Dear Riders,

By now, you’ve probably heard that the MBTA has proposed to raise fares again, and you’re likely not happy about this decision. To be honest, neither are we. But just like you, the T is required to balance how much it spends with how much it earns. Since the last fare increase, the T has done its very best to supplement its income with ever-more creative one-time solutions like real estate sales, labor efficiencies, and debt restructuring. We at the Rider Oversight Committee commend the T’s efforts to keep the unsustainable system afloat, but regret that the fate of the entire system is now at a crossroads. Within the next four years, the difference between the T’s income and expenses will balloon to $330 million—nearly 20% of the T’s annual operating budget.

Certainly the T must be able to trim 20% somewhere to make up for the gap, right? By the numbers, to close the deficit with service cuts alone, the T would have to completely shut down the commuter rail system ($150M), permanently eliminate the Green Line ($70M), and abolish more than 80% of all existing bus routes ($100M). Collectively, these cuts could close the budget gap.

Does a fare increase suddenly seem more reasonable to you? Without any cuts to service, fares on the bus, subway, and commuter rail would have to nearly double over the next four years. Discounted fares for senior/student passes and the RIDE would need to rise to the maximum levels allowed by law. Altogether, these fare increases would be large enough to raise the $330M needed to break even.

The financial outlook for the T is grim. In the coming months, we’ve all got some tough choices to make. Without a sustainable combination of service cuts, fare increases, and new funding sources, the T simply will not survive.

Riders, now is the time for us to stand up and speak out. The T’s red ink is much worse than you think. Next year, without increased funding, your bus or train could be the one that stops coming. Do we want the transit system we can afford or the transit system that we need? Rally round, and get engaged! Come join us at the public meetings and support the MBTA. Help us by calling your local and state representatives to insist they finally address the T’s funding gap. Fellow riders, it’s our T. It’s time for us to defend it.

Sincerely,

Stefan Wuensch
Co Chair, The MBTA Rider Oversight Committee

C/o Darrin McAuliffe, Director of Communications Coordination and Liaison to the Rider Oversight Committee
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