



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
THE GENERAL COURT
STATE HOUSE BOSTON 02133-1053

September 19, 2018

MBTA Fiscal and Management Control Board
Chair Joseph Aiello
10 Park Plaza, Suite 3910
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Chairman Aiello,

We would like to offer a joint comment on the MBTA Focus 40 Plan.

We are concerned that: (1) the I-90 Allston-Brighton interchange is not among the priority places; (2) north-south rapid transit which could connect through that place to the Kendall and Longwood priority places (as well as to priority residential places) is not contemplated in the plan.

The plan is built on the concept of priority places. Missing among those places is the potentially huge concentration of employment in the I-90 Allston-Brighton Interchange and the adjacent Harvard development areas. Given that the Commonwealth is in the process of creating a place that very likely will become a priority place, we feel that it should get more explicit consideration in the plan.

The plan recognizes that in places where employment grows dramatically without multi-directional rapid transit connectivity, unacceptable congestion develops. We are urging that the Commonwealth take a Transit First approach to the I-90 development: Instead of building the highway interchange and street grid and waiting for development, build the transit infrastructure first and wait for development.

We are deeply concerned that if we delay planning for better service for this area, our neighborhoods will experience decades of increased congestion while development outpaces available transit. That has already been the sad chronic experience of our neighborhoods and we are committed to avoiding the compounding of that fundamental planning mistake.

The plan does mention a "multi-modal West Station" in the "We're Planning" category for commuter rail, but it does not define the modes that would serve the station. Even if West Station is built, the relatively low volume and mono-directional service afforded by commuter rail will certainly make only a minor contribution to traffic relief. Surface bus service will be

inevitably constrained by traffic and, as in Kendall and Longwood, will not make up for the lack of a multi-directional rapid transit grid. If we are able to achieve a subway-like urban rail service to that station, that will help, but the area will still be no better served by transit than the over-congested Kendall and Longwood areas to which the need for better service has been recognized.

For the benefit of the I-90 priority place, but also for the benefit of Kendall and Longwood priority places, we ask that the plan consider explicitly the need for north-south rapid transit connecting through West Station. We recognize that there is a blank space in the plan for whatever may come of the Rail Vision study and the Grand Junction connection is within the scope of that study. However, the Grand Junction connection does not connect through to the south and is only the beginning of the potential solution.

We note that a more extended north-south connection could benefit the underserved residential places identified by the study, borrowing concepts from the previously-contemplated Urban Ring plan. We also note that a focused project connecting the three major employment areas might be appropriate for a financing approach that involved major beneficiaries as contributors.

We urge that the plan be modified to explicitly recognize the Allston-Brighton I-90 interchange as a priority place and that the plan better address the need for a north-south connection connecting the interchange area to both Kendall and Longwood and perhaps to the residential priority places beyond.

Sincerely,



Senator William N. Brownsberger
Second Suffolk & Middlesex



Senator Sal N. DiDomenico
Middlesex & Suffolk



Representative Kevin G. Honan
17th Suffolk



Representative Michael J. Moran
18th Suffolk



Councilor Mark Ciommo
Boston City Council – District 9

Cc: Secretary Stephanie Pollack
Focus 40 Team