass -- even the Local Bus pass -- is valid anywhere on the MBTA system, including all commuter rail lines. On Sunday you can bring a friend along for free, too.

Car-Free^(R) is a registered trademark of the Association for Public Transportation, Inc.

Bus Terminal Changes

Bonanza and Englander now stop at Back Bay Station, on the Dartmouth St. side, instead of the Greyhound terminal. Plymouth & Brockton and Brush Hill now stop in Park Sq. beside the Four Seasons Hotel, as well as at South Station and the Peter Pan terminal.



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