



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

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JOINT COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, ARTS, AND
CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

January 18, 2022

The Honorable Michael O. Moore
Chair, Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight
State House, Room 109-B
Boston, MA, 02133

Dear Chair Moore,

I write to, respectfully, request your assistance in conducting an oversight investigation into the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) Mattapan Line Transformation project.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this line served more than 6,600 riders every day. This line runs on 2.6 miles of track between the Ashmont and Mattapan stations. The Mattapan Line Transformation project phases are outlined below.

- For phase 1 of this project, \$7.9 million was allocated for trolley fleet improvements, including car body repairs. The anticipated improvements proposed by the MBTA will extend the lifespan of the existing trolley cars by 8 - 10 years. The entire fleet of 10 trolley cars will undergo these modernization upgrades and repairs.
- Additionally, phase 2 includes infrastructure investments, including rehabilitation and maintenance of tracks, bridges, stations and platforms, as well as power system resilience

efforts. Accessibility and safety issues require upgrades to the Valley Road, Milton and Ashmont stations.

- Finally, phase 3 relates to additional investments to integrate the future vehicle fleet. Additional details on this project can be found on the MBTA project's website at <https://www.mbta.com/projects/mattapan-line-transformation>.

In April 2019, the MBTA held public hearings on the phases for improvements to the Mattapan Line. Furthermore, the MBTA estimated that the first trolleys would return to service in the summer of 2019. This project has encountered multiple schedule delays and is currently more than two years behind schedule.

In my opinion, the MBTA has failed to meet the needs of the people of the Commonwealth for whom this transportation serves as a lifeline each and every day. Specifically, the Milton station includes a public safety hazard as crumbling, dilapidated and dangerous stairs are left in disrepair.

On January 28, 2020, I, along with Milton Town Administrator Mike Dennehy and Milton Select Board Member Mike Zullas, met with MBTA General Manager Steven Poftak to discuss a variety of issues. The discussion included the Mattapan Line Transformation Project, as well as the deplorable condition of the Milton Station stairs.

On October 29, 2020, I sent a letter to the General Manager seeking an update on the Milton Station safety improvements. On April 20, 2021, my Chief of Staff sent an email to General Manager Poftak's Deputy Chief of Staff seeking an update on the status of the Milton Station stairs. While the Milton Station stair repairs are not scheduled to occur in phase 2, it was only at this point that my office was informed by the MBTA that no temporary safety measures would be implemented at the Milton Station. We were informed that this was due to concerns with triggering ADA requirements, and that the plan was now to completely redo the station when the Mattapan Transformation Project moves forward.

In the summer of 2021, a walk-through of the repairs that were being conducted on the Mattapan Line was organized for the delegation. I, along with my colleague Senator Nick Collins, were unable to attend this walk-through due to scheduling conflicts. My office reached out repeatedly to the MBTA to schedule a walk-through for myself and Senator Collins. On both August 2, 2021, and August 17, 2021, my office was informed by the MBTA that it would not be possible to accommodate a walk-through as the MBTA "teams" were currently otherwise engaged. My office continued to reach out and see if something could be scheduled further out, but we never received a response from the MBTA. On September 24, 2021, Senator Nick Collins and I sent a letter to General Manager Poftak seeking a walk-through of the Mattapan line, specifically requesting a response from the General Manager himself. We have yet to receive one.

In October of 2021, the MBTA stated that it looked forward to putting two rebuilt trolleys into service by the end of the year. The MBTA cited multiple reasons for the schedule delay, including the complexities of retrofitting vehicles with updated technology, lead paint abatement, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as of the date of this letter, no upgraded trolley cars have returned to service and no infrastructure improvements have been made.

In conducting an oversight hearing, I request the MBTA, specifically General Manager Steven Poftak, provide a detailed explanation outlining the reasons for the delay in completing the project,

the associated costs with the delay, as well as an updated timeline for the completion of each phase of the project.

Communication between the MBTA, the Legislature, and the public on this project continues to be an issue. I request that the MBTA outline how it will improve public access to updates for this project both on its public website and at the physical stations.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Senator Walter F. Timilty
Norfolk, Bristol and Plymouth