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DOT Board Approves Increases but challenges MBTA on (in)action on Youth Pass

Riders and workers call on MassDOT to take responsibility for investing in youth and protecting jobs

[Lynn—May 14] The Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation voted today to pass the MBTA's proposed FY15 fare change proposals without revisions. The FY15 budget includes an average five percent hike across all fares, with the exception of The Ride and the seven-day Student Pass. Despite past commitments by the MBTA and nearly one-third of youth riders priced out of public transit, the budget does not include a Youth Pass pilot. The T will also eliminate nearly 100 cleaning staff at subway stations on the Red, Orange and Blue lines.

Riders and workers decried the budget, demanding that the T take responsibility for keeping fares affordable and stations clean.

Representatives of the Youth Affordability Coalition (YAC), Mass Senior Action Council and SEIU 32 BJ/District 615 expressed disappointment with Secretary Davey and the MBTA for delaying the launch of a Youth Pass pilot and for cutting cleaning services and jobs in the system. "I would like the MBTA board of directors to consider stopping the cuts" said Marta Medina, who works cleaning the Community college T station on the Orange line. "Workers and passengers like myself will suffer. I'm also here representing my coworkers to say that we stand in solidarity with the youth who are fighting for an accessible T pass. The youth pass and the cuts are two issues that we care greatly about. It is unacceptable that we have not heard a positive response regarding both issues from you. We are here to support each other and we want to know what you will do about the situation."

"Why *not* now?" asked Chairman John Jenkins of the MassDOT Board. He went on to press further questions as to why the Board had not received more concrete information on the reasons the DOT/MBTA has not moved forward on a youth pass pilot.

Jenkins called on the MBTA to produce a proposal and analysis of the pilot in 60 days, to which MBTA Assistant General Manager Charles Planck agreed.

"We applaud Chairman Jenkins for asking the right questions," said Caroline Casey, YAC Coordinator. "It's been seven years of delays and 60 days is plenty of time. I hope this finally pushes transit leadership to work with us to finalize the Youth Pass pilot proposal by July."

T officials also agreed to complete a comprehensive assessment of possible fare policy changes by December 2014.

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