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How Will the MBTA Deal with the Central Artery/Tunnel Project?

MBTA Looks to System Expansion Despite Lack of Funds

How will the MBTA get people to where they're going when the city is under construction? How will the MBTA deal with Central Artery/Tunnel Project? The MBTA's stated goals for getting through the next eight years are to ensure passenger safety, maximize joint construction activities to save money, and mitigation during construction. Widely perceived as most critical, the need for "mitigation during construction," in an era of fiscal austerity, could finally force the MBTA to increase ridership through marketing, public information, and other low-cost means.

However, the MBTA's idea of mitigation during construction is expanding the system, a heavy commitment of money the MBTA does not have now and probably won't have in the foreseeable future. The MBTA is counting on new-equipment purchases, expansion of the commuter rail network, a large increase in parking lots and parking-lot size and extensions of rapid transit lines to increase ridership during the Central Artery construc-

tion period.

But critics argue that many of the proposed projects are actually commitments made by others for the Central Artery/Tunnel project. They say there has been no analysis to determine if the projects are

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cost-effective and would be successful in increasing ridership. Skeptics say that there is no schedule to prioritize projects, and the hard reality is that there may be no realistic way to fund the majority of projects on the boards.

Ridership increased in the 1980s, in part due to the Red Line extension, the relocated Orange Line, and a massive com-

muter rail expansion, but the MBTA has often been accused of having a "home run" mentality—all or nothing. System expansion instead of system management. While plans for long-range capital-intensive expansion projects are talked about, details on how the MBTA will keep people using the system; manage crowds displaced from stations closed temporarily; disseminate information better; and make the MBTA an attractive alternative to driving are seldom mentioned.

During austere economic times when funds for transit are tight, the MBTA's goal should be to maximize ridership on the existing system; then it can evaluate proposed transit projects for their cost-effectiveness and prioritize them, and resist external pressures to advance projects without merit. Planning new lines and stations that may not ever get built cannot be done at the expense of real ways of getting people around tomorrow.

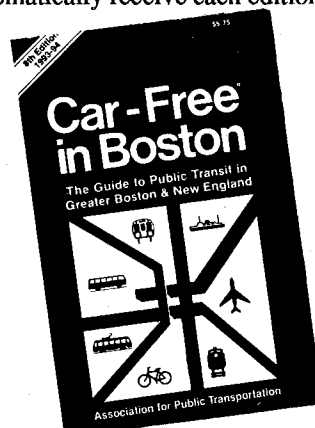
New Edition of "Car-Free in Boston" Available Transit Guide in Expanded Eighth Edition

"Can I get there without a car?" The answer more often than you think is "yes!" Find out how to get around without a car with the eighth edition of *Car-Free in Boston*, just published by the Association for Public Transportation (APT)! Available at newsstands, convenience stores, supermarkets, and bookstores in the Greater Boston area, this expanded, 170-page edition for 1993-94 contains information on over 300 transit routes; listings for hundreds of cities and towns, museums, parks, arenas, schools; telephone numbers for transit companies, airlines, and recreation areas; detailed, easy-to-read maps of neighborhoods and more.

Since the first edition was published in 1977, *Car-Free* has sold over 150,000 cop-

ies. *Car-Free* retails for \$5.75 and is available directly from APT for \$7.00 (includes shipping and handling). APT members automatically receive each edition of *Car-*

Free (see page 4 for membership information). For copies, send \$7.00 in check or money order to APT, 95 Berkeley St., Suite 633, Boston, MA 02116.



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Central Artery Tunnel Emergency Response Plan

Imagine you are traveling through the new depressed Central Artery in 2007. You are near Rowes Wharf. Traffic is heavy. Ahead, a large truck is carrying a load of plate glass. Suddenly, the truck swerves to avoid a car. There is now the equivalent of 400 broken windows in the roadway between you and the Charles River Crossing. Traffic comes to a complete halt.

Back in the 1980s and 1990s, planners had foreseen such an event. They prepared a plan and now it is put into action. A safety officer in the Central Artery operations center sees the accident through a remote camera, and identifies the problem. He or she then decides on an appropriate response and dispatches emergency equipment to clear the vehicles, sweep up the glass, and get traffic moving. These emergency response vehicles are supposed to arrive in just seven minutes and are to have traffic moving again in seven more minutes. You are once again safely on your way.

And just in time. The reason for the emphasis on rapid response to an accident is that if you had to sit in the tunnel for more than 15 minutes, the carbon monoxide (CO) levels from the automobile emissions would exceed safe levels. Thus the operations center, emergency vehicles staging area, hundreds of personnel, many with large brooms, and a staff standing by to address any problem.

When the Massachusetts Highway Department issued its emergency operations plan in June 1992, it spared no expense to ensure drivers and the Environmental Protection Agency that no one would be exposed to high CO concentrations for more than 15 minutes. Engineers can solve design or operations problems given enough money. So drivers should not be concerned about their well being in the Artery tunnel—the cameras are on, vehicles are ready, and in 15 minutes traffic will be moving.

Still, check that your oxygen bottle and mask are available...

Too Hot to Handle: MBTA Locks In Heat on Buses

The summer of 1992 was one of the coolest on record—hardly the weather needed to convince skeptics that the \$4 million spent on air conditioning MBTA buses was well spent. But the MBTA spent \$4 million to air-condition 200 buses and plans to spend more so all the RTS II buses will have air conditioning.

Critics of the original air-conditioning plan said that because people would continue to open the windows, the air conditioning would be ineffective. To prevent this problem, the MBTA has tightly locked the Allen wrench-keyed windows.

However, the MBTA decided to give control of the Allen wrenches to only the inspector at a route's terminus; the MBTA does not provide the driver on the bus with a wrench to unlock the windows if necessary. This has been a serious problem when the air-conditioning has broken down in the middle of a trip, leaving passengers trapped in a virtual sauna until the bus reaches the end of the run and the windows can be opened. Further, there are many instances when there is no substitute for an air-ventilated bus—urban buses can be quite close—but the driver is powerless to provide relief. The result often has been that the windows are forced open and the locks broken.

The obvious solution to this problem is to give the drivers window keys and allow them to control the climate of the buses they are in charge of. MBTA management needs to recognize that drivers must be given the means to improve passenger comfort—after all, wasn't passenger comfort the reason for the air conditioning in the first place?

Report on 1991 Fare Hike Available

The MBTA's long-awaited Draft Environmental Impact Report, (DEIR #8684) on the 1991 fare increase is available for public review and comment. Mandated by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs, the DEIR is a analysis of the impacts of the fare increase on ridership, the environment, and socioeconomic conditions.

The report also includes the Draft Fare Policy Statement adopted by the MBTA Board of Directors in May 1992. In this statement the Board declared that the MBTA shall not increase fares again before January 1, 1994, and should increase the revenue recovery ratio (the percentage of total operating costs that revenues represent) to 40 percent. The Board also declared that the MBTA should improve its marketing and public information to increase ridership; select new fare-collection equipment; and evaluate off-peak fares, reduced-rate transfers or free transfers, and a broader-base pass program. The DEIR also contains a discussion of possible alternative funding sources for the MBTA, including gas taxes, tolls, parking and driver's license fees, etc.

The Fare Increase DEIR will be reviewed by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) which will consider the

comments submitted by the public. The DEIR is available for the public to review at libraries including the State Transportation Library, at APT, and other places. Comments on the DEIR will be accepted at EOEA until October 22, 1992.

For copies of the DEIR, call the MBTA at 722-3152.

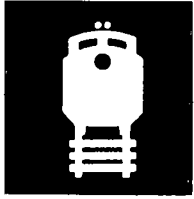
Potential Methods for Increasing Ridership:

The Fare Increase DEIR contains the MBTA's ideas and suggestions to boost ridership, including:

- Re-introduction of discounts for bulk-pack tokens
- Elimination of parking fees at commuter rail lots
- Elimination of weekend parking fees at subway stations
- Express commuter rail trains
- One-day visitors pass
- Pass-by-Phone

MBTA Projects Update

Southside Commuter Rail Extended to Include Saturdays and Sundays



As a result of the tremendous Commuter Rail patronage during the Tall Ships weekend (July 11-12), the MBTA has extended service on all Commuter Rail lines (except Fairmount) to Saturdays and Sundays on a trial basis.

Although the experimental program technically was begun the weekend following the Tall Ships, news of the improved service was almost nonexistent. To make matters more confusing, suburban newspapers printed press releases about the changes, yet Amtrak personnel knew nothing about the trial service. Schedules did not exist or were not available for weeks and there seemed to be no marketing plan to promote the new service.

Finally, weeks after the experiment began, the MBTA posted signs in the stations, distributed flyers, and began to aggressively promote the new Saturday and Sunday service. The trial weekend services are undergoing revision—for example, schedules are being made more regular—and will continue at least until December 31, according to the MBTA, at which point a decision will be made on whether to continue the service.

New Minuteman Commuter Bikeway Connects to Alewife MBTA station

With the opening of the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway, Alewife station could become an even greater intermodal facility as the terminus of the bikeway. The bikeway is an 11-mile bicycle-pedestrian path that runs from Bedford to Arlington along the former Lexington Branch right-of-way. The MBTA now has an added reason to improve the signage and bike-storage facilities at Alewife station for cyclists. Signs directing people to the bike path from the station area are non-existent and the not-so-obvious route can be hazardous to the unfamiliar cyclist.

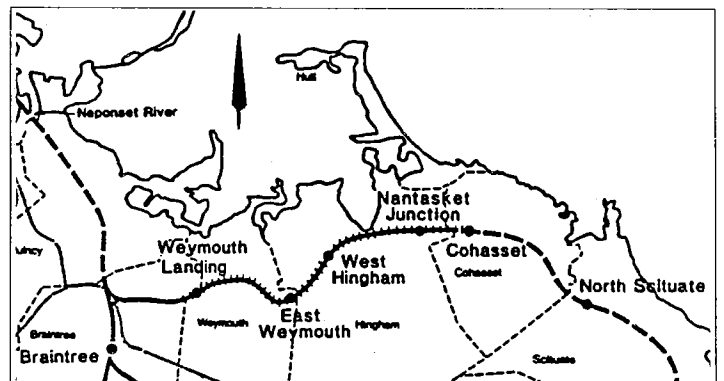
Signage for bike racks needs to be improved to let cyclists know that racks are available.

Old Colony Greenbush Branch Alternatives Under Study

The proposed Greenbush (Scituate) branch of the Old Colony Restoration will be the subject of a separate Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Report. The proposed Greenbush Commuter Rail line would include stops in Weymouth, Hingham, Nantasket Junction, Cohasset, and Scituate. The service would send Commuter Rail through historic Hingham Square. The Greenbush line was pulled out of the study of the Middleborough and Plymouth branches because of community comment and because of federal requirements to look at alternatives to avoid impacts to the historic resources in Hingham Square.

Alternatives to train service, under study by the MBTA since early 1991, include commuter boats and buses. The MBTA has also looked at a rail tunnel under Hingham Square. The supplemental environmental review will look at all the alternatives in detail, and a decision on what to do with the Greenbush branch should be made by early 1994.

Train service on the Plymouth and Middleborough lines is expected to begin late in 1996. For information on the progress of the Greenbush line, call the MBTA at 722-5835 or the public involvement consultant, Sverdrup Corporation, at 742-8060.



Source: Final EIS/EIR, Old Colony Rehabilitation Project

Proposed Greenbush Commuter Rail Line

Arborway Line South Street Reconstruction and Track Work Hit Funding Problems

A key element of the Arborway streetcar restoration plan, reconstruction of a little over one-half mile of South Street from the Monument at Centre and South streets and construction of "trolley plazas" for boarding, may be delayed due to lack of funding. The South Street reconstruction and the new trolley plazas are being designed by the City of Boston which anticipated receiving some \$5 million in federal and state funds. The South Street project has been dropped from the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a three-year program of capital improvements to the area's transit and highway systems for 1993-95. Projects listed in the TIP are those considered near-term priorities; projects not listed will not be eligible to receive federal funding.

Further, the City's consultant has proposed a "serpentine" track pattern that would shift the tracks to the trolley plazas to ease boarding and alighting. However, this proposed track layout has been criticized as presenting a hazard for both automobiles and bicycles. The Centre-South street corridor is heavily used by cyclists, and some feel that shifting the tracks closer to the curb would make an already dangerous situation on South Street worse by squeezing cyclists between the tracks and the trolley plazas.

While the design issues are being dealt with and the work on designing low-floor, wheelchair-accessible streetcars continues, the larger question of funding for the street reconstruction, a key to the restoration of streetcar service to Arborway, remains unanswered.

Short Stops...

New MBTA System Map Set for Distribution To Cost Between 75¢ and \$2.00

For the first time since 1988 a new map of the MBTA system will be available from the MBTA. The four-color map shows all bus, rapid transit, trolley, commuter rail, trackless trolley, and commuter boat routes in the MBTA's service area. New features on the map include fare and pass information and a series of detail maps of downtown and 25 transit nodes such as Brookline Village, Harvard Square, and Watertown Square.

Unlike the 1988 map, which was free, the new map will carry a pricetag of between 75¢ and \$2.00 and for the first time ever will be available at retail locations throughout Greater Boston, not just at one or two locations as in the past. The MBTA is looking at the new map as a cornerstone of its intensified passenger information program.

Originally scheduled to be out in mid-summer for the tourist season, the map is now planned to be on the street in late October.

Next Stop: Ruggles/Museum? Museum? Museum of Fine Arts?

The MBTA has slowly been changing the name of the Green Line stop on the Arborway line from Ruggles/Museum to Museum on MBTA system maps. But the signs in the stop itself have recently been changed to "Museum of Fine Arts," not simply "Museum."

The MBTA seems to be moving its station names from the simple, direct, one-word name to the longer, more complicated, hard-to-understand station names. The change from Auditorium to Hynes Convention Center/ICA and the thankfully short-lived Cambridge Center/MIT (Kendall) are glaring examples of mouthfuls.

What name change could be next? The Blue Line's Airport to General Edward Lawrence Logan International Airport/East Boston Memorial Stadium?

What is APT?

The Association for Public Transportation is a non-profit organization founded in 1973 to promote public transportation in and around Boston and advocate for improvements. APT also publishes *Car-Free in Boston*, the guidebook to public transit in Greater Boston and New England.

APT is a transit-advocacy group that depends on its members for information on how to improve transit. Becoming a member of APT gives you a voice in improving transit services. Questions or comments? Call 482-0282.

Membership benefits include:

- Copy of *Car-Free in Boston*
- Quarterly newsletter, "mass. transit"
- Meetings with guest "transit" speakers...and more!

Donations in excess of \$5.00 per year are tax deductible.

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