

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE 2024 PRIORITIES



Supporting a safe, reliable, accessible, and equitable transportation system for our regional economy

The future prosperity of Greater Boston is directly related to the accessibility, reliability, and affordability of our regional transportation system. Today, our transportation system is in crisis and needs a comprehensive plan to move our roads, bridges, transit—all our people—into the future. A Better City's Transportation & Infrastructure 2024 Priorities support a forward-thinking, inclusive approach to delivering major transportation infrastructure projects and providing essential public transportation, while reducing carbon emissions, addressing climate change resiliency, managing traffic congestion, supporting transportation equity and safety, and addressing our affordability crisis.

GOAL 1: ADVOCATE FOR RESTORATION OF HIGH QUALITY, SAFE, AFFORDABLE MBTA SERVICE

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Authority has a significant and costly State of Good Repair (SGR) backlog, estimated in 2023 at \$24.5 billion in 2021 dollars and is facing a large structural deficit for the operating budget. This burden limits the MBTA's ability to make more forward-looking capital investments and it impacts the agency's ability to run safe, reliable, frequent, and affordable service. In 2024, A Better City will prioritize MBTA operations and capital investments that support member companies and their employees, the regional economy, transit-dependent communities, and statewide decarbonization goals.

PRIORITIZE CRITICAL SAFETY, ACCESSIBILITY, & SERVICE CONCERNS

In 2024, A Better City will maintain our strong relationships with MBTA and MassDOT leadership and work collaboratively with other groups to help the MBTA get back on track. A Better City will monitor the MBTA's response to implementation of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) special directives and actively participate in implementation of the yearlong MBTA's 2024 Track Improvement Program to reduce improve mitigation and communication as well as reduce impact and maximize system accessibility for all riders. Further, A Better City will support efforts to build back the MBTA workforce, specifically bus operators, Operation Control Center staff, track workers, and other key safety positions that are fundamental to restoring pre-pandemic, or better, service levels.

ENSURE STRONG MITIGATION PLAN FOR SUMNER TUNNEL RESTORATION

In July-August 2024, the Sumner Tunnel will close for two months to complete critical repairs that were started in 2023. A Better City was deeply engaged in Phase 1 of this project and will participate again in planning meetings and implementation efforts to push MassDOT and the MBTA to execute comprehensive mitigation options across all relevant modes, including water transportation, for Phase 2. These efforts are critical to ensuring access to safe, reliable, and frequent transportation options during the closure that regional economy and Massachusetts residents depend on to get to work and partake in other activities of daily life.

SUPPORT INCLUSIVE INCENTIVES & PILOTS THAT INCREASE SYSTEM ACCESSIBILITY

Rethinking how the MBTA engages with riders is critical to meeting riders' expectations and improving system accessibility. In 2024, A Better City will support implementation of a low-income fare program to expand reduced fares to an estimated 60,000 riders aged 26-64. A Better City will also prioritize Commuter Rail fare reform, which will include rethinking zone pricing in general and expanding Zone 1A pricing to

additional stations to improve transit access in underserved communities and to promote modeshift. Additionally, A Better City will support regional rail pilot programs—e.g., Fairmount Line—that improve schedules, address air quality and health concerns in environmental justice communities and take steps toward decarbonizing the Commuter Rail system. Further, A Better City will monitor implementation of AFC 2.0—the MBTA’s new fare collection system—and delivery of remaining Orange and Red Line cars from CRRC.

PUSH FOR INNOVATIVE PROCUREMENT & DESIGN/BUILD STRATEGIES THAT MODERNIZE, EXPAND, & FORTIFY THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

In 2024, A Better City will urge the MBTA to expedite the design and building of key capital projects that modernize and expand the system, as well as address accessibility, environmental, and health concerns in environmental justice communities, including: the Red-Blue Connector, priority climate resilience projects to fortify the system, and decarbonization projects (bus and bus maintenance facility electrification, electrification of Commuter Rail, enhanced regional rail, etc.). A Better City will also focus on procurement reform, including related to the upcoming Commuter Rail reprocurement, to support these projects and encourage the collection and tracking of data on current trends.

GOAL 2: SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION FINANCE PLAN

Transportation finance will be a top agenda item in 2024. Governor Healey created a Task Force to ensure sustainable and adequate funds are available to meet the Commonwealth’s transportation system’s short-term threats and longer-term needs. A Better City is uniquely positioned to influence this effort to develop a comprehensive transportation finance plan that sets Massachusetts up for success, across the network (MBTA and regional transportation authorities [RTAs], roads and bridges, and rail).

ADDRESS THE MBTA FISCAL CLIFF & LONG-TERM OPERATING BUDGET NEEDS

As a priority in 2024, A Better City will focus on the MBTA’s looming operating budget deficit, which jeopardizes the region’s economic, environmental, and transit equity goals. A Better City will call on legislators to support increased funding in the state budget to address the expected MBTA deficit for FY26 and beyond.

MAXIMIZE FAIR SHARE REVENUE TO ADDRESS BROADER TRANSPORTATION FINANCE NEEDS

In 2024, A Better City will advocate that no less than 50% of Fair Share revenue be dedicated to transportation. Further, A Better City will encourage the legislature to approve the governor’s budget proposal to authorize a long-term borrowing plan to maximize the benefits of Fair Share revenues.

ESTABLISH EQUITABLE MOBILITY PRICING COMMISSION

In 2024, A Better City will advocate for the establishment of, and our participation on, a legislatively convened Equitable Mobility Pricing Commission to investigate, study, and recommend the development and deployment of comprehensive, regionally equitable mobility pricing strategies. A Better City stands ready to contribute research, support data analysis, and to reflect the perspectives of the Greater Boston business community.

GOAL 3: SUPPORT TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS TO ACHIEVE STATEWIDE HOUSING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, & DECARBONIZATION GOALS

There are multiple transportation infrastructure investments that simultaneously address broader state goals, including decarbonization, climate resilience, housing, and inclusive economic development. To support these goals, in 2024, A Better City will focus on the roll out of the MBTA Communities Act; electrification of the Commuter Rail (rolling stock, infrastructure, service changes) and bus network (fleet, maintenance facilities); expansion of bus priority corridors; equitable electric vehicle charging infrastructure deployment, and company fleet decarbonization.

SUPPORT THE MBTA COMMUNITIES ACT, TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT MEASURES, & OTHER HOUSING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In 2024, A Better City will support and engage with members, as appropriate, on the adoption and implementation of the MBTA Communities Act as an important avenue to address the housing shortage in Massachusetts, create inclusive economic opportunities, and achieve statewide decarbonization and climate goals through modeshift from cars to frequent, reliable, and affordable public transit service.

ADVANCE ELECTRIFICATION OF MBTA COMMUTER RAIL & BUS NETWORK

In 2024, A Better City will advocate for funding and early actions to advance electrification of the Commuter Rail system as well as encourage the MBTA to consider innovative procurement methods in the future to operate and maintain the Commuter Rail system and potentially finance a portion of rail transformation. In addition, A Better City will urge the MBTA to take all necessary steps to accelerate updates to bus maintenance facilities and procurement of electric buses to meet our Clean Energy and Climate Plan goals. These efforts not only support decarbonization goals they take concrete steps toward reducing negative environmental and health impacts on environmental justice communities.

ENGAGE BUSINESS COMMUNITY ON BUS PRIORITY CORRIDORS

In 2024, A Better City will engage with members and the broader business community on bus priority corridors, including on issues related to traffic mitigation and enhanced service needs to support priority bus lanes. This early and proactive engagement will inform interactions with the MBTA and key municipal leaders responsible for implementing bus lanes and other local infrastructure improvements that enable priority travel for buses. Priority lanes have the potential to save time for riders, improve bus operations, and improve transit service to support existing and future development and growth. A Better City will also monitor automated enforcement legislation and offer constructive feedback in the process.

ADVANCE ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE & FLEET DECARBONIZATION

In 2024, A Better City will research, monitor, and advocate for equitable access to, and pricing for, electric vehicle charging infrastructure at the state and city level, as well as support members, as appropriate, with fleet decarbonization planning.

GOAL 4: SCALE TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT CAPACITY, POLICIES, & PROGRAMS

The impact of COVID on telework policies cannot be overstated. But as the questions of ‘if’ and ‘when’ people move around the region are still in flux, the matter of ‘how’ remains a critical one. Despite disruptions in travel patterns and reduced commuting, the Commonwealth is still paralyzed by gridlock since the majority of trips—57% according to MassDOT data—are three miles or less, and 80% of those trips are in cars. In 2024,

A Better City will encourage mode shift of those short trips to active, sustainable modes like public transit, bicycles, and e-bikes in support of our 2025 Clean Energy and Climate Plan goals.

EXPAND IMPACT OF TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

In 2024, through the A Better City Strategic Framework for Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Impact, A Better City will continue to rally city, state, and institutional partners to engage in more effective program and policy delivery. A Better City will also deepen engagement with MassDOT to make TDM specific funding available to Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) in support of on-the-ground programming to catalyze modeshift. Further, A Better City will inform the formalization of the Transportation Access Plan Agreement program through the Boston Transportation Department and bring A Better City's expertise to bear as they seek to refine and expand the Base Mobility Score, parking maximums, and other key TDM support policies.

SCALE ADOPTION OF BICYCLES, E-BIKES, & BIKESHARE

E-bikes present the single largest opportunity to enable modeshift in Greater Boston and to jumpstart our effort toward the Commonwealth's climate goals. With miles of new paths and on-street bike infrastructure opening every year, we are on the edge of having a comprehensive, regional network that will unlock the potential of active mobility for tens of thousands of people. In 2024, A Better City will push the state to launch an e-bike rebate program as early as possible and amplify the need to dedicate additional, recurring funding to scale that program to 100,000 e-bike rebates by the end of 2026. In addition, A Better City will continue to engage the MBTA to understand how many trips are multi-modal, meaning a rider connected with their service by bicycle, e-bike, or scooter. This includes reviewing first and last mile data, bike parking at stations, and how the Bluebikes footprint overlaps MBTA stations.

GOAL 5: ADVANCE I-90 ALLSTON MULTIMODAL PROJECT

A Better City plays a leading role in advocacy for this transformational roadway, rail, transit, and land development project that will establish a new western gateway for Boston and an enhanced link to and from Central Massachusetts. A Better City has served on the project Task Force since 2014 and successfully advocated for the adoption of the "All At-Grade" design and for a more expedited and cost-effective construction staging strategy. A Better City managed the preparation of an Economic Benefits Study in 2022 and supported MassDOT in the development of competitive applications to two federal grant programs. Working in close coordination with an array of project stakeholders, A Better City will continue to champion this transformative project.

ADVOCACY & SUPPORT TO ADVANCE I-90 ALLSTON MULTIMODAL PROJECT

In 2024, A Better City will lead advocacy and support advancement of the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project, including advancing pursuit of funding sources and advancing innovative construction sequencing and staging strategies. A Better City will continue to participate in the MassDOT project Task Force, the City of Boston Beacon Park Yard Regional Framework Plan, and other engagement opportunities.

SUPPORT COMPLETION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORTS & STATEMENTS

In 2024, A Better City will support and evaluate the MassDOT workplan to complete Supplemental Environmental Impact Report/Draft Environmental Impact Statement, including West Station design, interchange ramps and street grid, construction staging, and river edge and Paul Dudley White path design.