

Commuter Rail Ridership Trends across 495/MetroWest

*Presentation to the 495/MetroWest Transportation Committee on November
7, 2024*



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Influencing Factors

- **Pandemic Impact:** Changing working patterns and upending social and health norms plummeted ridership in 2020.
 - Since the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, public transit has been in a race to recover to pre-pandemic ridership levels.
 - Marginal returns to in-office work, coupled with revitalized confidence in public health aided immediate ridership recovery.
- **Clockface Scheduling:** Implemented in April 2021 across all Commuter Rail lines, clockface scheduling has been an integral factor in successful Commuter Rail ridership recovery.

Clockface Scheduling by Line

Fitchburg:

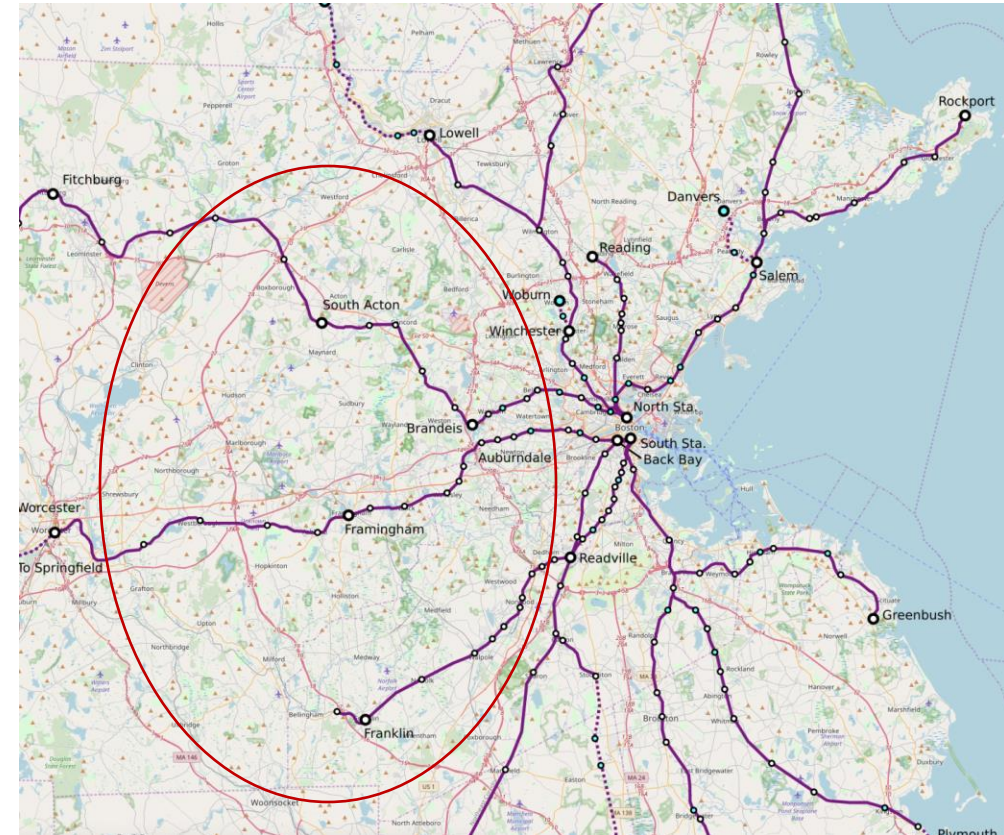
- South Acton, Littleton/Route 495
- Clockface scheduled service from 4 A.M. to 12 A.M. providing approximately one train in each direction per hour. Extra service at peak hours and scheduled lulls in service during the late morning and early afternoon.

Framingham/Worcester:

- Grafton, Westborough, Southborough, Ashland, Framingham, West Natick, Natick Center
- Hourly clockface trips in each direction from 4 A.M. to 8 P.M. with more spread out scheduling until midnight. Extra service during peak hours.

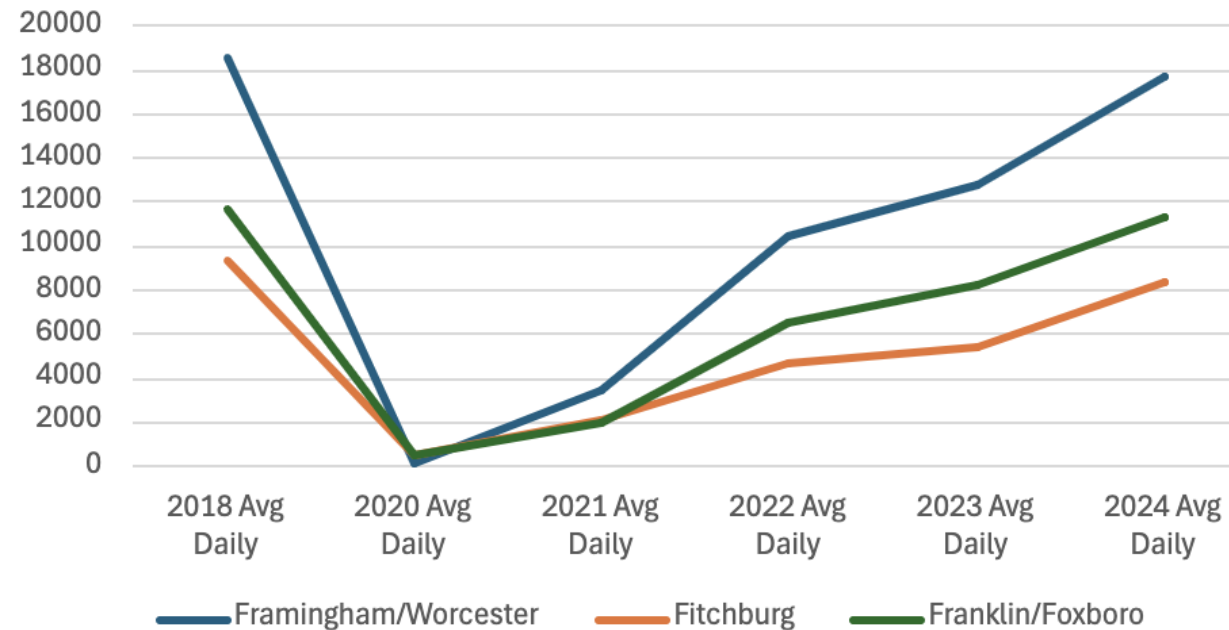
Franklin/Foxboro:

- Forge Park/495, Franklin, Norfolk, Foxboro
- Hourly clockface trips in each direction from 5 A.M. to 11 P.M. with extra scheduling during peak hours.



Raw Numbers

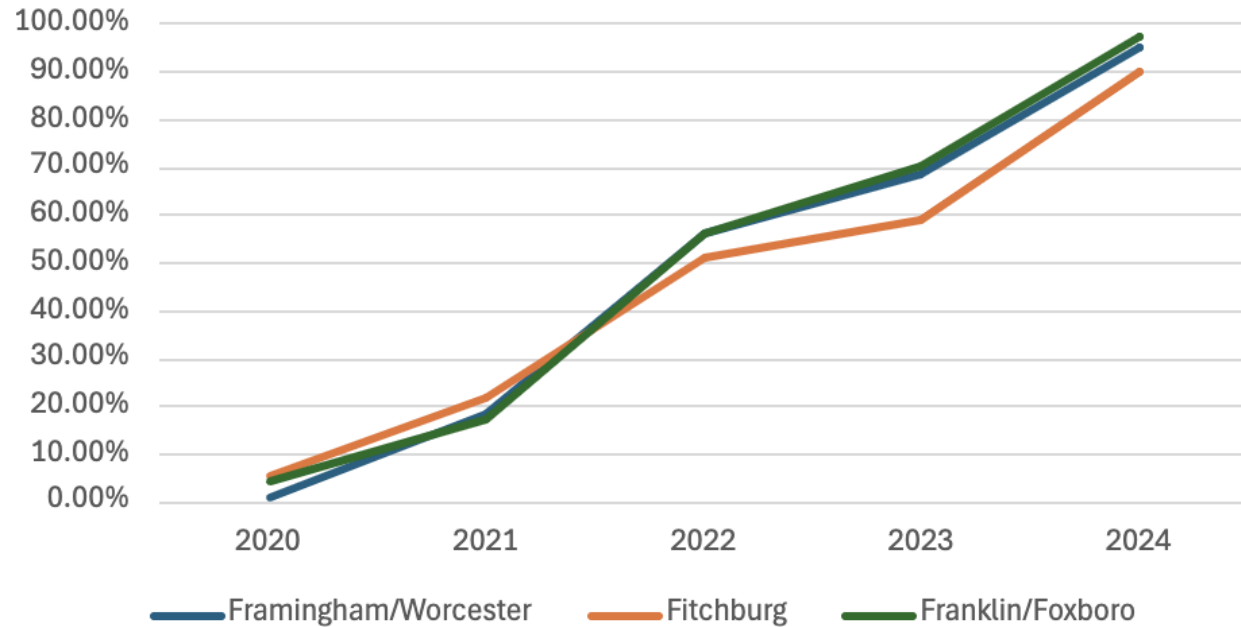
Weekday Ridership by Year and Line



Line/Year	2018	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Framingham/Worcester	18,636	159	3,469	10,500	12,794	17,714
Fitchburg	9,302	488	2,037	4,734	5,474	8,386
Franklin/Foxboro	11,671	516	2,020	6,582	8,193	11,374

Ridership Recover (% of 2018 Levels)

Ridership as % of 2018 Levels



Line/Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Framingham/Worcester	0.90%	18.60%	56.30%	68.60%	95%
Fitchburg	5.20%	21.90%	50.90%	58.80%	90.20%
Franklin/Foxboro	4.40%	17.30%	56.40%	70.20%	97.50%

Takeaways

- Ridership has almost fully recovered from the pandemic.
- Ridership recovery has been particularly strong along Commuter Rail lines, compared to the average recovery of all MBTA services. (95% Commuter Rail vs. 55% Rapid Transit)
- The greatest jump in ridership came between 2021 and 2022, immediately after clockface scheduling was implemented.
- Increases in ridership have yet to slow down in the past 4 years, suggesting further growth potential in the future.
- While clockface scheduling is not the only factor influencing recovery, it has helped expedite the Commuter Rail's return to its previous utility.



Works Cited

"MBTA Commuter Rail Ridership by Service Date and Line." *MBTA Blue Book Open Data Portal*, mbta-massdot.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/MassDOT::mbta-commuter-rail-ridership-by-service-date-and-line/about. Accessed 7 Nov. 2024.

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