



**TOWN OF ARLINGTON**  
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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**MEMORANDUM**

To: Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager

From: Daniel Amstutz, Senior Transportation Planner

CC: Jennifer Raitt, Director, Department of Planning and Community Development

Date: December 17, 2020

RE: Forthcoming MBTA Service Changes in Arlington and the Region

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The Fiscal Management and Control Board (FMCB) of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) voted on Monday, December 14, to make service changes as part of its [Forging Ahead initiative](#), which aims to address declines in ridership and more than a more than \$500 million projected budget gap in the next fiscal year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of the initiative is to define and protect core essential services for those who depend most critically on the MBTA for frequent and reliable service by reducing primarily non-essential services. The service changes do not cut as much service as was originally proposed by the MBTA in November, but still impact many services throughout Arlington and services in nearby communities that residents rely upon. [The presentation of the changes that were voted on by the FMCB can be found on the MBTA's website](#), as well as [a summary of the public comments that they received](#). The Town of Arlington submitted a letter commenting on the proposed changes that was also signed by the Town's state delegation.

MBTA bus service in Arlington will be significantly affected by the approved service changes. The following changes are expected to become effective in spring (March/April 2021) or later following other state reviews (including Title VI and MEPA reviews):

- Suspend service on Route 79 (Arlington Heights to Alewife Station);
- Suspend service on Route 80 (Arlington Center to Lechmere Station), contingent upon completion of the Green Line Extension;
- Consolidate Routes 78 & 84 (Arlmont Village to Harvard Station and Arlmont Village to Alewife Station);
- Consolidate Routes 62 & 76 (Bedford VA Hospital to Alewife Station and Hanscom Air Force Base to Alewife Station); and
- The remaining bus routes within Arlington may operate 20% less frequency compared to baseline service levels: 67, 77, 87, 95, and 350.

The following additional changes to services that may affect Arlington residents include:

- 20% reduction in frequency on the Red Line. During peak travel periods, this means that times between trains will increase to 5 ½ minutes from the current goal of 4 ½ minutes. This also applies to the Green and Orange lines, while the Blue Line will only have up to a 5% reduction in frequency. These changes may go into effect as early as March 2021.
- Weekday service on the Commuter Rail will be reduced and end at 9 pm. In addition, weekend service will be suspended on lower-ridership lines, which include the Fitchburg Line serving Belmont and the Lowell Line serving West Medford. These changes are expected to become effective starting in January 2021.
- For the RIDE, some trips will need to be booked 40 minutes from request time instead of the current 30 minutes. In addition, some RIDE trips may become premium trips, though the RIDE service boundaries would not change, and the premium service hours will be adjusted to match Commuter Rail hours of operation. These changes are expected to become effective in spring.

The MBTA will continue to run services after midnight and have the same hours of operation for bus and subway/rapid transit, and will maintain the Suburban Subsidy program for services in Bedford, Beverly, Burlington, Lexington, and Mission Hill.

The MBTA plans to do outreach over the course of the winter and spring to inform residents and transit riders of these changes, via their website, postings in vehicles and at stations, notifications at bus stops and on digital screens, and to community groups and elected officials and in multiple languages based on demographics. The MBTA must also do a Title VI Service Equity Analysis as required when there is a major service change as defined by their Disparate Impact/Disproportionate Burden (DI/DB) policy. They will conduct this analysis based on the Base Service adopted at the December 14 meeting and return to the FMCB for its approval in February. Finally, an environmental review is required by MEPA due to the size of the service reduction and the public will have an opportunity to comment on the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) before the Secretary of EEA issues a Certificate of Adequacy.

The MBTA has noted that most service changes are not intended to be permanent, and service will be restored depending on public health guidance and the timing of the Massachusetts post-vaccine re-opening plan. They will monitor ridership and feedback from surveys, among other data, and develop scenario plans to estimate future ridership levels. The FY22 service levels will be planned beginning in February/March as part of the FY22 budget process.

Please let me know if there are any questions about this memo. Staff will monitor the situation with the MBTA and continue to provide further updates.