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Station Names and Signs Confuse, Mislead Riders

What's in a station name? It's not a silly question. Transit riders -- especially those who are new to the system -- rely on station names and signs to help find their way around the city.

Signs which have recently been installed at two subway stations, however, do not show the official station names adopted by the MBTA Board of Directors:

-- On the Orange Line platforms of **Downtown Crossing** station, there are no signs to show that this busy transfer point was once "Washington" station -- even though it is still "Washington" on many T signs and maps elsewhere. At nearby State station, for example, there are over a dozen signs for trains "To Forest Hills via Washington." Red Line conductors still announce "Washington" station aboard their trains, while their Orange Line counterparts call the station "Downtown Crossing."

According to MBTA policy, "Washington" is now the station's secondary name and should be printed on the white stripe below each "Downtown Crossing" sign -- but it is not.

-- At the new **Back Bay Station**, also on the Orange Line, stonecutters have carved the wrong name over the station's entrances. The

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Providence Trains Now Running

Commuter trains began running to Boston from Providence RI on Monday, February 1, after a 7-year absence. There are 5 weekday trains each way, including 3 rush-hour trips and an evening train leaving Boston at 8:15. A new station at South Attleboro MA will open next year.

According to press reports, over 400 commuters rode the trains on their first morning runs. Rhode Island officials are considering additional trains to allow a commute from Boston to Providence, as well as possibly extending the service to Westerly RI, 87 miles from Boston.

The How and Why of High Speed Rail

High speed rail service -- from Boston to New York in 3 hours or less -- may be the way to ease congestion, both on the ground and in the air, at Boston's Logan Airport. Amtrak's "Shore Line" trains now take 4-1/2 hours or more to make the trip; but, led by Mass. Gov. Michael Dukakis, the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG) hopes to make rail service competitive with air travel.

In the last decade, straight portions of the Boston-New York trackbed were rebuilt to 110-mph standards. But other work to speed the service was never done. Since diesel engines cannot use tunnels in New York City, today's trains must still stop in New Haven for 15 minutes to change to electric engines. More time is lost when trains slow down, sometimes to 50 mph, to negotiate the line's many curves without passenger discomfort.

CONEG planners now believe faster trains may be easier to achieve than was formerly thought. Last October, an Amtrak Turboliner train, usually used on the New York-Albany route, made the New York to Boston trip in 3 hours, 44 minutes. No engine change is needed for the Turboliner, which can also accelerate out of curves more quickly than conventional trains.

Even faster times are expected with a Spanish "Talgo" train to be tested here in April. This train has a special tilting mechanism in each car, so it can take curves without slowing down.

Both Turboliners and Talgo trains are available "off the shelf," and they are far cheaper than straightening curves or electrifying the line from Boston to New Haven.

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Arborway Decision Delayed

The final decision on the restoration of Arborway Line streetcar service, promised for January, has been delayed. The decision by the MBTA's Board of Directors is now expected by the end of March.

Editorial: Bring Back the Arborway Streetcar

Two years of study have shown what should have been obvious from the start: streetcars will provide better transit service than buses on the Arborway route from Copley Sq. to Forest Hills.

Of the seven alternatives examined by the MBTA's consultants, only streetcars would attract new riders to the transit system. By comparison, more than 1,100 transit riders would be diverted to private autos every day under any of the bus options.

Streetcar service would be faster, more frequent, and more comfortable than any of the bus options, with a lower fare and no need to transfer.

Streetcars have near-unanimous support from communities along the route -- including residents, hospitals, colleges, neighborhood councils, conservation groups, even local merchants. City councillors, state legislators, and Boston Mayor Ray Flynn have all endorsed the streetcar alternative.

In two years, only two serious arguments have been raised against streetcars. One is that existing Green Line cars are not accessible to the handicapped. This is a problem which needs to be solved for the entire Green Line, not just for the Arborway Line. Other

cities have wheelchair-accessible streetcars; and reducing service for other riders is not the way to provide access to the handicapped.

A second objection to streetcars has come from some MBTA officials who don't want to operate the line since it does not have a reserved median strip. They claim that double parked cars, higher accident rates, and snow would make the line difficult to operate. None of these complaints, however, were substantiated in the MBTA's two-year study. And Boston city officials have pledged their full commitment to parking enforcement and other efforts to keep the line running smoothly.

The Arborway line decision will be one of the most important questions faced by the MBTA's Board of Directors in several years. Their choice will show the depth of the T's commitment to quality transit service in Boston's urban neighborhoods. For a fraction of the money that it is spending elsewhere to attract new riders, the T can, and should, maintain its existing ridership base.

Only one alternative will reduce traffic congestion in Boston; only one alternative will prevent a decrease in MBTA ridership. Streetcar service should be restored to the full length of the Arborway Line.

Waiting in the Middle of Nowhere

When the MBTA dug up Summer St. in downtown Boston two years ago, T-Buses 11 (City Point-Downtown via Bayview) and 49 (Dudley-Downtown) were rerouted onto Bedford St. behind Jordan Marsh. Although Summer St. has been reopened to traffic, these buses still stop on Bedford St. -- where Boston Edison is now doing construction.

Not only are bus riders exposed to wind, rain, mud, and slush at this out-of-the-way location; they must also dodge heavy trucks

using a driveway that passes right through the bus stop. As one commuter recently remarked, "Isn't this an awful place to wait for a bus?"

T-Bus 49, which has replaced the Orange Line elevated along Washington St., is one of the city's busiest bus routes. It is time to give the rider a break, and move the stop back to its old location at the corner of Summer and Chauncy Sts.

Short Items...

"Charlie on the MBTA" is now a regular feature of each Tuesday's Boston Herald. The new column answers questions and complaints from T riders, and offers "an insiders' look at the MBTA."

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Some six-car trains have been operating during rush hour on the Orange Line since September, and a few three-car trains are now serving the Green Line's D-Riverside branch. The longer trains are intended to alleviate rush-hour crowding on these lines.

The Chinatown Neighborhood Council has agreed to support a new streetcar line to replace the old elevated Orange Line. The route, an extension of the Green Line, would use an old subway tunnel under Tremont St., extending south from Boylston station. The streetcars would come above ground near the Mass. Pike, then follow Washington St. to Dudley Sq. Chinatown residents had formerly opposed streetcars, but they agreed to the tunnel option. Except for residents in some parts of the South End, all of the neighborhoods along the line have now endorsed the streetcars.

Station Names

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signs read "Back Bay-South End," instead of "Back Bay," the official designation. "South End," the secondary name, is also showing up on maps throughout the T system; although, according to MBTA policy, it is supposed to be only on the station's platforms.

In 1985, the MBTA Board of Directors changed the names of 8 stations, including Downtown Crossing and Back Bay Station. The new names were the result of a public review process, which reflected transit riders' needs rather than the wishes of special interests. It is unfortunate that new signs and maps do not accurately show the names established by the board, and it is difficult to understand why MBTA officials did not follow the board's instructions.

Today's Charlie -- the legendary "man who never returned" from Boston's subway -- is looking for Washington station on the Orange Line.

Can You Believe It?

MBTA officials say that T-Bus 59 (Needham Jct.-Watertown) has been rescheduled to "improve coordination with Needham Line commuter rail" (see Mass. Transit #5, Autumn 1987). Under the new schedule, several bus trips leave before the "connecting" train arrives, and vice versa. * * * * *

At the State Transportation Library, a sign announces, "MBTA System Maps Available Spring 1988." These maps were promised a year ago; it has now been six years since the last T map was published.

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.

High Speed Rail

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With comparable times for a door-to-door trip -- say from downtown Boston to midtown Manhattan -- planners hope that many people will switch from air to rail. This would ease traffic, both in the air and on the roads leading to Logan Airport, and would effectively increase the airport's capacity for travelers taking longer trips.

From Route 128 Station, southwest of Boston, high speed trains to New York might be even faster than flying. By taking rail from Route 128, travelers would avoid having to drive through downtown Boston to Logan Airport, and they would be in Manhattan in less than three hours. Route 128 Station will thus play a crucial role in the success of high speed rail service.

Between New York and Washington, where 3-hour rail service is already available, 1 in every 3 travelers now rides Amtrak. In the Boston-New York market, just 1 in 8 travelers takes the train. The Boston-New York air route is one of the nation's busiest, serving more than 4 million passengers each year.

On January 19, the Boston Globe printed a letter complaining about poor lighting in the MBTA's Harvard station. The next day, a crew of electricians was on the scene replacing all of the burned out light bulbs.

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Timetables for the reopened Needham Line say that Bellevue station is at "Bellevue & Centre St." The station is really located 1/2 mile away, at Anawan and Belgrade Aves.

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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"Car-Free" Update #6

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 #5 in November. For a copy of Updates #1-5, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to A.P.T.

- Red Line** Substitute buses now operate between **Park St.** and **JFK/UMass**, after 8:45 pm Mon.-Fri., until further notice. Regular service now operates at all times between Park St. and Alewife.
- Green Line** Beginning in late March, substitute buses will operate between **Park St.** and **Kenmore** after 8:45 pm Mon.-Fri., until further notice.
- Green Line-E** (**Lechmere-Brigham Circle**). Beginning in late March, there will be no train service to Brigham Circle after 8:45 pm Mon.-Fri.; use T-Bus 39.
- Attleboro Line** Now operates **Boston-Providence RI** in rush hour and 1 trip at night.
- Fairmount Line** Now operates **South Station-Readville**, via Uphams Corner, Morton St., Fairmount. Trains operate hourly Mon.-Fri.; half-hourly in rush hour.
- T-Bus 300** (**Boston-Riverside**), express. Now operates hourly at night, via Copley Sq. and Newton Corner. (Replaces service on discontinued T-Bus 310.)
- Andre Coach Lines** Now operates **Quincy Ctr.-Hull** service formerly operated by Sea Shore Transportation. Call 524-8000.
- Kinson Bus** Now known as **McGregor-Smith**; no change in service or telephone.
- Peter Pan** Now offers seasonal service to **Stratton Mountain VT.**
- Yankee Line** (**Boston-Littleton**), via Acton. New service. One rush hour trip leaves from South Station and Copley Sq. Call 268-8890.

TELEPHONE NUMBER CHANGE: WRTA.....1-791-WRTA

TELEPHONE/TERMINAL CHANGES AT LOGAN AIRPORT:

Valley Airlines.....(new service).....Terminal A.....800-322-1008
 Hub Express.....(new phone no.).....Terminal B.....561-0519
 Continental.....(new phone no.).....(See Note).....569-8400

Note: Continental's Newark Shuttle uses Terminal A;
 all other Continental flights now use Terminal B.

The Boston Ski & Sports Club advertises a **day of midweek skiing** every Wed., leaving from Riverside (Green Line-D) to Waterville Valley or Loon Mountain NH. Call 789-4070.

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