



December 4, 2020

To the MBTA Fiscal Management and Control Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the MBTA's proposed service reductions. I am writing on behalf of the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP), a statewide public nonprofit that finances affordable rental housing and home ownership, provides technical assistance for housing and neighborhood development, and provides research and analytical support for state housing policy.

MHP's Center for Housing Data developed and launched a new online platform last year that quantifies the potential to expand housing production in proximity to MBTA stations. Our parcel-level analysis found that approximately 60 percent of the new housing developed in Massachusetts over the last decade has been within a half-mile of transit stops. On a going-forward basis that percentage will need to be ever higher in order to meet the state's housing production and climate goals, decrease auto-dependence and support additional MBTA ridership.

MHP is concerned that the proposed service cuts -- even if reversed at a later date -- would undermine decades of state policy to promote housing development near transit. Since future federal financial support from Congress and the Biden Administration could make the cuts unnecessary we urge the Fiscal and Management and Control Board to delay any decision until at least the end of the next quarter.

The frequency of daytime service and the availability of weekend and late night service are critical considerations for anyone seeking to buy, rent or develop new housing near transit. Perceptions matter a great deal and any uncertainty about the MBTA's future commitment to restore services "as riders return" could have a crippling effect on the willingness of lenders and investors to finance new housing near transit and on public support for increased density in station areas. The additional market value of housing near reliable transit has been well-documented, with a recent analysis from the American Public Transportation Association and the National Association of Realtors showing a value premium of 9% and 4%, respectively, for owner-occupied homes and apartments in metro Boston within a half-mile of transit.

The proposed cuts will also have a significant impact on the tens of thousands of people that MHP serves. Low- and moderate-income households who live in MHP-financed properties need reliable, frequent transit service to reach jobs, schools, and essential services.

We hope the MBTA will consider delaying its decision until the magnitude of federal financial support becomes clearer. To do otherwise might result in a major setback to the state's housing and growth strategy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clark L. Ziegler', written over a light gray background.

Clark L. Ziegler
Executive Director