



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS NEWTON

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March 8, 2012

Jonathan R. Davis
Acting General Manager
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
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Dear Mr. Davis:

The League of Women Voters of Newton (LWVN) adds its voice to the chorus of organizations and individuals calling for an alternative funding plan for the MBTA. At a time of rising ridership, the MBTA should not only be celebrated for the service it provides, but also be receiving increased support from the riders, cities and towns, and state that it serves.

The League of Women Voters has long supported:

“A statewide public transportation service, accessible to all, that provides access to jobs, housing and services while creating minimum disruption of the environment; public monies allocated flexibly to meet public transportation needs.” (*League of Women Voters of Massachusetts Transportation position*)

The MBTA has proven itself an invaluable service, especially in these tight financial times, when commuters and local residents continue to search for ways to travel less expensively and with less impact on our environment. It is an essential part of the economic engine that keeps our local economy moving, as well as a basic tool of life for those who are most at risk in our society.

The debt burden that the MBTA carries, however, has been an insurmountable barrier to its fiscal solvency. The dedicated revenue stream from sales tax revenue that was instituted under the “forward funding” plan has not performed as expected, and has been insufficient to meet increasing operating expenses and debt service. The MBTA has been diligent and creative in finding new revenues and cost efficiencies, but these measures are miniscule compared to the problem at hand. There simply is no amount of “belt-tightening” that can put the MBTA back on its fiscal “feet.”

The long-term fiscal challenges that the MBTA faces are such that they cannot be resolved by fare hikes and service cuts alone. These are short-term “fixes.” We agree that fare hikes may be necessary, to make them comparable to the transit fares in other cities, but not at the percentage increase proposed in either scenario. We hope that the MBTA will look at increases that do not fall disproportionately on those least able to afford them. We are especially concerned that significant service cuts would impact those least able to find alternatives, and start a downward spiral from which the MBTA would find it difficult to recover.

The LWVN is heartened by the recent outcry of support from riders and local cities and towns, but dismayed by the seeming lack of support at the state level for alternative funding solutions. The Governor and Legislature must consider other revenue sources and options, especially debt relief. The MBTA is too important a resource for Massachusetts citizens to not find a long-term, sustainable solution.

Sincerely,

Sue Flicop
Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters of Newton

Anne Borg

March 8, 2012, League of Women Voters of Newton letter re: MBTA

CC:

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State Senator Cynthia S. Creem
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