



Charles D. Baker, Governor  
Karyn E. Polito, Lieutenant Governor  
Jamey Tesler, Acting MassDOT Secretary & CEO  
Steve Poflak, General Manager



May 9, 2022

Sumbul Siddiqui, Mayor  
City of Cambridge  
City Hall  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

Lou DePasquale, City Manager  
City of Cambridge  
City Hall  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

Re: Overhead catenary removal on Massachusetts Avenue

Dear Mayor Siddiqui and City Manager DePasquale:

Thank you for your April 21 letter regarding the MBTA's overhead catenary infrastructure in Cambridge, and also for the City's support for our conversion of the North Cambridge retrofit project – part of our commitment to decarbonize the MBTA's entire bus fleet by 2040. As you note, the MBTA is committed to removing all infrastructure in the public rights of way which formerly supported our electric trolley bus operation as expeditiously as possible. Our team is currently engineering a plan for the removal of the system in its entirety, while identifying opportunities to expedite sections where there is an interface with local street projects. Your engineering department has communicated the urgency associated with the separated bike lane project on Massachusetts Avenue between Roseland and Beech streets to MBTA staff overseeing this catenary removal effort.

While the plan for removing this infrastructure is still in development, we know that the only option for removing the wires on this portion of Massachusetts Avenue by the end of July would be to use the MBTA's Power System Maintenance group to conduct the work. This group is currently working at capacity to support the completion of the Green Line Extension project as well as transformation efforts across our rail rapid transit system, making it challenging for them to support the systemwide removal of catenary infrastructure at this time. We can, however, advance the planning work for this 1,450 foot segment and make our Power department available to remove those wires in July. Given the urgency of this work for the City, and strong working relationship between our respective staffs on the battery electric bus transition in North Cambridge, we would expect your support in expediting any local permits required to support the wire removal on this timeline.

Over the next few months, we will complete our plan for removal of all infrastructure in Cambridge, Belmont and Watertown associated with the former trolleybus operation. We will then determine whether this work would be best completed by our own Power department or through the procurement of a private contractor. The MBTA will continue to coordinate with City staff on the timeline for this overall effort and identify any opportunities to advance segments that have synergy with other active construction projects. Please contact Scott Hamwey, the Director of Bus Modernization at 617.686.6711 or at [shamwey@mbta.com](mailto:shamwey@mbta.com) for updates on the further development of this work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Poftak', written in a cursive style.

Steve Poftak  
General Manager