



City of Cambridge

Committee Report #3

IN CITY COUNCIL

April 22, 1996

COUNCILLOR DAVIS

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to direct the appropriate staff in the Community Development Department to prepare the text of a resolution relative to retaining and expanding the quality and quality of public transportation services in Cambridge.

In City Council April 22, 1996

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk



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D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

Councillor Davis inquired about the layover situation in Central Square. Ms. Clippinger distributed a chart listing all of the bus routes in Cambridge with accompanying frequencies. (See **Attachment B**). She stated that the revenue was generated by the route itself, rather than ridership. Information regarding ridership, however, was not available, as Ms. Clippinger informed the committee.

The Deputy Director for Community Development, Liz Epstein, commented that the systemwide average operating ratio for Cambridge is 23.6%. Transportation fees are based on the citizens, due to the fact that the system runs on a deficit, with a maximum of 39% in operating costs returned by the # 1 bus.

Councillor Davis questioned the three speakers as to what will happen when and if bus services are privatized. Ms. Schlesinger stated the services will be under contract with outside vendors. Ms. Epstein commented that this could result in lower costs for the same service and Ms. Clippinger stated that the maintenance under contract, would be the private contractor's responsibility.

Vice Mayor Born asked if any plans were being made to cut bus routes due to privatization, and if so, what possible ramifications this would have on the city. Vice Mayor Born also commented that she would like the hospital shuttle route expanded to include possibly the library and high school. She also stated that she would like the issue of airport shuttles reviewed. In response to Vice Mayor Born's comment regarding the difficulty of obtaining a cab to the airport, Ms. Clippinger stated that Cambridge has the highest rate per capita trips to the airport.

Councillor Davis asked what routes run through Cambridge, to which Dick Easler, Chief Transportation Planner, replied that there are twenty-nine bus routes (as outlined on a map displayed for the hearing) that service Cambridge, nine of which run to Alewife via Route 2. Mr. Easler stated that most of the city is within one-quarter mile of bus routes; however, across town trips require a transfer, however, since transfers are not available there is also an additional fee. Mr. Easler continued to remark that to connect some of these routes would benefit its users, but would result in a schedule that is difficult for the driver.

Councillor Davis questioned the feasibility of such a plan to connect these bus routes. Ms. Schlesinger replied that she is currently in the process of attempting to extend bus lines, and that this is not an easy feat. Mr. Easler stated that the longer the route is, the harder future schedule maintenance will be for these routes. Ms. Clippinger also remarked that longer routes will also result in a greater difficulty in maintaining costs.

Councillor Davis further questioned the hearing members as to the implications of privatization of services. Ms. Epstein commented that it is necessary to maintain the current level of service -- it is to be our primary concern. She stated that we must involve our state delegation in this process in order that they are informed of our primary concern: to maintain

our current level of service in terms of the number of routes and frequencies of the buses during not only peak hours, but also during all hours of operation. Since there is no community input into the RFP and the Advisory Board's functions are rather limited, our best efforts should be directed toward the state delegation.

Mr. Jonathan Ginsberg posed a question concerning the validity of the Pacheco Bill.

The committee proceeded at this time to hear from George Despotis, a Cambridge citizen, who informed the committee of a federal law which allows public participation, and further suggested that it would be beneficial if the city could investigate the United States Code (available on the Web) regarding public participation, MPO's and federal transportation agencies. He continued to comment that the current bus system does not have a Global Position System installed; and further that illegally parked cars in bus stops and snow clearance from bus stops be more strictly enforced. In closing, Mr. Despotis claimed that these items were only a matter of procedural changes.

Ms. Susanne Rasmussen, Director of Environmental and Transportation Planning, came before the committee to state that Governor Weld is currently considering plans to eliminate the MBTA Advisory Board, which is our communities' main source for public participation. Councillor Davis remarked that it is possible for the city to adopt a resolution outlining the need for active community participation.

Ms. Epstein replied that it would be helpful to all for the City Council to adopt a plan of action to present to our state delegation on these issues.

Vice Mayor Born requested Councillor Davis, with some input from Liz Epstein, to draft a resolution seeking support from our state delegation. Ms. Epstein then stated the resolution should stress the importance of public transportation within the city; the benefits it provides; that it is critical to maintain clean air, economic growth and development, and it should stress the need for quality along with quantity of services, that communities affected should participate in the planning process and objecting to the elimination of the MBTA Advisory Board.

Councillor Davis questioned the issue of privatization. Ms. Clippinger responded that if buses are privatized we will be better able to plan local impacts on services with the Advisory Board in place. Councillor Davis stated the issue is what we need to see in our bus service in the near future and what types of improvements.

Mr. Jonathan Ginsberg suggested that the city solicitor look over the privatization bill, in particular, the section where the State Auditor has authority to approve privatization.

Ms. Epstein questioned as to why it was not possible to receive direction from the Attorney General in this matter. Mr. Ginsberg commented that the city is not a client of the Attorney General.

Ms. Epstein continued stating that the Law Department is not a sufficient body to evaluate this new law, claiming it is appropriate to go straight to the employee authorized, that person being the Attorney General, or rather, his office. Ms. Epstein requested that this opinion be backed by the City Council as to the role of the State Auditor if he does not approve the Weld Administration privatization plans in general.

Vice Mayor Born questioned who would bid on the bus service, would they be new or existing contractors. Ms. Clippinger believed they would be existing contractors, while Mr. Easler claimed the MBTA would provide the equipment they have, in addition to hiring management firms. Ms. Epstein also added that MBTA employees can bid on such contracts.

Vice Mayor Born inquired as to how Cambridge was being bundled. Ms. Epstein stated that was unknown at the time how our services would be bundled in a bid, but the contractor should provide the service we have come to expect. Ms. Clippinger stated that maintenance is included in the bidding, but whether garages were going with these bus bundles was unknown. Ms. Epstein then commented that this is an MBTA operational issue.

Councillor Davis stated that existing bus routes are in demand, and questioned if there was any assistance provided for additional services. Mr. Ginsberg answered that Forest City Shuttle, a private shuttle service, should be included in the memo. Councillor Davis remarked that private shuttles are currently being used for public transportation, but are not open for the use of all the general public. Ms. Epstein backed this, commenting that some shuttles are not available for the public but rather, private shuttles are usually available to employees only. With private shuttles there are a number of concerns, one being the question of liability. She further stated that she would like to start a TMA program, of which only twelve exist in the state. One such TMA in existence, Ms. Epstein stated, was the MASCO Bus Service servicing the Longwood Medical area.

Councillor Davis proposed the issue of shuttle service expanding through public transportation. Ms. Epstein remarked that the MBTA is hesitant at the moment to expand its services. If there is a demand for such facilities and the MBTA is convinced to expand its services, the deficit increases. The MBTA by legislation is under law to provide public transportation within the public transit district. Ms. Epstein continued, stating the proposed Hospital Shuttle service must not compete with a route already in existence.

Vice Mayor Born questioned Ms. Epstein as to whether it was the proper time to discuss the issue of shuttle services. Ms. Epstein replied that it was not, but that we do have to decide on an approach to take concerning privatization, and that a negative impact is highly discouraged.

She stated that efforts are in the making to continue to work with the MBTA and the Advisory Committee on our service.

Vice Mayor Born inquired as to whether the changes of the MBTA service affect the parking freeze. Ms. Epstein replied that these changes can, in fact, affect the parking freeze.

Councillor Davis posed the question of the expansion of the CT-2 bus route (Kendall Square - Ruggles Station via Vassar Street and LMA). Ms. Epstein stated that when the CT-2 bus route was in its planning stage, the residents of Brookline Street protested against any new bus on their street. The MBTA, she stated, lays out routes based on their quickest access.

Ms. Clippinger inquired if the job base changes for Kendall Square how will this affect the MBTA service. Ms. Epstein responded that the focus is currently on employment centers and residential areas.

Councillor Davis asked as to how the public is to receive these services. Ms. Epstein responded to this as well, stating the needs of the citizens need to be heard by the Community Development Department first in order for their needs to be met sufficiently. Ms. Epstein continued to remark that the MBTA does not market their services efficiently.

Councillor Davis then commented that the public transportation demand was an integral part of the city of Cambridge.

Councillor Davis will requested from the City Manager, in the future, an analysis of shuttle services, in particular, the U.S. Shuttle Service.

Ms. Epstein commented that she would like to have a "Share-a-Cab" service within the city.

James Gascoigne, from the Charles River Transportation TMA, inquired during peak period of time, what the taxi cab situation is within the city. Councillor Davis responded that the situation was not good.

In closing, Ms. Epstein made it well known to the committee that bus schedules are available at various locations within the city, two of which are the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department and the Community Development Department.

Councillor Davis submitted the following two motions:

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to direct the appropriate staff in the Community Development Department to prepare the text of a resolution relative to retaining and expanding the quality and quantity of public transportation services in Cambridge.

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to seek an opinion from the Attorney General about the opportunities for public input on proposals for privatization of MBTA bus lines and for clarification of the role of the Auditor vis a vis privatization.

On a voice vote the motions were -

Accepted by the committee.

At the conclusion of the meeting Councillor Davis stated that additional hearing would be held to discuss the circumferential ring, shuttle services, in particular private and airport shuttles and the Share-a-Cab issue.

The committee recommended that the two motions be referred to the full City Council for adoption.

The hearing adjourned at three o'clock and thirty-five minutes p. m.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henrietta Davis", written in a cursive style.

Councillor Henrietta Davis
Chair

77	via Lexington Harvard - Arlington Hts. via Mass Ave	8 L	11	12	8	15	11	Somerville	19.4%
77A	Harvard - N. Cambridge via Mass Ave	9	12	-	-	-		Somerville	
78	Harvard - Arlmont Vill. via Concord Ave	15	30	60	30	60	4	Somerville	13.3%
79	Alewife - Arlington Hts. via Mass Ave.	9	25	45	-	-	6	Somerville	19.1%
80	Lechmere - Arlington Ctr. via McGrath Hwy.	15	35	60	35	60	5	Somerville	27.5%
83	Central Sq. - Rindge Ave via Porter Sq.	15	30	60	25	40	7	Somerville	28.5%
84	Alewife - Arlmont Vill.	30	-	-	-	-	1	Somerville	13.1%
85	Kendall - Spring Hill via Union Sq.	40	40	-	-	-	1	Somerville	19.5%
86	Sullivan Sq. - Cleveland Cir via Harvard Sq.	20	30	60	40	70	5	Somerville	23%
87	Lechmere - Arlington Ctr. via Somerville Ave	16	30	30	24	30	4	Somerville	26.1%
88	Lechmere - Clarendon Hill via Highland Ave	12	30	30	24	30	8	Somerville	26.2%
91	Central Sq. - Sullivan Sq. via Inman Square	25	25	60	20	40	2	harlestow	23.1%
96	Harvard - Medford Sq. via Porter & Davis Sqs.	20 L	40	60	30	60	3	Fellsway	16.7%
350	Alewife - N. Burlington	20	60	60	60	60	5	Somerville	12.3%

Notes:

Oper. ratio is the % of the operating cost covered by revenues as of June 1993.

Systemwide average oper. ratio is 23.6%.

Routes 71, 72 and 73 are the trackless trolley routes.

L = limited service.

Route 77 runs limited service rush hours between Harvard and N. Cambridge.

Route 96 runs limited service rush hours between Harvard and Porter Square.

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE - MBTA BUS ROUTES

<u>Number</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Rush hrs</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Night</u>	<u>Sat</u>	<u>Sun</u>	<u>Buses</u> <u>pk hr</u>	<u>Garage</u>	<u>Oper ratio</u>
CT1	Central Sq. - BU Medical Ctr via Mass Ave	15	15	-	-	-			
CT2	Kendall Sq. - Ruggles Sta. via Vassar St & Longwood Medical area.	20	20	-	-	-			
1	Harvard - Dudley via Mass Ave	7	12	16	12	18	10	Cabot	39.7%
47	Central Sq. - Albany St, Boston via BU Bridge, Longwood and Dudley	20	20	30	20	35	4	Albany	18.1%
62	Alewife - Bedford VA Hosp.	30	60	L	60	-	3	Somerville	19.5%
64	Oak Sq. - Central Sq. (& Kendall Sq. at rush hours).	18	30	60	60	60	4	Somerville	17.6%
66	Harvard - Dudley via Allston & Brookline Vill.	10	15	25	15	40	10	Cabot	27.9%
67	Alewife - Turkey Hill via Arlington Center	25	45	-	-	-	2	Somerville	11.1%
69	Harvard - Lechmere via Cambridge St.	17	23	30	20	30	7	Somerville	36.1%
70	Central Sq. - Watertown via Western Ave & Arsenal St.	15	30	60	40	30	10	Somerville	21.3%
70A	Central Sq. - N. Waltham via Watertown Sq.	45	120	-	40	-		Somerville	
71	Harvard - Watertown Sq. via Mt. Auburn St.	9	12	30	12	50			
72	Harvard - Huron Ave	15	30	30	30	30			
73	Harvard - Waverly Sq. via Mt. Auburn St.	5	12	30	12	50			
74	Harvard - Belmont Ctr. via Concord Ave.	15	30	40	30	40	3	Somerville	17.3%
76	Alewife - Hanscom Air Base	30	60	60	60	-	3	Somerville	12%

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

I. MBTA

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) was created in 1964 under Chapter 161A to replace the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA). The transit district was expanded from 14 communities, including Cambridge to 68 communities extending almost to I-495. This legislation gives the MBTA exclusive control over public transportation service within the area covered by the district. Transportation services are divided into two categories, express and local. Bus service in Cambridge is considered local service whereas the Red Line would be considered express service. Bus routes within the city have not changed much since the days of the old MTA (see section "Changes to MBTA bus routes" below for information on bus routes which have been added, extended or eliminated).

Currently Cambridge is served in whole or part by 29 separate bus routes of which nine only enter the city to reach Alewife or Lechmere Stations. These nine routes are beneficial however, since they carry commuters from the suburbs to the rapid transit system rather than have these people drive through Cambridge. Most of Cambridge is within a quarter of a mile of a bus line. Most bus routes terminate at either Harvard or Central Square which results in the need for a transfer for many people who wish to travel from one end of the city to the other.

Decisions on which routes to run and at what frequency are made at the MBTA through its Service Planning Section. When a city such as Cambridge makes a request for a change in service, that request is sent to the Service Planning Section for review. Criteria used to evaluate the request include the amount of new ridership, the cost of providing the new service and the effect on the operation of the bus system. Based upon this analysis, a recommendation is made to the Director of Planning. After review, the Director of Planning will either make a decision or in some cases refer the request to the General Manager for a final decision (see section below "The City's Ability to Impact Bus Service" for examples of city requests for service improvements).

II. MBTA ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

All 79 cities and towns in the MBTA district pay a share of the MBTA's yearly deficit or net cost of service. The assessment formulas for sharing the deficit were originally spelled out in state legislation passed in 1964 when the old Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) district, serving 14 cities and towns, was enlarged to the present district and renamed the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). The formulas have been amended by the legislature from time to time in

an effort to make the assessments more equitable. Cambridge's annual assessment is now \$6,600,025 or about 5% of the total district-wide assessment.

The legislation defines two basic types of MBTA service, "express service" and "local service". Express service refers to rapid transit service, including commuter rail, in controlled rights of way, while local service refers to MBTA buses, trackless trolleys, and streetcars in local streets. The net cost of providing each type of service is calculated separately and allocated by a different formula. Various forms of Federal and State financial assistance are then subtracted from the deficit to obtain the costs to be assessed to municipalities.

Express Service

Legislation has divided the assessment for the cost of express service into two parts, a 75% portion and a 25% percent portion, each distributed in a different fashion.

The 75% portion is shared by all 79 municipalities on the basis of the number of "commuters" in each community. This figure is taken from the latest Federal Census Journey to Work Data and represents the number of people residing in each community who work in a different community no matter how they get to and from work. In the case of the City of Boston, a special calculation is used that ensures that Boston is responsible for not less than 30% of this portion.

The remaining 25% of the net cost of express service is shared only by those cities and towns that have one or more express service stations. This part of the assessment is proportional to the number of passengers boarding the rapid transit lines at stations in each community. Each year counts are taken to determine the number of passengers boarding at each station and within each community. However, in 1973 the legislature amended the assessment procedure to exclude from the boarding count passengers boarding at new rapid transit stations opened after July 1973. This means that a new station in a community will not result in an increase in its assessment for the 25% portion of express service costs. Thus, the Cambridge boarding counts numbers do not include patrons using Porter and Alewife Stations.

Local Service

As with express service, the formula for assigning the local service deficit is divided into two parts. Half (50%) of the local service deficit is allocated on the basis of population, as determined by the most recent Federal Census; but first divided into two groups, the original 14 cities and towns contained in the old MTA district and the 64 cities and towns added to the district in 1964. The other 50% of the deficit from local service operations is shared by those cities and towns that have such service, and is based on the portion of losses in each community.

To determine the operating loss incurred in each community, the average operating cost per mile is first determined for the different types of local service; bus, trackless trolley, and streetcar. The yearly mileage operated on each route is then used to figure the yearly operating cost for that route. Fare box revenue is sampled on each route four times per year. The difference between operating cost and annual revenue determines the yearly loss for each route. This loss is allocated to each community on the route based on the mileage in each city or town. If a community elects not to be served by that route (buses do not make stops), the loss is distributed among the other cities and towns on the route. The losses from the routes for each community are totaled and then split in half for allocation to each part of the local service assessment. Thus, 50% of the local service assessment is based on the percentage of local service operating losses incurred in each community.

The objective of the procedures is twofold; to recognize that the 78 cities and towns in the MBTA district comprise one regional transportation district, that all municipalities benefit from the system, and therefore all must share some of the cost. The second objective is to assess a greater portion of the cost to those cities and towns that get a greater portion of the direct service.

III. MBTA ADVISORY BOARD

The MBTA Advisory Board was established as part of Chapter 161A creating the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). The advisory board consists of the city manager in the case of a Plan D or E city or the mayor of each other city, and the chairman of the board of selectmen of each town within the district. Each mayor, city manager or chairman may appoint a designee to act for him on the advisory board. Each city and town has one vote on the advisory board plus additional votes based upon that communities share of assessments made to the district. Thus, Boston controls about one third of the vote whereas Cambridge, the next largest vote, controls only 4.2%.

The responsibilities of the Advisory Board are as follows:

- Statutory review and line item approval of the annual MBTA expense budget. This is a line item budget which the Advisory Board can only reduce (not increase) by line item.
- Approval of any fare changes for local service.
- Approval of the appointment of the General Manager for the MBTA.
- Approval of three appointments by the Governor to the MBTA Board of Directors.
- Approval of the Program for Mass Transportation (the five year capital program for the MBTA).

Some expenditures are excluded from oversight by the Advisory Board. If a capital expenditure is mandated through an act of the Legislature it can proceed without approval by the Advisory Board. An example of expenditures mandated by the Legislature includes commuter rail extensions beyond the MBTA district (Worcester, Fall River, New Bedford, Newburyport, etc.).

In addition, the Advisory Board produces reports dealing with such issues as service quality and maintenance to highlight problems and uses its political strength to initiate changes.

Governor Weld has recently stated that he wants to abolish the Advisory Board. Weld argues that in light of the cap on MBTA assessments on cities and towns under Proposition 2 1/2 the Advisory Board's function as a financial "watchdog" is now largely redundant.

IV. MBTA BUDGET CUTS

A. PRIVATIZATION OF BUS OPERATIONS

Facts: All MBTA bus operations are scheduled to be privatized effective January 1997. The MBTA estimates that privatization of bus operations will result in savings of about \$13.5 million on the fiscal 1997 budget. An RFP for bus operations is expected to be issued in June of this year. It is likely that private operators will be allowed to bid on portions of the current bus network rather than the entire service network. Contractors may be allowed to bid on a specific set of bus lines; bus lines serving a certain geographic area; buses originating from a certain garage; or some other subset of bus operations. The maximum length of a contract awarded to a private operator is five years, however the T may opt for awarding contracts of a shorter duration. Both the MBTA Advisory Board and unions representing bus operations personnel are opposing the privatization plans. The MBTA has previously attempted to privatize a portion of the service network (involving only 11 lines of a total of 159), but the attempt was aborted when savings did not meet the MBTA's expectations.

Issues and Concerns: The City should try through our legislative delegation to ensure that contracts between the state and private operators include clear specifications for maintaining current levels of service in terms of number of routes and frequency of buses. This is particularly important, since there is no formal opportunity for impacted communities to provide input into the RFP and contractor selection process either directly or through the MBTA Advisory Board. Another main concern is that private operators, in order to be competitive, may reduce bus maintenance and therefore reliability of service and potentially safety.

B. LAY-OFFS

Facts: In an effort to further reduce its budget the MBTA is planning to cut 350 jobs from its payroll by July 1, 1996 including one of every four administrative positions. Positions will be cut through a combination of lay-offs, elimination of vacant positions or not filling jobs when employees quit or retire. The cuts are designed to save \$38 million and offset increases in other T programs. The staff cuts represent 5.2 percent of the T's 6,640 employees.

V. CITY'S ABILITY TO IMPACT BUS SERVICE

A. CHANGES TO MBTA BUS ROUTES

Chapter 161A allows the MBTA to provide mass transportation service, whether directly, jointly or under contract, on an exclusive basis, in the area constituting its district. However, no substantial changes in service can be made unless notice has been given to the Advisory Board at least 30 days in advance. The MBTA must conduct a public meeting upon petition of 25 or more persons who reside one-half mile or less from any point on a route for which significant service changes have been proposed. Significant changes in service are defined as a 100 percent or greater increase in headways, a 50 percent or greater decrease in total trips, discontinuation of a route, discontinuation of off-peak, weekend or evening service on a route or changes in the layout of a route. As a result of the process, the only requirement of the MBTA is to provide written notification to all persons who received written notice of the meeting the results of the MBTA's reconsideration of the significant service change.

From time to time, the City of Cambridge has requested service improvements. These requests have taken the form of letters from the City Manager to the MBTA General Manager sometimes accompanied by City Council Orders and Resolutions. As a general rule, the MBTA has been reluctant to make changes. However, perseverance has sometimes resulted in success. The following are examples:

- Service to the elderly at Huron Towers
- Extending Route 83 from Porter Square to the end of Rindge Avenue
- Connecting the Cambridgeport loop bus (Rt. 67) with a bus on the Boston side of the river to create Route 47 which provides service to the Longwood Medical Area and educational and other institutions
- Extending service from Central Square along Main Street to Kendall Square

However, we have been unsuccessful in our attempt to move Route 83 back onto Beacon Street instead of Somerville Ave after the railroad bridge was repaired. In addition, we have been unsuccessful in getting the MBTA to establish a new express route connecting the Red Line from Kendall Square to the Orange Line in Charlestown. One route has been eliminated entirely, namely Route 75 (Kendall Square to Harvard Square via Broadway) which was discontinued in the late 1970s due to lack of ridership.

B. SHUTTLES

The City is actively working to support the establishment of shuttle bus service by private businesses when appropriate as a means to reduce the reliance on automobiles by employees and visitors. As new construction projects and redevelopments are proposed in the city, city staff works to ensure that businesses and employment centers are accessible by paratransit and that bicycle and pedestrian amenities are incorporated. In addition, through the special permit process, the Planning Board requires many new developments to include Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plans which could include the establishment of a private shuttle. The Cambridge Galleria shuttle which runs between Kendall Square MBTA station is an example of shuttle required by special permit. The shuttle carried approximately 60,000 riders per month during 1995.

A proposal for state funding for a shuttle was recently submitted by the Cambridge Hospital. The shuttle will provide a link between the Hospital and Central Square's bus and subway connections. The service will be free to the general public as well as hospital and other city employees. The shuttle will follow a route that serves 57 Inman Street, 51 Inman Street, and City Hall as well as a number of other worksites in and around Central Square, such as the Police Department. The funding proposal for the shuttle is currently listed as the second highest priority on the state priority list for funding of TDM initiatives.

IV. CIRCUMFERENTIAL TRANSIT SERVICE

A. MAJOR INVESTMENT STUDY

The MBTA has identified a need for improvements in circumferential transit within the core of the Boston metropolitan area in order to improve access to major travel destinations. This major longterm planning effort is also of critical importance to the implementation of economic development and clean air initiatives within the compact communities. While there is broad support for this effort among the inner core communities, the state administration has expressed little support for the project.

To determine the most effective way to improve transit in the corridor the MBTA is planning to conduct a major investment study (MIS). The goals for the MIS are to identify ways to link existing and future radial services, connect key activity centers, relieve congestion on radial transit services, increase ridership, and foster local and regional economic development. While \$1.1 million in Federal Transit Administration funds have been earmarked and a consultant has been selected to conduct the study, the MBTA Board has yet to approve the implementation of the study. A vote by the Board is expected at their next meeting on April 25, 1996. Once approved by the Board an MIS final report is expected within 10 months.

B. CITY PARTICIPATION

In October of 1995 a ceremony at Bunker Hill Community College officially launched the Circumferential Ring Regional Planning Compact. The Compact consists of the cities of Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett and Somerville and was formed to ensure local participation in long-range transit planning generally and in the Major Investment Study specifically.

The compact communities are working closely with MBTA planning staff and will be taking a very active role in identifying existing transportation deficiencies, collecting data, defining the preferred location of the transportation corridor, and evaluation of travel mode choices for the corridor.

City staff along with staff from the other compact communities meet on a regular basis with the MBTA. City staff also participates in the Urban Ring Working Committee (URWC) which was formed by the MBTA to help monitor and provide input into the Urban Ring MIS. The URWC represents a broad base of organizations, government entities and businesses.

City of Cambridge

The Traffic and Transportation Committee held a public hearing on Friday, April 12, 1996 beginning at one o'clock and fifty minutes p. m. in the Ackermann Room. The purpose of the hearing was to discuss issues relating to Cambridge bus routes, including possible effects of plans for privatization and the quality of service.

Present at the hearing were Councillor Henrietta Davis, Chair, Vice Mayor Born, Councillor Sullivan, along with several members of the Community Development Department: Susan Schlesinger, Assistant City Manager for Community Development; Liz Epstein, Deputy Director; Dick Easler, Chief Transportation Planner and Susanne Rasmussen, Director of Environmental and Transportation Planning. Also present were Susan Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation, Jonathan Ginsberg, Forest City Development, James Gascoigne, Charles River Transportation, (TMA Transportation Management Association), Donna P. Lopez, Interim Deputy City Clerk and George Despotis, citizen of Cambridge.

At this time Councillor Davis, Chair of the Committee, stated she scheduled this meeting to review the progress of public transportation within the city over the past twenty-five years. Councillor Davis also stated she planned to inquire as to the needs of the citizens as well as local businesses on this matter, and requested to discuss long-term objectives for an improved public transportation system within the city.

The meeting opened as Susan Schlesinger gave a brief overview from a document prepared by the Community Development Department describing the public transportation services in Cambridge, a copy of which is attached (see **Attachment A**).

Councillor Davis requested Ms. Schlesinger to describe the role of the MBTA within the city. Ms. Schlesinger informed the members that the city has a seat on the MBTA Advisory Board, and stated that the formula used for voting on the Board was such that one vote plus any additional votes used were based on the percentage of the individual community's share of assessment. Ms. Schlesinger stressed a need for improvements in the circumferential transit, commonly known as the Urban Ring. This would then lead to improved access to major travel destinations, and improvements to the Urban Ring would subsequently improve economic and environmental development of the city.

Councillor Davis proceeded to pose a question regarding the role of the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department in relation to the MBTA. Susan Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation responded that her department interacts with the MBTA on various operational issues, among which are:

bus stop locations, operation and system problems, drivers en route, the layover at Purity Supreme, and determining whether this setup is maximally efficient or if there is a more productive solution.

Ms. Clippinger stated that her department works with the MBTA to conclude solutions to problems.

Committee Report #3

5-226

Received from Councillor Davis,
Chair, Traffic and Transportation
Committee, for a public hearing
held on 4/12/96 for the purpose
of discussing issues relating to
Cambridge bus routes, including
possible effects of plans for
privatization and the quality of
service.

In City Council April 22, 1996

Report Accepted. Placed on file.

Orders Adopted.