

TO: Local Chief Elected Officials  
FROM: Glenn Eaton, Executive Director  
RE: MBTA Weekend Service Stoppage on the  
Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line  
DATE: May 2, 2014



I am writing on behalf of the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC), the transportation advisory committee of the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), to express the committee's concerns related the weekend service stoppage for the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line by the MBTA.

Our MJTC members have expressed their concern about the decision by the MBTA to suspend weekend service along the Rail Line from April to November during planned construction improvements on several occasions. These concerns center on the severe impact users along the line from points west heading into Boston will experience during these months. All stations in our region and all along the line will not be serviced in any manner, i.e. MBTA will not be providing any alternative means for users to access what train service or connections that may be available. MJTC representatives have stated that many individuals in their communities utilize the train to access jobs, medical treatments and recreational events during the weekend periods. In particular, they pointed to individuals employed by Boston area hospitals who may be considered essential that will be impacted. Additionally, in our region students and faculty at Fitchburg State University (FSU) will be affected due to the planned stoppage. The lack of a viable alternative for these people as well as a feeling that little was done by the MBTA to adequately publicize this service suspension was a consistent theme throughout MJTC discussions.

The MJTC does recognizes the cost considerations associated with the MBTA providing some type of bus or van service to supplement these outages and also understands the current fiscal issues that face the MBTA. However, there appears to have been little done to identify possible alternatives for the impacted commuters. Information such as local taxi or limousine companies to possible ridesharing opportunities through the MassRIDES program and potential alternative routes through the Worcester Commuter Rail Line should have been made available to these individuals. Additionally, research by the MRPC has shown that a number of small local bus companies reside within the region. These private companies, if contacted and informed of the opportunity, might consider establishing some type of service. Of course these businesses would need to evaluate the profitability of such a service but unless approached with such an opportunity there is no way to determine if anything can be established.

It is with the above in mind that I write on behalf of the MJTC and the MRPC to your community. The planned service stoppages for the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line have raised several important issues and concerns that will likely impact residents of your town. The development of a comprehensive plan and outreach program are vital to meet the needs of those individuals that rely upon mass transit and the rail line. Adequate public notice regarding commuting options and services is a minimal step to address this need. We hope that you will join us in asking that the MBTA review their plans to inform the general public about the service outage, their assessment of potential publically funded connection options and the opportunity for local private companies to step in and fill the service voids created by this construction project. We asked that if you are so inclined to contact the MBTA to voice your concerns and to ask that, at the least, important service information be clearly disseminated at all stations through literature or variable message signs.



As outlined in the MBTA fact sheet, ([www.mbta.com/about\\_the\\_mbtat\\_projects/default.asp?id=15585](http://www.mbta.com/about_the_mbtat_projects/default.asp?id=15585)) this situation will occur again in 2015, so this will continue to be an important issue for the Montachusett region and the communities along the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and for the opportunity to bring this issue to your attention. Please feel free to contact me in order to further this discussion.

CC: MJTC Representatives  
Montachusett Region State Senators and Representatives  
CEOs Fitchburg, Leominster, Shirley, Ayer, Littleton, Acton, Concord, Lincoln, Weston, Waltham, Belmont, Cambridge