

LivableStreets Rethinking urban transportation

e-bulletin #13

June 12, 2006

Greetings!

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*** SPECIAL MBTA / TRANSIT ISSUE ***

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1. * FEATURE ARTICLE * -- FISCAL CRISIS: From piecemeal to no meal at the T



by Amanda Patterson, Staff Writer for
LivableStreets Alliance

What follows are excerpts from the full length article... [Click here for the full article.](#)

At a legislative briefing on June 6, transportation advocates set the stage for the MBTA's next move in financing: debt relief. Advocates from Northeastern University's Center for Urban and Regional Policy, the Conservation Law Foundation, and Alternatives for Community and Environment, delivered the following message to 30 legislators and aides: the MBTA can not continue to survive without massive changes. The first step requires the state to reassume the debt it handed to the T in 2001, when it shifted the T to Forward Funding.

Although Forward Funding is not usually seen as contributing to increased fares, it is actually the driving force behind the T's recently announced fare hike. Under Forward Funding the T has two options, neither of which

MEET THE ADVOCATES



Click on the links below to go directly to the transit- related page or document for each organization.

[MBTA Rider Oversight Committee](#)

[On-the-move Coalition](#)

[Conservation Law Foundation](#)

[MA Smart Growth Alliance](#)

[T-Riders Union](#)

[Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership \(STEP\)](#)

[Sierra Club](#)

[Washington Street Corridor Coalition](#)

[Fairmount/Indigo Line Coalition](#)

[MassPIRG](#)

[PolicyLink](#)

have a desirable outcome for riders— raise fares or reduce service. The Legislature however could mitigate fare hikes and improve service on the T by reassuming the debt it shifted to the T in FY2001.

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“The problem with the T goes far beyond fare increases,” said Jeff Rosenblum, Executive Director of LivableStreets Alliance. “Fare increases are a short term fix for a system that is broken. The legislature and the Governor need to come up with a plan for a financially sustainable MBTA, and debt relief has the most common ground among advocates and professionals.”

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The Best Cities in the World Have Great Transit

The Commonwealth is in trouble. Not only is Massachusetts the only state to lose population since the year 2000, but young families continue to leave Massachusetts, because of real estate prices which have become unaffordable even to the upper- middle class.

The Boston Foundation, the region’s foremost philanthropic group, has expressed concern about Boston’s ability to attract the “creative class.” Young professionals, who wish to be urban dwellers, tend to migrate toward more livable cities, equipped with good transit, bike-friendly roads, and cultural activities.

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The solution to this quandary is to solve financial problems, plan wisely, and to resist halting expansion by coming up with new and effective ways to fund this financial predicament. Curtailing expansion and reducing service is not the answer to the T’s current financial predicament. Instead, new and innovative ways to fund the system must be embraced in order to maintain Boston’s “livable city” status into the future.

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The Future Takes a Long Time to Build

We need to start planning today for the city we want to have in the future. This includes planning for the needs of the future demographic of the city. Projections indicate that Boston will be about 30% non-white, and one in three residents will be over 55 by 2030. Both of these groups are consistent transit users, and planning for both development and transit should be accounted for now, rather than become a problem later.

[Association for Public Transportation](#)

[LivableStreets Alliance](#)

[Late Transit Alliance](#)

For more information on transit and related issues:

[The Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization](#)

[Massachusetts Taxpayer's Foundation](#)

[Center for Urban and Regional Policy, at Northeastern University](#)

[MassINC/Commonwealth magazine](#)

[The Boston Indicators Project](#)

[Issue Source \(by MassINC\)](#)

[Metro Area Planning Council](#)

TRANSIT EXPANSION IN THE WORKS (from the MBTA planning website):

[Arborway Restoration](#)

[Airport Station Relocation](#)

[Ashmont Station Renovation Project](#)

[Beyond Lechmere Planning](#)

[Charles/MGH](#)

[Dorchester Red Line Rehabilitation](#)

[Fairmount Improvements](#)

Boston started building for the future when they began the Big Dig. The original plan included improvements to public transit service because, as former state transportation chief Fred Salvucci said in a February 2005 Boston Globe column, "We always knew that this thing would create a very brief improvement and things would re-congest if we did not improve public transportation."

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"What the public sees is the T's inability to address service problems," said Rosenblum, "but the issue is the fundamental structure of the organization." Governor Romney emphasized the switch over from thinking about moving cars to moving people, in the draft of his 20-year transportation plan. "Right now, all we have seen is lip service," said Rosenblum.

[MORE ... Click here for the entire article](#)

2. FAIR BURDEN: Public Speaks Out Against Fare Hike

by Amanda Patterson, Staff Writer for
LivableStreets Alliance



BOSTON— On June 6th, more than a hundred T riders rallied in Copley Square before packing a standing room only public hearing on the MBTA's proposed fare increases. The crowd chanted one message: Don't raise our fares! General Manager Dan Grabauskas, who was in attendance, also heard public concerns about inadequate quality of service. The T Riders Union (TRU) agrees that the new fare is too high and the service is already sub-standard.

State legislators, gubernatorial candidates and transportation advocates echoed the call for improved, affordable service. "At a time when gas prices are through the roof, we should not be raising fares," said Democratic gubernatorial candidate Deval Patrick. Green-Rainbow Party gubernatorial candidate Grace Ross agreed, saying fare hikes were being leveraged on the backs of those who can least afford them.

State Senator Jarrett Barrios, who represents parts of Cambridge, Somerville, and Chelsea, told the MBTA that debt relief is a possibility if the agency requests it. Sen. Pat Jehlen, (Somerville and Medford) echoed Barrios's call for debt relief, and assured the MBTA that the issue would receive the attention of the Massachusetts state Legislature.

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[Fields Corner Station](#)

[Government Center Modernization](#)

[MASS Transportation](#)

[Maverick Modernization](#)

[New Bedford/Fall River Commuter Rail Extension](#)

[North Shore Transit Improvements](#)

[North South Rail Link](#)

[North Station](#)

[Savin Hill Station](#)

[Shawmut Station](#)

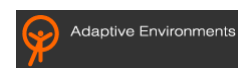
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[This special MBTA/ transit issue is dedicated to Christopher Hart, tireless advocate for improved MBTA service for all users.](#)

The MBTA Advisory Board is currently in the process of evaluating the proposed fare increase and restructuring, but recently approved a FY2007 budget that relies on revenue from the fare increase. It sees little other choice. "Grabauskas is required by law to balance the T's budget," says budget and policy analyst Ulla Hester. "At this point he has only two choices: higher fares or decreased service."

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[MORE ... Click here for the entire article](#)

[Click here for a copy of the "Citizen Info-sheet" handed out at the hearing by LivableStreets Alliance.](#)

[Click here for MBTA's brochure on the fare increase/restructuring.](#)

3. THE CHARLIE CARD EXPLAINED



Charlie Card. The Charlie Card, to be launched in January 2007, will revolutionize how we use and pay for transit. The size of a credit card, the Charlie Card is recognized by subway or bus

collection gate by waving it in front of the sensor. You can even leave it in your wallet or purse! It can be used either as a monthly pass or can hold cash value to "pay as you go" (or both). It can be recharged either online or at machines in stations.

Charlie Ticket?

As you read this, tokens are being phased out, replaced by the Charlie Ticket, a paper ticket with a magnetic strip. The Charlie Ticket can be used in the same way as the Charlie Card, thus leading to the confusion. Assuming that the Charlie Card implementation goes well, it is expected that the Charlie Tickets will only be used for users wanting to buy only one-fare.

Subway-bus transfers

Both the Charlie Card and Charlie Ticket will allow subway-bus transfers once the new fare structure is implemented in January 2007. This will open a whole new opportunity for new bus riders who once would only ride the subway.

[Click here for more information](#)

4. TRANSIT AS ECONOMIC ENGINE FOR BOSTON

A new report by Stephanie Pollack from the Center for Urban & Regional Policy emphasizes the need to address transit and land use together. Pollack states, "We are talking about transit not as something that moves people from one place to another. We're talking about transit as a regional asset. One of the key assets upon which we can build a future in which Boston remains economically competitive is our transit system." She claims that solving the housing crisis must involve rethinking density and focusing on transit oriented development. Equity and social justice should be the foundational elements of any transit and land use strategy. Future demographics include a higher fraction of elderly and non-white population-- these are the people that need and want transit the most.

[Click here for more information.](#)

5. MBTA DISABILITY SETTLEMENT

In April, the MBTA has agreed to upgrade station elevators, platforms, buses and other facilities at a cost of more than \$310 million as a requirement to provide better accessibility for riders with disabilities. The Court has preliminarily approved the settlement agreement and has scheduled a hearing for June 15th to consider whether the settlement agreement is fair, reasonable and adequate-- 9:30 a.m. Courtroom 8, John J. Moakley U.S. Courthouse, 1 Courthouse Way, Boston.



[Click here for Boston Globe article](#)
[Click here for MBTA press release.](#)
[Click here for a copy of the settlement.](#)

[Click for more information.](#)

6. CLF SUES OVER UNMET TRANSIT COMMITMENTS

CLF has filed a lawsuit against the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to force the completion of a series of public transit projects promised as part of the Big Dig. (1) The Green Line extension to Medford with new stops in highly-populated and underserved Somerville. (2) A connection of the Red and Blue lines at Charles/MGH. (3) Restoration of rail along the Arborway in Jamaica Plain.



Update! Federal Judge Rules Transit Lawsuit Stands. "This is a big win for Boston transit riders, and for Boston's environment," CLF President Phil Warburg said. "For 15 years, we have been waiting for the Commonwealth to deliver on its promises to provide Boston area commuters with better transit. In that time, we have seen the most

ambitious road-and- tunnel project in urban America get priority treatment, at a cost of nearly 15 billion dollars. Yet parallel commitments to bring Boston transit into the 21st century have gone unmet."

[Click for more information.](#)

7. GOVERNOR'S 20-YEAR PLAN



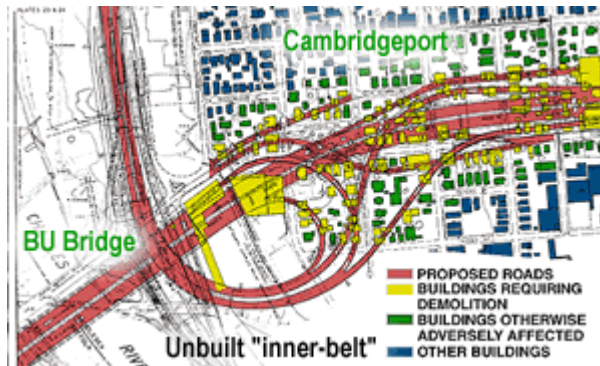
In March 2005, Gov. Mitt Romney said that the state should spend \$31 billion over the next 20 years to improve and expand a transportation infrastructure long neglected because of the Big Dig. At the unveiling, Romney indicated that this plan is a paradigm shift, incorporating transit and highway planning together. Although the

funding details to this transit commitment are still unclear, its recognition as an important part of economic development is a positive step forward.

[Click here for more information](#)

8. BOSTON'S TRANSIT ACTIVISM HISTORY

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Eisenhower Interstate System. Although policy over the past



decade has shifted to the problems with automobiles in American cities, the Federal Highway Administration's website is sentimental toward highway Americana. Boston has a rich history of anti-highway activism. In the 60's and 70's this activism prevented several major highway projects from destroying its neighborhoods, and instead shifted funding to transit expansion, which we now take for granted.

Two visible successes: (1) The "inner belt" was stopped, a highway that would have gone through Cambridgeport and Central Square; (2) The Southwest Expressway was converted into the Southwest Corridor, now the home to the Orange line, multi-use pedestrian/bike path, and greenspace

[Click here for Anniversary Page.](#)

[Click here for Inner Belt history.](#)

[Click here for SouthWest Corridor history.](#)

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