

October 27, 2021

Governor Charles D. Baker
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon St., Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Secretary Jamey Tesler
Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, MA 02116

General Manager Poftak
Massachusetts Bay Transportation
Authority 10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02110

Via electronic submission: charlie.baker@state.ma.us, jamey.tesler@state.ma.us, spoftak@mbta.com

Subject: Accelerate electrification of the MBTA bus fleet

Dear Governor Baker, Secretary Tesler, and General Manager Poftak,

The undersigned members of the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) coalition and additional organizations are writing to urge the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) to commit to 100% electrification of its bus fleet by 2030 and release an implementation plan that is centered in equity. The ZEV coalition includes over 35 environmental, transit, labor, community, social justice, and science organizations working on electric vehicle policy, advocacy, and education.

The MBTA operates one of the largest transit agencies in the country. Its fleet of primarily fossil fuel buses contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and toxic air pollution that disproportionately impacts environmental justice populations. The MBTA still hasn't made a public commitment to get to an all-electric bus fleet, and plans to continue purchasing [hundreds of fossil-fueled buses](#) that would lock Boston area residents into a dirty transportation system for decades to come. In contrast, other large transit agencies in cities across the country- including Chicago, New York City, Los Angeles, Portland, Miami-Dade, San Francisco, Seattle, and most recently Houston- have made commitments to 100% zero-emission buses.

The Massachusetts 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap study identifies transportation as the leading source of carbon emissions in the Commonwealth. Reducing transportation emissions will be critical to achieving the Commonwealth's commitment to reduce emissions by 50% by 2030 and get to net zero emissions by 2050. The latest report by

the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) makes it clear that to avoid the worst consequences of climate change that are already impacting our communities, urgent and bold action is needed now to cut emissions.

The MBTA's current plan to transition to an all-electric fleet over several decades is inadequate and far too slow. [The new report](#) released by Sierra Club, TransitMatters, and the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy - alongside 14 supporting organizations- offers a plan that would transition the MBTA to a fully electrified bus fleet over the next ten years. It shows that 100% electrification of the MBTA's buses would reduce the fleet's greenhouse gas emissions by 97%, save the MBTA more than \$175 million in lifetime operating costs, and save area residents approximately \$9 million annually in avoided healthcare costs.

We urge the MBTA to take concrete steps towards full bus fleet electrification by 2030 in a manner that guarantees that transit electrification will first benefit the Boston area communities most impacted by vehicle pollution by prioritizing garage upgrades and bus electrification for routes serving low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. This means that instead of first replacing existing zero-emission electric trolleybuses operating out of the North Cambridge garage with battery electric buses, the MBTA should deploy these electric buses in environmental justice populations where they can replace diesel buses that are adding to air pollution levels. It is crucial that the MBTA work in collaboration with the legislature to identify progressive sources of revenue and take advantage of the upcoming federal transportation funding to fast track the electrification of our transit bus fleet.

Specifically, we are calling on the MBTA to commit to the following:

- **Commit to full bus fleet electrification by 2030 and stop internal combustion engine bus purchases no later than 2023.** A gradual shift to electric buses and trolleys over the next ten years is well within the MBTA's reach. Publicly committing to electrifying the fleet by 2030 would provide clear objectives and timelines as the public works with the MBTA to achieve equitable and productive interim steps.
- **Release a 2030 fleetwide electrification plan that prioritizes environmental justice hotspots in its electrification planning.** The MBTA should release a detailed bus fleet electrification plan by June 2022 that includes a thorough network wide route analysis to identify electric bus technology options, battery specifications, and charging strategy. The plan should prioritize the deployment

of zero-emission electric buses on routes that pass through low-income and communities of color.

- **Create an effective charging strategy to expand and build a reliable electric bus network.** The MBTA should explore both in-route charging (IRC) and overnight garage charging for electric buses, and in-motion charging (IMC) for trolleys to provide added range resiliency and to ensure the smoothest possible transition to an electric fleet.
- **Accelerate bus facility modernization and replacement.** The MBTA should adopt an aggressive timeline for garage replacement by advancing the planning, design, and construction of multiple facilities simultaneously; and identify MBTA and MassDOT properties that can be used as swing space as new facilities are built. As the pace of bus facility modernization efforts will govern the pace of bus electrification, the MBTA should adopt an aggressive timeline for garage replacement by advancing the planning, design, and construction of Quincy, Arborway, and Fellsway facilities simultaneously. The MBTA should also advance the modernization of the Southampton and Cabot facilities, instead of relegating them for replacement ten plus years out, as currently planned. These core facilities have the largest capacities and serve a high percentage of low-income residents and people of color. All new garages starting with Quincy in 2024 must start housing an electric bus fleet from day one.
- **Make job retraining opportunities available to current employees.** As part of the electrification process, the MBTA should provide opportunities for current bus drivers and fleet maintenance staff to update their skills to operate and maintain the growing electric bus fleet while providing new greener jobs and training opportunities for workers from disadvantaged communities.

We urge the Commonwealth and the MBTA to commit to a bold bus fleet electrification plan that centers environmental justice communities, riders, and workers, and that befits the urgency of the climate crisis. The ZEV coalition looks forward to working with the MBTA on a timely transition to an all-electric bus fleet.

For any questions about this letter, please contact Veena Dharmaraj (veena.dharmaraj@sierraclub.org) and Jarred Johnson (jarred@transitmatters.info)

Sincerely,

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Josh Ostroff, Interim Director, Transportation for Massachusetts
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Pat Rathbone, Co-Chair, Watertown Faces Climate Change

CC: MBTA Board of Directors