



200 FRIBERG PARKWAY
WESTBOROUGH, MA 01581
774-760-0495
495PARTNERSHIP.ORG

March 5, 2019

General Manager Steve Poftak
MBTA
10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116

RE: 2019 MBTA Fare Proposal

Dear General Manager Poftak and staff:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed MBTA fare increase, and for including a public meeting in Framingham to allow for feedback from the 495/MetroWest region.

Hearing from our region is vital, because the thirty-five communities in 495/MetroWest have over half a million residents and an employment base of over \$24 billion per year. With this employment base, 495/MetroWest is a net importer of labor, with almost 200,000 commuters into the region, and 180,000 residents commuting to work outside the region, so our transportation network and Commuter Rail system is of paramount importance.

The Partnership seeks to address our regional needs through public-private collaboration by working to enhance economic vitality, improve quality of life and sustain natural resources. The Partnership focuses on helping alleviate regional constraints and limitations, and conducts numerous initiatives on transportation, workforce housing, brownfields, and water resources. Our region is served by twelve Commuter Rail stations on three lines: the Fitchburg Line, the Framingham/Worcester Line, and the Franklin Line. The Partnership would like to raise some concerns about the fare proposal, and requests that the MBTA use the additional revenue to support Commuter Rail improvements that will help regional transportation outside of Boston, including the 495/MetroWest region.

The proposed fare changes would increase one-way Commuter Rail fares by \$0.50 to \$0.75 and monthly passes by \$18 to \$25 for riders in our region, where stations are located in Commuter Rail zones 4 through 8. The cost of a full year of monthly passes would increase by \$216 to \$300 for our riders, and this is a significant cost on top of the thousands of dollars riders pay for monthly passes year-round. The Partnership understands that in order to maintain and improve service on the Commuter Rail system, the MBTA needs to raise additional revenue, but Commuter Rail is already an important component of raising revenue for the MBTA. Since FY2015, Commuter Rail ridership and fare revenue have increased, growing increasingly important to the MBTA's bottom line when compared to bus and subway. In FY18 alone, while fare revenue was decreasing in all other MBTA modes of transportation, Commuter Rail fare revenue increased \$7.5 million, offsetting lower revenue in bus and subway enough to create an overall increase in total MBTA fare revenue.

Thus, in considering increased fares, it is crucial to also consider the negative impact the change could have on Commuter Rail ridership, particularly from stations in outer zones. Many riders have already experienced an increase cost to use the Commuter Rail because of the parking rate changes initiated in September. For example, the weekday parking cost has increased at several of our region's stations, including Franklin, Southborough, Westborough, and West Natick. Despite these increases, most of the stations' lots in our region are over 75% occupied on an average weekday, and are often full. On weekdays, some commuters arrive at stations as early as 7AM, if not earlier, only to ensure that they get a parking space. Greater use of public transportation is ultimately beneficial, yet increased fares on top of these parking constraints and increased parking costs will further discourage ridership, which is already dealing with limited service with quality and reliability concerns.



200 FRIBERG PARKWAY
WESTBOROUGH, MA 01581
774-760-0495
495PARTNERSHIP.ORG

A reliable public transportation system can help entice drivers to use Commuter Rail as an alternative to cars, which helps alleviate congestion, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. It is in the interest of the economy, the environment, and the public, and the MBTA to continue to grow ridership, building on the 21.2% increase system-wide since 2012. During that time period, the Framingham/Worcester Line's ridership increased by 45.7%, experiencing the largest passenger growth of any Commuter Rail line. This line was already had the second-highest ridership in the system. These facts demonstrate the importance of Commuter Rail connections, since an analysis of commuting data shows that our residents' top commuting destinations are Boston, Framingham, and Worcester, while our workers' top origin points are Worcester, Framingham, and Boston. Similarly, the Fitchburg and Franklin Lines are vital connections between our region and Boston for commuters, feeding into our \$24 Billion annual payroll. The MBTA Commuter Rail needs to improve to meet the increasing service demands of our vibrant region.

Therefore, if the proposed fare rates are put in to effect, the funds generated need to be used to improve the reliability, efficiency, and overall quality of Commuter Rail operations, along with addressing existing parking and access constraints at the station. With the proposed fare increase, we expect accountability for tracking how the funds are spent and how the expenditures benefit riders.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposal and ask that you take time to thoroughly consider the effects of raising fares and how fare revenue should be invested in Commuter Rail improvements to benefit riders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul F. Mathews".

Paul F. Mathews

Executive Director

774-760-0495 / paul@495partnership.org