



METROWEST REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Public Transportation System

15 Blandin Ave Framingham, MA 01702

Ph. (508) 935 2222 ▪ Fax (508) 935 2225 ▪ www.mwrta.com

December 14, 2020

Dear Customer,

We hope you are all doing well during this very challenging and unfamiliar time.

Over 14 years ago the MWRTA took over responsibility for providing MBTA paratransit service within the newly created transit authority. At that time, existing customers of the MBTA were assured that they would receive the same service they had been enjoying from the RIDE, even though neither the MBTA nor MWRTA were statutorily obligated to do so. These MBTA customers, including you, were grandfathered into service levels that mirrored the MBTA RIDE system and were designated as Tier 1 riders. Riders applying for paratransit service after this transition were designated as Tier 2 riders and currently they are receiving service which the MWRTA is required to provide based on its fixed route service and ADA guidelines.

Since that time, Tier 1 customers have not only enjoyed similar service, but in most cases, better service than the MBTA Ride for several reasons. Pre-Covid-19, the MBTA has raised their RIDE fares and have created a 'premium service' tier for trips which would have encompassed all of our current Tier-1 service. MetroWest RIDE customers have never experienced a fare increase in the MetroWest service area.

Provision of Tier 1 service, in the beginning, was exorbitantly costly to provide at nearly \$60 per one way trip. Through better attention to ride sharing opportunities, partnerships with COAs and other management practices, MWRTA has been able to reduce paratransit costs down on average, to \$25 per one way trip. As the MBTA's costs were growing to approximately \$70 per one way trip, and the RIDE was evaluating additional cost cutting measures, MWRTA still provided Tier 1 customers with the service they had been "accustomed to", even though the Authority it was not mandated to do so by ADA law.

Since Covid-19, both the MBTA and the MWRTA, as frontline workers, have been struggling to provide safe and dependable public transportation to everyone, while at the same time keeping their own staffs safe and healthy. When ridership plummeted, the MBTA again fell on crisis mode because of their dependence on fare box recovery to underwrite its subsidy. Yet again, they have been forced to consider other options. (See Forging Ahead: Bus and the RIDE November 9, 2020

<https://cdn.mbta.com/sites/default/files/2020-11/2020-11-09-forging-ahead-bus-the-ride.pdf>).

In this light, our Tier 1 customers must understand that MWRTA will need to make some adjustments as well. Social distancing (safety) as well as critical mass are the main drivers of our decisions. <<OVER>>

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Sudbury ♦ Marlborough ♦ Southborough ♦ Wellesley ♦ Dover ♦ Hudson ♦ Milford ♦ Hopedale**



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When the number of people at certain times falls below a certain level, it becomes unsustainable to provide service. That has become a reality during late night weekdays, Sundays, and major holidays. The fact that there is limited to no ridesharing during these periods due to both low volume and social distancing, means that providing service above and beyond what we are not statutorily obligated to provide, becomes unreasonable as the cost nearly doubles. This reality has become painfully obvious with the compounded challenges of the pandemic. As with the MBTA, we have not implemented any major service changes, and continue to negotiate service times with customers whenever possible. However, customers will experience even more change, including limited Sunday and holiday service hours.

In order to move forward and be a better and more inclusive RTA, we are now assessing alternative methods of providing transportation, such as our own micro transit option, during the identified lowest performing periods, broadening the availability of these services to both Tier 1 and Tier 2 customers, as well as eliminating some service hours that have been provided exclusively to Tier 1 customers. The changes being analyzed will only impact less than 3% of MWRIDE/Dial a Ride Customers and less than 10% of Tier 1 riders. These changes will also not impact operations during our required ADA operating times of 5:30am – 9:00 pm Monday-Friday and Saturday 8:00 am – 6:00 pm.

We appreciate your understanding and we will make every effort to inform affected customers personally at the appropriate time. Stay well and Happy Holidays to all.

If you would like further information, please contact:

Lisa Long, MW Call Center Manager, at 508-820-4650

Sincerely,

Ed Carr, Administrator