

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority,  
Regional Transit Authorities  
Coordination and Efficiencies Report

Regional Transportation Authorities  
RTA



**Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority**  
*America's First Subway*

**Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority/Regional  
Transit Authorities**  
**Coordination and Efficiencies Report**

**Requirements:**

Under the terms of Chapter 196 of the Acts of 2004, Section 15:

the executive office of transportation shall promote administrative saving and improvement initiatives among the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and any regional transportation authorities established under chapter 161B of the General Laws. These initiatives shall seek to promote the sharing of resources as appropriate and to enhance statewide transit service, construction, repair, maintenance, capital improvement, and security, coordination, financing and planning. The executive office of transportation shall study the issue of tort liability among the regional transportation authorities established under said chapter 161B. The executive office of transportation shall also examine and pursue appropriate models for increasing federal aid for transit projects in the commonwealth. The secretary of transportation shall report to the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on transportation the results of these initiatives on or before March 1, 2005, which shall include a list of the administrative savings or other improvements from such initiatives.

**Similarities:**

The core missions of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) and the Commonwealth's fifteen (15) Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) are basically the same – to provide safe, dependable, reliable, and affordable mass transit to their member communities. Both the MBTA and the RTAs are customer-driven and committed to excellence in service.

A Board of Directors appointed by the Governor governs the MBTA. The Secretary of Transportation serves as its Chairman. The Board is authorized to make policy for the Authority. In addition to the Board of Directors, there is an MBTA Advisory Board, comprised of representatives of the member communities, providing public oversight, technical assistance, and information.

The RTAs are governed by Advisory Boards, comprised of the chief elected officials (or their designees) from member communities. Each RTA Advisory Board is empowered to hire/fire its Administrator, set policy, establish service, approve budgets, and otherwise operate in accordance with its individually established by-laws.

The MBTA manages and operates its service in accordance with Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 161A. The RTAs, which are locally controlled, manage their operations but must hire private operating companies to provide their services in accordance with the provisions of MGL 161B. The single exception is the Greenfield-Montague Transportation Area (GMTA), organized under MGL Chapter 161. GMTA may manage and operate its own services.

The MBTA serves 175 communities including Boston and the surrounding metropolitan area utilizing buses, light rail, heavy rail, commuter rail, and ferries. The RTAs serve 231 small urban areas, suburban municipalities, and rural communities utilizing buses and minibuses.

As public transit operators, and recipients of Federal funds, the MBTA and the RTAs must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). In compliance with the ADA, citizens living within three-quarters of a mile of a fixed bus route, who are physically unable to access that fixed route, must be provided with equivalent accessible transportation. In addition to ADA-mandated service, individual RTAs can and do provide complementary paratransit services to the elderly, the frail, and the mobility challenged for whom the fixed route service is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable. Also, RTAs are encouraged to coordinate with the State's human service agencies to provide fully funded contracted services.

The MBTA has been funded prospectively as of 2001. The dedicated revenue stream used to accomplish "forward funding" consists of 20% of the Massachusetts sales tax. In addition to the sales tax, additional revenue sources include fare recovery, advertising, and Federal funds. The overall MBTA capital and operating budget is approximately \$1.78 billion.

The RTAs are reimbursed for services provided in the previous year for State contract assistance. RTAs receive Federal grants that partially fund ADA services, preventative maintenance programs, and rural operations. After all revenues (including farebox revenues) are deducted from expenses in a given year, a net cost of service is determined. RTA member communities are assessed at least 25% and not more than 50% of the net cost of service. The assessment is deducted from the local aid payment every community receives from funds generated by the State Lottery. The local assessment is capped at a 2½% increase over the prior year, except when new service is implemented. The Commonwealth provides at least 50% and not more than 75% of the net cost of service. The State's contribution for Fiscal Year (FY) 2005 (reimbursement for FY'04 expenses) was \$48.7 million. The Governor's Fiscal year (FY) 2006 House One Budget proposed an increase to \$49.1 million.

### **Coordination:**

In accordance with Chapter 196 of the Acts of 2004, Section 11, the Regional Transportation Authority Council (RTA Council) was established to coordinate, share information, and implement best practices. The areas of scrutiny are: public safety and security, planning and service delivery, capital and maintenance, and finance and tort reform. Subcommittees have been formed to identify cost savings and administrative efficiencies. RTA Council membership includes the Secretary of Transportation, the Administrators of the fifteen (15) Regional Transit Authorities, and the General Manager of the MBTA (as a non-voting member). EOT has also retained a consultant (Urbitran) to assist in evaluating and analyzing various transportation service needs across the State's RTAs. References to Urbitran's pending study appear throughout this report.

The Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) and the RTA Council have established the following four subcommittees to examine service requirements related to Chapter 196 and Chapter 291 of the Acts of 2004:

- Finance and Tort Reform Subcommittee (Members: Jim Scanlan, Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA); Gary Shepard, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA); Lou Pettine, Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA).)
- Public Safety and Security (Members: Ray Ledoux, Brocton Area Transit (BAT); Paul Talbot, Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA); Mary MacInnes, Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA); Chuck MacNeil, Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA).)
- Capital and Maintenance (Members: Frank Gay, Greater Attleboro/Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA); Angela Grant, Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority (VTA); Jim Haine, Greenfield Montague Transportation Area (GMTA); Joe Potzka, Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority (CCRTA).)
- Service and Planning (Members: Joe Costanzo, Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA); Mary MacInnes, Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA); Paula Leary, Nantucket Regional Transit Authority (NRTA); Mo Khan, Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART); Denise Wallenius, Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA).)

The RTA Council is mandated to meet quarterly. Its second meeting, held on February 25<sup>th</sup>, addressed the progress of the aforementioned subcommittees and ways to more fully integrate MBTA representation in Chapter 196 implementation efforts.

#### Finance and Tort Reform Subcommittee:

Finance innovations and tort reform have been under review for over five (5) years. Among the reforms being reviewed are:

- Joint Procurement of Insurance Services. In 1995 EOT financed a study to determine whether cost savings could be realized through an RTA joint procurement of insurance services. The study indicated that insurance premiums would be disproportionate to risks due to the dissimilar sizes and populations of the fifteen (15) RTAs. Given the population shifts reported in the 2000 Census, and the resultant redesignation of historically classified rural areas as urban, this is an ideal time to revisit the issue of joint purchases based on population, similarity of services, and designation as urban or rural.
- Single Statewide Advertisement Contract. In response to the interest of state, regional, and local companies in purchasing advertising space on RTA property and equipment, three (3) RTAs have prepared a joint bid opportunity for potential advertisers. The RTAs will aggressively pursue this new source of revenue, as historically advertisers have focused on larger, urban systems.

- Tort Reform. The tort reform initiatives proposed by the Romney Administration and the Joint Transportation Committee would substantially reduce insurance costs for the RTAs and the MBTA. The MBTA and RTAs are advocating for a tort claim cap of \$100,000 – the cap amount for state agencies and municipalities.

#### Benefits:

Limiting liability and containing insurance costs are critical to the financial stability of the RTA network. Although tort reform is unresolved after years of negotiation, the RTAs, as quasi-public agencies, are committed to working diligently to insure parity with State agencies and municipalities' ability to cap claims at \$100,000.

Regardless of the outcome of the insurance services study and subsequent efforts to reduce costs through joint procurement, the RTAs have benefited from the compilation of data and exposure to a number of procurement methods. As a result of the 2000 Census, many communities and regions, formerly designated as rural, have been redesignated as small urban. The RTAs have a unique opportunity to reopen the issue of joint procurement of insurance services based on size, census designation, and relative risk. It is possible that cost savings could be achieved by various groupings of RTAs.

In issuing a joint solicitation for potential advertisers on RTA property and vehicles, the RTAs have essentially broadened the advertising market. Three RTAs are participating in the first joint solicitation. It is anticipated this effort will be successful and the remaining RTAs will see the merit of a broader cross-RTA advertising effort, recognize the value of a relatively new and untapped revenue source, and participate in future efforts.

#### Conclusion:

Chapter 291, section 79 requires EOT and RTA Council to develop recommendations for RTAs' service expansion addressing unmet needs for fixed route, elderly, and paratransit services. Consultants Urbitran will examine existing service in all fifteen (15) RTAs. Urbitran will examine current and projected user needs, rolling stock and equipment requirements, and estimated costs to "close the gap" in service. Urbitran will also develop projections towards implementing RTA forward funding. Urbitran's final report is expected on April 1, 2005.

#### Public Safety and Security Subcommittee:

In what has been designated as the first statewide safety and security transit awareness campaign, EOT, MBTA, and the RTAs have launched the "Transit Watch" program. This initiative, launched concurrently statewide, is intended to both educate the riding public on matters of security as well as partner with the riders to help insure safety and security. The campaign was kicked-off by statewide distribution of "Transit Watch" leaflets, clearly explaining the role and responsibility of riders. The pamphlet lists the names and telephone numbers of every transit authority. Subway and bus cards were developed and strategically located throughout the Commonwealth's transit systems. Public announcements were, and continue to be made in stations and terminals appropriately equipped.

The MBTA Public Affairs Department provided the templates for written campaign materials to insure uniformity statewide. The MBTA and the RTAs took individual responsibility for printing and distributing the leaflets to constituents.

The RTAs have been extremely aggressive in applying for Federal grants to purchase security cameras, recorders, and lighting, et al. In order to ensure equipment can be purchased and installed expeditiously, EOT has committed, through the RTA Capital Assistance Program (RTACAP), to provide necessary matching funds.

The EOT Deputy Secretary, the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Transit Authorities (MARTA), and an MBTA representative participate in the Transportation Security Roundtable. The representatives also participate in the Homeland Security District Commissions and the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Benefits:

The “Transit Watch” program has ensured the public that EOT, the MBTA, and the RTAs are working cooperatively, along with other State and Federal agencies, to provide safe and secure transportation options.

Conclusion:

The long-term benefit of these cooperative efforts will be increased public confidence in the transit system.

Capital and Maintenance Subcommittee:

EOT and the RTAs have jointly prepared specifications for statewide bus procurement RFR. Upon completion of the bid award, the MBTA and any RTA would be allowed to participate in purchase.

The same transportation providers are exploring the feasibility of a joint fuel purchase of diesel, low sulfur diesel, ultra low sulfur diesel, propane and/or compressed natural gas (CNG).

Benefits:

Labor costs for procurement and specifications generation will be reduced drastically with this method.

Joint fuel purchases and a system of accessing fuel in centralized locations could lower transportation costs and offer RTA and other users (e.g., Massachusetts Highway Department) a statewide fueling network.

Conclusion:

Joint bus procurement RFR will be issued in the spring of 2005.

Fuel purchasing efficiencies will be addressed in the Urbitran Study.

Service and Planning Subcommittee:

Because some inter-authority travel exists by specific agreement, this Committee will focus on the development of a statewide pass program providing seamless travel between transit authorities. The Committee will consider results from the Urbitran Study regarding routes and headways throughout the Commonwealth's RTA system. Attention will be paid to parking issues created by the success of MBTA's commuter rail network

Benefits:

With a fully coordinated statewide pass program, the RTAs will be able to interface more comprehensively with the MBTA's automatic fare collection system.

Statistics have shown that ridership increases with seamless travel options between authorities.

RTAs would be in a position to increase revenue sources through the management of MBTA commuter rail parking facilities.

Conclusions:

The pending Urbitran Study will address inter-authority travel and the statewide pass program.

RTAs continue to work with the MBTA on commuter rail stations parking and construction collaborations.

Current Coordination:

EOT will continue to work with the RTA Council and Massachusetts Association of Regional Transit Authorities (MARTA) on incorporating applicable initiatives as required by Chapter 196 of the Acts of 2004 and in the spirit of meaningful transportation reform.

EOT has formed a workgroup with the MBTA to examine how to implement their resources in transportation integration and coordination. EOT is also a participant in a Human Services Transportation Coordination Commission. The Commission includes Secretaries of EOT, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Elder Affairs, and other State and Federal officials. The Commission will examine various coordination of transportation issues, it will, most importantly "facilitate access to the most appropriate, cost-effective transportation services within existing resources."

It is important to note that there is currently a good deal of coordination amongst the RTAs as well as between the RTAs and the MBTA. Some examples of existing collaborative efforts include:

- The EOT Transit Unit is working aggressively on a new Federal Revenue Opportunity for the MBTA and RTAs paratransit system. This initiative seeks to generate new revenue for existing transportation costs incurred at the MBTA and RTAs' for operating Americans with Disability Act (ADA) paratransit systems that are likely eligible for reimbursement under the federal Medicaid program for 50-cents on the dollar spent. In addition, this proposal includes an MBTA "no cost" pass program for eligible HHS Medicaid clients as a substitute for eligibility and participation in the Human Services brokered transportation system. Participation will generate additional revenues for the MBTA. It is expected that the full implementation of this initiative will result in annual savings exceeding \$1 million and will significantly improve the coordination of transportation services between the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Executive Office of Transportation (including the MBTA and the RTAs).

On February 15, 2005 a meeting between Secretary Grabauskas (EOT), Secretary Preston of Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), MBTA Deputy General Manager and Chief Financial Officer Jonathan Davis, and EOT and EOHHS staff was held to determine the viability of the above listed initiatives. It was agreed, both plans have merit and the respective staffs from EOT, EOHHS, and the MBTA are working together on an implementation plan. This exciting two part initiative was originally developed by EOT in accordance with the President's Executive Order on Human Services Transportation Coordination (See Appendix E) and the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) "United We Ride" program.

- Preliminary discussions are in process to further the issuance of a Governor's Executive Order, which mirrors the President's Order, to promote cooperation among State agencies in seeking measures to provide the most cost effective quality transportation services.
- Mobility Assistance Program (MAP) provides fully accessible vehicles to public agencies, such as Councils on Aging, for transporting elderly, persons with disabilities, and others on a seats available basis.
- Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) using Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311 funding, provides free training, technical assistance, and small related purchases for drivers (mostly from Councils of Aging) transporting elderly and disabled persons.
- Seven RTAs operate in areas served by the MBTA commuter rail – Brockton Area Transit, Cape Ann Transportation Authority, Greater Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority, Lowell Regional Transit Authority, Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority, Montachusett Regional Transit Authority, and Worcester Regional Transit Authority. These seven RTAs provide feeder service to the commuter and light rail service in their areas, manage parking lots associated with the MBTA commuter rail



services, coordinate joint-use construction projects, and provide ADA service into the MBTA area (transfer to The RIDE).

- Several RTAs have reciprocity agreements with neighboring authorities to accept their fares, offering a seamless service.
- Brockton Area Transit (BAT) provides fixed-route service to the Ashmont MBTA (Red Line) Station, offering customers an affordable alternative to more costly commuter rail.
- Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) operates and maintains the Gallagher Terminal in Lowell housing the MBTA commuter rail terminus; LRTA leases space used by both the Lowell and MBTA police; and LRTA was instrumental in the redevelopment of the North Billerica MBTA commuter rail station.
- Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) provides a summer shuttle service from the Gloucester MBTA commuter rail station to area beaches and tourist attractions.
- Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) Intermodal Center houses the Fitchburg MBTA commuter rail station; MART is completing a garage to be used by both MBTA and MART commuters; and MART was instrumental in the redevelopment of the North Leominster MBTA commuter rail station.
- EOT has taken a leadership role in founding the Transportation Security Roundtable with both the MBTA and RTAs as members. The MBTA and State's 15 RTAs participate in the "Transit Watch" security awareness initiative program
- The MBTA and RTAs are currently exploring a fully coordinated "Fusion Center" (information analysis and distribution point).

There are many other areas where MBTA and RTA services are complementary and/or coordinated. They continue working together to seek out new initiatives, for better collaboration and coordination.

### **Future Areas of Investigation:**

In direct response to Chapter 196, Section 15, the MBTA and RTAs will aggressively pursue cost efficiencies and service enhancements including, but not limited to:

- The implementation of a "statewide pass program" which could be used throughout the MBTA and RTA systems.
- MBTA, RTA, and EOHHS participation in a transit pass/revenue initiative consistent with the President's Executive Order and the Federal Transit Administration "United We Ride" program.

- The installation of security cameras at mass transit stations, intermodal centers, and transfer hubs that can be tied into a centralized monitoring system.
- The development of a centralized traffic operations system that would fully integrate the MBTA feeder services currently provided by the seven contiguous RTAs.
- Joint procurement of rolling stock and associated parts and maintenance.
- The collaborative lobbying efforts for Federal earmarks to be used for joint-use MBTA/RTA facilities and equipment.
- The continued cooperation among the MBTA, RTAs, and many other stakeholders as MassHighway rolls out the Federally-mandated ITS architecture.

### **Coordination Summary:**

The Executive Office of Transportation (EOT), the Regional Transit Authority Council (established by section 11, Chapter 196), individual Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs), and stakeholders will work to improve coordination and administrative efficiencies in the following areas:

- The Regional Transit Authority Council will explore feasibility of joint procurement of insurance services. The 2000 Census identified changes in population and demographics, and some formerly “rural” areas are now designated “urban”. The population and demographic shifts may mean joint insurance, at least by regional groups of RTAs, make economic sense, where as before premiums were prohibitive.
- The Regional Transit Authority Council and several individual RTAs will explore new revenue sources, including feasibility of a single statewide advertising contract. Interest in a statewide advertising contract follows interest from certain advertisers in moving away from large urban to regional transit systems.
- The RTA Council, MBTA, and individual RTAs will advocate for a tort claim cap limit of \$100 thousand, the same claim limit for state agencies and municipalities.
- The RTA Council and individual RTAs will continue active participation in the EOT Security Roundtable and implement measures for the safety and security of transit users.
- EOT, MBTA, and RTAs will continue exploring feasibility of an operations center with centralized monitoring capabilities and a “fusion center” (central point to collect and distribute information).
- EOT and RTAs have jointly prepared specifications for a statewide bus procurement Request for Responses (RFR) for advertisement in spring of 2005.

- EOT and Regional Transportation Authorities will explore feasibility of a joint fuel purchases (including compressed natural gas (CNG)) and a statewide fueling network. The fuel purchases and fueling network could lower transportation costs and allow refueling of a vehicle outside of its service area.
- EOT, MBTA, and RTA Council will continue exploring development of a statewide pass program. The eventual rollout of a statewide card will allow seamless travel between transit authority areas.
- EOT, Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), RTAs, et al., will work on implementation of a new Federal revenue opportunity for the MBTA and RTA paratransit systems. The Federal initiative also provides for a “no cost” pass program for eligible HHS Medicaid clients as a substitute for eligibility and participation in the Human Services brokered transportation system. Program implementation will result in annual savings exceeding \$1 million and improve coordination between EOT, MBTA, RTAs and EOHHS.
- EOT and RTAs will continue the Mobility Assistance Program (MAP) providing fully accessible vehicles to Councils of Aging and other public agencies transporting elderly and others with disabilities.
- EOT and RTAs will continue the Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) providing free training and technical assistance to Councils of Aging and other public agencies transporting elderly and others with disabilities.
- The seven (7) Regional Transit Authorities (Brockton Area Transit, Cape Ann Transportation Authority, Greater Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority, Lowell Regional Transit Authority, Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority, Montachusett Regional Transit Authority, and Worcester Regional Transit Authority) that operate in areas served by MBTA will continue coordination to provide feeder service, manage parking lots, coordinate joint use construction projects.