

July 27, 2022

Steve Poftak, General Manager
Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority
10 Park Plaza, Suite 5610
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Mr. Poftak,

I write to object most strongly to the changes in bus service proposed for Somerville and Cambridge as part of the “Better Bus Project”. Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS) has been the federally designated anti-poverty agency serving Somerville, Massachusetts since 1981. CAAS’ mission is to help local families and individuals achieve financial security while working to eliminate the root causes of economic injustice. We provide Head Start classrooms in both Cambridge and Somerville, as well as Housing Advocacy, Community Organizing, and Volunteer Income Tax Preparation services to Somerville and surrounding communities.

The vast majority of our clients live at or below the Federal poverty level. They are dependent, more so than most area residents, on the bus system to get to work, bring their kids to daycare, attend medical appointments, shop for groceries, and a host of other essential activities. Any reduction in bus service impacts them disproportionately, forcing added expenses for alternative modes of transportation such as taxis, and lost opportunities for work and medical care.

We oppose *any* reduction in service to any of the bus routes serving our area. Under the guise of “improvement” the MBTA is placing the burden of its fiscal problems on those least able to bear those burdens. However, we would be delighted to add our voices to efforts to improve the mass transit system through additional funding, better staff training, benefits, and retention systems, and other improvements that will ultimately produce a fairer, more robust, and more useful transit system for our region. We urge you to abandon the strategy of reducing service, and adopt a progressive, optimistic, and visionary approach that leads to an MBTA that we can all rely on and be proud of.

There is another reason, of course, why a robust and truly usable transit system is essential to our region, and that is to help address the critical issue of climate change. There can be no reasonable debate at this point that climate change is happening, and that unless addressed - at *every* level, by *every* program and government office - we will face catastrophic impacts in the very near future. It is the MBTA’s, and the Commonwealth’s, responsibility to design transportation options that take this reality into account. Reductions in bus service that will force increased use of private vehicles is the opposite of what is needed to address this crisis.

We look forward to working with you to advocate for the resources needed to address these concerns.

Sincerely yours,



David Gibbs
Executive Director

CC: Governor Charlie Baker
MassDOT Secretary and CEO Jamey Tesler
Somerville Mayor Katjana Ballantyne
Somerville City Council
Cambridge Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui
Cambridge City Council
State Senator Pat Jehlen
State Representatives Christine Barber, Michael Connolly, Marjorie Decker, and Erika Uytterhoeven