

IMPROVING HEALTH THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS, NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

February 1, 2016

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South Boston Collaborative Advisory

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David Aronstein, Director

I am David Aronstein, Director of the Boston Alliance for Community Health (BACH). We are an alliance of neighborhood coalitions, hospitals, community health centers and other community-based organizations and residents of Boston. In 2014 we published the results of an intensive planning process which identified 5 strategic issues that need to be addressed in order to improve the health of Bostonians, particularly the most vulnerable. Two of the goals we identified are:

- Achieving racial and ethnic health equity
- Influencing transportation policy and practice to achieve better health outcomes

This is why I, from a health organization, am here to voice our opposition to any fare increase at this time and if that is unavoidable, to limit the increase to 5%.

In 2012, the Massachusetts Area Planning Council (MAPC) did a “Health Impact Assessment” of that year’s proposed fare increase proposals. The T is a health resource as it results in

Increased

- Free Time
- Physical Activity
- Access to Health Care
- Disposable income



And decreased

- Air Pollution
- Accidents
- Noise



While the specific numbers have changed since then, the significant costs and negative impact on people’s health resulting from the current proposal identified by MAPC are still applicable today:

- Increased mortality and hospitalizations due to pollution caused by more people driving rather than using the T.
- Increased cost of lives lost due to decreased physical activity.
- Increased cost of additional car crashes including crashes with bikes and pedestrians

- We understand the need for increased revenue to support the T, but we are concerned that the proposed fare increases would impact riders that are least able to afford them.
- Under both proposals, bus and subway passes would increase in cost by a significant amount: student passes would rise by 23%, local bus passes would rise by 16-19%, and The Ride would rise between 5-10%.
- Meanwhile, fare and pass increases for those who ride the commuter rail would increase by 10% or less (in some cases 0% and in most cases by only 5%), and fares and passes for express bus service (service provided from suburban communities to the city) would drop by between 22% and 26.5%.
- These proposals would disproportionately impact low-income residents and people of color. T data shows that buses and The Ride are the most commonly chosen forms of public transportation for low-income individuals (those who make \$30k/year or less). The bus is also the most commonly used form of transportation among Black residents - ridership data shows that 26% of T bus riders are Black, whereas only 10% of subway and 4% of commuter rail riders are Black. By contrast, 54% of commuter rail riders report income levels of \$100,000/year or more and 87% of commuter rail passengers are White.

For all these reasons, if you do raise fares, we urge you keep the fare increase to 5% and to readjust the specifics of the plan so that the greatest burden is not placed on the people least able to bear it.