



Connection!

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The quarterly newsletter of TransitWorks - www.TransitWorks.org

Special points of interest:

- Attend a public workshop and learn more about the proposed fare increase and fare restructuring
- A new database helps Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad document rider concerns
- TransitWorks surveys Commuter Boat Riders



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Small changes to your commute can make a big difference

By Kate Driscoll, Program Manager

Making small changes to your commute may save you a lot of frustration and aggravation. Availability of seating, as well as personal comfort are two of the highest priorities for MBTA riders, according to TransitWorks research. The ability to easily find parking is also a key component of a pleasant commute. My own daily experiences on the Commuter Rail, Orange Line, and occasionally, the Blue Line, confirm this. In talking with the former director of Railroad Operations at the MBTA about the need for more seating on some Commuter Rail trains, I learned that there is typically only one or two peak hour trains that are filled to capacity. I usually take an express train that leaves from Beverly Depot at 8:01 and arrives at North Station at 8:33, and though it is usually not a problem to find a seat in Beverly, all seats are typically taken by the next stop in Salem, which can make for an uncomfortable ride.

Though I'll confess it wasn't solely for research purposes that I ended up taking the next train one morning, which leaves the Depot at 8:10 (I was also running a little late), I was pleasantly surprised by what I found. Though the train leaves just 9 minutes later and arrives at North Station just 13 minutes later than the 8:10, there are a number of empty seats, making for a much more comfortable ride. I am able to make up time by taking the Orange Line rather than walking to my office, and overall, it makes for a much more pleasant commute.

Though not everyone has the option to make that specific type of change to their commute, often there are other options. If you have to leave earlier than you'd like to every morning to find a parking space at your Commuter Rail station, why not explore options at other stations where parking might not be so tight? If you have a story about how you've changed your commute for the better, please email them to me at kdricoll@transitworks.org.

Another commuting tip: One of my coworkers recently received a rash of tickets while parked at the Canton Junction commuter rail station, even though she had diligently

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Celebrating Bike Week in Boston

by David Straus, Executive Director, ABC TMA

National Bike Week is May 15-19, 2006 and to celebrate Boston area Transportation Management Associations are providing an opportunity for area businesses to

encourage their employees to bike to work with a chance to win the Bike Week Commuter Challenge, a friendly competition between businesses and institutions in Boston

and Cambridge to see who can get the most employees and students to bike-to-work/school at least one day during National Bike Week, May 15 - 19, 2006.

Riders say they would spend fare increase dollars on service improvements

TransitWorks recently held a series of focus groups with regular MBTA riders to get their feedback on a series of proposed changes at the MBTA. Working with the T, TransitWorks developed a series of questions pertaining to the proposed fare increase and the fare restructuring. The questions were designed to give riders a chance to sound off on various elements of the

proposal.

Overall, we found that riders had noticed improvements in facilities, such as new or refurbished stations, but had noticed cutbacks in service quality. Participants said overwhelmingly that if they were in charge, they would spend money gained through a fare increase on improving and increasing service.

In addition, participants voiced concern about how proposed changes to the fare structure, such as free or discounted inter-modal transfers would impact boarding times.

Many thanks to all who participated! We delivered your feedback to MBTA officials. Many thanks also to those who inquired about participating but were not able to fit it in to their schedule.

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paid her \$2.00 parking fee each time. After doing some sleuthing, she learned that when she pays with quarters, the parking attendants can't always see that there are 8 quarters in the box, and so they give her a ticket. She was advised to always pay with dollar bills, and to insert them

one at a time. And though she sees the injustice in it ("aren't quarters legal tender?") she finds it is much easier, and less stressful, to pay with dollar bills every morning

Thanks for reading this edition of the TransitWorks Connection! Think Sun!

Celebrating Bike Week in Boston

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"Bicycling is a fun, healthy, non-polluting way to commute to work, it reduces traffic congestion and improves our regions air-quality, enabling employees and students to arrive healthy and awake!" said David Straus, Executive Director of the ABC TMA. "And with gas prices nearing record levels bicycling to work not only good for the environment but

for your bottom line as well. Biking just five miles to and from work only one day a week can save the average commuter more than 20 gallons of gas in a year."

"Bicycling is a fun, health, non-polluting way to commute to work, it reduces traffic congestion and improves our regional air quality"

-David Straus, Executive Director, ABC TMA

2006 Bike Week culminates with the Annual BIKE BASH at Flattop Johnny's, at 1 Kendall Square, Cambridge (near the intersection of Hampshire and Portland Streets) from 5:30pm to 7:30pm on Wednesday, May 24th. The BIKE BASH is a fun way to celebrate the winners

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of the Bicycle Commuter Challenge, for participants to collect their prizes and bicycle commuters to reward themselves on adding a healthy leg to their commute. All bicyclists are invited to attend.

Companies and individuals may register in the Bike Week Commuter Challenge online at www.abctma.com.

Annual BIKE BASH at Flattop Johnny's from 5:30 to 7:30 on Wednesday, May 24th!! All bicyclists are invited to attend!

Got an opinion on the proposed fare increase? Make it heard at an MBTA workshop or Public Hearing!

As you've probably heard, the MBTA is proposing to increase fares. In concert with the fare increase, a number of changes to the fare structure are also being proposed. Most notably, the new fare structure includes free transfers from the subway to the bus, and deeply discounted transfers from the bus to the subway. In addition, the new fare structure includes incentives for using the Charlie Card, a smart card with a chip in it that will be introduced later this year, and the introduction of a new pass, tentatively called One Pass, that will replace the subway and combo passes. To facilitate the public input and feedback process, the MBTA is trying something new, and will be holding a series of interactive workshops, in addition to the legally required public hearings. If you have questions, concerns or comments about the proposed changes, attend one of these workshops and/or hearings. Below is a schedule of the remaining workshops, and to the right is a list of the public hearings.

Public Workshops

Thursday, May 18th

Roxbury

Dudley Square Branch Library
Auditorium

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

65 Warren Street

Cape Verdean Interpreter Avail.

Monday, May 22

Boston

Tip O'Neill Federal Building
Auditorium (1st floor)

4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, May 23

Cambridge

Cambridge CityWide Senior Center

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Chelsea

Chelsea Library

Auditorium

569 Broadway

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Spanish Interpreter Avail.

Wednesday, May 24th

Worcester

Worcester Public Library

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Thursday, May 25th

Malden

Malden City Hall Council Chambers

200 Pleasant Street

6:00 - 8:00 pm

Public Hearings

TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 2006

Boston

Copley Square Public Library
700 Boylston Street

4:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Framingham

Framingham Town Hall
Memorial Hall

150 Concord Street

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Wednesday, June 7th

Lynn

North Shore Community College

6:30 – 8:30 pm

Spanish Interpreter Avail.

Monday, June 12, 2006

Attleboro

Attleboro City Hall
Council Chambers

77 Park Street

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Tuesday, June 13, 2006

Arlington

Arlington Town Hall (Town Hall
Auditorium)

730 Massachusetts Avenue

6:30 pm – 8:30pm

TransitWorks surveys Commuter Boat Riders

This week, TransitWorks and the MBTA worked with the Commuter Boat operators to distribute a survey to the over 2500 passengers that use the Commuter Boat daily. The survey asked riders a series of questions designed to learn more about their preferences when riding

the commuter boat. The survey also asked riders whether they plan to switch to the Commuter Rail service when the Greenbush Line opens in 2007.

Many thanks to all those who completed the survey! I look forward to sharing the results with you.





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In Collaboration With:



MBTA Advisory Board

The TransitWorks Mission

The mission of TransitWorks is to improve the quality and increase the use of all modes of transit in the Boston metropolitan region. Using valuable customer feedback, TransitWorks seeks to work collaboratively with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) in order to improve the riding experience for all transit users.

Our Goals

TransitWorks has four main goals that guide our activities:

- 1. Enable effective, proactive communication between transit users and transit providers in order to improve the riding experience.*
- 2. Use customer outreach activities to increase the sense of public ownership of the transit system.*
- 3. Retain current riders and attract new riders to the transit system.*
- 4. Promote the entire transit system and increase region-wide transit awareness and pride.*

New customer feedback tool at MBCR

By Linda Dillon, Customer Service Manager, Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad Company

Many of our customers take the time to e-mail us and let us know when things go wrong. Some of them also like to let us know when things go right or if a member of our staff has been particularly helpful. Whatever the concern or issue, we do value their feedback and we want to make it as easy as possible for our customers to contact us. That is why we have recently invested in a new customer service database which, as well as making it easier for customers to submit their e-mails, also means we can more carefully and consistently log the e-mails we receive.



Of course one may think that a cus-

tommer service database is not a particularly new idea, especially bearing in mind the number of commuters we carry every day. This system is an improvement on our previous database because it is easier for our customers to use, ensures a speedier response and logs and sorts the information more comprehensively.

Beginning this winter, you can quickly write your issue on a short, easy-to-use electronic form. Your e-mail is logged and an acknowledgement is sent to you right away to confirm receipt. Your note is then sent directly to a customer service official for investigation and response. A speedy, informative response is all part of the enhanced level of customer service we look to

offer and the new system helps us to accomplish this. But another added advantage is that we are able to capture and sort the information, highlighting areas that need our immediate action. So, if we start to receive too many e-mails on a particularly subject, we can quickly focus our attention into putting it right.

So, next time you want to let us know about something that needs our attention, or single a staff member out for outstanding performance, contact us via www.mbcrr.net and try our new system. You can also contact us via the T on www.mbta.com. Either way, we'd be glad to hear from you and hope you find the new system an improved customer service offering from MBCR.