



The Honorable Senator Edward Markey & The Honorable Senator Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
Committee on Banking Housing and Urban Affairs
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The MBTA is a key part of the success of Greater Boston. One only has to look at the cranes adding millions of square feet of housing, office, commercial, and lab space right next to MBTA stations. A report by A Better City found that through travel time and cost savings, savings from avoided vehicular crashes and injuries, and reduced carbon emissions, the MBTA provides an estimated value of \$13.2 billion to Greater Boston each year¹. This value benefits both transit riders and non-riders alike. That value is also more than six times the T's annual operating budget of approximately \$2 billion.

The T is also hugely important on a human level and is essential for social mobility, equity, and cohesion. According to AAA Northeast, the average cost of car ownership in the Commonwealth is \$10,728 a year². The ability to live without a car or share one is a significant savings, especially for low and moderate-income households. A Harvard University study on "Equality of Opportunity" found that "the relationship between transportation and social mobility is stronger than that between mobility and several other factors, like crime, elementary-school test scores or the percentage of two-parent families in a community"³.

Yet this value is being diminished by unprecedented reductions in service delivery and quality, the abysmal state of good repair and safety concerns, and lackluster leadership that has substituted austerity for vision, and is now suffering the consequences of that failed approach to transit operations.

The Baker Administration has bragged about more than \$7 billion in capital spending^{4 5}, and yet few would say that the reliability or service quality of the T has gotten better in the past 8 years. The agency's capital spending quite literally came at the expense of the operating budget. As recently as this spring \$500 million was unwisely transferred from the operating to the capital budget⁶, only months before the FTA cited unsafe staffing levels at the T's control center and inadequate staffing in the maintenance department⁷.

Deliberate decisions made by T leadership have led to outcomes that are causing daily harm to our economy, to our air quality, and to social equity. As a direct consequence of an understaffed Operations Control Center, the T was directed by the FTA to take corrective action⁸. That action has slowed down subway service in ways that cause real harm to our most vulnerable transit riders. Residents of neighborhoods like Mattapan, with some of

¹ [The Transportation Dividend](#), A Better City, 2019 (benefit adjusted for inflation)

² ["Annual cost of new car ownership exceeds \\$10,000 in Massachusetts"](#), *Berkshire Eagle*, 2022

³ ["Transportation Emerges as Crucial to Escaping Poverty"](#), Mikayla Bouchard, *The New York Times*, 2015

⁴ [MBTA Crisis – Part II](#), Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, 2020

⁵ [MBTA finance cast a long, red shadow for incoming leaders](#), Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, 2021

⁶ [T board blesses \\$500m transfer for capital programs](#), Bruce Mohl, *Commonwealth*, 2022

⁷ [Here are the 24 findings the FTA...](#), Sahar Fatima & Taylor Dolven, *The Boston Globe*, 2022

⁸ [Under pressure from regulators on staffing...](#), Laura Crimaldi, *The Boston Globe*, 2022

the highest travel times in the region, often spend an extra 15-20 minutes added to their daily commute. Residents along the Orange Line are dealing with increased headways as well as slow zones nearly a month after the T promised their service would improve.⁹

The Metro Boston region cannot tolerate more disruptive shutdowns. The MBTA needs a larger, more stable operating budget to perform more regular maintenance. It needs to learn from peers who are able to perform more trackwork during longer overnight periods, without complete disruptive shutdowns. It needs to treat hiring more bus operators and subway dispatchers like an emergency because it is one. The agency must regain the trust of riders and stakeholders by being honest and transparent. The double-speak around the Orange Line slow zones and the political interference during the Blue Line shutdown¹⁰ have severely damaged trust. Finally, the agency has to move beyond the “good enough mindset” and understand that it has an obligation to provide high-quality service, even when it must perform extensive maintenance.

T riders deserve more than what the T’s acting COO, called “a more manageable and palatable level of interruption”¹¹. Riders deserve service frequent and reliable enough to avoid lost wages, and most importantly, they deserve to know that their public transit system is safe. Riders deserve to know when they will have a fully functional, slow zone-free transit system and the steps that it will take to achieve this goal. MBTA employees deserve leadership that works tirelessly to improve their quality of life and works collaboratively with labor to address worker shortages. Businesses deserve a transit system that enables customers and employees to reach them conveniently, reliably, and sustainably. And the region deserves a transit agency that provides high-quality service for today and one that has a vision for how to grow and modernize to meet tomorrow’s needs as well.

The T needs leadership that can address the T’s long-standing needs and expands access to drive mode shift and shorten travel times for environmental justice communities. Our climate, our economy, and our fight for transit and economic justice can’t wait.

⁹ [The shutdown was supposed to make the Orange Line faster...](#), Taylor Dolven, *The Boston Globe*, 2022

¹⁰ [Three T derailments in three days...](#), Taylor Dolven, *The Boston Globe*, 2022

¹¹ [The shutdown was supposed to make the Orange Line faster...](#), Taylor Dolven, *The Boston Globe*, 2022