

## A Vision for Boston: Questions for the 2009 Mayoral Candidates

### DAY 6: MBTA

*What should the Mayor's role be in supporting the MBTA, keeping it affordable for residents, and encouraging better service?*

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) serves approximately 4.7 million people in 175 communities in eastern Massachusetts. According to the US Census data, almost 190,000 commuters from both outside and within Boston use public transportation to get to work in the City. This represents 36 percent of all commuters.

The cities and towns served by the MBTA support it through annual assessments. Total local assessments represent 10% of the MBTA's total operating budget, which this year was \$1.466 billion. Boston's MBTA assessment is \$74.7 million for fiscal 2010, which is 50% of the municipal contribution and \$66 million more than Cambridge, the next highest contributor.

The current challenges facing the MBTA have important consequences for Boston. Operational problems facing the MBTA include deferred maintenance (frequently due to over ambitious expansion) which has hurt the system's reliability. Unrelenting increases in expenditures have required fare increases and may result in service cuts. Planned service enhancements and capital expansions are being delayed, canceled or scaled back, which will impact economic growth in Boston.

One Boston project whose funding is in doubt is the third phase of the Silver Line, which involves constructing a tunnel from Washington Street to South Station to provide a direct connection from Dudley Square to the South Boston Waterfront and Logan Airport. Another multi-billion dollar project in need of funding is the Urban Ring, a bus rapid transit system that would connect Boston and six other municipalities in an effort to link people to jobs.

All of this comes at a time when the MBTA's role within the state's larger transportation bureaucracy is changing. The transportation reform bill recently passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor abolishes the MBTA's independent board and folds the system into a much larger Authority that will include the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority and Massachusetts Highway Department. As a consequence, Boston's influence with the MBTA may be diminished.

*As an advocate for the city's residents, how would you engage the MBTA and state transportation planners to ensure that adequate resources are devoted to supporting the transit system in Boston? What will your position be, if after a state study of MBTA operations and obligations, a fare increase is recommended? What would you recommend to make MBTA services more available to riders?*

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