



CITY OF BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
THOMAS M. MENINO

January 27, 2012

Secretary Richard Davey  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160  
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Secretary Davey:

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) provides absolutely critical services to Boston residents, commuters, and visitors. As the transportation hub and economic engine of the region, Boston is uniquely affected by the state of our public transit system. I understand the difficult decisions facing the MBTA. Many administrations have simply passed the buck onto the next administration – and now the MBTA must find a way to operate with an enormous structural deficit. However, riders should not be forced to shoulder the entire weight of this debt, and I am deeply concerned about the MBTA's current proposal to increase fares and reduce services.

Many T riders have indicated that they would rather accept modest fare increases than lose access to critical transportation routes, but I am concerned that some riders face a disproportionate burden. The two scenarios propose to double the cost of passes for seniors and students, representing an increase of 100 percent. While some fare increase may be necessary, elders and students are typically on fixed budgets. Elderly riders may be forced to choose between daily essentials and the ability to leave their home, visit family and friends, and be active members of society. In addition, we must make sure our transit system continues to serve people with disabilities. I applaud the MBTA for all of the work being done to make stations more accessible, but the RIDE should maintain its current level of service for those with the most severe disabilities who are unable to use the fixed route system. While I realize that the current paratransit system needs reform, I encourage you to explore more cost effective modes of transporting disabled passengers rather than cutting services or denying eligibility. Potential options are to contract with taxicab companies for those with less severe mobility impairments, and offer travel training programs for people with disabilities who are unfamiliar with the accessibility improvements made in recent years.

I am most concerned about the proposed elimination of services under both scenarios. I strongly oppose the cuts to bus routes proposed in Scenario 2, which would eliminate 101 routes, including 33 that service Boston neighborhoods. My understanding is that many of these routes experience high ridership and eliminating them would make public transit virtually inaccessible for thousands of Boston residents who do not have alternate modes of transportation. I also strongly urge you to reject the proposal to eliminate the bus routes (#275 and 276) that service the homeless shelter on Long Island. Homeless shelters in Boston already serve a statewide constituency with limited resources. These two bus routes transport approximately 300 guests per day to the shelter and other programs on the island, and another 200 guests from the Pine Street Inn. Unfortunately, the unique nature of the passenger base, weight limits on the bridge, off hours service, and the geographic location of Long Island may present challenges in getting a reliable vendor to assume operations of these routes. This again underscores my point that bus service, in many cases, is not an alternative mode of transportation but the only mode of transportation for many riders. Eliminating these routes would shut off our most vulnerable population from essential services at a time when they need it the most. I know when you accompanied me on my annual Homeless Census in 2010 you saw firsthand that this could be a matter of life and death for some people.