



Town of Hull



BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MUNICIPAL BUILDING
HULL, MASSACHUSETTS 02045
(781) 925-2000

November 4, 2020

Dear Members of the Fiscal and Management Control Board and MassDOT Board of Directors:

Please accept the Town of Hull's comments on the proposed "Forging Ahead" plan as put forward by the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA). While the Town recognizes the financial challenges confronting the MBTA resulting, in part, from reduced ridership on public transit during the Covid-19 pandemic, the proposed elimination of the Hull commuter ferry service, as is currently being discussed by the MBTA, will have an immediate, substantial and disparate impact on the residents and businesses, not only in Hull, but much of the South Shore subregion. These impacts will be significant in nature affecting not only local economies, but the quality of life for the town's resident commuters.

Reducing transit to bus and rail core services, coupled with the assumption that displaced ferry commuters will retreat to vehicles as an alternate mode of transportation, flies in the face of reason and directly contradicts established and adopted Long Range Transportation goals and objectives, including the MBTA's commitment to support modes of transportation that are safe, resilient, reliable, efficient, environmentally friendly & sustainable, promote economic vitality and that provide transportation equity. The ferry system represents all of these goals and objectives.

The pandemic has presented challenges and setbacks which cut clear across both local and household economies. Reliable and accessible transportation options play a direct role in recovery, during and post-COVID. As municipalities struggle to close existing and forecasted revenue gaps, elimination of ferry service would not only compound revenue loss, but would be salt in the wound of commuters and local businesses. Ferry service not only provides a palatable commuter option between Boston and the South Shore, but it also supports the fragile, seasonal economies of Hull, Hingham, Scituate, Cohasset and Boston.

To eliminate ferry service will significantly undermine State and local investments already made in the region and will uncertainly diminish local business and household survivability during the pandemic as well as recovery post-COVID. Investments in transit-oriented development at ferry sites has provided improved access to ferry transportation, economic opportunity through its mixed-use development as well as

advanced affordable housing stock in the region. Without ferry service, businesses will not survive, household incomes will diminish or will be completely eliminated and efforts to increase the affordable housing stock will take a significant step backwards.

The MBTA's data states that 33% of ferry riders are a zero (0) to one (1) car household and have a high ridership propensity. However, the data also claims that ferries serve a low transit critical population. The difference between zero and one is insurmountable and represents a demonstrable flaw in the assumptions. Of the identified 33%, there is no consideration given to the exact portion of households who have zero vehicles in comparison to exact portion of their counterparts with at least one vehicle. Applying this data point is further flawed, as it assumes that in those households with a single vehicle, that it is available for use by the misplaced ferry commuter.

Compounding the flawed assumption that ferry riders have an alternative mode of transportation, is the undiscussed reality that pushing commuters to vehicles undermines efforts to promote clean air and sustainability as well as efforts around capacity management and mobility, impacts not only realized on the South Shore, but across environment justice communities in our region resulting in significant negative impacts on the quality of life for those commuters and communities.

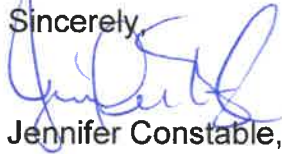
Also of note, forcing Hull commuters to the Greenbush commuter rail line, will render those households with zero vehicles, without access to public transportation as there is currently no bus connection from Hull to the Greenbush line. Again, demonstrating that elimination of ferry services is simply not an option.

From a local economy perspective, on either end of the Hingham-Hull-Boston route exists fragile, seasonal economies which heavily rely upon the ferry system to support its consumer base. Elimination of ferry service cuts the legs directly out from under those businesses already struggling to survive. The impact of the ferry on the viability of the business community in Hull cannot be understated. The reliability on and consistency of ferry ridership is further evidenced by a recent petition to the MBTA in support of ferry services. In a community with a population of approximately 10,500 year-round residents, the petition generated over 5,000 signatures in very brief period of time.

Ferry service is essential to the residents, businesses, and local economy in Hull as well as its neighboring communities. Acknowledging the complexity of the current fiscal situation, one thing is clear and should not be overlooked, the survivability of Hull's local commercial economy and that of our resident's, rests in the decisions put forth by the MBTA. We implore the MBTA and its Fiscal Management and Control Board to make the responsible and equitable decision to maintain ferry service throughout the pandemic and especially post-recovery.

On behalf of the Hull Board of Selectmen, our residents and businesses, we thank the MBTA for its diligence during these trying times and especially for due consideration to the matter so important to our community.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Constable, Chair
Board of Selectmen

Cc:

Governor Charles Baker

Sen. Stephen Lynch

Rep. Joan Meschino

Sen. Patrick O'Connor

Sec. Stephanie Pollack

MBTA Fiscal Management and Control Board