



## TESTIMONY: MBTA FMCB MEETING

MARCH 4, 2019

- Hello, good afternoon. I'm Veena Dharmaraj from the Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club. Thank you so much for this opportunity to comment. The Sierra Club submits the following comments on both the fare hike proposal and the facilities plan, on behalf of our 100,000 supporters and members.
- Sierra Club is strongly opposed to any fare increases. The proposed 6.3% fare hike would place an undue burden on those already struggling to meet transportation related costs. At a time when Massachusetts is looking at ways to reduce transportation emissions, a fare increase will push more commuters to drive, contribute to declining ridership, increase congestion, and take us further away from our climate goals.
- We encourage the T to reduce fares for low income residents, expand and simplify the youth pass, and make Charlie Cards more accessible, especially in communities that depend on bus service. We also ask that MBTA revise zoning rules for commuter rail fares so that no municipality is split between multiple fare zones.
- Given that gridlock in the Metro Boston area in 2018 was worse than anywhere else in the nation, we should prioritize investments in public transit as recommended in the Governor's Commission on Future of Transportation report. The state and the T should look at other funding sources to maintain, improve and expand service.
- We would also like to take this opportunity to comment on the facilities plan, especially in view of the fact that bus procurements will be aligned with facility improvements. As you are aware Sierra Club and several other organizations have been asking that MBTA move quickly on fleet electrification. The Governor's report also highlights establishing a goal for electrification of our vehicle fleet to reduce transportation emissions. While we are glad that the T is taking steps in that direction, we urge the T to move faster on implementation.
- It is disheartening that the MBTA Focus40 draft plan shows no electric bus procurements in commitments through 2023. In that time MBTA will add another 194 hybrid buses with an additional 460, buses scheduled for delivery by 2025. This means that unless immediate and near-term bus replacements include electric buses, a significant percentage of MBTA's bus fleet will remain tied to polluting fossil fuels for well over a decade.

- We look forward to the five electric buses expected to join the Silverline fleet this spring and learning more about the timeline for the electric bus pilot in North Cambridge. However, it is time for MBTA to move beyond these small electric bus pilots. The electric bus feasibility study currently underway should lay out a pathway that supports a quick transition and commits MBTA to all-electric bus purchases by 2030.
- As MBTA analyzes the feasibility of modifying or expanding current garage maintenance facilities and constructing new ones, we urge that all facilities are equipped for the next generation of bus technologies including an electric bus fleet.
- With transit agencies across the nation making the shift to all electric zero emissions buses, we highly recommend that in the scheduled process of updating MBTA bus maintenance facilities, that MBTA have at least one maintenance garage fully operational for an electric bus fleet by 2020. This will facilitate the planned and necessary transition to all electric bus procurements by 2030.
- Electric bus technology has become mainstream, with battery and charging technology constantly improving. Fleet electrification will reduce MBTA's operating and maintenance costs, expand access to clean transit, reduce emissions and benefit public health.
- On behalf of Sierra Club, I once again urge MBTA to reject the fare hike, commit to all electric bus purchases by 2030, have at least one maintenance garage fully operational for an electric bus fleet by 2020 and speed up procurement of electric buses.

Thank you.