



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

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CHAIRMAN  
House Committee on:  
Global Warming and Climate Change

MBTA  
Ten Park Plaza  
Boston, MA 02116  
Attention: Fare Proposal Committee

August 11, 2009

Dear Fare Proposal Committee:

As the Chairman of the House Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change and as the representative of an urban district that depends highly on the MBTA, I write today to express my opposition to the proposed MBTA and commuter rail fare increases. I believe that the increases will be a burden to my constituents in Brookline, will unfairly punish low-income T riders and will be detrimental to the state's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollution.

The MBTA provides transportation service to 75 percent of the Commonwealth's population, who make 2.1 million trips on the T daily. In the past couple of years, ridership on the T has increased, which means that fewer people are using their cars for their daily commute. This is good news for the T and good for the environment, since traveling by public transportation is less carbon intensive than driving a car. Taking public transit also reduces the overall amount of pollution in the air, which has positive public health impacts.

I am concerned that the proposed fare hikes will again cause ridership to fall – up to 5 percent, by state estimates – leading to an increase in our transportation emissions. Given the state of the economy, the ridership drop could be even greater than predicted – a recent Boston *Globe* report pointed out that, before the 2007 fare hike, state analysts had predicted a 5 percent drop in ridership, far below the actual result at a 9.5 percent decrease. Fewer people riding the MBTA means there will be more cars on the road, adding physical stress to our infrastructure, increasing congestion, and filling our atmosphere with greenhouse gases and other pollutants. This pollution has an adverse impact not only on the environment, but also on public health, especially since parts of the Boston area have some of the highest rates of asthma in the country.

The transportation sector in Massachusetts is responsible for over 34 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMT $\text{CO}_2\text{E}$ ) annually, making up about forty percent of the Commonwealth's annual emissions. This is a serious problem. In order to meet the emissions reductions goals of the Global Warming Solutions Act – 10 to 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 – we need to increase access to public transit and have fewer personal vehicles on the roads. The MBTA has tremendous potential to help us reduce our transportation emissions, but increasing fares will only make the situation worse.

In addition to the environmental and public health impacts of the fare increase, I am also concerned about how it will impact my constituents, particularly seniors, low-income families, and those on a fixed income. A 20 percent increase in travel expenses is difficult for any budget to reconcile, but for those with limited means, it could be the difference between going to work or not, getting to a doctor's visit or not, or being active in the community or not. Indeed, for many of my constituents, public transportation is not a choice; it is their only way of getting around town.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the proposed fare increase. I was surprised to note in your draft impact analysis on the fare increase that greenhouse gas emission impacts were not considered, though air pollution generally was. I hope that climate change impacts can be factored into your decision-making process, and I am encouraged by your willingness to engage in a public process before deciding whether the increase is necessary. I look forward to working with you on this issue in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank I. Smizik". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Frank I. Smizik