

MBTA
ATTN: Victoria Ireton
10 Park Plaza - Suite 3830
Boston, MA 02116

Re: City of Cambridge Transit Advisory Committee Comments on Proposed Bus Network Redesign (BNR)

Dear Victoria:

The City of Cambridge's Transit Advisory Committee and its MBTA projects subcommittee reviewed the published Bus Network Redesign proposal. The advisory committee gives advice to the Cambridge City Manager and staff on issues related to public transit in Cambridge. We also write comment letters directly to state agencies with comments on MBTA or Commonwealth projects and initiatives. We offer the following comments, concerns, and additional suggestions on the redesign proposal.

The advisory committee would like to offer its strong endorsement and support of the objectives of the plan, the inclusion of a 25% increase in bus revenue service miles systemwide and, especially, the estimate of a 35% increase in service miles in Cambridge. We also applaud the expansion of all-day high frequency bus routes, as the Committee has long advocated for higher frequency service as the best way to maintain and increase ridership in the area.

With respect to the service proposals that may impact the Cambridge, we would especially highlight our support for the new or revised high frequency routes: T39, T70, T96, T101, T109 and the new mid-frequency Route 55. We offer our suggestions for revised and improved routings for several of these, as described later in this letter.

However, we are dismayed to see several substantial service frequency reductions on several routes and route eliminations. These will adversely impact current bus riders and we urge the MBTA to restore most, if not all, of these proposed service cuts. We are concerned that both Cambridge residents, visitors to and travelers passing through Cambridge will be substantially inconvenienced. In particular, we are concerned by the proposal for longer headways and longer walking times to distant stops. The service reductions most affecting Cambridge residents include the elimination of all day service on Route 68, the elimination of Route 74 and a potential frequency reduction on Route 78, and the loss of current bus service in East Cambridge (served by routes 80,87, and 88). These three areas are proposed to have significant and unsustainable frequency reductions that will undoubtedly drive more residents away from public transit while new development in all three areas (especially in West Cambridge) is bringing many new residents, workers, and visitors into these neighborhoods.

We also cannot support the service reductions in our neighboring communities of Belmont, Arlington, and Somerville who currently use the proposed eliminated routes 74, 79, 80, 87, and 88 to access Cambridge destinations every day.

Regarding alternative routing proposals, we would strongly urge the MBTA to consider the following ideas that the TAC has generated over the past several months:

- Extend the current Route 68 through Harvard Square to the Danehy Park/Fresh Pond shopping area via Concord Ave., New St. and potentially further to either Alewife Station or the new West Cambridge development area beyond the Fresh Pond Parkway rotary;

- Extend Route T109 through Harvard Square to Allston/West Station (Harvard developments) or Boston Landing (WGBH and New Balance);
- Change the northern terminus of Route T39 from Porter Square to travel instead to the new East Somerville GLX station and Sullivan Station, where a route connecting Central Square to East Somerville GLX and Orange Line connections is needed; and
- Modify other high-frequency routes like T77 and T96 to serve Somerville Ave. or consider keeping route 87 as is.

The advisory committee believes that each of the above alternative routing proposals will enhance the Cambridge network connections and substantially increase two-way ridership on these routes at a modest additional cost.

Finally, the TAC would suggest a few BNR “early action” priorities for the proposed changes in Cambridge based on our understanding of the greatest immediate benefits that can be achieved. These include, in rough order of priority:

- a. Commit to maintain the mid-frequency services discussed above that are now slated for substantial reductions;
- b. New T101 service at least from the new Lechmere Station to Kendall Square via First St
- c. New service to MIT and Kendall—Route 55
- d. New Route T39 through Central Square to Union and East Somerville GLX stations

The advisory committee invites the Bus Network Redesign project team back to attend a future meeting to discuss in more detail each of the comments and alternative proposals outlined here. We appreciate the opportunity to present meaningful input into your planning process and look forward to your response to our comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,



John Attanucci, Chair

On Behalf of the Cambridge Transit Advisory Committee