



Mayor Michelle Wu
FTA Congressional Field Hearing Opening Statement
Friday, October 14, 2022

OPENING STATEMENT (5 min):

Thank you **Sen. Warren** and **Sen. Markey** for convening this hearing, and for your leadership.

When Boston began building the first subway system in the country in 1895, the idea was labeled dangerous and radical.

Business owners organized an “Anti-Subway League,” warning that construction would disturb snakes and rats underground, forcing them to the surface spreading fear and disease. The League’s president, W.G. Harris, spoke of the “great disadvantage and damage to business” that would result from tearing up the street.

Thankfully, decisionmakers looked to the future, investing in our nation’s very first subway tunnel running from Park Street to Boylston.

It took tremendous innovation—electrifying trolley cars to run underground without suffocating coal smoke—and it reshaped what growth looked like in our city, and our country, as more people were able to escape traffic above-ground, and reach their destinations en masse.

Today we must continue investing in our future to make Boston a city for everyone—green and growing, where families can thrive.

We are so grateful for your partnership—and that of the Biden administration—in deploying necessary resources for our collective recovery. We've allocated our ARPA funds, and are looking to stretch every dollar from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act to reinvigorate our city.

But none of that matters if residents can't rely on public transportation to get where they need to go. We're here today because all that investment—in housing, schools, economic development, and healthy communities—is constrained by the state of public transit in Massachusetts.

As someone who's been taking the T for decades—as a college student, a young professional, and a mom pushing a big double stroller through MBTA elevators, buses, and trains to get to child care—this discussion isn't a theoretical one for me.

On Wednesday I took the Orange Line to work, grateful that it was back in service, and excited to board a shiny new train at Forest Hills. The ride went smoothly, but there were still 12 minute headways at peak rush hour.

After an unprecedented 30-day shutdown of our busiest subway line, we all still hold our breath and cross our fingers when we step into stations and look up to see when the next train will arrive.

In recent weeks, the T has acted with more urgency than we've seen in years, but my experience as a commuter—like so many others—is still emblematic of the broader, systemic problem:

For too long, our approach has focused on fiscal management at the expense of long-term vision.

The result is a system constantly on the verge of collapse—one that directs all our energy toward meeting basic safety requirements rather than growing and expanding public transit as critical infrastructure.

If we want Boston to be a thriving, competitive, global city...we can't continue to sabotage ourselves by taking a piecemeal, reactive, bare-minimum approach.

The people of Massachusetts deserve safe, reliable, accessible public transit. But that needs to be our starting point, not our finish line.

Our transit system today isn't equipped to meet the needs of our growing region. Restaurants and small businesses are desperate for foot traffic after years of economic hardship. Large employers struggling to get workers back in person are facing staffing shortages across every industry because people can't afford to live close enough to walk to work, and don't want to deal with a stressful, unreliable commute.

As a hub for healthcare and life sciences, innovation and education—our possibilities are endless, if we could just connect *all* our communities to the opportunities here.

Doing so will require a strategic vision for the T:

One that secures long-term, sustainable funding...Establishes a workforce development strategy...Expands access and affordability...And ensures that

the communities most affected by the system are the ones most empowered to shape it.

That means an MBTA Board seat for Boston, fare equity and electrification for our commuter rail system, fare-free buses, and accelerated progress on the red-blue connector and West Station.

Thank you, and I look forward to a productive conversation about turning the T into a source of pride and connection for all our residents.

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