

Responses to prompts asking for an example of problems and possible solutions in each of the categories below:

Name	Org.	Governance	Operations	Finances
Li, Vivian	The Boston Harbor Assn.	The City of Boston should have a seat on the MBTA Board, given the range of issues that directly affect Boston and its residents.	Water transportation services should be better integrated into the rest of the MBTA system. This should include free transfers between routes; use of Charlie Cards on ferry services; better signage; more parking at MBTA water transportation terminals; and ADA-access on water transportation.	MBTA bus service is crucial to many lower-income and limited-income urban riders who do not have alternatives to getting to work or to medical appointments. No one likes fare increases (including me), but if a fare increase is necessary, commuter rail riders should assume more of a fare increase. Urban bus riders should assume less of an increase. For many, a fare increase is preferable to the elimination of service. The 2014 binding referendum vote on the automatic gas tax increase will only exacerbate the MBTA's financial situation.
Lazu, Malia	Future Boston Alliance	The MBTA needs leadership from the top not just to point the finger and blame people but to take responsibility that the MBTA has not been given proper funding to run and expand (which would be nice). Its not about who's not doing their job, but what do these people have to do their job.	Its unfortunate to loose Dr. Scott. I think the MBTA needs new blood and people who are excited about problem solving.	It seems as though there is little transparency about why the MBTA has so much debt and whats tied to the big dig. The MBTA could also sell a lot more advertising. Find corporate sponsors to wrap the trains and buses or set up their marketing events at the train stops. there are quite a few nice T stations that could be used as staging areas for companies wanting to do creative outreach in Boston. Taxes probably need to be raised to really get funds and thats a fight we have to push electeds to have. trying to do this on sawdust and spit is playing make believe.
Regan, Paul	MBTA Advisory Board	The MBTA Board of Directors has no representation from local communities, unlike almost every major transit system in the country. This leads to an us vs. them attitude among communities, a lack of support and involvement in transit issues as well as a feeling that all transportation issues can only be addressed by the Legislature. The MBTA Advisory Board once had lively debates and actual influence over the MBTA, much like the other RTA's in the Commonwealth. Once the Board was stripped of its powers, all debate shifted away from the customers and the communities served and moved to Legislature for top down solutions. These approaches lack a constituency and public support for public transit is waning. Communities are assessed about 10% of the operating budget and can speak for both the communities served and for the customers. They deserve seats on the Board of Directors and the organization that represents them should have its powers returned.	The MBTA has a serious problem with absenteeism. Our research shows that the majority of dropped trips on bus are dropped because the MBTA does not have a driver available. It is not a narrow majority: In calendar 2014, the range of dropped trips caused by lack of personnel went from a low of 60% to a high of 80%. This is employees not showing up to work bus routes that they selected through the union mandated selection process. While the overall total of dropped trips is small (the MBTA provides total dropped trips that states that the number of dispatched trips is in the high ninety's) the reality is that the majority of dropped trips are during rush hours when the drops affect the highest number of customers. The greatest impact is on the MBTA's most transit dependent customers; city bus riders. The MBTA needs to implement the Progressive Discipline system that it currently has on its books to get control of the situation. It was also help if they limited the amount of overtime that employees with excessive absents can earn.	We know that the MBTA is a labor intensive organization and that wage and fringe are major cost drivers at the MBTA. The fact that the unionized workforce works past the expiration date of the current contract allows for a smooth continuation of service, but it also can be a fiscal problem. When the T goes to binding arbitration, they are faced with the need to make retroactive payments to union members and to also to pay increases in a fiscal year whose budget is set. The Authority should have reserve accounts that they can access to cover these mid-year expenses. If you look at the last two times there were judgments against the T, they had to take extraordinary measures to cover these costs. The Commission should recommend that the restrictions on the existing reserves funds the MBTA currently has be lifted, and that reserves for this purpose and other important purposes be increased. It would be smart management to have adequate reserve accounts for a roughly \$2 billion annual operation.
Norton, Emily	Newton Board of Aldermen	No suggestions for this category.	There is a real problem with notification. It is terrific that the commuter rail lines now have electronic signage to indicate when the train is coming, but too often they are inaccurate - saying a train is late but then it arrives; or more frequently not saying anything at all when a train is delayed or cancelled. And obviously there have been too many late and cancelled trains this winter. I literally gave up taking the Newtonville commuter rail train until the snow is melted.	The MBTA needs to have enough money to fund maintenance of its current operations. To reach our climate change goals we must get more people out of their cars but who would give up their car for the bus, train or subway after this winter's performance?

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Li, Vivian	The Boston Harbor Assn.	It makes sense for the MBTA General Manager to be accountable to the MBTA Board. It also makes sense for the GM's contract to be independent of political changes in order to ensure continuity.	Much has been written about the debt which the MBTA has been saddled with. That needs to be examined in 2015, with changes if necessary.
Lazu, Malia	Future Boston Alliance	The time is now to take leadership on what is needed to operate a 21st century train/bus and rail system not how to keep a 19th century system going. I think the MBTA should be forthcoming on what it will actually take to rebuild the system. Do some serious community organizing and get the public transportation riding community on board. Public forums at organizations that are aimed to be open about the amount of money and time this will take will help people understand. It will also help them know how to advocate for real change.	Its need for funds.
Regan, Paul	MBTA Advisory Board	While the legislative effort to consolidate transportation planning at MassDOT is a good idea, too much of the transit planning is happening without sufficient input from MBTA personnel. One example of this is the planning around service to Foxborough. Almost all of the planning is taking place in the MassDOT Planning office with little input from the people who will run the service. IT has been my experience that MBTA personnel do not know what decisions are being made or the cost or impact of these decisions. This is not the first example of this tendency. There needs to be greater involvement by transit professionals in these decisions, and a more defined role for MBTA Planning.	I would find a way to reduce the amount the MBTA pays in debt service annually. The average 25% of available funds going to capital principal and interest is too high. This would free up funds for operations. and would create space in the MBTA's capital plan for Pay-as-you-go capital spending. This would reduce or eliminate the need for operational bail outs by the legislature and reduce overall capital cost, while still allowing the MBTA to address capital needs.
Norton, Emily	Newton Board of Aldermen	No suggestions for this category.	Reliability

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Boelter, Alice	boelter & associates	Governance at the MBTA places too much reliance on the General Manager, the face known to the public but lacking the power to make the decisions necessary to improve the T's overall performance.. The Board is virtually unknown to the general public, and while individual Board members may bring specific knowledge to the table, they lack the hands-on experience of moving the traveling public and what that entails. Over time, other government agencies have "learned to deal" with the T's ways, but these folks know the T's requirements, as espoused by personnel from various T department/divisions are often antiquated and cumbersome.. This breeds frustration for those trying to effect some inter-agency coordination to address a specific situation. I remember when the T faced a job action around 1980 and other agencies jumped into action to see how alternate service might be provided. in contrast, when the T has been invited to help, I don't recall the same instant leap to assist. Maybe that is a function of the huge bureaucracy and the inability of employees to stick out their necks lest they lose their jobs.	The Procurement Department uses "one size fits all" . Thus bus RFP's become the standard for all bid advertisement even if the situation is very different. Numerous efforts to demonstrate such concepts as the need for longer lead time before the contract start date, longer term of contract, and stipulation and enforcement of performance criteria fell on deaf ears when new water transportation contracts or new service starts were considered. This severely narrowed the field of bidders to the detriment of ferry service since competition generally triggers innovation which often improves service for the passengers.	Finances will forever be a problem as long as the Legislature pushes for new service without considering the long term cost of sustaining that service. Federal grants for construction are too appealing for elected officials and the construction industry to resist. However, these do not cover the personnel costs to operate the service, pay for the generous retirement packages of those employees, maintain the equipment and repair the infrastructure. We cannot continue this practice. The South Coast rail project must be removed from the table, no matter how appealing it would be for Fall River and New Bedford residents to gain access to jobs in Boston now that the old industries in those two coastal cities have died. We should not allow planning/engineering money to be spent on new service lest we fall into the trap that brought us the disastrous Greenbush investment. Gov. Romney failed to cancel the project by saying .too much money had already been spent on it to drop it.
Bourassa, Eric		The MBTA is challenged in making politically difficult decisions like raising fares, cutting services with low ridership, saying no to expansion projects that politicians want, even consolidating bus stops. Keep that in-mind as you recommend changes. Would these decisions be easier if the Governor or legislature had more oversight? Also, if you think cities and towns should pay more assessment to MBTA (currently about 9% of operating budget compared to 25% of other similar sized transit systems), they should probably have more say over how the T runs.		The T's core problem is its debt. You are shirking your responsibility as a commission member if you don't include a recommendation to address the T's debt. Don't do what the recent Mass Tax Payers Foundation report did, and identify how much a problem the T's debt is but then make no recommendation to solve that core problem. Don't pursue a narrow political agenda that says this crisis is an opportunity to score a win for taking down the Pacheco Law and fighting unions. The T took on expansion projects in 80's and 90's with the understanding the Commonwealth would pay that debt. When Forward Funding did not deliver the anticipated sales tax, and the authority experienced year after year budget deficits in 2000s, the T spent less money on maintenance in order to pay debt. The T has taken on additional borrowing to pay this debt (debt restructuring), which is like paying your mortgage with a credit card--making the problem even worse. If the T can be relieved of dedicating 25% of operating budget to debt, then it can pay for state of good repair.
Forman, Ben	MassINC			My approach would be a regional payroll tax. I would model how much revenue such a tax would generate if it were capped so that employers with a disproportionate number of high wage workers don't pay excessively. I would also examine providing a credit to employers for payments to TMAs or TDM programs.

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Boelter, Alice	boelter & associates	Entitlement I believe the entire system needs to be reconstituted with different personnel. Too many employees are simply there for the "23 years and out" opportunity. They in turn model that behavior for new employees who will be reluctant to stick out their necks with innovation and we are then stuck with more of the same.	The organization needs a new footing and new leaders with a new mindset, new priorities, real management skills, budget savvy and financial acumen, long term planning skills, and a recognition of whom they serve and why.
Bourassa, Eric			Provide additional funding to either pay MBTA debt payments or address maintenance backlog.
Forman, Ben	MassINC		

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Poftak, Steve	Rappaport Institute	<p>Its difficult to split the MBTA's overarching problems into these buckets, but let me try... The primary issue with the MBTA is the lack of maintenance (I include not only regular repairs but also replacement of equipment, including rolling stock, at the end of their asset life). I view it as a governance problem that the MBTA's BoD/MassDOT Board have not insured that proper amounts were spent on maintenance over the last 30 years. In almost every case, any potential 'breathing room' that allowed for PAYGO maintenance spending was swallowed up by personnel costs and/or debt service (and by extension expansion spending). It is vital for this Panel to figure out a way to insure appropriate PAYGO maintenance spending as a first priority in order to justify any new revenues.</p>	<p>I see several issues in operations -- procurement, contract enforcement, and sound maintenance procedures. I'm not an expert in procurement but my sense is that the MBTA struggles to conduct procurements that result in the timely delivery of usable rolling stock. Review the State Auditor's report on the procurement of the Breda Green Line cars -- http://www.mass.gov/auditor/docs/audits/2007/200405837a.pdf -- to see an illustration of this. We have a large number of replacement cars in the queue -- why will they take so long to deliver. Further, the Panel should review the MBTA's contract with MBCR. To the MBTA's credit, that contract put the onus on MBCR to maintain the system and turn over an inventory of the CR system at the conclusion of the contract. Was this ever enforced? If it was, why can't the MBTA come up with an SGR number for the commuter rail? Lastly, it appears that the MBTA has either neglected or failed to prioritize maintenance planning. It lacks an up to date assessment of SGR and does not appear to take a systematic approach to the planning of maintenance.</p>	<p>The MBTA has conducted a number of debt restructurings, which clearly lessened the burden on the operating budget in the last decade. These likely will increase the future burden. It is not clear that a public entity should have the latitude around debt that it currently has.</p>
Matsueda, Lee	Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE)	<p>Few General Managers have meaningfully engaged with MBTA riders. As a result there has been little done to understand the challenges riders face on a daily basis and work with them toward solutions. In this moment where the challenges facing the MBTA are so public and so many, the General Manager hiring process is an important opportunity. It is a chance to be more transparent and to let the riding public know that next General Manager of the MBTA will listen to its riders, engage them in a genuine process and act to ensure a reliable, safe and affordable public transportation system for all. MBTA riders are not only customers helping pay for a service, they are also public transportation experts, allies and advocates, and have done a lot to make sure the system is maintained and expands to meet the need. This can only improve when the riding public is treated with respect and engaged in process like the hiring of the next MBTA General Manager.</p>	<p>Buses serve nearly one third of the rides daily on the MBTA, which is about 440,000 trips. Many of these riders who use buses are people who have few other choices than to use public transportation. They cannot afford a car or car insurance and as a result are among the MBTA's most faithful customers that rely on the system in all conditions at all hours of the day and night. A major operational problem is an unreliable and overcrowded bus system in all seasons, not only when snow falls. It is critical that bus investment is prioritized in capital and operations budgets to include increased early morning service hours, expansion of the key bus route program, and an increase in the number of buses and operators across the system. Another way to keep this conversation relevant is to make sure the MBTA service planning process continues. It is supposed to happen every two years and has not occurred since 2009.</p>	<p>We cannot pretend that the root of the MBTA's financial problems is overspending or financial mismanagement alone. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed its burden to pay for nearly \$2 billion of Big Dig mitigation projects to offset the negative air-quality impacts of the Central Artery construction onto the MBTA. As a result the MBTA paid nearly \$450 million in annual debt services this past fiscal year, fares have been raised four times and there have been multiple rounds of service cuts since Forward Funding began in 2000. To address the problem at the root is to build political will to invest in public transportation. If not, like your home, it will continue to deteriorate if not maintained. Another approach is to take back the Big Dig mitigation project portion of the debt and return it to the Commonwealth's books. As thousands have said during this winter people want are willing to invest in transportation. ACE would support in options that are not regressive, instead focusing on the businesses and institutions that benefit from the MBTA. An example of this would be to create a University Pass program similar to Chicago that by conservative numbers could raise \$40 million annually in additional revenues in the MBTA service area.</p>
Van Meter, Bob	Local Initiatives Support Corporation	<p>MBTA board should include more municipal stakeholders. Information on maintenance backlog should have been shared earlier and the fact that it was not was a problem,.</p>	<p>Overall performance over the last two months has undermined riders confidence in the MBTA. Clear information on what riders can expect is vital. Communications overall have improved over the last several years but communications about weather related delays and schedule changes were haphazard.</p>	<p>MBTA needs relieve from the debt that it has been saddled with which impedes attention to maintenance of the system and strategic investment that can benefit the regions economy.</p>

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Poftak, Steve	Rappaport Institute		I would determine a means of 'lock-boxing' maintenance funding as a first priority.
Matsueda, Lee	Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE)	A key piece of MBTA's organizational structure is its board. The MassDOT/MBTA board meetings are one of the few ways riders are able to access and observe how decisions are made and who are making those decisions. For a public entity, this is critical for transparency and accountability. The MassDOT/MBTA board must continue to exist. In addition there should be MBTA rider voice and vote on the board and not just an advisory seat as written into the MGL CH 161A. It is such an important matter for our organization that we have worked with legislators in two previous legislative sessions to submit amendments. A related solution should also be to maintain an exclusive MBTA board separate from MassDOT and the other transportation matters, allowing board members to focus on the many issues facing the MBTA and its riders.	The region served by the MBTA is undergoing impressive growth. During this time it is critical to maintain and expand access and affordability for those who live in the MBTA's service area and to those who rely and depend on the system as their primary mode of transportation, particularly youth, seniors, people with disabilities and lower-income riders. These riders are the MBTA's most faithful customers and they are also the most in need. The MBTA must continue its work to study the Youth Pass, a tiered-fare structure for RIDE users and a pass for lower-income riders, and then implement the programs in FY 16-17.
Van Meter, Bob	Local Initiatives Support Corporation		We need to dramatically expand investment in the MBTA to meet the needs of current riders and the need for economic growth in the region. The MBTA is essential to the region as the recent crisis demonstrated in no uncertain terms. Reform has occurred, more reform may be necessary and helpful but the core problem is money. MBTA growth should also help us reduced opportunity gap and increase access to jobs and education for disadvantaged communities and people.

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Pourbaix, John	Construction Industries of Massachusetts	<p>As a member of the Transportation Finance Commission and as a party that worked with the Administration and Legislature in the drafting of MassDOT's enabling statute, we fully appreciate the challenges that faced the Commonwealth and its transportation entities. There was no question we needed to improve the way Massachusetts was overseeing its transportation assets. With this knowledge, CIM was a strong supporter of the creation of the MassDOT Board of Directors. When it was being created, we envisioned that the new Board would spend its valuable time focused on policy initiatives and setting in place the vision for the Commonwealth's transportation needs. Our major reservation concerning the creation of the new Board was that it would replicate the existing MBTA Board which we viewed as time consuming and inefficient in its handling of construction contracts. In fact, some CIM members choose not to bid MBTA work because of the track record of delayed decisions which have caused contractors to finance projects for months and even years while the Board delayed its decisions. Unfortunately, the positive changes we had hoped to see haven't been realized to the scale they should have. We suggest the MassDOT Board re-empower the professional staff of MassDOT to make the decisions they were hired and authorized to make. For example, construction contracts and amendments are commonly delayed for months because of a time consuming, inefficient approval process. Contracts and change orders have to be approved by the General Counsel, which results in backups of several months and in some cases over 12 months. Subordinates should review the documents and provide guidance for timely approval.</p>	<p>Resident Engineers do not have authority for time extensions, payment on extra work or day to day operations. Project controls (schedules) are able to hold up payments even after approval of the requisition & update at the field level. The civil rights section is inconsistent with its interpretation of M/W/DBE requirements of the contract. The contract amendment process is overly burdensome; after approval is granted, negotiations are regularly re-opened. Often times extra work on a project is obviously required, but is not undertaken because of the arduous approval process and the resulting desire to avoid the Board approval process. While it would be much cheaper and more efficient to perform work when it is identified, it is postponed at a much greater ultimate cost.</p>	<p>The MBTA does not pay on time. Most subcontractors do not want to work on MBTA projects because payments are most often late. Payments should be made within 30 days of signed requisitions. When additional funding has become available, a cost benefit analysis should be done to look at preventative maintenance, versus expanded service (including the additional operations and maintenance expenses) and additional subsidies. There has been an annual budget crisis over the last several years. Despite the inflow of new revenues, the MBTA has had to rely on one year deals to balance its budget, such as the lease of the North Station Parking Garage. The MBTA settled for a lump sum and gave up an annual stream of revenue.</p>

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Pourbaix, John	Construction Industries of Massachusetts	The construction division does not have the ability to move construction related issues through the system.	The approval process for construction projects needs to be streamlined and made more efficient and timely.

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Leroux, Andre	Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance	No response.	<p>LACK OF CAPACITY TO MEET DEMAND The current MBTA system is unable to fully meet current demand and those additional demands that can be readily projected for the short-run (e.g, through 2021). Eastern Massachusetts, particularly Greater Boston, has been experiencing a significant increase in market demand for walkable, transit-oriented places to live and work. This is due to a demographic shift, with both the millennial and baby-boom cohorts (the two largest), having a preference for living, working and retiring in those locations. This trend is discussed, and quantified, in the Metropolitan Area Planning Council’s Housing and Demand Projections for Metro Boston (January 2014). http://www.mapc.org/data-services/available-data/projections. The increase in demand for rail transit—and its implications for the system—are discussed in The Hub and Spoke: Core Transit Congestion and the Future of Transit and Development in Greater Boston (Urban Land Institute) http://boston.uli.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2012/06/Hub_and_Spoke_WEB.pdf. To meet this increasing demand with the current rail system requires that old rail vehicles be replaced as soon as possible and on a consistent basis, and that infrastructure such as the power and signalization systems be modernized. With respect to the bus system, this means consistently replacing old vehicles, adding fleet vehicles to handle increased demand on existing routes, and providing adequate maintenance facilities. It also means working with municipalities to reduce travel time through route and bus stop location changes, dedicated bus lanes and other strategies. To be clear, the increased demand for transit and for walkable, transit-oriented places to live and work is a very good thing. Shifting from auto travel to other modes has significant and positive implications for public health, for climate change, and for vibrant neighborhoods (and each of those outcomes is associated with saving public money). Importantly, for the Commonwealth’s economic prosperity, the MBTA is creating wealth that we enjoy in higher incomes and increased tax revenues. The MBTA is helping to drive our economy, as indicated by two recent reports commissioned by Smart Growth America. In a survey of 30 metro areas, those with more walkable urban places (generally connected to rail transit) had an average of 38% higher GDP per capita, and the metro Boston region was ranked first in the nation. Foot Traffic Ahead (June 17, 2014). http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/locus/foot-traffic-ahead/. Additionally, a study of eastern Massachusetts just this month showed that walkable urban places (74% served by rail transit) were yielding price premiums over auto-dependent places; this is a major reversal of the real estate market of the preceding 50 years, with projections that the real estate trends of the next several decades will continue to have this characteristic. The WalkUP Wake-up Call: Boston. http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/2015/03/11/inside-the-walkup-wake-up-call-boston/. Failing to increase capacity to meet demand will gut our state’s competitive advantage in the global marketplace and stunt the Commonwealth’s prosperity.</p>	<p>ADEQUATE REVENUE AND DEBT RELIEF We do not expect riders to fully pay the cost of operating the MBTA because all residents in the Commonwealth benefit economically from public transit. This is clearly demonstrated by the reports we cited in our response to the previous question. World-class metropolitan areas need a world-class transit system to accommodate new growth and investment. Numerous studies have documented time and again the backlog of deferred maintenance needed to bring the MBTA (indeed, our whole transportation infrastructure) into a state of good repair. However, the last two major transportation bills have principally focused on reforming state agencies as the way of solving these woes. The billions of dollars in promised savings have not materialized. Spending state resources more efficiently will improve our transportation management going forward, but will not replace decrepit infrastructure. We urge this Special Panel to recognize and recommend, as prior studies have done, that significant new revenue is needed. If the Legislature and Administration cannot identify the 1 billion dollars in new revenue that has been indicated is necessary to address our capital deficits, then debt relief for the MBTA is absolutely essential. MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR COSTS Studies have shown that the MBTA’s repair costs are significantly higher than for other comparable transit systems. While we do not profess to have expertise in this area, the Baker Administration should determine whether it is a function of our deteriorated system, or whether there are other, more manageable, variables in play and take action. As a side note, MassDOT’s road repair costs per mile is also significantly higher than for our neighboring states, and we should similarly determine the underlying reasons why.</p>

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Leroux, Andre	Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance	No response.	<p>EMBRACING THE MBTA'S ROLE AS AN ECONOMIC DRIVER FOR MASSACHUSETTS Real estate is the largest asset class in our state's economy, and although the MBTA is very likely the number 1 driver of that value in Massachusetts, it does not get the respect or investment it deserves. The most immediate issue facing the MBTA may be to increase its capacity to meet demand in the current system, but the larger issue is recognizing the importance of transportation infrastructure to the Massachusetts economy. We must not only get the MBTA up to capacity, but continue to plan and make the strategic investments that are necessary. The alternative is economic stagnation, as well as sliding back on key environmental and equity goals. Extending the Green Line through Somerville and making improvements to the Fairmount Line are already adding economic value in the station areas. Adding one station on the Orange Line—with a significant percentage of federal and private money—triggered over a billion dollars in private investment at Assembly Square. The construction of West Station at Allston Landing will likewise trigger private development that redevelops old rail yards. The Silver Line was one of the key reasons for the massive private investments that are remaking the South Boston waterfront; the chief risk to its continued success is the need to increase Silver Line capacity. South Coast Rail will re-connect the Southeast region to the strong Greater Boston region and lay the foundation for growth in the station areas that have been prepared by state, regional and municipal planning. The only way to accommodate our region's future growth is through the MBTA, by making capital improvements (repair and modernization) coupled with strategic expansion to knit together the metropolitan area. Eastern Massachusetts is already mostly built out at drivable densities (which is often unpleasantly known as "sprawl"). We are now at a point where growth without effective public transportation only increases congestion, leads to a loss of productivity, and raises health costs. Demand for public transportation is illustrated by the fact that MBTA ridership surpassed 400 million rides in 2014—an all-time high—despite rising fares and an often sub-par service. There are a few steps that could help achieve this goal: 1. The Commission could highlight the value of the MBTA as an economic engine benefitting the entire state in terms of its value to real estate and job creation. 2. Continuing to explore "value capture" as a mechanism for helping to fund strategic expansion linked to housing and job growth centers. This could perhaps through the use of new transit shed districts that capture a percentage of increasing private property values (itself sparked by the transit investment) as a way of contributing revenue to the state to help pay capital bonds. 3. At the same time, the MBTA should leverage its own property assets to ensure that some parcels of development around transit stations remain dedicated to affordable and middle-income housing, because those are the families who will become fare-paying customers and exhibit high rates of transit ridership. Stephanie Pollack's research on "equitable TOD" show ("Maintaining Diversity in America's Transit-Rich Neighborhoods.") http://iris.lib.neu.edu/dukakis_pubs/3/ 4. Support passage of a bill (H2698) that allows municipalities and regions to create local revenue streams approved by ballot initiative in those communities. Capital transportation improvements are often funded in this way in other parts of the United States, but it is a mechanism not currently allowed here. 5. The MBTA should invest in new infrastructure that leverages what we currently have. Some examples include: introducing Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs) to commuter rail lines beginning with the Fairmount Line, which will make our commuter rail track function more like a light rail system. DMUs could also be used to activate lines of track that are currently abandoned or underutilized, connecting new communities to rail transit. Another example is developing Bus Rapid Transit, which are dedicated bus corridors that function like rail transit, and which has been used effectively in many nations that have experienced rapid growth in population and urbanization. Such BRT corridors could reduce commute times and create a new category of high-value Transit Oriented Development at a fraction of the cost of embedded rail.</p>

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Pecci, Kirstie	MASSPIRG	<p>Transparency and accountability. This month, the public learned that the MBTA maintenance backlog tops \$6.7B, which is significantly higher than previous reports indicated. For years, legislators, advocates, and others have been asking for data about the MBTA's assets as well as the MBTA's finances and pension costs. The information has been incomplete at best or, in the worst cases, ignored. The MBTA should ensure that key data is collected, aggregated, and released regularly to the public. In an effort to provide greater financial transparency, the MBTA should continue to provide information to the Open Checkbook program, and should rigorously report back to the public on its needs and expenditures.</p>	<p>Labor Issues. Running a transit system is labor intensive. For years we have been told that management is taking advantage of workers or that labor is unfairly driving the system's costs up. However, there has not been a complete or in depth analysis of the facts. The Commonwealth needs data driven solutions to the MBTA's labor problems. We ask that the Commission solicit input from both sides -- management and workers -- and spend the time and resources to get to the bottom of this complex problem.</p> <p>Work Force Development. Talented and trained employees often leave the MBTA to make more money elsewhere. The MBTA needs to retain their highly skilled workforce and attract and train new blood to the organization. Investment in work force development should be a priority of the MBTA. Meeting demand. Cranes are up all over the city, evidence of a building boom that will require more capacity on our transit network: with market demand for walkable, transit-accessible places on the rise, demand for MBTA service is projected to grow. The Hub and Spoke: Core Transit Congestion and the Future of Transit and Development in Greater Boston projects demand for the system to grow between 100,000 and almost 400,000 new riders by 2021. Currently, there isn't the capacity on any of the subway lines, except the Blue Line, to accommodate this demand. For the MBTA to continue to serve as an engine of the Massachusetts economy, the MBTA must create service enhancements to expand the capacity of the core system. This could include new vehicles, upgrades to the power systems and signals, signal prioritization and optimization for buses, and exploring the addition of DMUs to the existing system. After initial investments, schedules and services should be adjusted routinely to reflect demand. Accurate commuter rail counts. Recently, the Pioneer Institute released analysis asserting that commuter rail ridership has fallen. The data the Institute used is hand-counted by conductors. Other data throws into question whether these numbers are reliable. Fare revenue data - between fare hikes - has remained fairly constant, suggesting that ridership has also stayed constant. In addition, the ridership-audited data shows that commuter rail ridership has actually increased, as do the new numbers released this week. We recommend that the MBTA develop a more reliable approach for measuring commuter rail ridership that doesn't solely depend on conductor estimates. In addition, regular and objective ridership projections would help improve planning and service adjustments to reflect demand.</p>	<p>Additional revenues. While the T can - and must - operate more efficiently, the truth is that no amount of cost-trimming is going to be enough to pay down the MBTA's gargantuan debt load, much less enable the T to rehabilitate its existing infrastructure and serve emerging needs. Even the most ardent critics of the MBTA agree that reforms will not generate the savings needed to rebuild the system, and we anticipate the Special Panel will acknowledge the collective wisdom of the dozens of reports over the last decade recommending new, significant resources to address not only the MBTA's needs, but to repair bridges, highways, local roads, and improve regional transit throughout the state. Alternative Revenues. The MBTA should aggressively explore alternative sources of revenue, including value capture and development, as well as continued exploration of public-private partnerships. Regional and local option taxes could provide local investments supported by municipalities in the MBTA service area, and innovative fare pass programs like the UPass program could increase off-peak ridership and provide critical revenue for the MBTA.</p>
Strunkin, Jessica	495/ MetroWest Partnership	<p>We would recommend greater inclusion of municipal representatives on the MBTA board and/or strengthening the MBTA Advisory Board's authority so communities served have a greater voice in governance. Perhaps the MBTA Board should be separate from the MassDOT Board or at the very least should involve the Commuter Rail Operator to a greater extent.</p>	<p>We feel there needs to be better coordination and communication between the MBTA and the Commuter Rail Operator relative to Commuter rail schedules, reverse commute service and RTA coordination to create a more seamless transit system for the users. Additionally, there seems to be a disconnect between the MBTA's ownership and operation of parking facilities, particularly on the Commuter Rail lines, and the ability for the MBTA to get the greatest return on investment for those parking assets. Parking is not only a revenue source but is essential to attracting greater ridership at Commuter Rail Line stops. We also recommend more attention is paid to accurate ridership counts and projections.</p>	<p>Fare evasion continues to be a problem on the Commuter Rail Lines and while fares only contribute a small portion of the MBTA's revenue - it sends an important message and discourages riders who are paying appropriately. The debt from the Big Dig, while not the entirety of the financial challenges for the MBTA, continues to be a concern and a legislative solution may be needed.</p>

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Name	Org.	Organizational Structure	If you could address one issue currently facing the MBTA...
Pecci, Kirstie	MASSPIRG	We recommend the Panel consider merging the planning functions of the MBTA and MassDOT in order to better consider opportunities like value capture, and ensure the multi-modal integration of transit, roads, and pedestrian and bike facilities. The Panel might also consider merging the MBTA's design and construction group with Highway District 6. Again, this would allow for better multi-modal project implementation, as well as facilitate more face-to-face coordination between staff involved in developing and implementing transportation projects.	While much must be done to make the MBTA operate more efficiently and effectively, the Commonwealth must continue to plan for future population and economic growth. The MBTA is already over-capacity and will be overwhelmed with new riders in the next five years. Capacity enhancements are sorely needed. In the short term, the MBTA should consider power and signal upgrades to increase frequency and performance, and should review the possibility of including diesel multiple units (DMU) to provide subway-like service on existing commuter rail lines. But as we strengthen the core system, we also need to extend its reach. We need a transit system that will support the state's economy for the future. GLX, is partially funded by the federal government and must continue. The South Station expansion is needed for the future. Extending the Silver Line past Logan Airport into Chelsea and Everett will connect workers to economic opportunity in the South Boston Waterfront. Expanding South Station is crucial not only for improving commuter rail service but also to lay the groundwork for high speed and intercity rail. And South Coast Rail will reconnect a region and labor market that has been cut off from Boston's economic engine, while supporting a smart growth blueprint for development along the way. All of these projects are decades in the making, and require relatively small amounts of funding to advance at this time. While the MBTA gets its house in order, this planning can ensure that critical projects are ready when the resources are available.
Strunkin, Jessica	495/ MetroWest Partnership	It would be helpful for the MBTA to work with the Commuter Rail Operator on outreach to communities along the Commuter Rail Lines. We would suggest utilizing a model similar to the Fitchburg Line Working Group. Greater transparency is needed on the various silos that contribute to the successful operation of the MBTA, namely CTPS, MBTA, MassDOT and the Commuter Rail Operator.	The MBTA needs to have a long-term vision, but unfortunately is stressed by the short term needs of the aging system. There needs to be a combination of fixes, maintenance, and expansion.

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Mares, Rafeal	Conservation Law Foundation	<p>Lack of Involvement and Investment by Municipalities and Riders in Governance: One of the MBTA's greatest governance advantages may also be its greatest weakness. The consolidation of transportation agencies into MassDOT in 2009 brought the MBTA under more state control. The advantage of that approach is that the state feels more responsible for the MBTA and to a certain extent that has helped the transit agency receive state assistance. / / The downside is that it is difficult for a statewide legislature to repeatedly be in the press for having to bail out the MBTA with new funds, which physically (although not economically) serves only the eastern part of the state. To be clear, the MBTA only needed more financial resources because it has been chronically underfunded, but that fact is too often lost on the media putting undue pressure not to adequately fund the MBTA on legislators. / / If local governments and riders had more of an investment and voice in the MBTA's governance structure, the wider circle of responsibility for the agency could be beneficial. Nearly every other transit system relies substantially more on local funding for its operating and capital budgets than the MBTA. The challenge with local funding in Massachusetts is that municipalities have only very restricted authority to raise revenue. As a result, such a change in the MBTA governance structure would have to go hand in hand with an increase in the ability of municipalities to raise revenue. / / Regardless, it may be useful to increase the role the Boston MPO plays in the MBTA's governance. This could add an element of regional coordination to the MBTA, which would be useful. Transit agencies in San Francisco, Dallas, and the twin cities already do so. This change would, however, have to be implemented in a way that avoids giving suburbs a disproportionate say. / / It would also be useful to add rider representation to the MassDOT/MBTA board. The challenge here is that as a result of the Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Law (M.G.L. c. 268A) people who professionally work with or on behalf of riders cannot serve in both roles. Volunteer riders, on the other hand, generally do not have the time or resources to participate on the level necessary. Seeking a specific exemption for this board position from the Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Law could be a good solution to this problem. /</p>	<p>Accuracy of Service Alerts: The MBTA's service alerts serve an enormously important purpose for riders. They allow people to change their plans if the transit service they rely upon is not available. Unfortunately, there are many occasions where the information provided on the website is inconsistent with what is actually happening on the ground. Days after the snowstorms, there were still many buses running on snow routes, which means that the drivers were asked to leave out certain portions of their regular route. Too many times, however, the website did not reflect that the bus was still running on a snow route. Commuter rail riders are affected in a similar way and the same problem occurs with buses during the summer in relation to construction projects. / / This is problematic because it means that MBTA's customers are waiting for buses or commuter rail trains, which never show up. A rider who is aware of the fact that her bus is skipping her station may be able to make other plans. But without that opportunity, the rider is forced to be late to her appointment. To make matters worse, riders now cannot trust that their bus or train is arriving the next day even if the website says that it is running on a regular schedule. This results in infuriated riders, who, if possible, will make plans to get around without the MBTA. Such plans could become long-term habits which reduce ridership and political support for the agency. / / This should be a relatively simple problem to fix. Somehow the communications between bus drivers, bus operations officials, and Lisa Battiston in the control center are not accurate or happening quickly enough. A similar review of internal communications at Keolis could be helpful for commuter rail trains. It would be important to look into this issue in the hope that all updates can become accurate and timely. In other words, no bus route or train schedule should be changed without a prior service alert other than during extreme emergencies in which the update should be immediate. / / Labor-Related Challenges: Public transportation is a labor-intensive operation. It is therefore prudent to explore opportunities for increased efficiencies in this area. Despite all the focus by the media on this aspect of the MBTA's challenges, few people understand the intricacies of the MBTA's labor relations. The Governor's Special Panel to Review the MBTA would therefore be well-advised to sit down with both management and unions to identify labor-related problems and find reasonable solutions. For example, if the Panel can document that the MBTA suffers from a high rate of employee absenteeism, it would be worthwhile to explore whether an improvement in management practices in this area is necessary. Many companies also have chosen to provide emergency child- and elderly-care facilities or services to their employees to help address this problem. Considering the size of the MBTA's workforce, this could be a cost-effective option for the transit agency. In this context, it is also important to learn more about the workforce challenges the MBTA is facing. An increasing shortage of signal, traffic, and vehicle engineers, for example, may be threatening the MBTA's operations. / / Insufficient Maintenance Facilities: The MBTA lacks adequate maintenance capacity, particularly to serve its bus fleet, which reduces the number of buses that can be in service. This is a particularly big challenge, because of the age of the MBTA's bus fleet. The MBTA currently has 1085 buses in active use. Almost 10% of the active bus fleet is beyond its useful life. An additional 80% of the current active bus fleet is reaching the end of its useful life within four years or less. Property needs to be acquired for the MBTA to be able to adequately maintain its aging bus fleet. /</p>	<p>Annual Budgetary Uncertainty Needs to be Eliminated: For years now, the MBTA has gone into every budget season unsure about how it will balance its operating budget. A transit agency should be able to plan ahead and such budget uncertainty is not allowing the MBTA to do so. Going into budget formation in fiscal years 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 the MBTA faced a budget deficit of \$160 million, \$73 million, \$127 million, and \$185 million respectively. Starting in FY2010 the MBTA received additional state assistance in the amount of \$160 million per year and for FY2013 the MBTA received a one-time assistance of \$49 million. In addition, a fare increase, debt restructuring, parking revenue securitization, and granting a parking lease helped the MBTA balance its budgets during these years. / / In 2013, the state legislature passed the Transportation Finance Act. Underlying the Act was a pro forma that projected future revenue gaps for the MBTA for fiscal years 2014 through 2018. The Joint Ways and Means Committee projections underlying the Act were significantly more optimistic than those of MassDOT at the time, resulting in smaller revenue gaps. The Committee estimated that the MBTA revenue gaps would be \$115 million, \$135 million, \$202 million, \$261 million, and \$357 million for fiscal years 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 respectively. Since a legislature cannot bind future legislatures on expenditures, the statute itself did not reflect these amounts. / / To ensure that the MBTA does not have to seek additional funding every year to balance its budget, it is crucially important that the agency be reliably awarded state assistance in the amounts projected in the pro forma underlying the Transportation Finance Act of 2013. During the last two years the state budget included state assistance covering the amounts of the revenue gap projection in the Joint Ways and Means Committee pro forma, as planned. Going forward, the MBTA should continue to receive state assistance in the amounts projected in the pro forma in order to assure that its operating budget can be balanced without service cuts. /</p>

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Mares, Rafeal	Conservation Law Foundation	<p>GM as Head of Rail and Transit Division: There is one part of the MBTA's organizational chart that sticks out as problematic. The General Manager of the MBTA, as the head of the Rail and Transit division of MassDOT, currently provides oversight of the state's fifteen independent regional transit authorities (RTAs). While increased coordination between the MBTA and the RTAs is to be encouraged, that goal may be better achieved by having the division led by someone at MassDOT who has an equal relationship to the MBTA and RTAs. / /</p> <p>Duplication of Functions between MBTA and MassDOT: A review of whether further functions of the MBTA and MassDOT can be brought under one department is warranted. To avoid duplication and encourage coherence in approaches, further consolidation of the engineering, planning, program management, and other functions with MassDOT should be considered. Such integration could not only save money, but also provide better results. For example, to really plan for the whole transportation system, all modes should all be addressed in a unified manner and transportation decisions should be connected to land use, housing issues, employment, and environmental issues. It may be easier to accomplish this goal with one MassDOT/MBTA planning office. /</p>	<p>For Any Reform to Work Additional Funding is Needed: As much as continued reform of the agency is, and always will be, necessary, without sufficient funding no restructuring effort will help the MBTA. The agency therefore, most urgently, needs to be funded at a high enough level to cover both its operating budget and capital needs. The approach of reform before revenue has been tried before without success. What is needed this time is reform and revenue. Sufficient funding on the operating side over the next three years must include at a minimum state assistance in the amounts underlying the Transportation Finance Act of 2013, which are \$202 million, \$261 million, and \$357 million in fiscal years 2016, 2017, and 2018 respectively. The MBTA also needs an amount of money sufficient to be able to keep its state of good from growing and to reduce it over time. The MBTA has not yet determined a number for how much it needs to spend annually to keep its state of good repair backlog from growing. It would be disappointing to see the efforts of the Governor's Special Panel to Review the MBTA be wasted as a result of insufficient revenue.</p>