

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
ATTN: Board of Directors
Suite 3830
10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116

Tuesday, December 6, 2022

Re: City of Cambridge feedback on the updated MBTA Bus Network Redesign

To the members of the MBTA Board of Directors:

The City of Cambridge is writing to provide comments on the updated Bus Network Redesign proposal. We understand that the MBTA Board of Directors voted to approve the Bus Network Redesign vision at the November meeting. That approval was conditioned on the completion of a service equity analysis. We write to you after this vote based on our understanding that the Board and staff made a commitment to welcoming and responding to additional feedback from municipalities.

Your response to our comment letter

Our letter in July had ten suggestions or comments on the Bus Network Redesign proposal. We thank you for responding significantly or accepting our suggestions for seven of these. Our suggestions in May were related the proposed Routes T39, T96, 55/85/CT2, 62/76, 80/87/88, 83, and 91. These modifications and suggestions respond well to our letter and much of the feedback that Cambridge community members gave to city staff.

We would like MBTA staff to provide a follow-up response on the three remaining comments from our July letter. This includes our comments or suggestions on:

- Route 68: We suggested maintaining all-day service
- Route T109/86: We requested further consideration of Allston or Brighton as terminal for new route T109 and review of the feasibility of Harvard Square as terminal for both routes
- New route: We requested consideration of a new route from Kendall Square to Chelsea via Gilmore and Tobin Bridges

Specifically, we raise again our serious concerns about the proposal to convert Route 68 to peak hour-only schedules. We are concerned by the potential negative impact of this schedule proposal because the Route 68 travels through neighborhoods in eastern and central Cambridge with some the largest concentrations of low-income households and households of color. As an example, there are several large housing complexes for low-income families in The Port. These are not close to parallel bus routes which could

provide alternate service in the Bus Network Redesign proposal. On the western end of the Route 68, there are municipal facilities that provide access to opportunity. These include the city's public high school - Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, the War Memorial Recreation Center, and the City's Main Library. In particular, the loss of service in the middle of the day is negatively impactful to those who are not adult workers with 9-to-5 employment.

Additional community comments in response to the updated proposal

Since the release of the updated proposal earlier this month, we have heard continued concerns from students and parents about the proposal resulting in cuts to MBTA-provided school transportation in Cambridge. This includes the proposed conversion of Route 68 to peak-hour only service and the morning service on Route 75 that no longer runs between Cambridge Rindge & Latin School and Strawberry Hill and West Cambridge.

In addition, members of the Cambridge community have shared their concerns that Routes 69, 78, and 83, do not have sufficient service today and are unimproved in the proposal. These routes primarily serve local commercial centers, municipal facilities, and neighborhood destinations. They also serve as school transportation to middle and high schools in Cambridge. Specifically, Cambridge community members have identified that the Routes 75 and 78 serve locations of after-school sports and other after-school activities. However, the network proposal does not provide frequent midday and late evening service to access these opportunities. With 525 new apartments beginning leasing in 2023 and further development expected in the Alewife Quadrangle within the next 5 years, Cambridge community members have also asked if the service levels on Concord Avenue are sufficient to serve new residents and new employees in the area. Based on these additional community concerns, we suggest the MBTA reinstate, as soon as possible, the morning school trip on Route 75 from Aberdeen Avenue. In addition, we suggest that the MBTA add afternoon school trips from Cambridge Rindge and Latin School on Routes 74 or 78 and Route 75. Finally, we encourage the MBTA to further review frequency of service on Routes 69, 78, and 83.

In conclusion, we understand that the MBTA has the immediate challenge to secure enough bus operators to run current scheduled service and must hire significantly more operators for this network vision to become a reality. Please let us know how we can partner with you to assist in those efforts. In addition, we look forward to further conversations on dedicated lanes and signal priority for buses. Please do not hesitate to contact Andrew Reker, Transit Planner at areker@cambridgema.gov or 617-349-6959 with any questions.

Sincerely,

Yi-An Huang
City Manager

Sumbul Siddiqui
Mayor

Dr. Victoria L. Greer
Superintendent