

Regional

Boston Metro Transit District

Rebalancing transit dollars to jointly fund new services in core communities

Policy Score

- Access 1
- Access 2
- Safety 1
- Safety 2
- Reliability
- Affordability
- Sustainability/Resiliency 1
- Sustainability/Resiliency 2
- Governance

This policy recommendation came out of the Needs Assessment

Policy Description

Boston will spearhead a new core transit district in collaboration with nearby communities to provide additional transit services that expand the MBTA's capacity within the broader region. Building off of local shuttle successes, the district would focus on non-competing modes that may include shared transportation and technology providers that could extend the range of MBTA transit or alternative modes of travel such as mini-buses, streetcars, or urban rail on routes such as the Fairmount Indigo Line. Boston would complement this with a new transit streets initiative that focuses on speeding up buses and improving the passenger experience on city streets. Broader and creative revenue sources would help fund new services and improvements, and integrated fare payment and information technologies would make the services feel seamlessly integrated with the MBTA.

Benefits and Issues Addressed

Today, the MBTA is heavily burdened by serving a large region with extensive on-going capital repair and maintenance needs which prevent it from providing many new transit services. Meanwhile, transit demand is at an all-time high and growing, especially in the core service area of Boston and nearby communities. A transit district for this core area would offer new services—potentially some recommended in this action plan—that the MBTA cannot support today while making Boston's low per capita transit expenditure more in line with other large American cities. With a new focus on operating its own transit service, the City would be able to make additional street and signal improvements that enhance transit quality and speed, beyond those made for many existing MBTA routes.



Mayor Walsh worked with his counterparts in the Metro Mayors group on a Climate Mitigation Commitment. Photo credit: MAPC

Best Practices

In San Francisco, CA, the Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) manages the entire surface transportation network, including taxi regulation. This includes operating Muni Transit, a network of streetcars, buses, and cable cars. To the user, the Clipper Card makes transfer between Muni and other regional services such as BART or Golden Gate Transit seamless. www.sfmta.com

Portland, OR, owns the Portland Streetcar, and operates it in conjunction with the regional transit agency, TriMet, and a non-profit specifically for the Streetcar. The three parties have a "master agreement" governing this relationship. The system includes 16 track miles today and carries more than 15,000 trips daily. portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/573729

Similarly, the Atlanta, GA, funds the Atlanta Streetcar, while several other transit agencies serve the region. The City has leveraged funding from both federal and regional sources, as well as a Downtown Improvement District. The streetcar serves 12 stops with 15 minute frequencies and has several additional lines planned in the future.

Implementation

Approximate Cost: \$10 million per year for operations

Potential Funding Sources: City of Boston and parking impact fees

Who's Responsible: BTM

Time Frame: 5 to 15 years

Public Input

"More integrated forms of transit should be better connected."

—Roslindale roundtable

"Sharing economies are not accessible to everyone. More integration with traditional public transit. More innovative transportation."

"Small-scale, flexible transit."

—Roxbury roundtable