



Are you on board?

15 State Street Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02109
617 223 8667
bostonharbornow.org

February 24, 2022

MBTA Board of Directors
10 Park Plaza – Suite 3510
Boston, MA 02116

Re: Proposed MBTA Fare Tariff Changes and Low Income Fares

Dear Members of the MBTA Board of Directors and Secretary Tesler,

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

The MBTA Board is currently considering a range of fare proposals to improve existing fare structures and provide more options for people who are currently eligible for reduced fares. The current proposals only scratch the surface of needed changes, but they point to a range of issues that can be addressed in small ways now and larger and more impactful ways moving forward.

In determining future fare policy, it is imperative that the MBTA keep as its guiding star the goal of making the entire transit system more affordable for people whose mobility is limited by the cost. In response to shifting travel needs across the region, Boston Harbor Now supports a system-wide low-income fare policy. Low income residents of the Boston region deserve access to housing and job opportunities linked to all modes of public transit.

Ferries, as well as commuter rail, can and should be a part of strategies to create more inclusive transit. Ferries, if operated and priced to promote broad access and affordability, can help our region meet its climate and transit equity goals.

We are strongly supportive of the fare improvements proposed so far:

- Creating a reduced fare monthly pass for regular ferry passengers
- Allowing the Reduced LinkPass to be valid on the Inner Harbor Ferry

Both changes enable more equitable access to water transportation options for seniors, persons with disabilities, and young people eligible for middle school, high school, and youth passes by integrating ferry services as a transit option on any trip.

To avoid the cost burdens of paying separately for ferry and train/bus service, the ferry between Charlestown and Long Wharf should be fully integrated into all pass programs and included in free transfers. Though the technology is currently



Are you on board?

15 State Street Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02109
617 223 8667
bostonharbornow.org

limited, this integration broadens the mobility options and trip choices for everyone who uses the MBTA system.

Looking ahead, additional opportunities should be evaluated as further policy is developed in advance of the future fare changes and technological improvements.

- Provide reduced fares to low income riders. People across the region between the ages of 25 and 65 have limited mobility due to the cost burden of their transit trips, and they lack particularly lack access to opportunities that are connected by ferries and commuter rail.
- Enable free transfers between ferries and other MBTA modes. Each time separate fares are required with mode changes and transfers, access to transit trips becomes financially constrained. Commuter rail and south shore ferry passengers alike should be able to transfer to MBTA bus and subway services without paying an additional fare.
- Create a system that allows for transfers between MBTA services and regional ferries. Either through the adoption of now-independent services or revenue sharing agreements, MBTA passes that allow for transfers should be incorporated into the fare payment options for other Boston ferry services to Salem, Winthrop, and Quincy as well as the inner harbor services now operated by the Convention Center Authority.

As long as ferry rides require a separate fare, they'll only be useful for people with disposable income to spend on the extra trip connection or who live and work at each end of the service. We can make them a meaningful part of equitable transportation choices for all Bostonians when reduced fares are offered to more people and transfers are built into the system.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alice Brown".

Alice Brown
Chief of Planning and Policy
Boston Harbor Now