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August 10, 2023

Thomas P. Glynn, Chair
MBTA Board of Directors
10 Park Plaza, Suite 3510
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Chair Glynn,

We write to request that the MBTA provide a formal explanation for its classification of the Mattapan trolley line as rapid transit. According to the MBTA's current Service Delivery Policy, the rapid transit designation includes both heavy rail (Blue, Orange, and Red Lines) and light rail (Green Line and Mattapan trolley line).

However, the significant differences in service, infrastructure, and equipment demonstrate that the Mattapan trolley line is not equivalent to the rapid transit lines, and that its previous classification as not being rapid transit should be restored. As is shown below, equating the Mattapan trolley line with the Blue, Orange, Red, and Green Lines is like saying that the trolley in Mister Rogers' Neighborhood is the same as Bullet Train.

The Town is requesting this explanation as the MBTA has failed for years to adequately invest in the Mattapan trolley line. Most recently, in the July 18 2023, meeting of the MBTA Advisory Board, the Undersecretary of Transportation, Ms. Monica G. Tibbits-Nutt, was unable to respond to a question about the timeline for the proposed Mattapan Line Transformation Project as she was "not briefed on that project."

That follows a June 20th community meeting where multiple complaints were made from Milton, Mattapan, and Dorchester residents about the ongoing delays, as well as a ten-year failure to remedy a dangerous set of stairs at Milton Station, used by both Milton and Dorchester residents, and for which we as a Town had no alternative but to seek relief from the courts.

Recently, in the context of the Mattapan Line Transformation Project, the MBTA has acknowledged the deficiencies of the Mattapan trolley line resulting from decades of neglect, and its differences from the rapid transit lines, by recognizing its deficiencies in “reliability, safety, and accessibility for riders,” its lack of “convenient access and connections,” and the need to:

modernize stations and improve infrastructure throughout the Mattapan Line. This includes introducing the next generation of vehicles to the line, the Type 9 light rail vehicles. These vehicles are much more accessible, as they make level boarding possible at the middle doors by featuring sliding doors and automatic ramps. They also have a bigger capacity.

<https://www.mbta.com/projects/mattapan-line-transformation>.

We look forward to the proposed Mattapan Line Transformation Project, if and when it occurs. We acknowledge the recent activity on this Project, including discussion of early action projects and the anticipated completion of a 15% design by the end of this year. We hope that progress continues and all requisite funding for the Project is made available by the MBTA. However, we understand that there is no clear timeline for the construction of the proposed Project, other than perhaps sometime in the next decade. As mentioned above, leaders do not seem to be briefed on this project and certainly have not demonstrated a prioritization of the work.

While the short, self-contained Mattapan trolley line loop runs on a designated right of way, in its current state, its operation is more equivalent to a bus or street-car system than to a rapid transit line in the following ways:

RAPID TRANSIT LINES HAVE A DIRECT TRANSIT LINK TO DOWNTOWN BOSTON; THE MATTAPAN TROLLEY LINE DOES NOT.

Unlike passengers on each of the rapid transit lines, which bring riders from Brookline, Lynn, Revere, Cambridge, Somerville, and Newton to destinations in Downtown Boston on one-seat rides, riders from Milton, Mattapan, and Dorchester on the Mattapan trolley line do not have a direct, one-seat connection into Downtown Boston. Rather, Mattapan trolley line passengers must change trains at Ashmont to reach Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville on the Red Line, or take another rapid transit line to other destinations.

RAPID TRANSIT LINES HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE CAPACITY THAN THE MATTAPAN TROLLEY LINE.

In contrast to the rapid transit lines that operate many cars at a time, the Mattapan trolley line operates only a single car at a time and only four cars in total over the length of its 2.6 mile loop. In addition, the PCC cars on the Mattapan trolley line have a maximum capacity of 50 to 60 passengers, while the new Type 9 trains on the Green Line have a capacity of up to 300 passengers. While the Mattapan trolley line, like many elements of

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the MBTA system, is operating below pre-pandemic ridership levels, given the limitations of its age-old PCC cars and its decrepit infrastructure, it would not be able to handle any significant increase in ridership, including that anticipated and encouraged by the MBTA Communities Act.

RAPID TRANSIT LINES HAVE BENEFITED FROM INVESTMENT AND MAINTENANCE, WHILE MATTAPAN TROLLEY LINE AND ITS RIDERS HAVE SUFFERED FROM DECADES OF NEGLECT.

As the MBTA has acknowledged, the existing PCC cars on the Mattapan trolley line are decades old and in bad condition as a result of neglect, underinvestment, and deferred maintenance. The age of these PCC cars makes them unreliable and in frequent need of maintenance, which limits the line's ability to meet service levels. In contrast, over several decades the rapid transit lines have benefited from significant investment, such as the Green Line's new vehicles (Type 8, Type 9, and now Type 10) and service expansion, the Blue Line's newer equipment, and the Orange and Red Line projects to replace all their cars. As a result, the service, capacity, and modernization of the Blue, Green, Orange, and Red Lines are distinct from that of the Mattapan trolley line.

Disinvestment in the Mattapan trolley line has led to deteriorating conditions in the cars, along the tracks, and at the stations, such as at Milton Station, where decades of neglect left the staircase providing access to the station in disrepair, then closed as a safety hazard, and ultimately demolished with nothing rebuilt in its place.

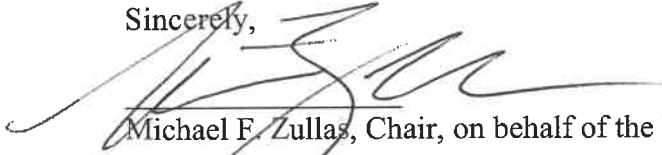
We continue to believe that the MBTA must rectify the inequity by immediately prioritizing the proposed Mattapan Line Transformation Project and setting and sticking to a clear and reasonable time line could help to redress the inequity of the past.

Again, the purpose of this letter is to request a full explanation of the classification of neighborhoods adjacent to the Mattapan High-Speed line as rapid transit communities equivalent to those with access to higher-capacity trains found on every other line in the system.

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Thank you for your attention to this matter. It would be most helpful to receive a response to this inquiry **on or before September 8, 2023**. Please do not hesitate to contact Town Administrator Nicholas Milano with any questions or for additional information at nmilano@townofmilton.org or 617-898-4845.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Zullas, Chair, on behalf of the Milton Select Board:

Erin G. Bradley, Vice-Chair
Roxanne Musto, Secretary
Richard G. Wells, Jr., Member
Benjamin Zoll, Member

CC:
Senator Walter F. Timilty
Representative William J. Driscoll
Representative Brandy Fluker Oakley