



mass.transit

NUMBER 9

AUTUMN 1988

Red Line Problems Continue; Solutions Are Unclear

Once the smoothest-running transit line in Boston, the Red Line has earned a reputation as the worst line on the MBTA system. Commuters must often endure long waits for trains, unexplained delays between stations, and breakdowns. Problems seem to have become chronic, although there have been some improvements in recent months.

Since late 1987, 34 new Red Line cars have been delivered; and 24 more will arrive soon. The new cars allow operation of 6-car trains, with much greater passenger capacity.

The Red Line is the T's longest and most complicated rapid transit line. Unlike the Blue and Orange Lines, which have standardized fleets, the Red Line has three different types of cars. To make matters worse, the oldest cars -- the "01400s" -- come in two varieties, with G.E. and Westinghouse motors.

Framingham, Providence Services Are Changed

Boston transit riders should be aware of two major changes in recent months:

**** Buses on the Boston-Framingham route, both local and express, and on the Boston-Worcester local route via Route 9, are now operated by Peter Pan instead of Marathon Line and Priority Express. There are some schedule changes; see "Car-Free Update" on page 4 for details. Also, Marathon Line's old telephone numbers have been disconnected and "no further information is available," according to a recorded announcement. For information on these routes, call Peter Pan at 426-7838 or 800-332-8995.**

(Marathon Line still operates the Newton Corner-Downtown Framingham route; for details call 800-562-9222 or 508-756-6660.)

**** Attleboro Line commuter rail schedules have been adjusted to allow commuting into Providence, with a 7:55 AM arrival and a 5:50 PM departure from the Rhode Island capital. There are now four commuter-hour trips to and from Boston; the late evening trip has been cancelled.**

Schedule changes on other lines are described on page 4.

Thus, repair crews must know how to fix four different kinds of cars, and different parts must be kept on hand for each kind of car.

In fact, the 01400 cars -- the ones with hard bench seats -- are the most prone to breakdowns. These cars are now 25 years old, although they were all rebuilt between 1977 and 1984. A lack of regular preventive maintenance, combined with age, has been blamed for their unreliability.

Another factor is Automated Train Operation, or "ATO," a computerized signal system which has been installed on the entire Red Line. This system includes a central computer, plus a computer on each train. Train operators can manually control train speed, up to a maximum set by the computer; or they can let ATO adjust the speed automatically.

When ATO was first installed on the Red Line, it was blamed for delays and irregular operation. Today, most of the bugs have been worked out and it appears that ATO itself is not at fault.

One problem arises because the 01400 cars were built before ATO was invented. Some observers say that the new computer and the older car controls are not fully compatible, and that this has led to a high rate of motor burnouts and other troubles. The newer cars, which were designed for ATO, do not have such failures.

Because of the 01400s' many problems, the T now hopes to buy more new Red Line cars to replace them. These cars, however, would not be available until 1993 at the earliest.

Critics also say that the Red Line fleet is not adequately maintained. There is great

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Commuter Rail Fare Increase Proposed by MBTA

As this newsletter was going to press, the MBTA proposed a 50-cent fare increase on all commuter rail lines. Public hearings on the proposed increase will be held at South Station on Mon., Dec. 12, and at North Station on Tues., Dec. 13, from 3:30 to 6:30 PM.

Orange Line El Is Gone, But Replacement Service Still Up in the Air

Although the Orange Line elevated through the South End and Roxbury was closed over a year and a half ago, officials still have not decided on a permanent transit service to replace it. "Replacement service" on Washington St. was originally promised to the neighborhoods as part of the Southwest Corridor Project, but it has not yet been delivered.

Three options have been proposed: a light rail branch of the Green Line; trackless trolleys; and regular buses. The Green Line option is supported by many community residents, who say that only light rail meets the MBTA's 1973 promise that new service would be equal to or better than the old Orange Line. Under this option, streetcars would branch off of the Green Line at Boylston station, through an existing (but unused) subway under Tremont St. The line would surface south of Chinatown and cross a new bridge over the Mass. Pike; it would follow Washington St. on the surface to Dudley Sq.

MBTA officials have not said which option they prefer. Their preferred choice is supposedly included in a draft Environmental Impact Statement submitted to the federal Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA);

but UMTA has not yet approved that document for public release.

Since UMTA funds the Southwest Corridor, it will have final say over the T's decision. Under President Reagan, the federal agency has generally opposed light rail projects as too expensive; it once tried unsuccessfully to have light rail deleted as an option for the replacement line.

At a local level, the Washington Street Corridor Coalition (WSCC) is mobilizing support for light rail. Residents of every neighborhood along the line, except for one part of the South End, have now endorsed light rail.

WSCC believes that light rail, as a major public investment, would stimulate other investment in Roxbury and the South End. The old Orange Line served many of Boston's black neighborhoods, but some of these were bypassed by the new Orange Line. Thus, many black residents and business owners see replacement transit as an issue of fairness as well as transportation.

The Washington Street Corridor Coalition can be reached at 31 Lenox St., Boston, MA 02118; or call 445-1175.

Back Bay Station Ventilation Update

In response to concerns about excessive smoke on the commuter rail platforms at Back Bay Station, the MBTA has directed Kaiser Engineering, Inc. to test and evaluate the ventilation system performance.

The system is designed so fans operate continuously during daytime hours. After the evening rush hour, the fans operate on trip switches -- they are turned on when a train approaches the station and turned off as it departs.

Kaiser and the MBTA have been testing and adjusting the controls to provide maximum ventilation at the appropriate times. On the Framingham Line, additional ducts have been installed to compensate for the long tunnel under Copley Place. The MBTA is also working on locomotive location and on engine maintenance in order to reduce smoke emissions.

Recent investigations confirm that OSHA construction standards for Back Bay Station have been met. According to these studies, air quality is now adequate on all platforms. However, passengers still report that excess smoke remains a problem.

The ventilation ducts are now being re-balanced to make them more efficient in removing smoke.

Red Line

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pressure to have as many trains as possible running in the rush hour. Yet for cars to be available at peak hours, repairs must be done either between 10 AM and 2 PM, or between 7 PM and 11 PM. Additional time is required to shift the cars into the Cabot shops in South Boston. Often, there is not enough time to do needed work, so trains are kept running until they break down. By promising more and longer trains, MBTA officials may thus be making reliability worse.

Other reasons cited for Red Line problems include:

- ** lack of an operating plan to define which trips are operated by 6-car trains;
- ** inadequate operator training;
- ** lack of preventive maintenance; and
- ** repair crews' unfamiliarity with the technology used in the newest cars.

If the critics' comments are true, then Red Line commuters have a rocky road ahead. Even with all 58 of the newest cars, the T must still rely on the 01400s for at least 5 more years. And if the new trains are poorly maintained, then in a few years they too will suffer breakdowns. New trains alone will not solve the Red Line's troubles.

Short Items...

The MBTA is reportedly negotiating with the City of Boston about restoring streetcar service on the Arborway Line (Green Line-E). If a settlement is reached, streetcars might be running to Heath St. by fall 1989 and to Forest Hills (Arborway) by spring 1991.

Voters in Quincy and Braintree voted in favor of restoring Old Colony commuter rail at the November election, even though commuter trains would not directly serve their towns. The vote in Quincy was 60% in favor; in Braintree, 61% in favor. A referendum on a commuter rail transfer station to the Red Line at Braintree also won, with 51% of the votes. All three questions were non-binding.

After months of letters and protests from commuters, police officers are now directing rush hour traffic at the crosswalk in front of North Station. Commuter rail riders had claimed that the busy Causeway St. crossing, between the commuter rail station and the subway station, was unsafe. The planned new Green Line station under Causeway St. will bring a permanent solution; meanwhile, the crossing guards are welcome.

Twenty commuter bus lines and six ferry companies have joined with the Talking Phonebook and Caravan for Commuters to offer recorded information about their services. To hear the recordings, call 972-6000, then press the four-digit code for the line you want. Buses are assigned codes 7570 through 7589; commuter boat codes are 3383 through 3388. For a complete code list, call Caravan at 227-7665 and ask for the brochures "Boston By Bus" and "Boston By Boat."

Can You Believe It?

New signs have recently been installed at South Station (Red Line) pointing "INBOUND to Harvard & Alewife, via Downtown Crossing & State." The last time we checked, State was a stop on the Blue and Orange Lines; perhaps the T's signmakers should look at a map.

Announcement heard recently on a Red Line train at Harvard: "Ladies and gentlemen -- I have just been informed that this is now an express train -- express with passengers to Charles St. -- express to Charles -- and may the Lord have mercy on our souls."

West Coast travelers may be interested in the California Transit Guide, which lists all public transit services in that state, plus hundreds of popular destinations. The new guidebook is available from the California Transit League, P. O. Box 586, Palo Alto, CA 94302, for \$17.50 including postage.

The Boston Globe's transportation writer, Peter J. Howe, has been reassigned to the Globe's City Hall Bureau. Mr. Howe brought insight and understanding to his coverage of transportation issues; he sought out stories instead of just reporting press releases. A.P.T. wishes him success in his career, and we hope that the Globe will continue the high quality transportation coverage which he began.

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 or write our office 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.

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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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Car-Free® Update #9

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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 #8 in August. For a copy of Update #8, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to A.P.T.

- Red Line** Substitute buses between **Broadway and JFK/UMass** Mon.-Fri. after 8:45 PM.
 - Green Line** Substitute buses Mon.-Fri. after 8:45 PM, as follows:
 - Green Line-B** Bus Copley-Kenmore, train Kenmore-Boston College.
 - Green Line-C** Bus Copley-St. Mary's St., train St. Mary's St.-Cleveland Circle.
 - Green Line-D** Bus Copley-Fenway, train Fenway-Riverside.
 - Attleboro Line** (Boston-Providence RI) now 4 rush hour trips, 1 reverse-commute trip.
 - Boston Harbor Cruises** Navy Yard Shuttle (Boston-Charlestown Navy Yard, Pier 4). Daily, every half hour; connects w/ Andre Coachlines Navy Yard Shuttle Bus.
 - Andre Coachlines** Navy Yard Shuttle (USS Constitution-Bldg. 199). New service. Daily, every half hour; connects w/ Boston Harbor Cruises Navy Yard Shuttle.
 - C & J Trailways** (formerly "C & J Limo"). Boston terminal: Peter Pan.
 - (Boston-Dover NH) via Seabrook NH, Portsmouth NH, Durham NH. Daily, 5-7 trips. (Rochester NH stop discontinued; new stop at Seabrook NH.)
 - (Logan Airport-Dover NH) via Newburyport, Seabrook NH, Portsmouth NH. Daily, every hour (16 trips). (Hampton NH, Pease AFB, Rochester NH stops discontinued; new stop at Seabrook NH.)
 - Cape Cod Bus** (Hyannis-Provincetown). Now operated by Plymouth & Brockton.
 - Concord Trailways** (Boston-Rochester NH). Now operated by C & J Trailways, see above.
 - Marathon Line** (Boston-Framingham-Worcester). Now operated by Peter Pan, see below.
 - Peter Pan** (Boston-Framingham-Worcester) via Rte. 9. Mon.-Fri., 5 trips (every 2 hrs.); Sat., 2-3 trips. Boston stops at Peter Pan; Park Sq.; Copley Sq. (Boston-Framingham) express. Rush hours, every 15 min. w/ some reverse-commute trips; midday/night/Sat./Sun., approx. every 2 hrs. Some trips serve State House, Park Sq., Copley Sq., Framingham Ctr., Waterview.
 - Plymouth & Brockton** (Hyannis-Chatham). Winter service, 1 trip daily.
 - Priority Express** (Boston-Framingham). Now operated by Peter Pan, see above.
- TELEPHONE NUMBER CHANGES:** C & J Trailways.....426-7838 or 800-258-7111
Marathon Line.....508-756-6660 or 800-562-9222
Plymouth & Brockton.....773-9400 or 800-328-9997
- LOGAN AIRPORT TERMINAL CHANGES:** Terminal A....Eastern Express.....262-3700
Terminal B....Braniff.....800-272-6433
Terminal B....Continental (all flights).....569-8400

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