



Ruthanne Fuller
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Philip Eng, General Manager
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
10 Park Plaza, Suite 3910
Boston, MA 02116

SUBJECT: FY 2025-2029 Capital Investment Plan Comments from the City of Newton

Dear General Manager Eng:

On behalf of the people who live, work and visit the City of Newton, first, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the MBTA FY 2025-2029 Capital Investment Plan. Second, thank you for your commitment to revamping the Capital Program Strategy to efficiently improve the MBTA system. The structure and presentation of the plan continues to improve, and the ordering of plan priorities, explanation of programs and modes, and explanation of funding sources contribute to a plan that is comprehensive and understandable. We appreciate the careful balance of addressing the State of Good Repair and safety backlogs while not losing sight of the modernization and resiliency needs of the system.

I want to start with our most serious concern, the acute need for **construction funding** in the CIP to build a **new Newtonville Commuter Rail Station** with either a center platform or double-sided platforms with elevators to provide accessible and more frequent service.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Newton Commuter Rail Stations

We have been grateful for the MBTA's ongoing work and dedicated design funding to bring all three Newton commuter rail stations up to full design, and the partnership with the Capital Delivery team. This year, the MBTA shifted its energies from designing three accessible stations to initially focusing on making one station in Newton accessible in Phase 1. While we were disappointed at the extra delay for two of our stations, we were supportive of a plan that could happen faster and with the necessary funding identified and secured. We appreciate the inclusion of design funding for this station in the proposed CIP.

However, we are extremely disappointed that construction funding is not included in the FY25-29 CIP. Newton cannot wait another decade for an accessible station and frequent, reliable commuter rail. The lack of accessibility hobbles our residents and people who work in Newton. The lack of frequent service undermines the quality of life and the ability to get to work for so many.

We strongly advocate for construction funding and support efforts to locate and bring about new funding resources. We are grateful to Representative Auchincloss for his efforts to secure federal funding, and to Representative Kay Khan, who is scheduled to retire at the end of this term, and who has spent the greater part of her legislative career strongly advocating and looking to secure the funding necessary to bring basic accessibility to the Newton Commuter Rail stations. We are also deeply appreciative of our legislative delegation's previous work, both Senator Creem and State Representatives Khan, Balser and Lawn, in securing significant funding for these stations in the Transportation Bond Bill.

The City of Newton completed the hard work in 2023 of changing our zoning regulations around our Green Line and commuter rail stations to allow more housing by right, to encourage transit-oriented development, and to comply with the MBTA Communities Law. Now we need the MBTA to improve service and accessibility at Newton's commuter rail stations to make the benefits of transit-oriented development a reality.

Commuter Rail Initiatives

Improving the commuter rail signal system is critical to a reliable rail system. We appreciate the attention to track modifications and state-of-good-repair improvements along the Framingham/Worcester Line that will provide more reliable and frequent service.

INVESTMENT OBJECTIVES

Safety, Reliability and Modernization

We fully support the prioritization of safety and reliability in the CIP, which is consistent with past Board guidance and with the needs of the MBTA and its riders. We appreciate the MBTA prioritized Green Line track improvements and continued focus on bringing assets into a State of Good Repair.

Accessibility

We greatly appreciate the plan's identification of enhanced and improved system accessibility as an important goal of the CIP. That said, we are concerned that today, more than 30 years after the Americans with Disabilities Act became law, so much of our public transit network is inaccessible to people with disabilities as well as people pushing a stroller or carrying luggage. Making public transportation universally accessible benefits everyone, and we look forward to a time when people of all abilities achieve true freedom of movement through the region's public transportation system. We understand that there are many accessibility projects that are not included in the CIP for lack of funding. This amounts to delayed justice for hundreds of thousands of people in eastern Massachusetts. At this rate of investment, it will be decades before Massachusetts upholds the letter and the spirit of the law. Accessibility is a matter of civil rights. We recognize that the MBTA's capital program must be funded, and that it is up to the Governor and the legislature to appropriate the funding needed to address this persistent inequity.

Sustainability and Climate Resilience

Transportation is a leading source of carbon emissions, and transportation pollution has significant negative health impacts. Converting to clean transportation is a high priority, and we urge the MBTA to help uphold the state's climate targets by and to renewable energy sources

with all deliberate speed. Similarly, the MBTA must continue to take action to ensure resilience in the face of extreme weather events and elevated stormwater volumes associated with climate change.

Conclusion: More Funding Needed

To achieve safety and reliability, accessibility, and sustainability and climate resilience, Massachusetts must make much greater needed investments in public transit. These are critical and strategic goals for Massachusetts, and the amount of spending in this five-year plan does not reflect the urgency and criticality of these goals. The CIP report highlights that CIP funding sources are expected to decline. We urge the MBTA, the Healey/Driscoll Administration and the State Legislature to reconsider the level of investments reflected in the CIP, realizing that historically the state has underfunded transportation with the stakes now much higher.

We greatly value the MBTA service provided to the residents, workforce and visitors in Newton. Public transportation is integral to Newton, and we are invested in and committed to a robust future for the MBTA.

As a road map for the MBTA's capital investments, the CIP reflects the Commonwealth's priorities and values. One of the administration's strategic goals, shared by the City of Newton, is to make meaningful progress in addressing the region's persistent housing crisis. The lack of housing has had negative consequences for families, our economy, our health, our climate, and for transportation. We consider the MBTA and the Healey/Driscoll Administration as partners in addressing the housing crisis, and we see investment in public transportation capital and operations as inextricably linked to housing and land use.

In closing, my urgent request is for the MBTA to include capital construction funding for the Newtonville Commuter Rail Station as part of this and future CIP outlays to provide the certainty that this essential project can move forward in an expeditious manner.

Sincerely,



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor, City of Newton