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ISSUE BRIEF: Proposed MBTA Fare Increases in 2019

Introduction

The MBTA is proposing new fare prices throughout all its services, including commuter rail. Details can be found at www.mbta.com/fare-proposal-2019. The MBTA is seeking public comment on the proposal throughout February, prior to a proposed vote of the Fiscal Management and Control Board on March 11, 2019.¹ The public comment period ends **February 28, 2019**. Comments can be submitted on the fare proposal webpage, emailed to fares@mbta.com, or mailed. There are several public meetings for comments on the fare proposal including...

- Woburn-Anderson Regional Transportation Center, Woburn, February 21, 6:00-8:00pm
- State Transportation Building, Boston, February 27, 6:30-8:00pm
- Worcester Union Station, Worcester, March 6, 6:30-8:30pm

Procedure for Raising Fares and Potential Benefits

In the most recent MBTA fare increase in 2016, fares were raised system-wide 9.3% on average.² State law allows the MBTA to raise fares as frequent as once every two years. The new fares would take effect **July 1, 2019**. State law also caps each increase at 7%. This proposal would increase all fares **6.3%** on average. The proposal tries to keep fares at a multiple of \$0.25 so that on-board commuter rail staff can dispense change in quarters, which affects the variability in fare percentage change by zone. It is estimated that the proposed fare changes would increase FY20 fare revenue by **\$32 million**, or 4.5%, under the assumption that there will be a 1.3% loss in ridership. According to a MBTA presentation, the increased revenue would support equitable compensation for employees and could support investment in additional commuter rail service and could maintain capital funding for near-term customer-facing improvement projects.¹

Effect on the 495/MetroWest Region

While the proposal would change fares across all MBTA services, the only service to directly affect the 495/MetroWest region is commuter rail. One-way commuter rail fares would be increased by **\$0.50 to \$0.75** for riders in the 495/MetroWest Region, depending on the commuter rail zone. Our calculations indicate that the average increase for one-way commuter rail fares would be 5.5% whereas the average for one-way commuter rail fares in zones 1-10 is 5.2%. The cost of monthly passes would increase by **\$18 to \$25** for riders in the 495/MetroWest region, depending on commuter rail zone. This is equivalent to \$216 to \$300 per year. Based on our calculations, this is an average increase of 6.9% for monthly passes for the zones in the 495/MetroWest region and the average increase for monthly passes in zones 1-10 would be 6.8%. About 77% of all commuter rail riders pay using a monthly pass. That number is 73% on the Fitchburg Line, 79% on the Franklin Line, and 72% on the Framingham/Worcester Line.³

¹ <https://cdn.mbta.com/sites/default/files/fmcb-meeting-docs/2019/01-january/2019-01-28-fmcb-fare-proposal-original.pdf>

² <https://www.wbur.org/news/2016/03/07/mbta-control-board-fare-hike-vote>

³ <http://ctps.org/apps/mbtasurvey2018/#>

One-Way Commuter Rail Fares ⁴					
Zone	495/MetroWest Stations	Existing Fare	Proposed Fare	Change	% Change
Zone 1A		\$2.25	\$2.40	\$0.15	6.3%
Zone 1		\$6.25	\$6.50	\$0.25	4.0%
Zone 2		\$6.75	\$7.00	\$0.25	3.7%
Zone 3		\$7.50	\$8.00	\$0.50	6.7%
Zone 4	Natick, West Natick	\$8.25	\$8.75	\$0.50	6.1%
Zone 5	Framingham, Norfolk	\$9.25	\$9.75	\$0.50	5.4%
Zone 6	Ashland, Southborough, Franklin, Forge Park/495, South Acton	\$10.00	\$10.50	\$0.50	5.0%
Zone 7	Westborough, Littleton/495	\$10.50	\$11.00	\$0.50	4.8%
Zone 8	Grafton	\$11.50	\$12.25	\$0.75	6.5%
Zone 9		\$12.00	\$12.75	\$0.75	6.3%
Zone 10		\$12.50	\$12.75	\$0.25	2.0%
Interzone 1	<i>Interzones: If your trip begins or ends anywhere other than Zone 1A, your fare will be based on the number of zones you pass through, including your origin and destination. For example, a 1-way trip from Concord (Zone 5) to Fitchburg (Zone 8) is an Interzone 4 fare. You will also pay an Interzone 4 fare for a 1-way trip from Fitchburg to Concord.</i>	\$2.75	\$2.75	\$0.00	0.0%
Interzone 2		\$3.25	\$3.25	\$0.00	0.0%
Interzone 3		\$3.50	\$3.50	\$0.00	0.0%
Interzone 4		\$4.00	\$4.25	\$0.25	6.3%
Interzone 5		\$4.50	\$4.75	\$0.25	5.6%
Interzone 6		\$5.00	\$5.25	\$0.25	5.0%
Interzone 7		\$5.50	\$5.75	\$0.25	4.5%
Interzone 8		\$6.00	\$6.25	\$0.25	4.2%
Interzone 9		\$6.50	\$6.75	\$0.25	3.8%
Interzone 10		\$7.00	\$7.25	\$0.25	3.6%

Commuter Rail Monthly Passes ⁴					
Zone	495/MetroWest Stations	Existing Fare	Proposed Fare	Change	% Change
Zone 1A		\$84.50	\$90.00	\$5.50	6.5%
Zone 1		\$200.25	\$214.00	\$13.75	6.9%
Zone 2		\$217.75	\$232.00	\$14.75	6.5%
Zone 3		\$244.25	\$261.00	\$16.75	6.9%
Zone 4	Natick, West Natick	\$263.00	\$281.00	\$18.00	6.8%
Zone 5	Framingham, Norfolk	\$291.50	\$311.00	\$19.50	6.7%
Zone 6	Ashland, Southborough, Franklin, Forge Park/495, South Acton	\$318.00	\$340.00	\$22.00	6.9%
Zone 7	Westborough, Littleton/495	\$336.50	\$360.00	\$23.50	7.0%
Zone 8	Grafton	\$363.00	\$388.00	\$25.00	6.9%
Zone 9		\$379.50	\$406.00	\$26.50	7.0%
Zone 10		\$398.25	\$426.00	\$27.75	7.0%
Interzone 1	<i>Interzones: If your trip begins or ends anywhere other than Zone 1A, your fare will be based on the number of zones you pass through, including your origin and destination. For example, a 1-way trip from Concord (Zone 5) to Fitchburg (Zone 8) is an Interzone 4 fare. You will also pay an Interzone 4 fare for a 1-way trip from Fitchburg to Concord.</i>	\$90.25	\$90.00	-\$0.25	-0.3%
Interzone 2		\$110.25	\$110.00	-\$0.25	-0.2%
Interzone 3		\$119.75	\$120.00	\$0.25	0.2%
Interzone 4		\$130.25	\$139.00	\$8.75	6.7%
Interzone 5		\$148.00	\$158.00	\$10.00	6.8%
Interzone 6		\$167.00	\$178.00	\$11.00	6.6%
Interzone 7		\$183.75	\$196.00	\$12.25	6.7%
Interzone 8		\$202.75	\$216.00	\$13.25	6.5%
Interzone 9		\$221.50	\$237.00	\$15.50	7.0%
Interzone 10		\$240.50	\$257.00	\$16.50	6.9%

⁴ <https://www.mbta.com/fare-proposal-2019/fare-prices>