

Rail & Transit Report

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TRANSIT UPDATE

- **Senate Budget.** \$94M from the Commonwealth Transportation Fund requires that \$90.5M will be distributed the same as FY23 (the baseline formula) and that \$3.5M will be distributed based on the RTA agreed upon 60/30/10 formula. The remaining \$56M from line item 1596-2406 (Education and Transportation Fund) will be distributed at the discretion of MassDOT to those RTAs considered to have a proportionately lower net cost of service as compared to other RTAs and the remaining amount will be distributed based on the RTA agreed upon 60/30/10 formula. \$15M shall be dedicated to fare-free pilots by the RTAs, \$25M for innovation grants for transit providers, and \$4M for the Community Transit Grant Program to expand eligibility to low-income individuals
- **Community Transit Grant Program.** The Community Transit Grant Program (CTGP) awards funds to help meet the transportation and mobility needs of seniors and people with disabilities. MassDOT notified FY23 vehicle recipients of their awards this month. The FY24 Operating and Mobility Management Cycle opened on May 8. Applications are due June 23. RTD hosted two training sessions with approximately 50 attendees at each session. The FY24 Vehicle cycle will be delayed until later this year due to supply chain/procurement issues.

Bilateral MOUs. The upcoming two-year period covered by MOUs between MassDOT and the RTAs are under negotiation and will be finalized before June 30, the end of the fiscal year. The MOUs are based on a system of performance metrics and that incorporates Performance Targets most relevant to the RTA's individual system in the categories of Ridership, Customer Service and Satisfaction, Asset Management, and Financial Performance, including Farebox Recovery.

- **Statewide System of Regional Mobility Managers Study.** AECOM is performing a study for MassDOT RTD to (1) look at how other states set up their systems of Regional Mobility Managers; (2) interview MA transportation & aging and disability service agencies and other practitioners; and (3) develop recommendations. Project Advisory Committee members include representatives of the Massachusetts Councils on Aging (statewide association), Mass Healthy Aging Collaborative, Mass Rehab Commission, and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. MARTA selected Bob Malnati, Administrator of the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority, to serve on behalf of the RTAs.
- **Driver Recruitment & Advertising Campaign.** Working with MassDOT, RTAs have selected a vendor to support the use of \$637K in unused State Operating Funds on a driver recruitment and advertising initiative.



TRANSIT UPDATE

FRTA New Maintenance and Operations Facility. FRTA hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 7 in Turner Falls, MA for the new 28,000 square-foot building addresses the basic needs of the FRTA's operations in an efficient, energy efficient and aesthetically pleasing manner. The building includes four-bay vehicle repair garage with new and updated equipment, a modern dispatch area, indoor storage for 26 buses, a dedicated wash bay and new heating, ventilation and lighting systems. Additionally, the building incorporates features that make the building operate more sustainably and was designed to exceed current building code energy performance requirements. The building is heated with wood pellet boilers and solar panels will be installed in the coming months to provide renewable energy. Secretary Fiandaca gave remarks on behalf of MassDOT. The facility was funded with a combination of state and federal funds.



RAIL UPDATE

- **Rail Services.**

- The Valley Flyer, Hartford Line, and Vermonter routes have seen great ridership increases with each month outperforming prior highs. March 2023 saw 30% more riders than the previous record for March in 2019. We are on track to have 175,000 Massachusetts passengers on these routes.
- Two Amtrak Northeast Regional trains began service on June 5 offering single-seat ride options for traveling between Springfield and New York City and points south. Tickets are available on Amtrak.com, the Amtrak app, and by calling 800-USA-RAIL.

- **Safety.** On June 8 a Mass Coastal train operating on the Cape Main hit and killed a man trespassing on the ROW by fishing on a MassDOT bridge. We are exploring ways to help prevent future fatalities. A formal report will be issued.

- **Industrial Rail Access Program.** 10 applications were received by the June 1 deadline. The selection committee will review and make award announcements as soon as possible so grantees can start procurement. IRAP is a public/private partnership program that provides financial assistance to eligible applicants who are prepared to invest in rail improvement projects connected to the Massachusetts freight rail transportation network and focused on increasing or improving rail transportation to Massachusetts shippers.

- **Projects**

- Acquiring more defect detectors to install in strategic locations to prevent derailments.
- Advancing process to procure 10 ballast cars and 10 side dumps.
- Advancing simulation modeling with CSX and Amtrak to refine needed infrastructure improvements between Springfield and Worcester. FRA expects to make grant award announcements under the two programs in late summer (August/September) and early winter (November/December).

