

Connection!

The quarterly newsletter of TransitWorks - www.TransitWorks.org

Special Stops of Interest:

- Joyce Greer, a TransitWorks Charlie, shares her experience
- The MBTA describes Easy Way and the new MBTA Automatic Fare Collection System
- Barbara Boylan from the MBTA gives us an update and description of the new Charles/MGH Station

Inside this issue:

<i>TransitWorks Charlies Can Make a Difference</i>	2
<i>Easy Way and the CharlieCard</i>	2
<i>Charles/MGH Stations: More than a Facelift</i>	3
<i>TransitWorks Holiday Party</i>	3
<i>TransitWorks' Mission and Goals</i>	4
<i>Select Comments from the 2004 MBTA Ridership Survey</i>	4

TransitWorks Update!

Jessica Conaway, TransitWorks Executive Director

Since our last issue in September, TransitWorks has been busy with our many MBTA customer outreach and feedback activities. TransitWorks launched our first "MBTA Ridership Survey" on September 13, 2004. With the assistance of the TransitWorks Steering Committee and our partners and friends, TransitWorks distributed approximately 75,000 of these surveys between September 13, 2004 and October 15, 2004. We received approximately 2,700 responses - well over our goal of 2,500 responses! Thank you to all who filled out this survey, your participation is crucial to our success. We look forward to reporting the results of this effort soon.

We have also been able to recruit over 550 TransitWorks "Charlies", or volunteers. This level of commitment and involvement by area residents is staggering, and we look forward to working with them in early 2005 on the "Charlies Project", described below. Thank you to all our volunteers for your generous participation.

TransitWorks has also completed our first MBTA Blue Line "Station Evaluation". This tool evaluated particular elements of each station such as cleanliness, station attractiveness, lighting, etc. TransitWorks will complete the same exercise for the Orange Line in April or May, and the other subway lines (Green and Red) next summer.

We look forward to the coming year. Have a very happy holiday season!

The "Charlies Project"

Jessica Conaway, TransitWorks Executive Director

As mentioned above, TransitWorks was fortunate to recruit over 550 volunteers, or Charlies, to help us deliver customer feedback to the MBTA through the "Charlies Project." Thank you to all our volunteers for your participation!

Each participating "Charlies Project" volunteer will receive a travel diary, in which they will record their day to day experiences over a two week period. There is no additional commuting required in relation to the Charlies Project - participants will only log their regular transit use.

Charlies will receive a special one-time training to help in this reporting effort. We will offer several different trainings for our volunteers at various times of day and in various locations in Boston and Cambridge, all in mid-January. Charlies will attend one training, the various times and locations are for convenience. These training sessions will be approximately 1.5 hours long, and will explain the ins and outs of the travel diary. This will enable us to provide the best feedback to the MBTA possible. The actual two week diary effort will take place early February. We will be contacting all of our volunteers about this project shortly.

If you would like additional details about this project, or if you would like to participate, please call TransitWorks at (617) 557-7349.

TransitWorks Charlies Can Make a Difference!

Joyce Greer, TransitWorks Charlie

My name is Joyce Greer and I am a resident of Salem, MA. I answered a questionnaire on the MBTA system and offered to be a "TransitWorks Charlie" who would inform the MBTA of any problems which I noted during my commute.

About three weeks ago, I noticed that one of the steps going down to

the commuter rail station at the Salem depot had lost its finishing and rocked back and forth. One of my co-workers who also uses the commuter rail from Salem also noticed the unsteady stair. I reported the information through TransitWorks and within a week the step was fixed and steady. I also got an email message asking for feedback

about the problem, and whether the stair had been fixed.

I believe that this is a wonderful program for reporting trouble spots. It was wonderful to feel responsible, in some small way, for fixing the stairs to the commuter rail.

Volunteers can report specific comments about our transit system by calling TransitWorks at (617) 557-7349, or e-mailing us at volunteer@transitworks.org. Or simply submit your feedback via our on-line form at www.transitworks.org/volunteer/report.htm. Please make sure you provide detailed information (such as the vehicle number, the location of the broken stair, etc.) when providing your feedback so we may help the MBTA make needed improvements to the transit system. Thank you to the MBTA for being responsive to our comments, and for their continued commitment to customer satisfaction and quality transit service.

Easy Way and the CharlieCard

Automated Fare Collection Project Office, MBTA

Easy Way, the name given to represent the many benefits of the MBTA's upcoming service enhancements, will transform how you use the MBTA. Over time, you'll come to see that the improvements encompass everything from fare buying to customer service to safety.

The MBTA is also pleased to announce the name of its new fare media - "CharlieCard" and the "CharlieTicket". This is a new and exciting way for customers to pay fares on the T, soon to be previewed on the Washington Street branch of the Silver Line.

Eventually tokens will be eliminated, turnstiles replaced with new fare gates and brand-new fareboxes installed on all buses and light rail vehicles. New fare vending machines, located in all stations, will issue CharlieTickets with magnetic stripes, as well as allow for passes and value to be added to the CharlieCard.

"This is a new and exciting way for customers to pay fares on the T, soon to be previewed on the Washington Street branch of the Silver Line."

Customer service agents will be available at stations throughout the system to assist passengers. New safety measures will be instituted as the MBTA installs state-of-the-

art Hub Stations within six existing subway stations, enhancing service and safety for both customers and employees. The Authority is call-

ing the combination of all these enhancements, *Easy Way*. The MBTA will begin to implement the new fare collection equipment in late spring of 2005 on the Blue Line. Complete conversion (station-by-station and bus-by-bus) will follow for approximately 18 months.

Easy Way offers great benefits including:

1. Convenient ways to purchase passes and fares
2. Flexible passes and tickets
3. Ease of use
4. Customer service agents

5. Upgraded system-wide customer service and safety

Wondering where the name Charlie comes from? Charlie has a long history and is uniquely connected to Boston and the T. He first showed up on the scene in 1948 as a cartoon and in a campaign song for a political candidate. The song was later recorded and made famous by the Kingston Trio.

For those of you who buy bus, subway, commuter rail, and commuter boat passes, weekly and monthly passes will continue to be available and will allow unlimited rides for a week or month just as they do today.

As you can tell, *Easy Way* is more than a change in fare collection - it's the *Easy Way* to go. For more information on *Easy Way* and the CharlieCard, visit www.mbta.com and click on the CharlieCard icon.



Charles/MGH Station: More than a Facelift

Barbara J. Boylan AIA, Director of Design, MBTA

Spawned by the need for accessibility improvements at the 72-year old Charles Street Station and the desire for upgrading a significant civic project at the "gateway to Boston", the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority is well underway with construction of a new contemporary, and state-of-the-art transit station adjacent to the Beacon Hill residential neighborhood, the Esplanade parklands, the historic Longfellow bridge and the medical institutions of Massachusetts General Hospital and Mass Eye and Ear.

The accessibility features of the new station designed by the joint venture team of HDR Engineering, Inc. and Elkus/Manfredi Architects, Ltd. include a new at-street level station located 150 feet closer to Cambridge Street, with protected pedestrian crossings from the bustling hospitals and adjacent residential

"The new station will transform Charles Circle into a walkable street and enable commuters easy access..."

streets, new elevators, escalators, and a glass enclosed station. The platforms and tracks will remain as they exist today on the elevated bridge structure. The new station will transform Charles Circle into a walkable street and enable commuters easy access to the new Charles Station.

The station is open during construction through the two new temporary headhouses. Total construction duration is three years, and the new station is currently one year into construction. Beyond the accessibility and modernization work the project includes structural repair to the bridge viaduct and a sound wall from the portal to the new station.

The original Charles/MGH Station was constructed between 1931 and 1932 around an existing elevated trackway built in 1912. Due to its location at the intersection of Charles and Cambridge Streets, Charles Stations was built on a traffic island. Surface pedestrian access to the traffic island was difficult, and the original design included an underground pedestrian passageway. For more information about this project go to:

www.mbta.com/projects_underway/charles.asp



Rendering of Proposed Headhouse Design at Charles/MGH Station - Courtesy of the MBTA

❄️ TransitWorks Holiday Party! ❄️

TransitWorks will be sponsoring a holiday event for our volunteers, our steering committee, our partners at the MBTA, and our friends...at the Beantown pub! This informal event is in appreciation of these individuals and is meant to give folks an opportunity to meet each other and the TransitWorks organizers. Details follow:

What: A holiday event sponsored by TransitWorks. There will be free appetizers and pool for attendees, and a cash bar.

When: December 14, 2004, from 5:30 – 7PM.

Where: The Beantown Pub's Blue Billiard Room, 100 Tremont Street, Downtown Boston, (617) 426-0111

Please contact us at (617) 557-7349 or volunteer@transitworks.org if you have any questions or comments, or for directions to the pub. Thank you!



Happy Holidays!





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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.*

Select Comments from the 2004 MBTA Ridership Survey

Thank you to all who took the 2004 MBTA Ridership Survey! Your participation was, and is, crucial to our success. As part of this survey effort, TransitWorks received many comments about the MBTA. Some of these comments were complimentary of the T, and some critical. We thought we would share a few with you. The comments presented here were submitted to TransitWorks anonymously.

I access MBTA information online which is easy to use and very helpful.

My biggest problem is how long I have to wait for a train. When it finally arrives, it's crammed full of angry, frustrated people. Even if the MBTA just put a few more vehicles out, I think the situation could be improved immensely.

The MBTA is doing a great job. I know that working with the public is not easy. I congratulate all of them, and thank them for the service.

I wish all the MBTA vehicles ran at the same frequency on all days of the week. Some of us who don't have a car find it hard to schedule time to use the T.

Overall I really appreciate the MBTA service. I don't have a car and there aren't many cities in the Country with public transportation that would allow me to get around without a car. Thank you!

In the summer it is EXTREMELY hot in most vehicles. This is very uncomfortable.

I use the MBTA 6 days a week, sometimes more than twice a day. I appreciate the service. I don't have a complaint about the schedule or reliability. I understand that there will be times when delays in service will occur.

The overall service is good, but when there are problems/delays the MBTA is not very forthcoming with information about cause/length of

delay. Commuters should be kept informed about these issues. Better, timely, and accurate information about length of wait is needed.

The MBTA is making GREAT IMPROVEMENTS to some stations.

Signage can be confusing, though it improved for the DNC! Better signs at South Station would help a lot, especially with the construction going on. I always see out-of-towners looking bewildered there.

Please continue reminding riders to take their belongings and trash when leaving the vehicles.

Some MBTA bus drivers are terrific, helpful, and friendly. Others are gruff and indifferent. Anything that can be done to help the drivers to be more inclined toward the former would be greatly appreciated.

The MBTA did a great job during the DNC – thank you! I told all my friends and relatives.