

Frequently Asked Questions - MBTA Commuter Rail New Schedules

FAQ Document (December 30, 2015):

General:

Q. Why are MBTA Commuter Rail train schedules being changed?

A. The purpose of making changes to the schedule is to:

- Improve service reliability and resiliency:
 - Less likely to have cascading delays which last for several trains and affect multiple lines - Individual delays are better contained. (*Minimal inter-lining of equipment train sets*)
 - Schedules are more accurate to how a train can actually travel over a line and how that train interacts with other trains. (*Computer modeling*)
 - Proper time is allotted for required maintenance cycles and between-trip procedures. (*Increased turn times*)
- Reduce crowding on select trains that are already running at or near capacity.
- Create Efficient and Logical Equipment Movements

Q. Are there additional benefits?

A. In addition to increased reliability and resiliency, the new schedules provide other benefits, including:

- **Improved Express Service:** On several lines additional or new AM and PM rush hour express services are added in future schedules. New express routes will provide improved passenger travel times from the more distant stations.
- **Improved Connecting Services:** Most express services are coordinated with local services on the same line. Where possible, express and local trains will provide a convenient transfer at key station points. For example, Littleton/495 provides transfers for passengers on express trains to local services going inbound during the AM peak.
- **Improved Passenger Comfort Levels:** The separation of express and local trains will allow for a decrease in the time that passengers crowding occurs.

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On many peak period trains, passengers are standing room only as they approach inner core stations. With the modified schedule patterns passenger crowding will be reduced.

- **More Consistent Schedules:** While maintaining the same frequency of peak service at each station on the MBTA Commuter Rail System is a primary goal of the new schedules, a more consistent timing of service has been actively considered.

Changes in Level of Service:

Q: Are the changes to the commuter rail to achieve service cuts?

A: No - for the overall MBTA Commuter Rail System, the new schedules will contain 514 weekday revenue trains. The existing schedules have 500 weekday revenue trains. This is an overall 2.8% increase in service.

Q: Are there changes in the level of service provided to individual stations?

A: Yes - The majority of stations will experience either no change in the level of service or an increase in service. There are 137 stations on the MBTA Commuter Rail System of which 126 will experience either no change in service or an increase in the level of service (92% of total).

Q: With the new schedules, how are the AM and PM peak periods defined?

A: Trains arriving at North Station or South Station between 6:00 AM and 10:00 AM are considered AM Peak Trains. Trains departing either North Station or South Station between 3:30 PM and 7:00 PM are considered PM Peak Trains.

Q: How will service to stations change during the AM and PM peak periods?

A: The new schedules were designed to provide a greater number of peak period trains for most of the lines. In addition, new express service is being introduced to lines not presently served by express trains.

Express Service:

Q: How do you define an express train?

A: An express train provides faster travel times to and from communities furthest away from Boston by skipping station stops.

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Q: How many express trains are there in the new schedules and how does this compare to the existing schedules?

A: The new schedules include 46 peak express trains. The existing schedules have 23 peak express trains. This is a 100% increase.

Q: What lines are receiving new express service or additional express service?

A: Newburyport and Needham Lines will have new express service. Haverhill, Lowell, Fitchburg, Worcester, Franklin, and Providence will have additional express service.

Train Overcrowding:

Q: How do the new schedules address overcrowding of trains?

A: New schedules address overcrowding by adding service during time periods that currently have high congestion and improving express/local stopping patterns for key trains. Having additional trains during peak periods with similar arrival/departure times at Boston will provide additional options to riders and will decrease crowding on individual trains. Implementation of new express and local service will alleviate overcrowding by separating peak ridership among several trains instead of one train.

Many presently overcrowded trains are already at maximum possible length using high-capacity bi-level cars, so adding additional cars is not a feasible solution.

Weekend Service:

Q: Are there any major changes to the weekend service which will be provided in the new schedules?

A: Weekend schedules will provide a level of service comparable to existing schedules.

Peak Service:

North Station: Arrival and Departure Times:

Q: How do scheduled arrival and departure times to/from North Station correspond to typical working hours?

A: Arrival times at North Station were designed to provide service for key 7:00 A.M., 8:00 A.M., 9:00 A.M. and 10:00 A.M. job start times while providing sufficient time (approximately 20-25 minutes) for walking or transfer time to

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downtown employment centers. Departure times were designed to allow departures around 20-25 minutes after common quit times such as 3:00 P.M., 4:00 P.M., 5:00 P.M., and 6:00 P.M.

South Station: Arrival and Departure Times:

Q: How do scheduled arrival and departure times to/from South Station correspond to typical working hours?

A: Arrival times at South Station were designed to provide service for key 7:00 A.M., 8:00 A.M., 9:00 A.M., and 10:00 A.M. job start times while providing sufficient time (approximately 10-15 minutes) for walking or transfer time to downtown employment centers. Departure times were designed to allow departures around 10-15 minutes after common quit times such as 3:00 P.M., 4:00 P.M., 5:00 P.M., and 6:00 P.M.