



**MASSACHUSETTS
BAY
TRANSPORTATION
AUTHORITY**

Robert L. Foster
Chief Executive Officer
50 High Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02110

April 20, 1979

HAND DELIVERED

James L. Sullivan
Cambridge City Manager
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Jim:

Reference is made to your recent letter to me requesting that representatives of the Authority attend the Cambridge City Council meeting of April 23, 1979 to discuss two City Council orders dated March 26, 1979 and April 2, 1979. The first order deals with the Authority's negotiations with Harvard University relating to their performance of certain construction activity for the MBTA and also covering the acquisitions of property, permanent easements, and temporary easements for the construction of the new Harvard Square Rapid Transit Station. The second order deals with the restructuring of bus and trackless trolley service through the Square allowing for the construction of the proposed new station.

In regards to our negotiations with Harvard University for those construction and land acquisition items, it would be extremely inappropriate for the MBTA to discuss publicly the terms of this action. Negotiations are currently underway between officials of the MBTA and the University and every effort is being made to negotiate the lowest and most cost-effective terms. When discussions are completed and a final agreement prepared, it will become a public document and we will certainly forward copies to you for distribution to the City Council.

The City Council's request that the Authority discontinue the use of trackless trolleys and replace the service with diesel buses is just beyond the ability of the MBTA to comply with. I'm sure that you will recall that the Authority's use of trackless trolleys is based primarily on the insistence of the City of Cambridge, and that an entire new fleet of vehicles was purchased for this purpose. In any event, the routes and service that were placed into operation on March 24, 1979 were developed by MBTA staff in conjunction with city officials and their approval was obtained.

To support this position, let me present to you a few of the technical reasons, based upon careful analysis, why a major shift of vehicles cannot be accomplished by the MBTA.

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The North Cambridge or 77A Route requires seventeen (17) vehicles to accomplish its weekday schedule of service. Fifteen (15) of these vehicles are pullouts and two (2) are spares. The Huron Avenue or 72 Route requires four (4) vehicles; three (3) are for pullouts and one (1) is a spare.

To replace trackless trolleys which go to the Common with buses would require twenty-one (21) buses. To extend the routes past the Common to the Harvard/Brattle Station without reducing the frequency of service might require an additional three (3) buses be added. This means that extending the routes and replacing the trackless trolleys would require approximately twenty-four (24) buses.

Twenty-four (24) buses cannot be transferred for this purpose from the MBTA's current fleet of vehicles. The MBTA has an acute shortage of buses for service throughout its system. The cost of buying twenty-four (24) new buses would be approximately \$2 million dollars and funds for such a purchase are unavailable.

In addition, the Harvard/Brattle Station's bus berths are heavily congested currently by the buses and trolleys which now use this area. It would be an unmanageable and unsafe condition to locate any additional bus traffic at that station.

For example, during the weekday morning peak between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., one hundred and twenty (120) buses lay over or stop at the Harvard/Brattle Station. During that same period of time forty (40) inbound trips are driven on the North Cambridge Route and twelve (12) inbound trips are driven on the Huron Route. Relocating the North Cambridge and Huron Routes' termination and layover location to the Harvard/Brattle Station would pile an additional fifty-two (52) vehicles or a 43% increase onto the bus activity there during the two (2) hour a.m. rush. The Harvard/Brattle Station is not capable of absorbing this kind of bus activity.

The City Council also sought to obtain a bus stop in the vicinity of the Harvard Coop or Brigham's in Harvard Square. Unfortunately a bus stop at that location would badly congest traffic in the Square. The Cambridge Parking and Traffic Department have directed the MBTA's Transportation Department as to what locations around the Square would be permitted as bus stops, and I am sure they would concur that a bus stop in the vicinity of the Coop would cause intolerable traffic congestion.

During the morning rush between 7:00 and 9:00 a.m., seventy (70) buses currently pass through the Square to Harvard/Brattle Station. That number of buses would be increased to one hundred and twenty-two (122), if buses were to be substituted for trackless trolleys. Seventy (70) buses, never mind one hundred and twenty (120) buses, stopping in the Square during the morning rush would paralyze traffic.

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Trackless trolleys are environmentally superior and given the current escalation of fuel oil prices, far more efficient to operate than diesel buses. The MBTA appreciates that both our North Cambridge and Huron trackless trolley users had superior service while the bus tunnels were available. The current scheme of alternative service is the best that is feasible.

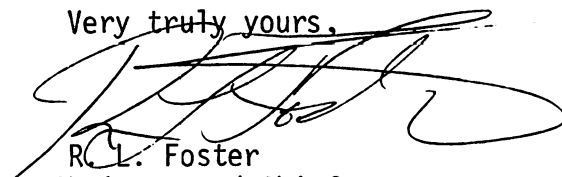
Every effort is being made to assist North Cambridge and Huron trackless trolley riders at the Cambridge Common. Two and sometimes three shuttle buses have been operating between the Common and Harvard/Brattle Station. Police officers have been detailed at Garden Street, along the Common, to assist bus users who are crossing to walk to Harvard Station or to ride the shuttle to the Harvard/Brattle Station.

In view of the foregoing, it does not appear that anything can be achieved by our attendance at the next Council meeting. As you know, I had hoped and attempted to develop a spirit of cooperation between the City and the MBTA, but recognizing the pending litigation, it is perhaps best if our communications remain as written correspondence rather than personal appearances.

We at the MBTA stand ready to work in every way possible to accommodate the desires of the City Council. To that extent, let me suggest we meet in the very near future to strengthen our relationship.

If I can be of any further assistance, please don't hesitate to call.

Very truly yours,

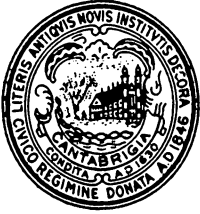


R. L. Foster
Chairman and Chief
Executive Officer

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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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Tel. 498-9011

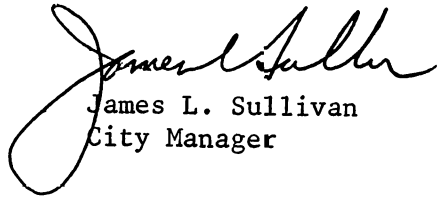
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
JAMES L. SULLIVAN
City Manager

April 23, 1979

To the Honorable, the City Council:

With reference to City Council Orders, No. 1 of March 23, 1979, relative to agreement between Harvard University and the M.B.T.A., and No. 11 of April 2, 1979, (Awaiting Report Item No. 15 of April 23, 1979), relative to discontinuing use of trackless trolley buses on North Cambridge and Huron Avenue routes, I transmit herewith self-explanatory communication from R. L. Foster, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the M.B.T.A.

Very truly yours,


James L. Sullivan
City Manager

JLS/b

Calendar

Agenda #13

*S-234B
#3*

RE: City Council Orders No. 1 of 3/23/79
and No. 11 of 4/2/79 - Awaiting Report No.
15 - re: agreement between Harvard and
MBTA and discontinuing use of trackless
trolley buses on No. Cambridge and Huron
Avenue routes.

In City Council,
April 23, 1979

4/23/79

*Tabled on Motion
OF
Lawrence Pechay*