

Connection!

The quarterly newsletter of TransitWorks - www.transitworks.org

Special points of interest:

- Read Part II of the E Line Riders feedback on page 3.
- Heard about T fare increases? Find out more on the proposed increases and what's next on page 3.

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Key Bus Routes Improvement Survey

In May, MBTA staff helped *TransitWorks* distribute and collect surveys on the 28, the 66, and the 111 bus routes. Since January, the T has been making improvements on these and 12 other "Key Bus Routes" in the system, which are identified as having the highest levels of ridership in the region. *TransitWorks* got back 850 surveys in English and Spanish, which indicated that riders really appreciated the new buses, and noticed that announcements were clearer and there were more MBTA personnel helping the routes move smoothly. Some riders also noticed im-

provement in frequency (how often buses come) and reliability (whether buses are evenly spaced and on time) but thought that boarding times and crowding were still problematic. According to

inside sources at the MBTA, the riders aren't the only people happier with these routes: since the beginning of the year, more and more bus drivers are asking to be assigned to these routes!



Distribution of the Key Bus Route Improvement Survey

Water Transportation Awareness Week

Tired of traffic congestion? Breathe free with the T's commuter boats and inner harbor ferries, which can also help you win prizes the week of September 17-21! That's when the MBTA will once again promote its Water Transportation services as an affordable and enjoyable alternative to South Shore and Waterfront driving headaches

for area commuters. The annual week-long promotion is sponsored by MassCommute, MassRIDES, Boston Harbor Cruises, the New England Aquarium, Boston Children's Museum, the Red Sox, Panera, Charles River Boat Company and other local partners who support the boats' services, as well as their positive impact on the

local environment. Kids can enter an art contest to win a free whale watch field trip for their class, and riders of all ages can enter a "Name that boat" raffle. Why sit bumper to bumper another day when you can bask on a beautiful boat in the fresh air with a gorgeous view of the Boston skyline? Take a trip today! For more details or to look up

Recent Survey Raffle Winners

We wish we could reward each and every one of you to show our appreciation for your efforts completing surveys and volunteering for *TransitWorks*. But since we can't do that (especially with over 800 respondents to the Key Bus Routes Improvement Survey!) we instead conduct periodic raffles with prizes like gift cards and our *TransitWorks* travel mug, perfect for those winter morning commutes! Recent raffle winners include:

Robert Popkin – E Line Diary project

Shirley Wilson – Key Bus Route 28 Survey

Mari Matner – Key Bus Route 111 Survey

Christine Cromartie – Key Bus Route 66 Survey

Julia Ruiz – Key Bus Survey Runner Up

Marissa Cheng – Charles River TMA Transportation Fair



Station Improvement Survey

For our Station Improvement Survey, we needed some last minute help distributing flyers to direct people to the online survey. Nine wonderful volunteers stepped up to the plate, and spent some time on station platforms reaching out to fellow riders. I'd like to give a special thanks to Allan Dolinski, Elizabeth Pottier, Rita Delaney, Benjamin Safran, Dee Dalrymple, Halina Polishuk, Daniel Verinder, Rashel Kesilman, and Robert McGilroy for their hard work and interest.

Thoughts From Volunteers

Dee Dalrymple:

I was at the Kendall T stop on August 1st from 4-5:30. Overall the experience was fun, talking with folks, listening to their stories, and the MBTA employees were friendly. However, most folks wanted to know when service was going to be improved and well I'm sure you've heard all the stories. I actually made myself a badge w/the *TransitWorks* logo and volunteer under it so folks would not get confused that I work directly for the MBTA.

Rita Delaney:

I went out Thursday and Friday morning of last week. I didn't get rid of all the cards but I think it was successful anyway.

It was fun talking to fellow commuters and asking for their help with the survey for *TransitWorks*. I had a good overall experience but some people don't want to be bothered with any kind of interaction either on the platform or in the train. While I was handing out the survey cards I had a few people ask me for instruction as to how to use the Charlie cards.

Transit Diaries

TransitWorks is currently looking for volunteers for our 2007 *Transit Diaries*. If you are interested in volunteering or have further questions please contact Monica G.

Tibbits by email at mtibbits@transitworks.org

E Line Riders Give their Opinions on T Service - Part II

Last fall we reported on the first stage of our E Line analysis, which took place in August of 2006 before the segment from Brigham Circle to Heath Street reopened. At the time, we measured riders' satisfaction levels with 14 different features of service, such as safety, cleanliness, signage, etc. Most categories scored above neutral, but comfort, seating, reliability and frequency were seen as somewhat dis-

satisfactory.

In April of 2007, satisfaction increased significantly for all categories, and three of the four that had been below neutral before bumped up to above neutral; frequency is still considered to be slightly worse than neutral but was rated much higher than before. Riders were also asked whether they noticed improvements in a number of areas,

and many said they had.



The Truth about MBTA Fares by Miriam Sorell

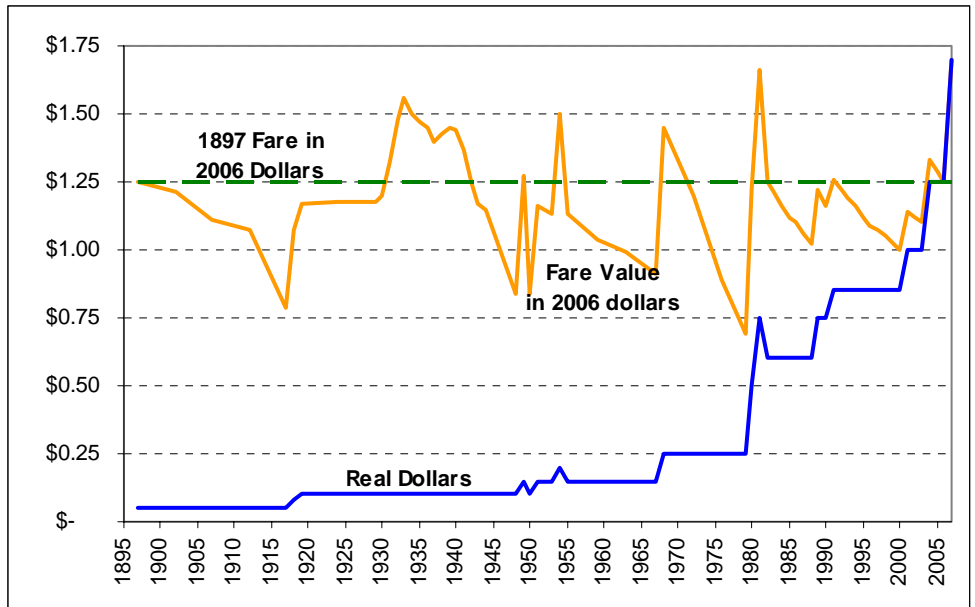
Recent years have been brutal for MBTA riders as fares increased 3 times and 70 cents in only 6 years. However, nostalgia for the days when Charlie and his fellow riders paid 5 cents per ride could just as easily be nostalgia for 2006: it turns out a nickel in 1897 actually had the same buying power as \$1.25 does in today's dollars!

An article by Galen Moore in Boston's new newspaper, BostonNOW, inspired me to do my own analysis of subway fares over the years. The first line of the article *Charlie ain't cheap*, on August 6th, was "The cost of a subway ride in Boston has left inflation standing on the platform." The article had a history of fare hikes and reductions in the T's 110 year history, but actually didn't talk about what the inflation rates were like in the intervening years, except for some price comparisons to 1991. I used an online "worth calculator" (try it out for yourself: <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppowerus/>) to figure out what the fares would have been worth in current dollars (the site calculates up to 2006). This graph shows the actual cost in dollars (the blue line), the value of the original 5 cent fare in 2006 dollars (the dashed green line) and what the fare for each year would be

worth in 2006 dollars (the orange line).

You can see that there were many times when the cost was kept the same for many years (flat parts on the blue line) but since there was inflation, the worth of that fare went down (slopes on the orange line: especially bad in the '70s!). The only time that this wasn't true was during the great depression, when 10 cents was suddenly worth

a bunch more. During times when there was inflation, though, the T was faced with increased labor, gas, and construction costs, but, probably for political reasons, the fare was kept the same. If the T had had regular fare increases of 5 or 10 cents every couple of years, then people would have been able to adjust gradually instead of the big changes in recent years. At least the price didn't just triple like it did from '79 to '81!



MBTA fares since 1897, shown as real price and adjusted for inflation to 2006.



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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.

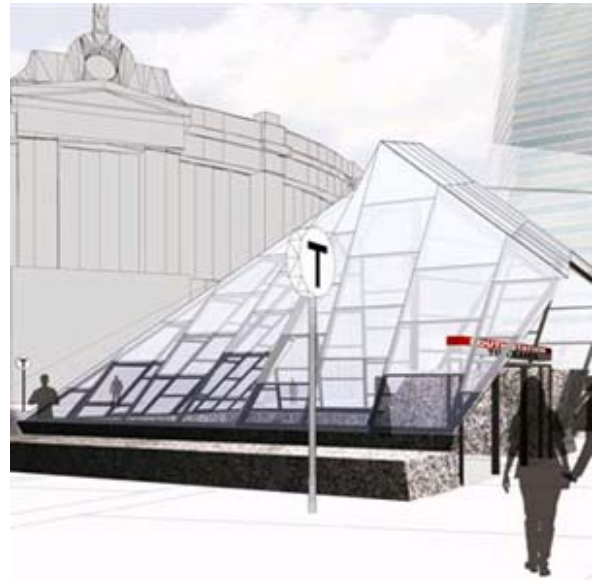
Our Goals

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.*

More Service News

This fall the MBTA has a few new service options to consider. In September, the MBTA announced that service between Back Bay and South Station on the Commuter Rail will now be free. Visitors and residents can hop on to one of the 85 weekday departures from Back Bay to South Station. This will efficiently connect them to the Financial District, attractions near the Waterfront or to the Silver Line to Logan Airport. Secondly, football fans can take advantage of the football train to Gillette Stadium for Patriots' home games. Trains begin at South Station and Providence with additional stops along the way. For information on either of these services, go to MBTA.com.



Direct, free service from Back Bay to South Station

Take the train to a Patriots Game