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# **REVIEW OF MASSDOT FARE INCREASE AND SERVICE CUT PROPOSALS**

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Presented by the Finance Committee to member communities for their  
consideration prior to the February 29, 2012 full board meeting

MBTA  
Advisory  
Board

February 2012

The MBTA Advisory Board is an independent statutory organization which represents the interests of the 175 cities and towns in the MBTA service district. Each year these municipalities contribute over \$150 million in subsidies to the MBTA via municipal assessments.

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# Dedication



Dedicated to the memory of the Honorable Kevin Hagan White  
(1929 – 2012)

Mayor, City of Boston  
1968 – 1984

Member, MBTA Advisory Board  
1968 - 1984

**Preface**

Massachusetts General Law chapter 161A, section 5 (d) states:

“No proposal for a systemwide change in fares or decrease in systemwide service of 10 per cent or more shall be effective until said proposal shall first have been the subject of one or more public hearings and shall have been reviewed by the advisory board and, for a systemwide increase in fares of 10\% or more, the MBTA board has made findings on the environmental impact of such increase in fares and, for a systemwide decrease in service of 10\% or more, the decrease shall be the subject of an environmental notification form initiating review pursuant to sections 61 and 62H, inclusive, of chapter 30. Any systemwide increase in fares of 10 per cent or more shall conform to the fare policy established pursuant to paragraph (r). The authority shall increase fares only to provide needed revenue and shall not increase fares solely for the purpose of funding the stabilization fund established pursuant to section 19.”

The MBTA Advisory Board finds that MassDOT’s proposed scenarios would increase MBTA fares by 10% or more, and would decrease MBTA service by 10% or more. In recognition of this the Authority presented these scenarios to the Advisory Board (the first such public meeting) on January 9, 2012. The Advisory Board, as a whole and via committee has reviewed said proposals and finds that the Authority has met its statutory obligations under section 5 (d).

**Executive Summary**

Based on testimony at public meetings on MassDOT’s plans to raise MBTA fares and cut MBTA service, as well as a decade-long track-record of sounding the alarm about the MBTA’s cyclical and structural operating and capital financing crises, the MBTA Advisory Board offers the following proposals to close the MBTA’s FY13 operating budget deficit and help close its projected FY14 operating deficit. The framework for these proposals is based upon the following principals:

- Focus on commuters- the vast majority of ridership who just want to get to/from work
- No service cuts or changes to RIDE service area for the time being.
- Buy time for Patrick/Murray Administration and Legislative Leadership to find a long-term solution to our broken transportation system.
- Focus on Transportation Reform and co-operation by all parts of State Government
- Those who benefit the most from transit service should contribute towards it’s proportionally and equitably.

To close the FY13 \$161.1 million operating deficit the Advisory Board makes the following proposals to generate new revenue (\$91.6 million) and find more savings through transportation reform (\$79.0 million).

<u>FY 13 Revenue/Savings Proposals</u>	<u>Revenue/Savings (\$, net, millions)</u>
New Revenue from MBTA Ridership	75.0
More Savings from Transportation Reform	70.8
MBTA Innovation and Restructuring	11.7
<u>Revenue from Institutional Beneficiaries of MBTA Service</u>	<u>13.1</u>
TOTAL:	170.6

The Advisory Board’s proposal, while not perfect, does preserve the transit system and bring more stakeholders into the discussion around fixing public transportation. Most importantly it provides a window of opportunity for the Patrick/Murray Administration and Legislature to lead us out of this mess. MassDOT’s proposals offer only a one-year fix that leads right back to even more cuts and fare hikes next year. Since 2003 the Advisory Board and numerous other reports, articles, and papers have heralded the MBTA’s fiscal woes and warned of draconian fare increases and service cuts. 2012 is the year when either such cuts and increases come to pass or the year that our elected leaders finally get serious and deliver the comprehensive, long-term solution that will allow Massachusetts to thrive in the years ahead.

## Introduction

In January 2012 MassDOT announced plans to close the MBTA's \$161 million FY13 operating budget deficit via fare increases and service cuts. Since this announcement at numerous public hearings and meetings the reaction has been clear- the public demands something else.

While there is not unanimity about how this new solution should be framed, broadly speaking there seems to be consensus around the following themes:

- The MBTA is mired in a structural and cyclical deficit, which requires a legislative fix.
- Such a legislative solution will eventually require new revenue, cost shifting, and debt relief to be successful.
- Riders cannot and should not bear the burden of new revenue alone.
- Fare increases, while unpalatable, are preferable to service cuts.
- The burden of revenue increases and cost reductions should be as small as possible, and should be shared by as many stakeholders as possible.
- The MBTA must do everything possible to collect all the fare revenue it is owed.
- Leadership is required from the Patrick/Murray Administration, Legislature and other leaders to find a way out of this that does not require figurative annual bloodletting.

It is important to note that the MBTA has much more than a \$161 million operating budget deficit. On paper its FY13 deficit is closer to \$185 million, which management to its credit has reduced through efficiencies, attrition, and changed work practices. It carries a debt burden of over \$8 billion in principal and interest that devours over \$400 million in spending annually. Despite such large annual payments the amount it spends on debt principal is too low for it to get out of debt at any time in the near future. Its backlog of state-of-good-repair projects is well over \$3 billion meaning that maintenance and enhancement projects will continue to be deferred and the system will continue to lurch from crisis-to-crisis, delay-to-delay, and frustration-to-frustration for want of revenue. For the past several years the Authority has plugged large operating deficits through greater efficiency, land sales, revenue securitization and by refinancing and restructuring debt. This year MassDOT's proposal is for fare increases and service cuts. In FY14 the deficit is projected at over \$201 million, and even if all the cuts and fare increases are enacted the deficit will still be over \$40 million.

The MBTA Advisory Board offers the following alternative to MassDOT’s fare increase and service cut proposals. While this alternative is certainly not a long-term fix it does buy one-year of breathing space for the Patrick/Murray Administration and Legislative leadership to finally fix transportation. For FY13 the Advisory Board proposes:

<u><b>FY 13 Revenue/Savings Proposals</b></u>	<u><b>Revenue/Savings (\$, net, millions)</b></u>
New Revenue from MBTA Ridership	
25% fare increase	<u>75.0</u>
Subtotal:	75.0
More Savings from Transportation Reform	
Assistance with transportation security costs	36.3
Transfer ferry service & assets to MassPort	31.1
Private Carrier/Suburban Bus cost reallocation	2.1
Assistance of homeless transportation costs	<u>1.3</u>
Subtotal:	70.8
MBTA Innovation and Efficiencies	
0% FY13 wage increase for all MBTA employees	8.2
MBTA abutter lease program	2.0
Alcohol advertisement program reinstatement	<u>1.5</u>
Subtotal:	11.7
Payments	
Transit proximity beneficiary payments	5.5
Special event surcharge	5.0
CR proximity beneficiary payments	<u>2.6</u>
Subtotal:	13.1
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b><u>170.6</u></b>
FY13 Operating Deficit:	<u>-161.1</u>
Surplus Towards FY14 deficit	9.5

In addition, at the request of our members and in direct response to the public testimony of the public at MassDOT’s hearings on their proposals, we request the MassDOT Board undertake the following non-revenue policy reviews and provide us a written response:

- FY13 Non-Revenue Policy Requests of MassDOT Board of Directors**
- Fare evasion study and reduction policy ASAP
  - RIDE in-person assessments as soon as possible
  - Statewide paratransit commission findings by 4/1/12
  - TOD value capture study with recommendations by 9/1/12
  - Underperforming route “watch list” policy with timeline and public processes.
  - New fare policy including support for small, regular increases

## New Revenue from Ridership (\$75 million from 25% fare increase)

The Advisory Board believes that everyone who benefits from public transportation should contribute towards it and while fare increases are unpalatable they are necessary from time to time. MassDOT proposes either a 43% average fare increase to yield \$123.2 million, or a 35% average fare increase to yield \$86.6 million. The Advisory Board estimates that a more equitable 25% fare and targeted parking fee increase will yield \$75 million.

**Table 1: Pass Fares with 25% Increase**

<u>Pass Category</u>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>%</b>
Local Bus	\$40.00	\$50.00	25.0
LinkPass	\$59.00	\$74.00	25.4
Senior/TAP	\$20.00	\$25.00	25.0
Student**	\$20.00	\$25.00	25.0
1-Day	\$9.00	\$11.25	25.0
7-Day	\$15.00	\$18.75	25.0
Inner Express	\$89.00	\$111.50	25.3
Outer Express	\$129.00	\$161.50	25.2
Commuter Rail			
Zone 1A	\$59.00	\$74.00	25.4
Zone 1	\$135.00	\$169.00	25.2
Zone 2	\$151.00	\$189.50	25.5
Zone 3	\$163.00	\$204.50	25.5
Zone 4	\$186.00	\$233.50	25.5
Zone 5	\$210.00	\$263.50	25.5
Zone 6	\$223.00	\$279.75	25.4
Zone 7	\$235.00	\$294.75	25.4
Zone 8	\$250.00	\$313.50	25.4
Interzone 1	\$65.00	\$81.50	25.4
Interzone 2	\$77.00	\$96.50	25.3
Interzone 3	\$89.00	\$111.50	25.3
Interzone 4	\$101.00	\$126.50	25.2
Interzone 5	\$113.00	\$141.50	25.2
Interzone 6	\$125.00	\$156.50	25.2
Interzone 7	\$137.00	\$171.50	25.2
Interzone 8	\$149.00	\$187.00	25.5
Commuter Boat	\$198.00	\$248.50	25.5
<b>Average</b>			<b>25.3</b>

**Table 2: Base Fares with 25% increase**

<u>CharlieCard</u>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>%</b>
Adult Bus	\$1.25	\$1.55	24.0
Senior Bus	\$0.40	\$0.50	25.0
Student Local Bus	\$0.60	\$0.75	25.0
Adult Rapid Transit	\$1.70	\$2.15	26.5
Senior Rapid Transit	\$0.60	\$0.75	25.0
Student Rapid Transit	\$0.85	\$1.00	17.7
Local bus + Rapid Transit	\$1.70	\$2.15	26.5
Inner Express Bus	\$2.80	\$3.50	25.0
Outer Express Bus	\$4.00	\$5.00	25.0
<u>CharlieTicket/On-Board Cash</u>			
Local Bus	\$1.50	\$2.00	33.3
Rapid Transit	\$2.00	\$2.50	25.0
Inner Express Bus	\$3.50	\$4.50	28.5
Outer Express Bus	\$5.00	\$6.25	25.5
<b>Average</b>			<b>25.5</b>

\*\* A 7-day student pass will be introduced to accompany the existing 5-day pass. A price for this 7-day pass has not been set.

Note: Seniors, persons with disabilities, and students pay half-fare for passes. Children 11 and under ride free with adult.

The Advisory Board lacks the computer software to perform the complex modeling that the MBTA can access in its elasticity studies. However, the history of previous fare increases, the fact that 2011 saw the highest ever ridership, and recent surveys suggest that public transportation users in eastern Massachusetts are less sensitive to mild fare increases than elsewhere. Also, the fact that fares have not increased since 2007 suggests that a 25% fare increase will not result in widespread ridership loss and can yield \$75 million in new fare revenue. While clearly some ridership will be lost even with a 25% fare increase, this number will certainly be lower than that projected from MassDOT's proposed 33% or 43% fare increases.

The Advisory Board also endorses several items suggested by the MassDOT proposals:

- \$10 minimum to reload CharlieCards on-board vehicles to reduce dwell time
- Eliminate tokens
- Introduce 7-day Student Pass and price accordingly
- Reduce validity of commuter rail tickets from 180 days to 14 days.
- Increase surcharge for on-board cash transactions on commuter rail to \$3.00
- Eliminate 12-ride ticket on commuter rail, and 10 and 60-ride tickets on ferry boats.

The Advisory Board does not support the proposed 25% discount off the single-ride fare for all midday and reverse commute commuter rail trips. We see no reason for commuters to subsidize day-trippers and do not believe that price is the reason for any excess capacity at off-peak times. Discounting off-peak fares is essentially charging peak time users a surcharge. We will also oppose any attempts to add a peak-time surcharge onto the backs of commuters because day-trippers and students should not be subsidized at the expense of commuters. Commuters ride at peak hours because that is when they go to and from work. If MassDOT wants to encourage off-peak ridership it should work with employers to alter working hours not charge commuters more.

As part of its next commuter rail operating contract MassDOT must find a way to accept the CharlieCard as both a pass and for use with a declining balance to compensate for the elimination of the 12-ride ticket.

As part of this fare increase the Advisory Board also reluctantly supports a 25% increase at select rapid transit parking facilities. We support MassDOT’s proposal to hold commuter rail parking rates harmless at this time. While the percentage increases in fares for all modes are equal the dollar increases for commuter rail pass holders on a monthly and annual basis, depending on zone, is much greater for commuter rail riders than for bus and subway riders. For this reason we support keeping commuter rail parking rates frozen, and a 25% increase to rapid transit parking fees.

**Table 3: 25% Parking Fee Increases at Rapid Transit Facilities**

<b>Parking Facility</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Alewife	Red Line	Cambridge	\$7.00	\$8.75	25.0%
Beachmont	Blue Line	Revere	\$5.00	\$6.25	25.0%
Braintree	Red Line	Braintree	\$7.00	\$8.75	25.0%
Chestnut Hill	Green Line D	Newton	\$5.50	\$7.00	27.3%
Eliot	Green Line D	Newton	\$5.50	\$7.00	27.3%
Forest Hills	Orange Line	Boston	\$6.00	\$7.50	25.0%
Lechmere	Green Line	Cambridge	\$5.50	\$6.75	22.7%
Malden	Orange Line	Malden	\$5.50	\$6.75	22.7%
Mattapan	Mattapan Line	Boston	\$4.50	\$5.50	22.2%
Milton	Mattapan Line	Milton	\$5.00	\$6.25	25.0%
North Quincy	Red Line	Quincy	\$5.00	\$6.25	25.0%
Oak Grove	Orange Line	Malden	\$5.50	\$7.00	27.3%
Orient Heights	Blue Line	Boston	\$5.00	\$6.25	25.0%
Quincy Adams	Red Line	Quincy	\$7.00	\$8.75	25.0%
Quincy Center	Red Line	Quincy	\$7.00	\$8.75	25.0%
Riverside	Green Line D	Newton	\$6.00	\$7.50	25.0%
Suffolk Downs	Blue Line	Boston	\$5.00	\$6.25	25.0%
Sullivan	Orange Line	Boston	\$5.50	\$7.00	27.3%
Waban	Green Line D	Newton	\$5.50	\$7.00	27.3%
Wellington	Orange Line	Medford	\$5.50	\$7.00	27.3%
Wollaston	Red Line	Quincy	\$5.00	\$6.25	25.0%
Woodland	Green Line D	Newton	\$6.00	\$7.50	25.0%
Wonderland	Blue Line	Revere	\$5.00	\$6.25	25.0%
<b>AVERAGE</b>					<b>25.3%</b>

The days of stuffing bills into small slits in a metal box to pay for parking must end. As part of the next series of parking management contracts MassDOT must find a way to allow FastLane transponders and other technologies to pay for parking at all MBTA facilities. Transportation

Reform promised us cooperation between the Turnpike, Highway, and transit divisions of MassDOT and we see no more visible means to show this coordination than making this a reality as soon as possible.

## **More Savings from Transportation Reform (70.8 million)**

Assistance with transportation security costs	36.3
Transfer ferry service & assets to MassPort	31.1
Private Carrier/Suburban Bus cost reallocation	2.1
Assistance with homeless transportation costs	<u>1.3</u>
Subtotal:	70.8

Transportation Reform promised the citizens of Massachusetts millions from consolidation and greater efficiencies and to date refinancing and shifting costs have realized millions in savings. For instance, maintenance costs of the Massachusetts Turnpike were shifted to the MassDOT Highway Division, part of employee health care premium costs were shifted from the MBTA operating budget to employees via the GIC, and the cost to operate the Worcester Airport was shifted from the City of Worcester to MassPort among other reforms. Transportation Reform promised that the state entity most capable of delivering public services to the citizens of the Commonwealth would do it, regardless of which Secretariat, Board, or Authority it fell under. The Advisory Board believes that Transportation Reform holds the promise to deliver millions more in better management and organizational changes to aid MBTA riders in this time of crisis. It is past time for MassDOT to deliver on this promise. We feel that some services currently provided by the MBTA can be better provided, and perhaps more affordably provided by other state entities. Everyone in State government works for its elected leadership, and the Advisory Board believes that this leadership should embrace the spirit of Transportation Reform and direct the state entity best equipped to provide critical services to provide, and pay for these services.

### **Assistance with Transportation Security Costs (\$36.3 million)**

The safety of the users of our transportation services and the security of our transportation infrastructure is and should be the responsibility of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Paying police officers is not a core MBTA function, but providing security to its citizens is a core

function of the State. The Advisory Board believes that security of MBTA facilities and transit riders should be provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Enacting this will remove \$37.6 million in direct operating costs from the MBTA's operating budget in FY13, plus millions more in future capital expenditure. The State could decide to cover the cost of the MBTA Transit Police from the budget of the Executive Office of Public Safety, or merge it with the State Police, or fund it from the MassDOT budget, or wherever it fits best. The MBTA must focus on its core functions: moving commuters on buses and trains, and while security is critical; in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is a statewide issue. Threats to tunnels, rails, and buses are not just MBTA concerns they are concerns to all of Massachusetts and deserve to be treated as such.

In 2011 the MBTA Advisory Board supported the merger of the Massachusetts State Police and MBTA Transit Police. Legislation (H 2922) is currently pending, yet the results of this are not guaranteed and even if it passes there is no assurance that it would save the MBTA any money. Regardless of the passage of this legislation the cost of providing policing and transportation security should not rest with the MBTA. Shifting these costs need not shift oversight or responsibility however. MassPort does not have its own police force, instead relying on a troop of the Massachusetts State Police, and yet security functions between these two separate; yet linked entities seem well integrated.

### **Transfer Ferry Service and Assets to MassPort (\$31.1 million)**

In 2011 the MBTA Advisory Board called upon MassPort to pick up the subsidy for all ferry and commuter boats because we foresaw this year's move to eliminate them. A January 30, 2012 editorial in the Boston Globe titled "If MBTA can't fund ferries, other agencies should step in" agrees, stating "a better proposal, which is under consideration by a MassDOT committee, would transfer responsibility for subsidizing the service to Massport, the state agency that runs Logan Airport and the port of Boston. The ferries may be a better fit there anyway, since water transport is already part of Massport's mission. Massport should have the needed expertise to oversee a ferry operation, and its finances are in better shape."

In response to the Advisory Board's proposal last year then MassDOT Secretary Jeffrey Mullan established the Airport Ground Access and Surface Transportation (AGAST) Working Group.

This group identified several ways in which MassPort could assist the MBTA in ways mutually beneficial. Based on this preliminary draft the Advisory Board calls upon the related parties to speed up the process of implementing the following actions:

Sell Ferry assets	16.0
Sell East First Street Parcel (S. Boston)	10.4
Reallocate annual ferry subsidies	3.6
Reallocate SilverLine airport fare revenue	<u>1.1</u>
Subtotal:	31.1

\$26.4 million of these costs are one-time revenues, while \$4.7 million are on-going costs. While the Advisory Board generally opposes the use of property sales to fund operating expenses it seems unavoidable in this context of cuts and fare hikes.

The MBTA has considered eliminating ferry service in 2007, 2009 and now in 2012. The merits of commuter boat transportation are obvious, but it is also obvious that their future with the MBTA is limited. The hard reality is that the MBTA simply cannot afford to operate ferries, but the state agency that operates the Port of Boston can.

#### Sell Ferry Assets (\$16.0 million)

The MBTA owns the Fore River terminal in Quincy, docks at Long Wharf in Boston, and leases terminal space in Hingham from the Department of Conservation and Recreation in Hingham. It also owns parking lots in Quincy and Hingham as well 2 passenger boats the *Flying Cloud* and the *Lighting*<sup>1</sup>. MassPort estimates the value of these assets at \$17 million.

MassPort operates the Port of Boston and has over 50 years of maritime contracting and operating experience. It also currently owns and maintains a ferry dock at Logan Airport. It is also one of the most successful catalysts of waterfront development on the east coast, and should be able to generate more return from commercial ventures on these properties, which could be used directly to subsidize continued boat operations. The MBTA would lose about \$1 million in annual revenue in forgone parking and commercial lease revenue under this proposal, netting \$16.0 million in FY13.

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<sup>1</sup> MBTA Ridership and Service Statics (Bluebook) 13<sup>th</sup> edition 2010, page 79

Sell East First Street Parcel (\$10.4 million)

The MBTA owns around 9.3 acres of land near East First Street in South Boston that it uses for bus storage, certain administrative offices and a generator building. The Authority has designated a portion of this property as an excess transfer parcel. MassPort would like to acquire this parcel as part of its Conley Terminal Dedicated Freight Corridor Project, and in 2010 the Legislature passed a statute facilitating this transfer. It is unclear why no sale agreement has been entered into yet.

Given the importance of the Conley Terminal Dedicated Freight Corridor Project to the future of the Port of Boston and the positive benefits of getting heavy trucks off of South Boston neighborhood streets and onto a dedicated right-of-way the Advisory Board sees no reason why this project should not move forward. MassPort estimates the value of this parcel at \$10.4 million and while the MBTA must ensure it receives fair market value and retains all necessary easements and protections for public transportation use it is also important that it consummate this deal in FY13.

Reallocate Ferry Subsidies (\$3.6 million)

The MBTA estimates \$3.6 million in savings in FY13 by not subsidizing ferry and commuter boat service when MassPort picks up this subsidy. Ferry operations are contracted to third parties, and the MassPort Board could simply take over these contracts by a vote of its Board anytime after the existing contracts expire in March 2012. Ferries already provide access to the airport, suggesting this as an allowable cost under FAA regulations. Under the MassDOT umbrella the use of CharlieCards may continue, and MassPort is and will continue to be eligible to receive federal transportation formula funds such as existing earmarks. MassPort also holds a permanent seat on the Boston MPO, which allocates these funds. MassPort's existing Community Advisory Committee currently has representation from communities such as Quincy and Weymouth and could be expanded in size and scope to improve the municipal voice in ferry and all MassPort operations and policies. The Advisory Board believes that the MBTA cannot and will not expand commuter boat service to places like East Boston, Lynn, Salem, Winthrop and others in the future, and that MassPort is the best opportunity these

municipalities have to see the ferry services they want retained, implemented, and/or expanded.

Reallocate SilverLine airport fare revenue (\$1.1 million)

The MBTA maintains a complex relationship with MassPort, which paid for 8 of the 32 special SilverLine buses the MBTA acquired for the waterfront and airport service. Each year MassPort pays the MBTA \$2 million towards the operation and maintenance of 8 vehicles and in return the MBTA remits all fare revenue received from passengers boarding at Logan Airport to MassPort. In FY13 the MBTA expects to pay about \$1.12 million to MassPort under this deal. Given the disproportionate benefit MassPort and Logan Airport receive from the MBTA the Advisory Board believes this practice should be discontinued and the MBTA should retain all revenue it collects at the airport for its own use.

**Private Carrier/Suburban Bus subsidy reallocation (\$2.1 million)**

The MBTA currently contracts private operators to run bus routes in Medford (710), Winthrop (712/713), Hull (714), and from Canton to Mattapan Station (716). Its suburban bus program partially subsidizes shuttle bus service in Beverly, Burlington, Dedham, Lexington, and the Mission Hill neighborhood of Boston. Under scenario 1 MassDOT proposes eliminating funding for the Medford (710) and Canton (716) private carrier routes, and all subsidies for the suburban bus program. Under Scenario 2 all private carrier funding and suburban bus subsidies would be eliminated.

While these routes are important to the constituencies they serve they are also perennial targets for elimination. In 2011 the MBTA Advisory Board in its FY12 budget report stated: "These routes are important to the people of those communities who use them, and should be maintained if possible. However, the precarious nature of the MBTA's budget suggests that the future is not bright for these services." At that time we proposed spinning off these routes to other MassDOT entities to allow the MBTA to focus on its core mission of operating its own buses and trains to serve commuters. We suggested that MassPort fund the Winthrop (712/713) and Hull (714) routes, and that the successful MassDOT agency MassRIDES use its leverage with the local Transportation Management Associations it subsidizes to operate the

remaining routes and shuttle services. In 2012 the Advisory Board renews this proposal. Shifting these costs to other MassDOT entities will save the MBTA \$2.1 million in FY13 and is a better option than simply eliminating these routes all together.

**Assistance with homeless transportation costs (\$1.3 million)**

The MBTA operates 3 bus routes that provide access the City of Boston’s homeless shelter on Long Island and to the Shattuck Hospital. These routes (275, 276 & 277) do not accept fares and operate purely as a social service benefit for a vulnerable population in need of transportation. In 2011 the operation of these routes cost the MBTA just under \$1.3 million. It is critical that homeless population have access to shelters and medical care, it seems logical to suggest that a department like Health and Human Services or Housing and Community Development should pay to provide such transportation rather than the MBTA. The State must stop using the MBTA to fill social service gaps at the expense of millions of citizens who depend on it each and every day.

**MBTA Innovation & Restructuring (\$11.7 million)**

The FY13 budget was reduced from \$185 to \$161 million through management, efficiencies, and innovation by MBTA management. The Advisory Board appreciates these efforts and believes that certain policy changes within the purview of the MassDOT Board can generate an additional \$11.7 million in savings through innovation and organizational restructuring.

0% FY13 wage increase for all MBTA employees	8.2
MBTA abutter lease program	2.0
Alcohol advertisement program reinstatement	<u>1.5</u>
Subtotal:	11.7

**0% FY13 wage increase for all MBTA employees (\$8.2 million)**

Over the last 5 years the story of which MBTA employees received raises and which did not is uneven. For the first time since 2006 the 200 or so non-unionized employees received raises of 1.5% effective July 1, 2011 and 1.5% effective January 1, 2012. 500 or so unionized employees received 0% in FY11, 3% in FY12, 2% this year, and are schedule for 2% next year. The remaining 5,400 or so unionized employees, including members of the Carmen’s Union Local 589 saw raises of 3% in FY07, 3% in FY08, 3% in FY09, 4% in FY10. The MBTA is currently in negotiation with Local 589

about a new contract to cover FYs 11-15, with any wage increase for FYs 11-13 being paid in arrears and retroactively.

This history is starkly contrasted with the experience of many employees of the cities and towns that are members of the MBTA Advisory Board. Since the effects of the Great Recession became evident starting in 2008 employees of municipalities and indeed most sectors of the American economy did not receive raises, and in fact many received the opposite--pink slips. In cities and towns across eastern Massachusetts, Mayors, Boards of Selectmen, and other leaders have made difficult choices to freeze wages for all employees, including unionized fire, police, teachers, DPW, and other workers. While it is true that all MBTA employees have or are joining the State's Group Insurance Commission which charges higher co-pays and premiums than were charged in the past; it is also true that thousands of municipal employees have also joined the GIC and seen out-of-pocket expenses increase. It seems only fair that unionized MBTA employees now stand with their municipal colleagues by accepting a wage freeze in FY13.

The manner in which pay and benefits are set for unionized MBTA employees is broken, and disconnected from reality. If and when MBTA management and MBTA unions disagree on the terms of the next contract an independent arbiter may make the final decision. Just such an arbiter granted average wage increases of 3.25% per year for the fiscal years 2007-2010 in the middle of a recession. Because this decision granted retroactive raises the MBTA was forced to pay out over \$65.9 million at once and raised parking fees at all its facilities by \$2.00 to cover these costs. Freezing all wages for FY13 (and FYs 11 and 12 retroactively for that matter) will prevent the MBTA from having to come up with another lump-sum retroactive payment when the next contract is settled, possibly even at the start of the next fiscal year just after fares and parking fees go up.

MBTA management's hands are tied, and the MassDOT Board of Directors must act on this just as dozens of Mayors, City Councils, Boards of Selectmen, Finance Committees, and Town Meetings across eastern Massachusetts have already done. Freezing wages will save \$8.2 million in budgeted costs, and many times that amount in future operating costs going forward.

If necessary, the Board of Directors should file legislation seeking the authority to do this or take the matter to court if needed. We note that MassDOT's proposals envision layoffs of 110FTE position in scenario 1, and 564 in scenario 2, and suggest that a wage freeze is more in the interest of all MBTA employees than such workforce reductions.

### **MBTA Abutter Program (\$2 million)**

The MBTA is one of if not the largest landowner in Massachusetts. There are at least 48 examples of MBTA property being leased or otherwise conveyed to communities or other state agencies for bike path uses alone, amounting to well over 50 miles of rail-right-of-way for use for recreational purposes with little recompense to the MBTA and no opportunity for the MBTA to enter into leases that could help defer the revenue raising options currently before the public.

The Advisory Board proposes that the MBTA or its agents survey the remaining property owned by the Authority but not currently used for transportation purposes with an eye towards entering into short term land leasing arrangement with abutters. Moreover, it is common that abutters of disused rights of way tend to encroach on those properties either out of ignorance of the property line or confidence that they will not be discovered. Since the MBTA has a property management agent we feel that that those encroaching on MBTA property can be contacted and settlements reached with little expense to the MBTA. Uses for these properties could include property access, additional parking or material storage. The program would increase revenues, reduce trespassing and illegal dumping, reassert MBTA control over its properties and open up properties currently underutilized to abutters in need of expansion. The Advisory Board recommends that these land leases be at fair market value and for terms no longer than 10 years at a time. In FY13 we estimate \$2 million in new revenue under this program.

### **Alcohol Advertising Program Reinstatement (\$1.5 million)**

At the end of January, in the midst of the public meetings on MassDOT's plans to raise MBTA fares and reduce service the Department announced plans to stop accepting advertisements for alcohol, which generate \$1.5 million annually in non-fare revenue for the MBTA. Secretary

Davey told the State House News that no revenue would be lost, as the Authority could resell that advertising space at no new loss. The Advisory Board believes that a better idea is to continue to accept alcohol advertisements and find new space to sell to advertisers clamoring to be seen by MBTA passengers. This would result in an additional \$1.5 million in revenue in FY13.

Many advocates believe that banning alcohol ads from MBTA property will somehow reduce underage drinking and “send a message” that the public does not condone such behavior. While the Advisory Board certainly supports laws banning the sale or consumption of alcohol by those under the legal drinking age, we also believe that the amount of such advertisements in magazines, on television, and in other media will surely swamp any reduction in advertising by banning such ads on the MBTA. The MBTA has a public interest in banning some types of advertising, but not alcohol and certainly not during this financial crisis,

## **Revenue from Institutional Beneficiaries of MBTA Service (\$13.1 million)**

Transit proximity beneficiary payments	5.5
Special event surcharge	5.0
CR proximity beneficiary payments	<u>2.6</u>
Subtotal:	13.1

The Advisory Board believes that those who benefit from public transportation should contribute towards it. Riders pay fares, cities and towns pay assessments, and taxpayers statewide contribute part of their sales tax revenue to fund the MBTA. Yet at public hearings from Attleboro to Lowell, Salem to Worcester, and throughout the Greater Boston area at public hearings MBTA Advisory Board members and staff have heard not just how important MBTA commuter rail, buses, trains, and boats are, but also what a hardship service reductions would create to institutional beneficiaries such as universities, hospitals, cultural institutions and businesses.

### **Transit proximity beneficiary payments (\$5.5 million)**

Large institutions in and around Boston benefit tremendously from the MBTA bus and rapid transit network, and yet none directly contribute to its operation. At the public hearings numerous leaders, employees, and stakeholders of such institutions expressed their dependence on the MBTA in general, and on those bus and light rail routes on the chopping block specifically. Given the benefit delivered to these institutions by the existing bus and rapid transit networks, the Advisory Board believes that these institutions should directly contribute towards the MBTA’s operations

Station name value payments	2.0
Inner-Core college student fee	2.0
Light Rail elimination mitigation	<u>1.5</u>
Subtotal:	5.5

Station Name Value Payments (\$2.0 million)

MassDOT has discussed implementing a station naming program for years, yet dozens of institutions already have rapid transit stations named after them for free. For instance Charles/MGH, BU East, Tufts Medical Center, and Airport are all named after viable institutions that surely benefit from having their name attached to a station, and should pay for this privilege. MassDOT’s real estate office should simply assign a value to a named station and bill the appropriate entity; otherwise the name should be changed on electronic media and when new signs are produced.

The following institutions should be approached as benefiting from sharing their names with rapid transit stations: Harvard, MIT, Mass. General Hospital, UMass Boston, Suffolk Downs, Logan Airport, New England Aquarium, Tufts Medical Center, BC, BU (3), Fenway Park, Prudential Center, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Northeastern, Museum of Fine Arts, Longwood Medical Area, Museum of Science, and the World Trade Center. It seems reasonable to estimate these 18 institutions would contribute at least \$2 million collectively annually for the benefit of sharing a station’s name.

Inner Core Student Fee (\$2.0 million)

At the hearings in downtown Boston, Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, Jamaica Plain, Newton, and elsewhere in the greater Boston region numerous college students testified about the

importance of public transit to their studies, research, and social lives. Over 200,000 full and part time students attend institutions of higher education in the MBTA's inner-core service area. A \$10 student-ID fee would generate at least \$2.0 million annually without imposing a hardship on any individual student. \$10 per year is less than 3 pennies per day. These payments will directly contribute to the continued operation of the MBTA at existing service levels. Going forward any discussion of off-peak discounts for students or "night owl" service should be within the context of increasing this fee, or converting all campuses to UPass plans to pay for them.

#### Light Rail Elimination Mitigation Payments (\$1.5 million)

MassDOT estimates that cutting the Green Line E branch and Mattapan high-speed line on weekends will save \$1.5 million in FY13. At the public hearings numerous individuals who benefit from these weekend services expressed opposition to the elimination plans. Specifically testimony from students, professors, doctors, nurses, and employees of institutions such as the Longwood health care and academic cluster, Museum of Fine Arts, Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum, Mass. Art, Wentworth, Mass. College of Pharmacy, Northeastern University, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and others that use weekend light rail service demanded that the service be retained at its current levels. Given the importance placed upon weekend light rail by those connected with institutions that benefit from it, it seems reasonable to ask these institutions to contribute the \$1.5 million annually needed to keep weekend light rail service running on these lines.

#### **Special event surcharge (\$5 million)**

The MBTA is at its core a commuter service. Yet hundreds of times each year it also moves thousands and thousands of citizens to and from special events such as Red Sox, Bruins and Celtics games, as well as public performances at venues such as the Opera House, Citi Performing Arts Center, Symphony Hall, and numerous other large venues. These special events constitute mini-rush hours that the MBTA is not designed or staffed to handle. Such events strain the existing system and cost millions in overtime. Extra fares collected before and after these events do not cover these costs. The venues that host these events rely on the MBTA to deliver thousands of citizens to these events without the use of automobiles. Traffic is already

congested in and around Fenway Park, the Theater District, and the TD Garden before and after special events. Imagine how bad it would be without the MBTA operating extra service.

Large public performance venues benefit greatly from the MBTA and should contribute towards its operations in the form of a \$0.50 surcharge on all tickets at venues with capacities over 1,000 persons. Given the number of events that take place at such venues it seems reasonable to expect \$5 million in annual revenue from this surcharge. Such a surcharge will not add significantly to ticket prices. For instance the average cost of a Red Sox ticket in 2011 was about \$53.00 suggesting that a \$0.50 surcharge would increase prices by less than 1%.

**Commuter Rail proximity beneficiary payments (\$2.6 million)**

At public hearings in places like Lowell, Salem, Attleboro, and Worcester numerous people testified about the importance of weekend and late night commuter rail service. MassDOT proposes eliminating all such service to save \$5.7 annually. Students, those in the tourism sector, educators, health care workers, and many others testified about how important it is to their economic well being and to the economies of places like Lowell, Worcester, and other cities to have weekend and late night commuter rail service. Given the benefit they testified about receiving it is reasonable to ask those institutions to contribute towards partially preserving them.

CR area college student fee	1.4
Proximity beneficiary payments	1.0
Station name value payment	<u>0.2</u>
Subtotal:	2.6

Commuter Rail area college student fee (\$1.4 million)

An estimated 140,000 full and part time students are enrolled in institutions of higher education in the 161 cities and towns in the MBTA service district outside the inner-core. An annual \$10 student ID fee for these students, similar to the one proposed for the inner-core area, would generate an estimated \$1.4 million annually towards the cost of keeping post-10 PM and weekend commuter rail trains running. As with the case in the inner core, going forward any discussion of off-peak discounts for students or “night owl” service should be within the context of increasing this fee.

Commuter Rail Proximity beneficiary payments (\$1.0 million)

Large business parks, institutions like Worcester's DCU Center, Lowell's Tsongas Arena, the Salem and Plymouth tourism clusters, the Worcester medical and life science clusters, and higher education establishments such as the College of the Holy Cross, Clark University and the State Universities in Salem, Bridgewater, Worcester, Fitchburg and Framingham surely benefit from their proximity to commuter rail stations, and weekend commuter rail service transporting thousands of people each year to and from their doorsteps. Surely institutions such as these and hundreds more throughout the commuter rail service area should be willing to make modest contributions towards retaining the late-night and weekend commuter rail services that everyone claims are so vital to them.

Commuter Rail Station name value payments (\$0.2 million)

As with the proposal to capture monetary value from those institutions with their names included in rapid transit stations, so too should some value be captured from commuter rail stations that include names of institutions. For instance the Brandeis/Robert station on the Fitchburg Line, and the Franklin/Dean station on the Franklin line are examples of station names that contain institutional names as well. Other stations such as Forge Park/495 and Windsor Gardens on the Franklin Line, River Works on the Rockport/Newburyport Line among others also enjoy benefits from sharing names with commuter rail stations. MassDOT should simply assign a value to the benefit of station name sharing and send a bill. If the bill is not paid simply change the name on all electronic media and the next time signs are changed. It seems reasonable to expect \$200,000 in net new annual revenue from this proposal.

**Non-Revenue Proposals****FY13 Non-Revenue Policy Requests of MassDOT Board of Directors**

Fare evasion quantification study and reduction policy ASAP

RIDE in-person assessments as soon as possible

Statewide paratransit commission findings by 4/1/12

TOD value capture study with recommendations by 9/1/12

New underperforming bus/rail route "watch list" policy with timeline and public processes.

New Fare Policy including support for small, regular increases

**Fare evasion quantification study and reduction policy ASAP**

The public believes that MassDOT does not do enough to collect all the fare revenue the MBTA is owed. The MassDOT Board should immediately commission a study to quantify the budget impact of fare evasion on all modes, and develop new policies to reduce fare evasion before fares are increased. It is only fair that MassDOT do all it can to collect all fares from those who do not pay before raising fares on those who do.

Some ideas for consideration include installing fencing and barrier fare collection facilities at all Green Line D branch stations, and at any other Green Line surface station where possible, and fencing and fare collection barriers at major bus facilities such as Dudley Station and Harvard bus way for example. Barrier fare collection at such stations may not be perfect, but they may be an improvement and should be considered. Not all such stations should be staffed. AFC must be introduced onto the commuter rail system with the implementation of the next contract, and MassDOT should seriously consider eliminating CSA attendants from non-key subway stations during non-peak hours and instead re-deploy these human resources to prevent fare evasion at known hot-spots during peak times. Greater use of the MBTA's extensive security camera network in discouraging and enforcing fare evasion policies should also be explored.

**The RIDE In-Person Assessments As Soon As Possible**

In 2011 the MassDOT proposed to start conducting in-person assessments of all individuals requesting RIDE certification by July 1, 2012. The cost to provide the RIDE doubled from \$50 million in FY07 to over \$100 million in FY12. MassDOT believes that in-person assessments can help slow this growth by ensuring that all those who use this door-to-door service meet all the necessary qualifications for it. At the same time MassDOT proposes establishing a two-tiered service area for RIDE trips with some RIDE fares increasing from \$2.00 to \$12.00 under one scenario.

If MassDOT believes that conducting in-person assessments can slow the growth in RIDE costs it should establish these first before recommending changes to the service area. In-person

assessments should begin as soon as possible (March or April 1) to allow 2-3 months of data on the impact of such assessments on the number of RIDE eligible customers. Should these in-person assessments prove effective in slowing RIDE cost growth, perhaps a tiered service area will not be necessary. Either way we see no harm in beginning the in-person assessment program as soon as possible to ensure that RIDE services are reserved for those who require them the most.

### **Statewide paratransit commission (EO 530) findings by 4/1/12**

In April 2011 the Governor issued an Executive Order 530 establishing a Statewide Paratransit Transportation Commission to examine and offer suggestions to improve and reform paratransit transportation. For the past 10 months this commission has met and listened. Now as MassDOT proposes the most radical changes to the RIDE ever the time has come for this commission to issue its recommendations. April 2012 will mark 1-year since the issuance of the Executive Order.

The EO 530 report must consider a state-wide paratransit service area for all of Massachusetts, or at least explain why it is not considered. Currently paratransit begins and ends at the borders of regional transit authorities (federally mandated service areas) meaning, for instance, that a client living in Natick, Gloucester, Stoughton, or Ayer cannot get to the educational, medical, business, or cultural centers of Boston without transferring between providers and paying 2 fares. Transportation Reform was supposed to be about tearing down artificial boundaries between transportation agencies. The creation of one state-wide paratransit district seems like a logical extension of Transportation Reform. Creation of such a district should save agencies like the MBTA millions annually in administrative costs through consolidation and millions more through the economies of scale that a state-wide provider can bring. If RTA payments to this service provider were capped to match revenue growth such a plan would also free the MBTA from unsustainable 16.5% average annual growth that threatens to swamp all other costs.

### **TOD value capture study with recommendations by 9/1/12**

At numerous public hearing on MassDOT's proposals to increase MBTA fares and decrease MBTA service, numerous stakeholders spoke of the importance of MBTA service to large new

developments built, or under construction near transit nodes. Several people suggested that some of the value created by such developments be captured and directed to the MBTA. Indeed, MassDOT officials have publically pointed to “value capture” as a means to pay for future expansion projects like the Green Line to Somerville and South Coast Rail. In light of the fiscal crisis and its proposal to raise MBTA fares the MassDOT Board should clarify its position on value capture payments by issuing a policy brief with recommended rates and locations, as well as necessary changes to existing laws to implement such a fee.

Of the five largest American Transit agencies only the MBTA and LA Metro lack any sort of value capture financing revenue. The New York MTA, Chicago CTA Transportation Authority, and Washington, DC WMATA all receive some revenue from value capture in the form of taxes on real estate transactions within their respective service districts when property is sold. If MassDOT is serious about value capture fees they should issue their proposals as soon as possible.

**Creation of a “watch list” of underperforming routes with a new policy to engage stakeholder’s dependant on such routes and new processes and time-lines to eliminate such routes.**

At every public hearing on MassDOT’s proposals to raise MBTA fares and eliminate MBTA service members of the public expressed dismay at the prospect of losing existing MBTA service. Yet it is clear to the MBTA Advisory Board that not all routes sustain the ridership necessary to continue in perpetuity. While the Advisory Board does not support the elimination of any routes at this time as part of a fare increase and service cut budget exercise, it does believe that those routes, which underperform, should go eventually. MassDOT has good standards for gauging route performance and the net cost per passenger metric is industry standard. The standards used to determine performance are not the issue however. The issue is the manner in which routes are eliminated. The Advisory Board believes that underperforming routes should be eliminated for service planning reasons and not to balance structurally deficient budgets.

It is difficult to argue that bus routes that are essentially subsidized livery services should continue when it is clear that those resources could be better utilized elsewhere in the system. Routes such as the 355 and 500 require over \$10 in subsidies (over and above fares) to carry each passenger on each trip every day. Nevertheless the Advisory Board understands the importance of routes such as these to those who ride them and the communities around them. The MassDOT Board should develop a new policy for eliminating underperforming bus, rapid transit, and commuter rail routes. Such a policy should identify these routes and place them on a watch list. Placement on a watch list should trigger a series of community workshops with stakeholders to explain why the route is in danger and to solicit their ideas for improving the net cost per passenger numbers for each route. Municipalities, institutions, legislators and other stakeholders should be given the opportunity to improve ridership, and MassDOT should intensely study each route on the watch list to ensure that its numbers are accurate several times throughout the process. The Advisory Board suggests that watch lists be produced bi-annually, that the process take 3 months, and that public meetings take place to solicit feedback, report new data, and keep all stakeholders abreast of the process.

Conducting a longer elimination process will not make eliminating a bus route any easier. But we believe it is important for all those affected to be part of a process and to be given the chance to save their routes prior to elimination. The MassDOT Board should develop these policies as possible and published the first watch list early in the new fiscal year.

### **New Fare Policy including support for small, regular increases**

The Advisory Board believes that Authority's existing fare policy should be revised with significant public input. We suggest that the MassDOT Board of Directors appoint a panel of internal and external experts to draft a new fare policy with new goals and objectives prior to the start of the FY14 fiscal year. Furthermore, the Advisory Board believes that as part of this committee's charge, the MassDOT Board should include support for small, regular fare increases. While no one enjoys paying more for the same service, large price spikes are even less appealing. Instead of spiking every 4-5 years, the Advisory Board believes that fares should rise more regularly to match inflation. We suggest that this expert panel consider the best

method to enact small, regular fare increases and include it in their new fare policy recommendations.

### **Conclusion**

The cities and towns that make up the MBTA district have been warning for almost a decade that the financing structure of the Authority is fatally flawed. Finally the day of reckoning can no longer be postponed and the public must react to MassDOT's proposals to gut MBTA service and dramatically increase its fares. The MBTA suffers from several problems but the main ones are far too much debt and the decade-long underperformance of the sales tax.

The MBTA has tried to help itself by trimming its workforce, innovating in the purchase of fuel and energy, finding efficiencies, and controlled those costs within its power to control. When those actions weren't enough the Authority raised fares and parking fees, sold land and other assets, restructured and refinanced its debt payments, and even sold a revenue stream to plug a gaping hole in last year's budget.

These actions allowed the Authority to limp from year-to-year, but the MBTA will never be healthy and travel conditions will continue to deteriorate until the underlying illness is cured. The plans put forward by MassDOT will not cure the MBTA's illness, and neither will our plan. The Advisory Board plan will, however, preserve the transit system until a real and lasting solution can be found. The Advisory Board plan can bring all of the stakeholders in our transportation system: the Governor, the Legislature, municipalities, businesses, large institutions, students, seniors, those with disabilities, transit advocates, commuters and all the users of the system together to finally have that "adult conversation" so long promised and so long avoided. Shame on all of us if we avoid it again.