

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2107

December 3, 2020

Fiscal and Control Management Board
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Members of the Fiscal and Control Management Board,

I write to express my strong opposition to the Board's proposed cuts to transit service in the Commonwealth. I recognize the devastating impact of COVID-19 on transit agencies across the country, however cutting services and laying off workers is not the solution. Public transit is and has always been an essential public good. For many of our most vulnerable neighbors, our public transit system is the only way to access healthcare, get to and from jobs, and buy groceries and other goods. To deny communities access to these critical transit services in the midst of this crisis would be catastrophic.

Furthermore, cutting services without a firm plan to return offerings would dramatically impact our public transit system's vital role in any long-term economic recovery for the Commonwealth. At this time, the MBTA's goal must be to provide consistent and reliable services so that riders—many of whom are essential workers serving on the frontlines—are able to travel as safely as possible while taking precautions and remaining physically distant.

I join many public transit advocates and community members across the Massachusetts 7th Congressional District in urgently requesting that the MBTA not allow this crisis to dictate long-term policy. It would be catastrophic for our communities if the MBTA proceeds with plans to cut the frequency of service by 20%, halt bus service at midnight, lower the number of daily commuter rail runs, and eliminate ferry services.¹

These and other proposed cuts are driven by a series of misguided and inequitable policy decisions. In fact, the MBTA's proposed cuts appears to be aimed at preventing a potential shortfall for the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2021, not at covering current operational costs. The MBTA must continue prioritizing the needs of residents today while policymakers do the much-needed work to fight for federal and state funds in the weeks and months to come.

¹ Editorial Board, "The Future of Public Transportation Is on the Line in Massachusetts - The Boston Globe," BostonGlobe.com (The Boston Globe, November 23, 2020), <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/11/23/opinion/future-public-transportation-is-line-massachusetts/>.

In March, Congress passed the CARES Act, which provided approximately \$827 million in federal funding to the MBTA. In recognition of the ongoing financial strains that have been caused by the pandemic, my colleagues and I in the House of Representatives have since passed three different comprehensive relief packages that would provide additional support to our public transit agencies. I am working hard to ensure that the MBTA gets the support necessary from the federal government to weather this crisis and look forward to continuing to work together to ensure that the funding needs of the MBTA are met. I acknowledge that the federal response from the Trump Administration has failed Massachusetts, and daily I am fighting for long overdue relief both with colleagues in Congress and in partnership with the incoming Biden-Harris Administration.

As Congresswoman for the Massachusetts 7th and co-founder of the Future of Transportation Caucus, I am committed to fighting for our transportation system and pushing for the resources needed during this crisis and in any long-term economic recovery. The challenges facing the MBTA are daunting but not impossible. It will require a strategic partnership between Congress, the State Legislature, and the MBTA. However, before we can work towards any solution, we must agree that transit is essential now and that vital transit services will be critical to the Commonwealth's economic recovery. Therefore, I respectfully request that the MBTA abandon proposed plans to make permanent or long-term service cuts, commit to advancing affordability for all transit riders, and ensure plans for critical transformative capital investments, climate justice, and air quality improvements moving forward in 2021 and beyond.

Thank you for your attention on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ayanna Pressley".

CC: Secretary Stephanie Pollack, General Manager Steve Pofatak.