



Are you on board?

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November 9, 2020

Fiscal and Management Control Board  
10 Park Plaza - Suite 3510  
Boston, MA 02116

Re: Preservation of MBTA Ferry Service

Dear Members of the Fiscal Management Control Board and Secretary Pollack,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment at today's meeting.

As advocates for a more equitable, accessible, and resilient waterfront, Boston Harbor Now is deeply concerned about proposals that would cut transit service in the region. We know that reduction of transit service restricts the mobility of many members of our community. Not only does it limit the economic opportunity of people who depend on buses, trains, and ferries to get to work, it also reduces the mobility of people who want to safely travel around the region to parks and other open spaces when they lack high quality outdoor experiences in their neighborhoods. We must ensure that affordable and comprehensive transit is available and fully funded now and in the future.

We have been particularly concerned about proposed cuts to ferry services, which we believe are an integral part of the MBTA's transit network. Ferry services from Pemberton Point in Hull provide a critical lifeline to downtown Boston with significant travel time savings and reliable transit for the essential workers who live there. Robust ferry services from Hingham, which date back to the 1970's have supported one of the most robust transit oriented developments in the MBTA system at Hewitt's Cove.

Both of these services have already been curtailed based on assumptions that workers require "typical" daytime commuter service, which does not reflect the needs of workers with less traditional schedules who can no longer depend on the ferry to transport them round trip. The Greenbush Line of the Commuter Rail is neither a substitute nor an alternative and must be viewed as complementary. With limited parking and less frequent service than the ferries, it cannot serve as a replacement for the frequency and dependability of the scheduled ferry services that have been historically provided.

If short-term schedule adaptations are needed, it is essential to work with the residents of these South Shore communities to create a model that works for the passengers who are either fully dependent on this service to get to work or who are opting out of driving into Boston.

Ferry services to Charlestown also remain essential. With health care workers in Charlestown, including those of the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, increasingly relying on this service and with ongoing construction of the North Washington Street Bridge that limits the efficiency of shuttle buses and provides a more harrowing experience to pedestrians and cyclists, the Charlestown ferry from Long Wharf has proved to be an irreplaceable alternative. Restoring weekend service should also be considered.

Furthermore, additional ferry services in the Inner Harbor—particularly from East Boston where it can supplement the Blue Line, which remains heavily utilized—should be considered and supported.

While no one knows what the coming months will bring to the region from a health perspective, the region can only address historic and ongoing inequality, support economic growth, and develop a more environmentally sustainable transportation system by providing robust transit service to all who live here. We urge you to avoid service cuts to buses, trains, and ferries, especially long term decisions about service, while the legislature finalizes the budget. We further encourage you to ensure that transit remains affordable for riders across the system and to continue to invest in capital improvement that will improve service delivery, air quality, and climate justice.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alice Brown".

Alice Brown  
Chief of Planning and Policy  
Boston Harbor Now