



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

**SENATOR WILLIAM N. BROWNSBERGER**

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*Chairman*  
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JOINT COMMITTEES ON  
ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL  
RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURE  
MUNICIPALITIES AND  
REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

March 8, 2012

Jonathan R. Davis  
Acting General Manager  
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority  
10 Park Plaza, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Mr. Davis,

I write to you today in opposition to the MBTA's proposed service cuts.

*Opposition to the service cuts*

Over the past two months, I have spent hours listening to riders testify in hearings conducted by the MBTA. As I have listened to riders, it has sunk in to me that cutting transportation service is qualitatively different from many other kinds of budget cuts. Given the lives and investments that have been built around MBTA service patterns, it seems irresponsible to propose adjusting MBTA service with the relatively short notice that the budget process affords. The short run budget process allows little systematic exploration of alternatives. And when decisions about route eliminations are finalized, people and businesses may have only weeks to develop alternative plans.

I encourage a sounder planning process that would look further ahead, identify routes that are uneconomical, conduct hearings targeted on specific routes, consider alternative service approaches, and if route eliminations truly are necessary and advisable, give people twelve to eighteen months notice of the expected changes.

Although a sounder planning process would be my preferred method of addressing the MBTA's current financial troubles, and although I oppose any route eliminations through the budget process, I do wish to speak to particular service cuts that my constituents have identified to me as affecting them. I have received hundreds of emails, phone calls, web posts, and petition

signatures from constituents who oppose the MBTA service cut proposals. During my district office hours, I have spoken to individuals of all ages and backgrounds who rely on local bus routes on a daily basis.

From Belmont to Brighton to Back Bay, service must be protected for the public good and economic vitality. It must be our priority to maintain adequate transportation options for individuals to travel between neighboring communities and throughout the metropolitan region to access educational, employment, and cultural opportunities and also to patronize local business areas:

- Residents in Arlington, Watertown, Cambridge, and Belmont hope to see the 62, 76, 350, and 351 bus routes protected to maintain an affordable alternative to reaching suburban towns close to and beyond route 128.
- Brighton residents rely on the 501 and 503 express buses to get to downtown Boston.
- The 64 is one of the few routes between Brighton and Cambridge. It is the only accessible and convenient route for Oak Square residents, and it should be saved.
- The 74/75 and 78 buses provide essential commuting service for many Belmont and Arlington residents.
- Fenway and Back Bay residents utilize the 55 bus heavily.
- The 52 bus provides a connection used by many at the Perkins School for the Blind.
- Green “E” Line service should be available on weekends to access hospitals and museums.
- Weekend commuter rail service should be protected to benefit urban businesses and attractions.

Traffic would inevitably rise with fewer bus routes available and thus increase congestion while threatening air quality. For instance, consider the 78 bus route that travels between Arlmont Village and Harvard Station. Several constituents have approached me with concerns regarding the existing and consistent heavy traffic along this route, especially on Concord Avenue, Blanchard Road, and Brighton Street. In addition, existing overcrowded bus routes, such as the 57 utilized by Allston and Brighton residents, could be more heavily burdened by the rise in passengers. Throughout my district, residents believe that approved and proposed development requires sufficient public transportation options.

#### *Accountability of the MBTA in the short run*

The MBTA must work to meet its own financial obligations and accept accountability to avoid service cuts if at all possible. For instance, I encourage you to review the cost saving methods and operational efficiency recommendations reported by Inspector General Gregory Sullivan and his office in a letter sent to you on February 14, 2012. These recommendations would enhance the financial health of the RIDE and paratransit services, which so many people rely on to access our communities.

In the immediate future, I reluctantly acknowledge the need for a 2013 fare increase. However, we should try to protect the most vulnerable public transit users who already allocate a large portion of their personal budgets to fares. The fare increases for seniors and the disabled should be limited. I oppose increasing base fares for those who utilize the RIDE and also do not support placing high premiums for non-ADA trips. Also, perhaps the MBTA could give Charlie

Card discounts for persons who are participating in selected programs that are based on income eligibility or disability.

Once the MBTA board has completed its budgeting process in April, I would support allocating additional state funding in Fiscal 2013 if necessary to prevent service cuts. However, the political will for such financial support may not exist, especially from the legislators representing communities that use the MBTA lightly or not at all. So, I do encourage the MBTA to do the best it can to avoid route eliminations within its own funding structure.

Long run accountability of the legislature

In the long run, I will absolutely support state funding to stabilize and strengthen transportation generally in our Commonwealth. State funds should be allocated first and foremost to restructure debt payments and improve maintenance.

In order to generate additional revenue in the long term, I am prepared to support a gas tax increase. 21 years have passed since we last increased the gas tax. I support allocating all gas tax revenues back to the region where they are raised. Consequently, residents on the Cape and in western Massachusetts would not be paying for the MBTA.

I see the preservation of a robust public transportation system as a fundamental economic and environmental necessity (very consistent with the Department of Transportation's GreenDOT initiative). I am entirely committed to working with you towards this goal.

Conclusion

Thank you for your attention to my concerns about the process and to the particular routes that are especially vital to my constituents and the economic vitality of the communities in my district. I look forward to working collaboratively with you on solutions. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if I can be of assistance in any way. I can be reached on my cell phone at 617-771-8274 and also at my State House office at 617-722-1280.

Sincerely,



William N. Brownsberger  
STATE SENATOR

CC: Richard A. Davey, Secretary of Transportation