



December 4, 2020

**To:**

Representative Christine Barber  
24 Beacon Street, Room  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Michael Connolly  
24 Beacon Street, Room  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Denise Provost  
24 Beacon Street, Room  
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Patricia Jehlen  
24 Beacon Street, Room  
Boston, MA 02133

Joseph Aiello  
Chairman, FMCB  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 5610  
Boston, MA 02116

Secretary Stephanie Pollack  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160  
Boston, MA 02116

**Re:** Comments on the Forging Ahead Plan

Dear Representatives Barber, Connolly, Provost, Senator Jehlen, Secretary Pollack, Chairman Aiello, and members of the MBTA Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB):

The Somerville Pedestrian and Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC) respectfully submits this letter to express deep concern and general opposition to the broad service cuts planned by the MBTA and the Baker Administration in the Forging Ahead initiative. The Somerville PTAC is appointed by Mayor Joe Curtatone to advise and advocate on behalf of pedestrians and transit riders, and to promote policies and programs supportive of walking and public transportation in the City of Somerville.

The proposed cuts to MBTA service are premature, drastic, discriminatory, and deeply damaging. They are premature because they are set to go into effect in spring/summer of 2021, at a time when we will likely see vaccine distribution and demand for ridership return. Not only will people be returning to work, but they will be excited to take advantage of all of the great experiences Greater Boston has to offer during the warm season - exploring our parks, dining and shopping, visiting museums, taking the ferry and the commuter rail to the beach, etc. These demands specifically will take place on weekends and off peak hours, when service is currently planned to be cut the most. Moreover, it is likely that the new Biden administration will provide an additional stimulus package for transportation in this time. It would be only prudent to wait for a federal stimulus before taking such a rushed decision. They are drastic because they eliminate entire bus routes, and entire ferry routes. Our bus and water services should be strengthened to

take more cars off the roads, and provide service to people who cannot or wish not to drive, not eliminated. They are unjust and discriminatory as they will leave stranded those who are dependent on the MBTA for their mobility needs: the so-called 'essential workers' that are not treated as such by these service cuts; the elderly; the undocumented; and all of our disadvantaged and vulnerable community members. And finally, these cuts are deeply damaging because they are permanent. Residents will lose their bus. MBTA union workers will lose their jobs. Cities will lose their ferry connection. Imposing these additional losses on us is not an effective strategy to recover from a pandemic.

Here in Somerville we have been making transit a priority on our streets. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Somerville has been working to implement Bus Priority projects to support our residents who depend on the MBTA every day for their mobility needs. Our community is highly dependent on reliable transit for all facets of daily life. Our work to make service more reliable and safer on our streets also benefits the entire region. We recognize that transit is essential, and prioritizing transit also helps reduce congestion, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and meet our equity and Vision Zero goals. The proposed cuts undermine the hard work of Somerville and the many municipalities that are committed to creating a modern and sustainable mobility system.

Cutting MBTA service next year as demand will come back is inequitable and unthinkable. The small amount of cost savings that the MBTA will gain from removing service is going to impose enormous costs on our people, economy, and climate for years to come. We strongly advise the FCMB not to approve these shortsighted cuts. It is time for the State Legislature and the Baker Administration to work together to disburse emergency funding to the MBTA to support the agency through this crisis, and save our transportation system.

Sincerely,

Zachary Rosenberg, Chair  
The Somerville Pedestrian and Transit Advisory Committee