



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

CITY HALL, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

(617) 498-9094

David E. Sullivan
City Councillor

TESTIMONY BEFORE MBTA HEARING PANEL
MARCH 16, 1981

My name is Elana Shavit and I am administrative aide to Cambridge City Councillor David Sullivan, who chairs the Transportation Committee of the Cambridge City Council. He is unable to be present tonight because of a City Council meeting.

Cambridge is about to suffer its third consecutive round of substantial reductions in MBTA service. I ask the MBTA to reconsider the serious impact of these cutbacks.

Given the rising MBTA assessments on cities and towns-- Cambridge's assessment rose 20% between 1979 and 1980--and the 15% reduction in available property tax revenue due to Proposition 2½, there is no alternative but cutting the MBTA budget. Although I continue to advocate adequate management reforms, I recognize that some reduction of service must follow. However, a 2% budget reduction does not seem to justify a 25% cut in service.

Furthermore, some of the service cuts already in effect reduce or eliminate bus service without generating a corresponding gain in efficiency. One example is the doubling of headway time after 10 p.m. on routes such as #69. At one time, a single bus ran back and forth between Harvard and Lechmere Squares

every 15 minutes. Now this route runs half as frequently, allowing the driver a 30-minute coffee break while the bus remains parked at Lechmere station with the engine running. This is not an isolated case.

A second area of difficulty involves the proposed elimination of all but rush hour service on route #72 (Huron Ave.). In a letter to Barry Locke dated March 6, Cambridge City Manager James Sullivan suggested that some vehicles from either route #71 (Watertown Square) or route #73 (Waverly Square) could be rerouted over the Huron Ave. route at no additional cost to the MBTA. This would continue service to the Huron Ave. riders without significantly disrupting service from Watertown Square or Waverly Square to Harvard station. The poles, wires and switches for this alternative are already in use so that no additional capital is required.

Alternative service should also be arranged for those riders affected by the scheduled elimination of routes #75 (Kendall/Harvard) and #85 (Kendall/Spring Hill). The omission of these two routes leaves those living between Cambridge St. and Central Square--many of whom do not own cars--with no service except the Lechmere bus.

While the cutbacks I have mentioned seem ill-advised, others are long overdue. I applaud the proposed elimination of a series of routes with unpublished schedules, many of which carry children to and from private schools at a reduced fare. Although some routes are used by students at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, this service effectively provides a public subsidy to private

education. If the private schools were forced to bear the financial burden of providing transportation for their students, more parents might choose to send their children to public schools. Unfortunately, the governor would like to see these "secret" routes reinstated. I find it difficult to justify expending public funds for children to leave the public schools, especially at a time when the public schools are striving to remain competitive under Proposition 2½.

In conclusion, the scheduled service cutbacks on routes #72, #75 and #85 will significantly inconvenience many riders. This situation could be alleviated with equivalent or even greater savings to the MBTA by providing alternate routing as I have suggested, re-evaluating existing curtailments in service and eliminating unapproved routes to private schools.

18. 5-151

Placed on file