

Good morning, Chair Warren, Senator Markey, and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs' Subcommittee on Economic Policy today.

As the oldest transit system in the country, the MBTA is a system of incredible complexity. Every day, the hard working, dedicated employees of the MBTA provide safe and constant service to more than 600,000 customers by utilizing 12 ferries, 100 locomotives, 300+ commuter rail coaches, 600 subway cars, 800 RIDE vehicles, and more than a thousand buses.

Over the past several months, the MBTA has faced a series of incidents that have raised concerns about the safety of the system. I want to state unequivocally today to the Committee and to our customers that the system is safe -- but we can and will do better. I am committed, just as I know all of the employees of the T are committed, to continuing to make the T a safer, and more reliable transportation system. I look forward to sharing with this committee the significant progress we have made and will continue to make towards that goal.

I am a regular MBTA rider, and my family regularly takes the T. The City of Boston doesn't run a fleet of school buses for Grades 7 - 12. Instead, the T provides the transportation to 25,000 school kids, including mine.

We take this role in our riders' lives seriously. We get people where they need to go, to grocery stores and medical appointments and school classes and jobs. We do it through blizzards, during parades, on holidays. And we did it throughout a pandemic that forced us to continually pivot on a sometimes day-to-day basis, rethinking our transit services as our ridership plummeted – all the while, with the goal of not only providing safe and reliable trips for our riders but also protecting the health of our riders and employees.

As riders continue to return to the system now, I understand the frustration many of them feel. On behalf of the more than 6,400 hardworking men and women of the MBTA, we acknowledge that safety incidents have occurred and that our service levels aren't where we want them to be due to staffing challenges that have forced us to make hard decisions that represent prioritizing safety above all else. These challenges are impacting major transit agencies across the country.

Some of those incidents have had tragic results, and I again extend deep condolences to the affected families on behalf of myself and all of the employees at the T.

Safety has been and continues to be our top priority. In 2019, the Fiscal and Management Control Board, on its own, commissioned a Report, with the full support of MBTA management, by an independent Safety Review Panel. All MBTA employees from all departments were fully engaged and candid throughout the process. The MBTA embraced the opportunity to review our safety processes and then make all necessary changes in our safety procedures.

One of the Report's findings, for example, was that the MBTA's Safety Management System (SMS) was lacking. The T had experienced a number of operational incidents that the Safety Review Panel directly attributed to ineffective SMS practices.

SMS is defined as a formalized, top-down, organization-wide, data-driven approach to managing safety. Every day, in every part of the MBTA, and even after the Report's release as the pandemic's first wave began in 2020, we continue to steadily implement SMS and best practices, setting safety performance targets as well as tracking and communicating them in order to make agency-wide decisions.

Much like we embraced the process of the Safety Review Panel in 2019, we have fully supported and collaborated with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) during their Safety Management Inspection process, which has focused on the heavy rail portion of the MBTA system. For the past several months, most of our MBTA departments and individual T staff members have conducted comprehensive, productive briefings with the FTA on just about a daily basis. We have welcomed this opportunity to go into great detail with the FTA about the safety initiatives we've accomplished, those that are currently underway, and the areas that need improvement.

At the front end of the process, the FTA identified some areas that required early priority attention. Four early special directives were issued, June 15, with defined timelines for corrective action plans (CAPs). We immediately began to make both long-term, lasting plans; and implement immediate corrective actions wherever possible.

For example, with respect to the hours that our operations staff were working, within days of receipt of the early special directives, we instituted a fatigue management plan to increase our operations staff rest intervals. This meant an immediate reduction in service levels but was necessary to prioritize the safety of our riders and our employees. We also, almost as instantly, augmented our hiring activities for the Operations Control Center (the OCC) so that we could ultimately return our service levels to meet the needs of our riders' expectations.

For the OCC, we authorized a \$10,000 sign-on bonus and launched an immediate internal hiring blitz to attract more heavy rail dispatchers. This is a critical-skills position with the unique and imperative requirement that applicants already work within subway operations so that their service as a dispatcher can benefit from their working knowledge of the system.

For the early FTA special directive 22-4, we have addressed the areas specific to the speed restriction for the Tufts to Back Bay curve. The worn rail was replaced ahead of schedule, as were approximately 400 Cologne Egg fasteners. As a result, speeds were increased from 10 mph to 18 mph. Some of this work was conducted during the Orange Line Surge which was a topic of our Special Maintenance Repair Plan (SMRP) submitted as part of our Corrective Action Plan for SD 22-4. We are in active discussions with the FTA to further improve system speed but this requires some additional plans for fasteners, which the FTA wants to review first. This effort is a solid example of the collaboration and rigorous ongoing engagement between the MBTA and the FTA.

On August 3, we announced a 30-day suspension in Orange Line service along the entire line beginning August 19 and resuming September 19. We shut down the line to make major, expansive, and comprehensive progress on a number of priorities identified in directives from the FTA and to accelerate additional critical track upgrades and other improvements.

It had become clear to us (and to the FTA) that traditional intermittent service shutdowns were not offering us the essential amount of time needed to perform the improvements required. The only way to deliver the positive rider experience in a timely way was to immediately invest a meaningful amount of time for repairs and upgrades. Thus, we embarked on the extraordinary effort to allow 100% unencumbered access to the system for 30 continuous days to accomplish the important work needed and reopen a line that our riders deserve. While the Orange Line shutdown was the largest closure of a line the MBTA has undertaken, we have had success with other targeted large-scale closures over the past several years across the system.

During this unprecedented service diversion, we successfully made sweeping improvements to the system and delivered a service to our riders on schedule. Thirty days of 24-hour access to the Orange Line's more-than-121,000 feet of track, its 20 stations, and the entirety of its rights of way allowed us to accomplish a profound amount of highly complex work that would have otherwise taken more than five years of weekend and nighttime diversions, all leading to less delays and unplanned service interruptions; and faster, more reliable, safer trips for our riders.

- We **replaced track and ties** across the entire Orange Line that brought us into a state of good repair.
- We replaced track in slow zones and have **lifted speed restrictions** across the Orange Line - specifically Jackson Square, Back Bay, and Tufts.
- We **upgraded signals** at Oak Grove and Malden and **replaced two major crossover track** areas that facilitate train movements.
- We **upgraded track and rail within the Wellington Yard and Maintenance Facility** to provide a safer and more accessible environment for workers, and to improve service reliability for riders.
- We are now running **all new Orange Line cars** and have begun the scrapping process for the decades-old cars.

The August SMI highlighted the concern over the workforce levels at the MBTA, and we agree this is an area where we absolutely need to do better. We are not alone in our staffing concerns. Our peer transit agencies around the country are also struggling to staff up their ranks with proficient, fully trained, fully certified employees. A February 2022 Survey conducted by the American Public Transportation Association (where 117 Transit Agencies responded) revealed that 92% of our public transit agencies are experiencing difficulties hiring employees (particularly bus operators), 71% of public transit agencies have either cut service or delayed service increases due to worker shortage issues, 66% of agencies are having difficulty retaining employees, and 20-50% of agencies have implemented actions such as increasing starting pay, including sign-on bonuses, introducing referral bonuses and implementing retention bonuses to attract and retain employees. APTA, just this week provided a survey update that noted the workforce shortage continues to impact 96% of public transit agencies (60% response rate). The MBTA not only shares the same challenges as noted by APTA but also has implemented similar actions along with many others.

We fully accept the FTA's Safety Management Inspection, and we are continuing to work with the FTA. We are committed to fully funding all actions to remedy any and all safety issues the FTA identifies.

We continue to refine the FTA CAP cost estimates for the four early special directives, made up of 22 corrective action plans, provided to the MBTA June 15. We cannot predict the full funding needs for these directives at this time since we are still in the process of responding and working through unknown considerations to respond to the FTA in the short and medium term but anticipate the need for approximately \$300 million in costs. The costs are a mix of funded and unfunded items, and current estimates are preliminary, with likely more than \$200 million in costs that are not currently budgeted to address the four early special directives.

For the four directives from the August SMI report, cost estimates are currently being developed through a combination of one-time, recurring, and contingency costs between capital and operating initiatives spread over multiple years. Early estimates forecast a need for \$225-300M for Fiscal Years 2023 through 2028. Our estimates are limited by current information available and are being updated frequently (and contain many preliminary assumptions pertaining to headcount, headcount costs, funded and unfunded costs).

We are working with the Administration to identify funding sources to support these efforts. Governor Charlie Baker has filed a supplemental budget which includes \$200 million for the MBTA to provide additional resources towards addressing the FTA's safety directives and ensuring a safe, reliable transit network for its riders. The supplemental budget also includes \$10 million for MassDOT, in collaboration with the MBTA, to develop a training academy to create a talent pipeline to address the staffing challenges at the MBTA. These funds will be used in FY23 to help cover costs arising out of the FTA Safety Management Inspection, to fund material and equipment purchases, increased staffing and recruiting, and will also support key safety-focused maintenance efforts.

At the MBTA, we recognize the important role we play in the daily lives of the communities we serve, and we know the transit services we provide are critical. The heart and core of what we do is providing reliable, safe transit service to riders who expect and deserve a modern, best-in-class system. Modernizing and upgrading the T, including aspects related to safety, can and does take time, but we're continuing to make progress. Safety is our number one priority at the MBTA, and we fully support all opportunities to review our practices and make changes to become a safer service and organization, including in the areas identified by the 2019 Safety Review Panel Report as well as the current FTA Safety Management Inspection, focusing on our heavy rail. The SMI report summarized issues that will take many years to resolve. While the early directives were tactical in nature, the August directives were strategic and systemic. They will take years to resolve but the work is already well underway. As I said at the beginning of my testimony, I am committed to continuing to working as hard as I can to achieve these goals.

Thank you again for allowing me this opportunity to speak. I look forward to continuing to partner with the Legislature as we advance these initiatives at the T, and to sharing more about our progress in making the MBTA a safer place.