



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE
State House Room 413-C, Boston, MA 02133

SENATOR LYDIA EDWARDS
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April 24, 2023

Dear Secretary Fiandaca,

I am writing in my capacity as Senator for the Third Suffolk District of the Commonwealth to respectfully comment on and request changes be made to Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)'s proposed FY24-28 Capital Investment Plan (CIP) as follows:

1. Red-Blue Line Connector Project – 30% Design Funding

The Red-Blue Line Connector is a long overdue project. The people of East Boston Revere and Winthrop (Blue Line communities) as well as an entire network of commuters' people trying to access the airport would be benefited for generations. I am delighted to see the CIP plan includes \$15 millions for the connector. I am hopeful that the funds assessed will get the project to 30% funding for the design of the project to move the Commonwealth forward on our transportation goals.

While \$15 million is currently earmarked in the proposed CIP for this project, to meet the 30% benchmark, the overall budget would very likely need to increase to \$30 million. The 30% design funding benchmark is typical of projects requiring state funding sources, and, thus, is in keeping with budgetary precedent. Moreover, meeting this threshold investment for the project ensures that the Commonwealth is putting a down payment on a better future for public transportation. Therefore, I respectfully request that the MBTA revise the CIP to increase funding for the Red-Blue Connector – Planning Project (P0866) from \$15 million to \$30 million or make and assurance that 30% of the design will be completed.

2. Ferries – Preserving Waterfront Transportation

The 3rd Suffolk has a robust history with ferries. While we are going through massive infrastructure changes with the Sumner Tunnel we should capitalize on our natural resources. In addition, metropolitan congestion and soaring housing costs, preserving this water transit service is crucial to the overall functioning and well-being of the district I represent. Currently, the CIP sets aside \$37.6 million for seven different ferry projects. It does not include however key projects or allocated bond monies set aside for ferry expansion.

First, East Boston Ferry Service Project, recently reestablished in September 2022, was a critical step forward in connecting East Boston directly to the North End and developing the infrastructure of the inner harbor. The East Boston Ferry Service Project was not specifically listed. As such, I respectfully request the CIP be changed to allocate an eighth project under the budget set aside for ferries in the amount of \$# million. This project should be specifically described as preservation and servicing of the East Boston Ferry Service Project.

Second, Winthrop has a ferry that stops in Boston-Long Wharf, Quincy and the Boston-Seaport. This ferry is operated by the town of Winthrop and it has become increasingly clear that it would be best to transfer the operation to the Mass DOT. This would allow passengers to use Charlie Cards. Moreover, this system is including a new stop at the Hyatt which has direct access to Boston Logan Airport. Therefore, I respectfully ask that the Mass DOT take over the operation of the Winthrop ferry and funding for this be included in the CIP.

Third, Senators Crighton, Lovely Keenan, Tarr and myself, successfully passed \$28 million in bonding funds for the “expansion, planning, design, construction, acquisition, operation and maintenance of infrastructure and vessels necessary for the operation of a intracoastal water-based transportation pilot program.” This pilot program shall be conducted not less than 3 years and not more than 5 years. With the \$28 million dollars the ferry funds available almost double. I respectfully ask that an intracoastal ferry pilot program be added to the the CIP.

3. Bus Network Redesign Proposal – Maintaining Shirley Point

The Bus Network Redesign Implementation Proposal, for which the CIP authorizes a budget totaling \$11.7 million, will profoundly impact Winthrop residents’ access to public transit. A component of this project includes the elimination of Point Shirley from the new bus routes intended to reach the more remote residential areas of Winthrop’s peninsula. Hundreds of Winthrop residents would be required to travel over a mile to get to their first bus stop. Many of the households impacted by this change include families with school-aged children who rely on this mode of transportation to attend schools. The two neighborhoods whose residents would need to travel over a mile to get to the first bus stop out of Winthrop are Point Shirley and Deer Island. In the Point Shirley neighborhood, around 28% of residents, or approximately 295 people, depend on public transportation to get to work. In the Deer Island neighborhood, about 62% of residents, or approximately 283 people, depend on public transportation to get to work. In sum, 578 Winthrop residents who rely on public transit to conduct their daily lives would be required to walk over a mile to get to a bus.

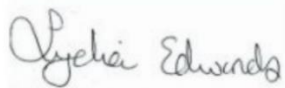
As to the safety of school-aged youth, approximately 207 residents of the Point Shirley neighborhood are enrolled in public school. Should the residents who are enrolled in public school depend on public transit to get access their education, these students would need to walk over a mile to get to their first bust step as well. Necessitating our youth to walk longer distances just to get to school would create a tremendous safety risk. Therefore, it is necessary that the CIP’s Bus Network Redesign Implementation Project (P0916) be amended to explicitly include the preservation of Point Shirley bus stops in the redesign of Greater Boston’s bus network.

4. Revere – Support for Proposed Projects

As to the CIP’s projects for Revere, a community in my district, I am writing to express enthusiasm and support for these projects and to request their budgets be maintained in the amounts currently allotted once the CIP is finalized. The two projects I am referring to are: (1) the Shared Streets/Chelsea-Revere Project (P0953d) with a budget of up to \$0.2 million; and (2) the Bus Priority and Accessibility Improvements Project (P0613) with a budget of up to \$48.2 million. Maintaining the budgets currently authorized for these two projects will ensure robust structural improvements and positive outcomes for the lives of thousands of Revere families and individuals.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Lydia Edwards
State Senator
Third Suffolk District