

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

City Hall Annex - Inman & Broadway - Cambridge, Mass. 02139

(617) 876-6800
EXTENSION 344

TO: City Manager James L. Sullivan

FROM: John R. Hixson

DATE: March 29, 1977

SUBJECT: Cambridgeport Bus Service to Central Square —
Response to City Council Order No. 8 of March 13

There has been continuing controversy about bus service to Cambridgeport from Central Square. Most of the complaints have resulted from operational shortcomings of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, and we are working with them to improve supervision and schedule adherence.

The old Cambridgeport loop bus from Green and Pearl Streets to Brookline and Granite Streets (Bus #67) ran until September of 1975. It operated Monday through Saturday until 6:00 P.M., after which a few runs from another route went out Pearl and Putnam on the way to Brighton. In its last full year, Bus #67 paid about 38 percent of its costs from the farebox. It is the type of localized route the MBTA no longer wishes to operate.

Commencing September, 1975, the route was extended across the Boston University Bridge and joined with Route 47, creating the present Central Square to Boston City Hospital line. By using short 35 foot buses, the MBTA was able to bring the terminal from Green Street out to Massachusetts Avenue. Aside from providing a more accessible location, this change should have brought the route under the control of the Central Square starters. But because the 47 bus came out of a different MBTA garage, this supervision has not been exercised. The new drivers also brought problems to a neighborhood accustomed to a special service. Operational lapses have combined with traffic delays in Boston to produce occasional long gaps in service. These problems have been brought to the attention of MBTA personnel and should be resolved shortly.

By most measures, however, Bus #47 has been a great success. Our office received more calls requesting information on it than on any subject in memory. Cambridge residents were enthusiastic about direct service to the Fenway institutions. Cambridgeport residents liked the extended hours and Sunday service. An early MBTA study showed that in only four months the new service had greatly increased ridership over the old routes. In its first full year of operation the line was able to pay 45.6 percent of its costs from the farebox despite the rapid cost escalations that had taken place. Patronage has continued to expand. More service, including Saturday and Sunday operation, has been provided. Even with more service, the 35 foot buses became overcrowded, and the MBTA was forced to use the standard 40 footers. This in turn forced the terminal back to the old location because the longer buses could not make the sharp turn from Green Street onto ~~River~~ Street. Although the present terminal does have shelter for waiting patrons, it is not the

- Cambridgeport Bus Service -

ideal location. Other places have been considered, but the street configuration and safety considerations have rendered them all unusable.

The creation of Bus #47 did move direct service to Central Square for residents of lower Magazine Street who used to ride around. To correct this, one of the River Street buses was rerouted onto Putnam Avenue and Magazine Street. All inbound runs from Oak Square, Brighton to Central Square are supposed to take this route, but here also there have been missing runs. We have pursued this problem with the MBTA as well and expect to eventually get a dependable service for Magazine Street.

Throughout this period, we have spoken to the residents about the bus service they were receiving. Most if not all had complaints, but added that if they were getting the service shown on the MBTA's schedules they would be reasonably happy. It is the failure to perform as advertised that angers them.

We will continue to try to improve service and find a better location for the terminal, in Central Square as throughout Cambridge. All ideas will be considered. The primary effort, however, will continue to be getting the service that is supposed to be there.

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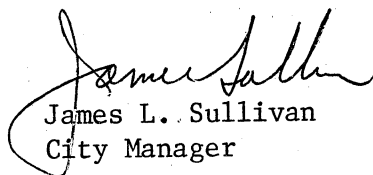
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
JAMES L. SULLIVAN
City Manager

April 3, 1978

To the Honorable, the City Council:

In response to City Council Order No. 8 of March 13, 1978, relative to the Granite Street Bus Route and establishing a stop in Central Square, enclosed please find a copy of a report from John Hixon, Transportation Coordinator.

Very truly yours,


James L. Sullivan
City Manager

JLS/nwc

Agenda #2

S-150

Re: Council Order No. 8 of 3/13/78 re:
Granite St. bus route and establishing bus
stop in Central Sq.

In City Council,
April 3, 1978

Placed on File
4/3/78