

Crosstown

Consolidated Smart Shuttle System

Eliminate redundant service with responsive vehicle requests

Policy Description

An on-demand shuttle service would provide circulation between major rail stations and large employers in congested commercial districts. This would build upon similar efforts by the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center (BCEC), BTDC, and Massport to improve access to the South Boston Waterfront, as well as the current system of MASCO and EZRide shuttles which connect North Station to the LMA and Kendall Square. Rather than running separate shuttles for individual buildings or employers, a consolidated fleet could run at higher frequencies with lower overall cost. A system designed to request vehicles electronically via the web and mobile devices could also allow for an ebb and flow of shuttles that is responsive to demand. While preserving preference for employees, allowing the public to use these shuttles for a nominal fare can better integrate this supplemental service into the existing transit system.



Existing shuttle services stack up while waiting for passengers. Photo credit: Boston Globe

Policy Score

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

#16 in public voting

Benefits and Issues Addressed

Today, numerous employer shuttles, designed to serve congested districts, operate redundant and underutilized service with multiple independent buses running from South Station to separate but adjacent buildings in the Seaport. They operate regardless of need, do not offer service to non-employees trying to reach the same location, and can get stuck in traffic. MASCO and EZRide shuttles at North Station are each somewhat consolidated systems but remain independent from each other and other non-participating but nearby employers who would benefit from their services today. A consolidated system could provide more regular service to a wider cross-section of potential users and be eligible for access to exclusive bus lanes and queue jumps on City streets to serve these places and others that the MBTA does not yet connect—such as Harvard’s burgeoning Allston campus—expanding transit access while reducing overall delay and congestion.

Implementation

Approximate Cost: \$500,000 for an operations plan

Potential Funding Sources: BCEC, Massport, developers and employers, MASCO, and area universities with support from MBTA and BTDC

Who’s Responsible: Service providers who would be selected through open RFP process

Time Frame: Within five years

Best Practices

MASCO already operates effective shuttle services for the Longwood Medical Area and can serve as a model for consolidation. Leveraging app-based technology to request needed service can improve efficiency for these shuttles here and across the city. masco.org/lma-shuttles/routes

Public Input

“Consolidate shuttles and buses → create monopoly to focus \$ and reduce inefficiencies.”

–Chinatown roundtable

“Privately owned hospital bus shuttles (LMA for one) should offer space for the public. Hospitals do, after all, benefit tremendously from the financial breaks they get from the city.”

–Roxbury roundtable