

TOWN OF COHASSET
COHASSET TOWN HALL
41 HIGHLAND AVENUE
COHASSET, MA 02025



**OFFICE OF THE
SELECT BOARD**
OFFICE: 781-383-4100 Ext. 5101

October 27, 2020

The Honorable Charles Baker
Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
24 Beacon Street, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Secretary Stephanie Pollack
Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, MA 20116

Mr. Steve Poftak
General Manager
MBTA
10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Honorable Governor Baker, Secretary Pollack and Mr. Poftak,

I am writing on behalf of the Cohasset Select Board to implore the Mass Department of Transportation, the MBTA, and the MBTA Fiscal Management Control Board to identify options for public transportation service to our communities that do not significantly reduce or terminate the Hingham/Hull ferry and the Greenbush Commuter Rail.

As local officials, we are acutely aware of the budgetary challenges we all face as our local and regional economies have effectively shut-down because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are challenged in our current operations and managing past and future budgeting assumptions, all with an uncertainty about how life will rebound in the future. However, as public officials, we have a responsibility to our residents to ensure that decisions we make today do not permanently harm our communities. We must also protect past investments in infrastructure, economic development, and community planning. In Cohasset, we place the highest priority on **maintaining the character and economic viability of our communities, ensuring the health and wellness of our residents, improving accessibility for seniors and the disabled, and protecting the environment.** These are priorities that must never be overlooked, regardless of the challenge.

Access to Boston by public transportation is vital to the entire South Shore and its residents. Cohasset's recently adopted Master Plan identified that **fully one-third of our working community is employed in the city of Boston, a large portion of whom rely on train or boat service into Boston.** Our residents span a wide-variety of professions and residents consistently note the Commuter Rail and Ferry as required services in their choice to move to and remain in our community.

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Public transit is the preferred option for our commuters, as the geography of the South Shore creates multiple roadway “choke points.” While Cohasset is only 20 miles from downtown Boston, a typical commute can last 90-120 minutes by car. **Many residents also work in the Rte. 128 belt, and putting more cars on the roads and highways of the metro-Boston region will have a devastating economic, environmental, and quality-of-life impact well beyond Boston and the South Shore.** The detrimental health effects of longer commute times are well-documented and impact not only those in cars, but also the region’s communities that will face increased pollution, congestion, and general disruption.

Over the past decade-plus, hundreds of millions of dollars of private, state, and federal funding have been dedicated to public transit and TOD. Cohasset rezoned land surrounding the Greenbush commuter rail allowing development of a now thriving retail and residential area that includes affordable housing units. These investments and the resulting jobs will be especially vulnerable to cuts in public transit. **Eliminating or reducing service to the Greenbush Line and the Hingham/Hull ferry risks disconnecting our community from Boston and the metro area and directly threatens the economic future of our residents and community.**

Significant schedule cuts in mid-day service to the Greenbush line and the ferries impact those working in the retail and restaurant businesses, students who travel between Boston and our communities, our many medical professionals working in Boston, and elderly residents who rely on the train, in particular, to go to Boston for healthcare appointments. **Impacts will extend beyond our own community as non-peak service reductions also will result in reduced trips into Boston for entertainment, restaurants, culture, and shopping by our residents.**

The future of our communities, Boston, and the metro-Boston region depends on convenient and accessible public transit. **We stand ready to assist in creative conversation about next steps that will best serve our working families, our communities, and the hundreds of millions of dollars in investments the Commonwealth, our local municipalities, and residents have made in the public transportation system to the South Shore.**

Yours sincerely,

Diane M. Kennedy /s/
Chair
Cohasset Select Board

cc: Mr. Joseph Aiello, Ms. Monica Tibbitts-Nutt, Mr. Brian Lang, Ms. Chrystal Kornegat
cc: The Honorable Stephen Lynch, United States Congressman
cc: The Honorable Patrick O’Connor, State Senator
cc: The Honorable Joan Meschino, State Representative