

# **Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority**

## Forging Ahead

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October 15, 2020

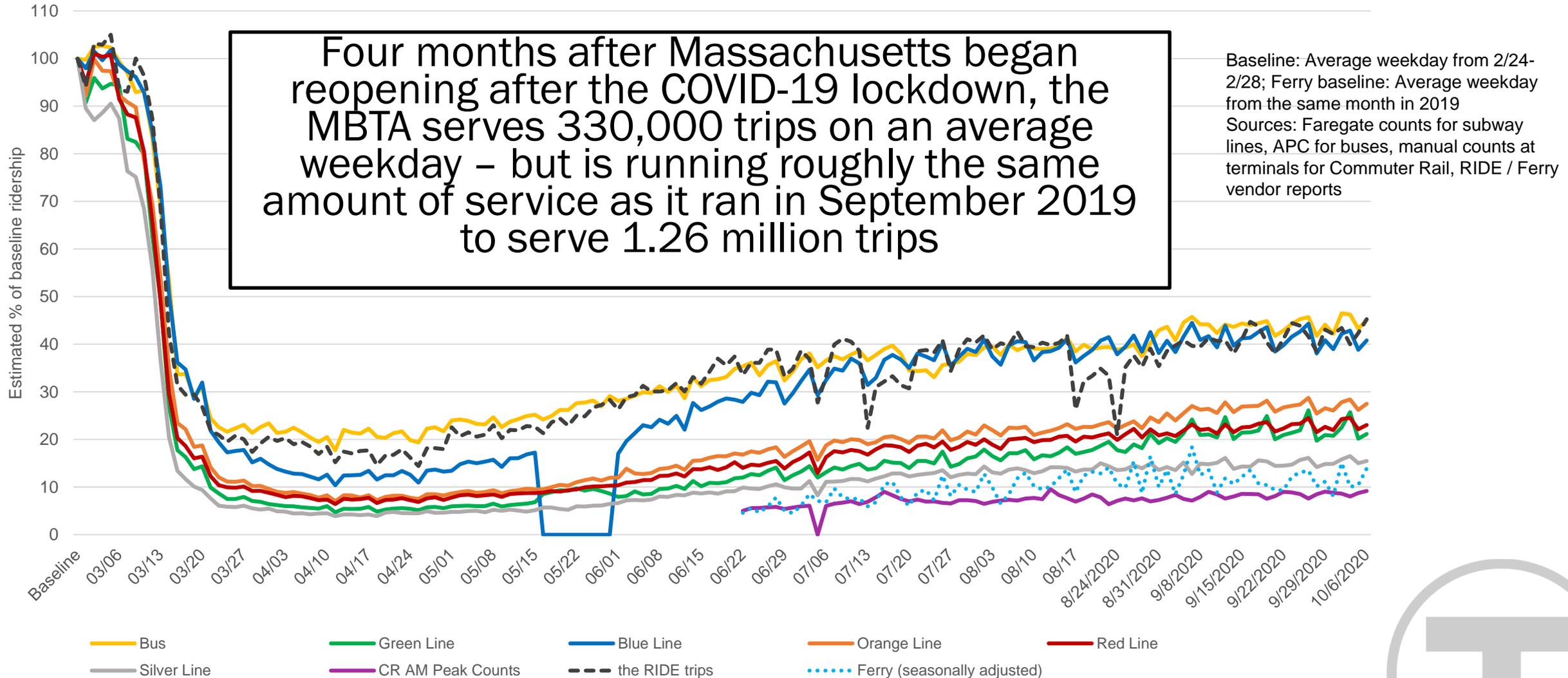
# What is Forging Ahead?

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- Forging Ahead is the process the MBTA is using to focus our operating and capital resources on the riders who depend most on the MBTA for frequent and reliable service.
- In order to do this we are:
  - Evaluating all internal spending to reduce expenditures
  - Assessing our capital projects and reallocating a limited amount of funds from our capital budget to support our operating budget
  - Defining a core of **essential** transit services that we will maintain and determining the costs needed to run them
- Out of this difficult situation, we are **forging** a more equitable and efficient transit system to move **ahead** economic recovery for Massachusetts.



# Our ridership fell significantly and is slowly recovering



# Why Does the MBTA Need to Change Service?

- Even accounting for the need to reduce crowding and accommodate social distancing, the MBTA is providing more service than its revenues can support and its ridership justifies
- Given the continuing pandemic and economic dislocation, ridership may not return to pre-COVID levels for a long time
- Given changes in where and how people work, learn and receive health care, riders may never again use the MBTA's different travel modes and options the same way they did before COVID
- Using limited resources to operate nearly-empty trains, ferries and buses is not a responsible use of the money provided to the MBTA by riders, communities and taxpayers
- Social equity demands that the MBTA focus its available resources on those who depend most on the MBTA for frequent and reliable service

The MBTA is therefore opening up a dialogue with its riders, the businesses and communities it serves and the stakeholders who depend on the MBTA about how best to prioritize the transit services that it provides.



# Our Commitments: The MBTA Will . . .

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- Provide safe, reliable, and accessible transportation, prioritizing the needs of those riders who depend on transit the most
- Monitor crowding and ridership and adjust service as ridership and revenue recover, focusing on equity and the riders most likely to return to transit as the pandemic ebbs and the economy recovers
- Exercise care when using capital resources for operating expenses and continue to prioritize investments in safety and in maintaining and modernizing the assets needed to provide reliable service
- Support the recovery of businesses and communities from the COVID pandemic and resulting economic disruptions
- Acknowledge that change has occurred in where and how people work, learn and receive health care and plan for the future realizing that there is much we do not yet know about future travel and transit use
- Rebuild service and the system as ridership and revenue recover, creating the system that our riders and the region now need rather than re-creating the system that existed before COVID



# Focusing our resources on Essential Services

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- To do this, the MBTA is first:
  - Working to reduce expenditures in our operating budget that don't impact service
  - Assessing our capital program and reallocating a limited amount of capital funds, in the short-term, to support our operating budget
    - We are conducting a collaborative, comprehensive and methodical review of the CIP to identify opportunities for deferring or scaling down projects, in order to transfer funds to support preventative maintenance work in our operating budget.



# Defining Our Essential Services

The MBTA is working to determine our set of core essential services. These are the buses, trains, vans, and boats that service our most transit critical populations and communities that rely on transit.

**These services come first.**

	Serving high transit critical population	Serving low transit critical population
Higher ridership (current or propensity)	Preserve service/access at Service Delivery Policy standards <i>(though individual trips may still be affected)</i>	Access to different service for drive to transit riders, changes to frequency and span
Lower ridership (current or propensity)	Longer walk to more frequent service  May also result in additional transfers or changes to fares	Potential to end access within 1/2 mile, lower frequency and span

This process is designed to create an equitable network that preserves access and quality of service available to transit critical populations (low-income, people of color, seniors, people with disabilities, and no to low vehicle households).



# Building back better

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- We have to prioritize service now, but are doing so with our vision for the future in mind.
- We are using our ongoing work to improve bus service, redesign the bus network, and rethink commuter rail to guide our decisions now.
- The services changes we make now will be permanent so that we can add service back that better serves the region's needs.
- The feedback we receive on Forging Ahead will inform both the short-term service priorities and how we build service back as resources and riders return.

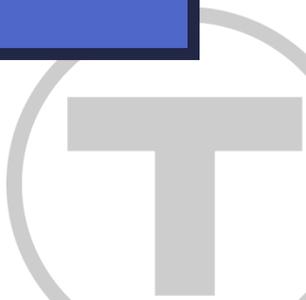


# Next steps

- Staff is developing detailed service packages to be released on November 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Following release of service packages, the MBTA will be soliciting public feedback on essential services implementation
- Current service implementation timeline
  - Bus, light rail, and heavy rail changes can be made quarterly, first changes to take effect ~July 1, 2021
  - Ferry and commuter rail changes subject to contract negotiations, could be implemented as soon as Spring 2021

## Service Packages

- Commuter Rail span, weekend service, and line-specific changes
- Ferry lines operating
- Heavy Rail headways & span
- Light Rail headways & span
- Major Bus changes
- Any RIDE implications



# Forging Ahead Public Engagement

- 12 virtual public meetings from Nov 4 - Dec 2
  - 10 meetings focused on sub-regions
  - 1 public hearing
  - 1 system-wide meeting
- Proactive, non-virtual engagement with communities
  - Targeted outreach to communities most impacted and least likely to engage in virtual meetings
- Online feedback tools at [www.mbta.com/forgingahead](http://www.mbta.com/forgingahead)

The engagement process for Forging Ahead will be:

- **Transparent** – we will share all information needed to provide input
- **Proactive** – we will reach out to impacted communities
- **Iterative** – we will return to communities when we have more information
- **Accessible** – we will ensure language access and access to persons with disabilities

# Forging Ahead: Capital Projects



# Capital Reallocation Overview

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- Ridership and revenue loss due to COVID-19 results in an estimated \$308-577M budget gap for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021.
- A short-term reallocation of capital funds to the operating budget is a key part of our strategy to mitigate this shortfall and preserve essential service to transit-dependent riders.
- The MBTA receives over \$150M in annual “Sec. 5307” federal formula funds; these funds have traditionally been used for capital investment, but can be applied to certain eligible preventative maintenance expenses on the operating budget.
- In order to shift funding from the capital to operating budget, we must identify an equivalent amount of currently funded capital projects to stop, slow, or scale down.
- MBTA staff are currently reviewing all 500+ projects in the CIP to develop proposals for leadership and the FMCB, consistent with other Forging Ahead planning and analysis
- Since almost 75% of the FY21 CIP is fully encumbered on active contracts, with new commitments in the pipeline, immediate action is needed to reallocate funds to preventative maintenance and minimize potential service reductions.



# Transit agencies are turning to capital to address budget gaps

## Based on a recent policy brief published by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA):

- The majority of the \$25B in emergency funding provided by the CARES Act has been obligated, leaving transit agencies across the country with ongoing budget gaps
- These gaps have forced agencies to consider service cuts, staff furloughs, and changes to ongoing or planned capital projects
- According to APTA, 56% of large agencies have already been forced to delay, defer, or cancel capital projects to close budget gaps.
- Additionally, 8 in 10 large transit agencies are *considering* delaying, deferring, or cancelling capital projects if the Federal Government does not provide additional emergency funding

## Peer Agency Actions:

- SEPTA may be forced to delay or cancel up to \$250M in capital projects due to a shortfall in Pennsylvania Turnpike Funds caused by the Coronavirus pandemic
- WMATA staff has proposed \$30M in FY21 Capital Program deferrals, along with \$139M in service adjustments and \$42M in management actions, to close a projected FY 21 shortfall of \$212M
- The MTA has put an indefinite hold on all capital projects as the agency faces a \$10.3B budget gap over the next two years



# MBTA Capital Program Strategy – Managing Uncertainty

## Short-term focus: Capital reallocation

- Continue active construction projects to maintain momentum and take advantage of low ridership
- Identify projects or scope to **pause** until conditions improve or additional funding is secured
- Aggressively pursue external funding and financing opportunities
- Align capital program strategy with Forging Ahead service planning framework
- Focus on “no regrets” decisions that make sense in the most possible futures
- Structure near-term investments to preserve maximum flexibility in an uncertain world

## Medium-term focus: Rebaselined CIP

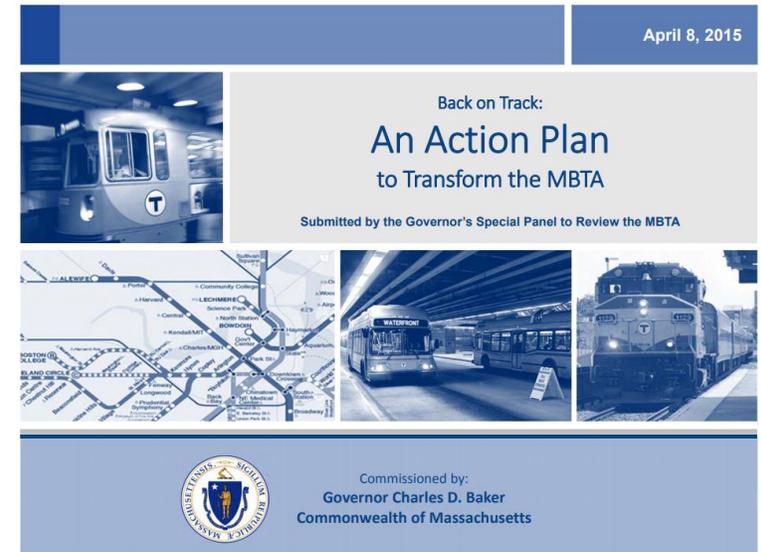
- Update and reconcile capital program funding sources
- Use outputs of scenario planning to revisit CIP prioritization and project selection framework
- Reassess fleet size and other capital needs through the lens of updated service levels
- Finalize decisions on paused projects/scope



# Overarching Principles for Capital Reallocation

## Principle 1: Maintain separation of capital and operating budgets

- Back on Track: An Action Plan to Transform the MBTA
  - In 2015 the Governor's Special Panel to Review the MBTA found that despite significant maintenance and modernization needs to reach a state of good repair, the MBTA regularly used funds intended for the capital program for operating expenses.
  - To address the MBTA's operational deficits and capital needs, and to prevent their recurrence, the panel recommended **clear separation** between operating and capital budgets.
- To the extent feasible, minimize the use of capital for operating costs and avoid creating a structural dependence on capital funds to balance the operating budget
- Reallocating Federal formula funds is a **short term** solution to replace lost revenue



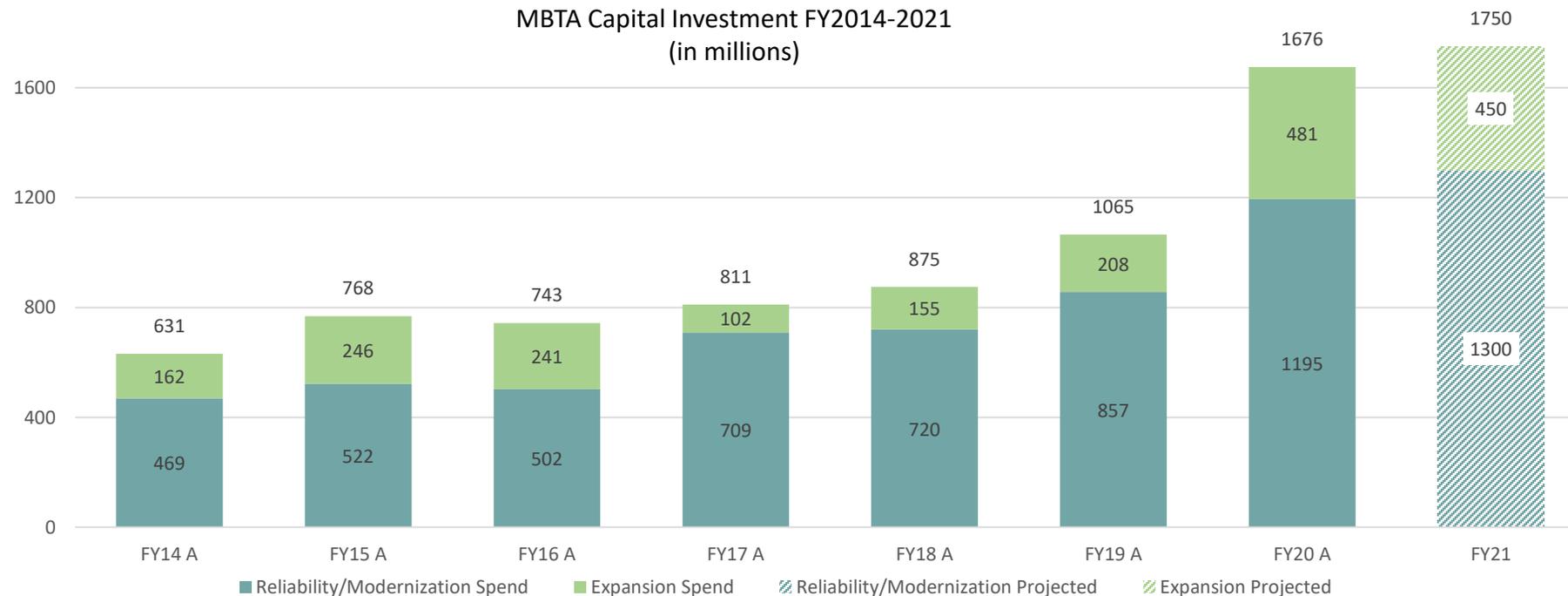
***“Implement a ‘firewall’ between the operating and capital budgets”***



# Overarching Principles for Capital Reallocation

## Principle 2: Continue the upward trajectory of capital investment to achieve system safety, reliability, and modernization goals

- Maintain momentum by prioritizing projects that address the most pressing capital needs and identifying alternative funding sources to replace reallocated federal formula funds



# Parallel processes to reallocate funds and seek new sources

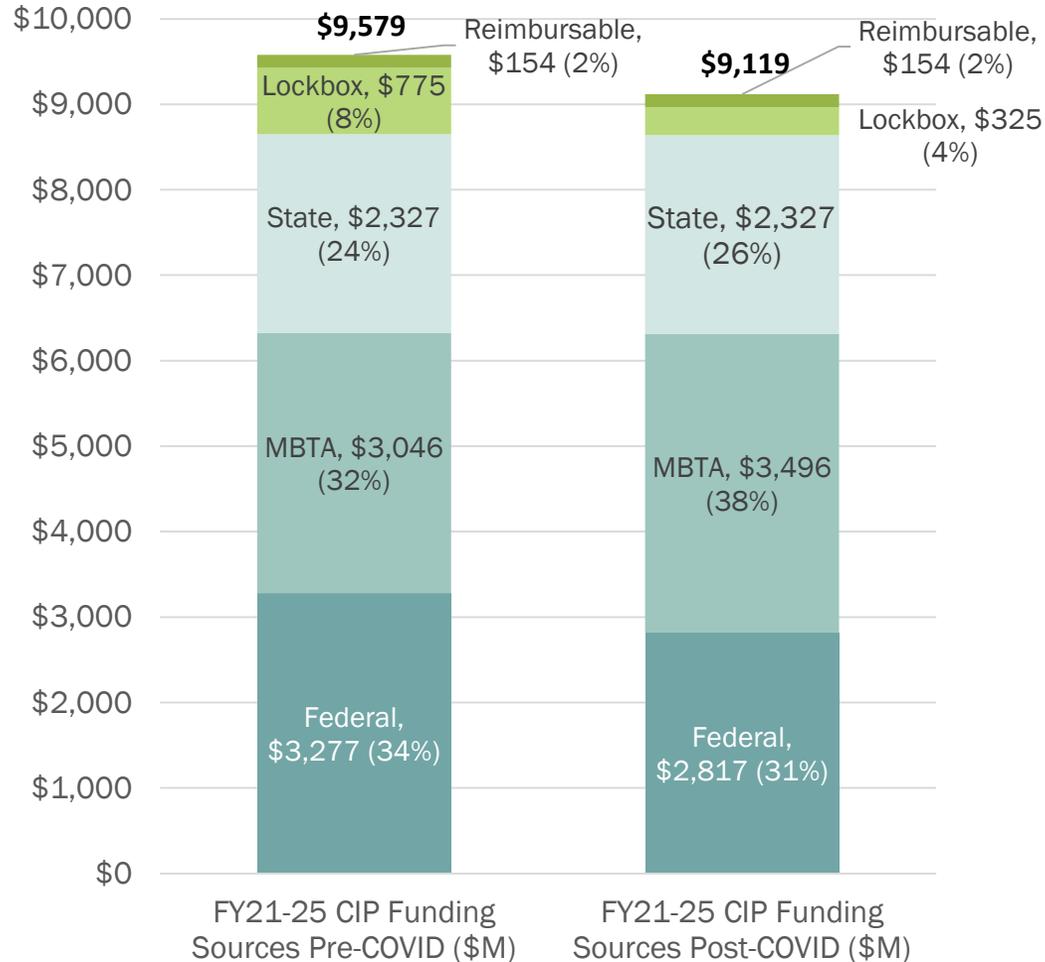
## Review Capital Program

- Conduct a collaborative, comprehensive and methodical review of the CIP to identify opportunities for deferring or scaling down projects.
- Stood up a cross-departmental team to review the status, flexibility, and timing of all projects to evaluate:
  - How much of the CIP is currently obligated (no contract flexibility)?
  - How much flexibility exists within the unobligated segment of projects (projects not currently under contract)?
- Developed a range of policy streams and channels of analysis to help shape and frame trade-offs and the decision-making process.
- **Outcome:** Recommendations for policy-level and project level adjustments that can be made to the capital program in support of the operating budget.

## Seek Additional Funding

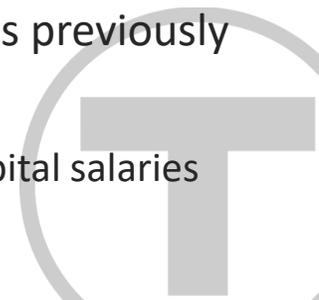
- Aggressively pursue external funding and financing opportunities to replace lost revenue and reallocated formula funds.
- Stood up a cross-departmental team to collaborate on “capital inflows”, including federal grant and loan opportunities.
  - Awarded \$3M grant for ferry overhauls
  - Received \$20M in FHWA redistribution funds for bus lanes
  - Submitted FHWA ATCMTD grant application for bus dispatching
  - Proactively preparing for FFY21 round of discretionary grants
- Engaged USDOT Build America Bureau to discuss low-interest financing through TIFIA and RRIF programs to build on success of recent PTC/ATC loan closing
- Preparing to submit a letter to FTA to request entry of Green Line Transformation into project development for the CIG Core Capacity program
- **Outcome:** Strategy for external funding/financing to minimize impact of revenue loss on the long-term capital program

# FY 2021- 2025 Sources Pre-COVID vs Post-COVID



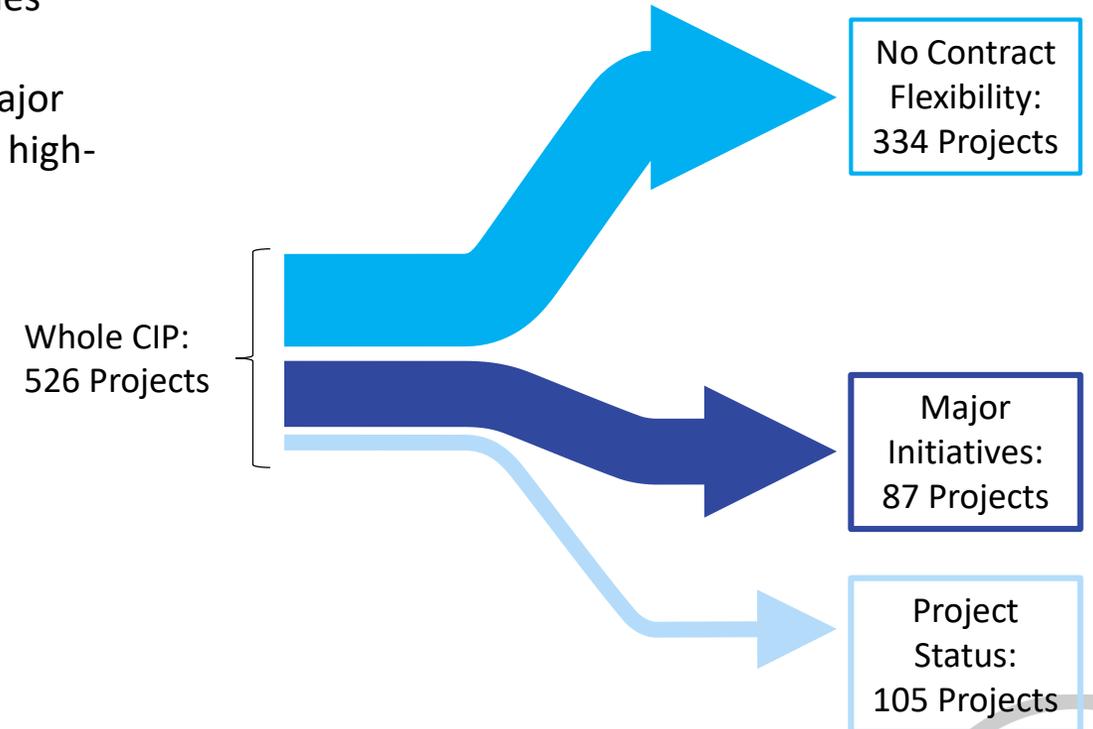
Several source assumptions have changed during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Federal Section 5307** reflects the proposed transfer of \$460 million of funds to the operating budget
  - \$80M in unobligated FFY20 funds currently available
  - \$150M in anticipated FFY21 funds, subject to appropriation
  - \$150M in anticipated FFY22 funds, subject to appropriation
  - \$80M in anticipated FFY23 funds, subject to appropriation
- **Pay-Go/Lockbox** reflects no transfer of funds from the operating budget, but assumes \$60 million per year in state assistance via bond cap plus prior year carryover
- **MBTA Bond** program has capacity to increase debt proceeds to accommodate capital salaries and project costs previously programmed to the Lockbox, as needed
  - Assumes enactment of legislative proposal on capital salaries



# Segmenting the CIP by Contract Flexibility

- A cross-functional working group reviewed the entire CIP to identify how much of the current program is allocated to active contracts with “no flexibility” to scale down or terminate without financial penalties
- The remaining projects with contract flexibility were grouped by major initiatives and project status designations to help guide and inform high-level policy and project-level decision making.
- Major Initiatives with significant upcoming commitments:
  - Bus and Bus Facilities
  - Green Line Transformation
  - Stations and Wayfinding
  - Commuter Rail Capacity
- Other flexible projects grouped by status or type:
  - New projects
  - Projects in design
  - Partially funded projects
  - On-call contracts

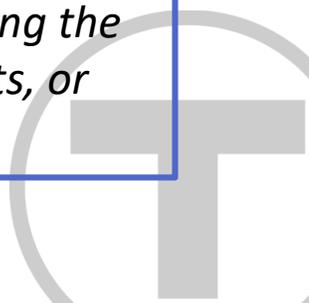


# Contract Flexibility: Preliminary Results and Analysis

	Not Flexible	Possible Flexibility	Flexible	Total FY21
FY 21 Programmed Amount	\$1,716,768,247	\$565,470,161	\$80,401,305	\$2,362,639,713

- **Most of the funding in the one-year CIP is currently committed on contracts:** 73% (or \$1.7 billion) of FY21 programmed funds are currently allocated to projects with “no flexibility” to suspend contracts
- The MBTA is planning to advertise an additional 8 construction or vehicle procurement projects before the end of the calendar year, representing up to \$307M in total funding. **Once additional major construction projects or vehicle procurements are underway, we will have less flexibility to reallocate or re-sequence the capital program.**
- The four major initiatives account for \$441M/68% of flexible and possible flexible funds in FY21, and a larger percentage of uncommitted outyear spending, often in closely intertwined projects (e.g. bus procurement and bus facility construction).

*A successful scenario will likely be a combination of deferring projects that have not yet started and modifying the schedule or scope of projects already underway. This may include scaling down projects to critical elements, or pausing projects until sufficient funding becomes available.*



# Decision-Making Framework for Capital Reallocation

## Key considerations for projects with flexibility:

- Safety is never compromised – safety investments may be needed even for projects targeted for reallocation
- Decisions should weigh project flexibility, placement on the framework, and anticipated benefits/outcomes to transit-dependent riders
- New projects in all categories may be paused or scaled down to focus resources on completing existing work

	Safety/ Maintenance	Accessibility	Capacity/ Amenities	Expansion
Higher ridership (current or propensity)	Continue or accelerate projects	Continue projects, based on impact	Continue select projects, consistent with demand	Advance planning/design, if resources allow
Lower ridership (current or propensity)	Focus on safety-critical elements	Consider scaling down, based on impact	Pause or scale down, consistent with demand	Pause or defer investments

# Next Steps for Capital Reallocation

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- **October 5:** Present financial scenario, guiding principles, and prioritization approach to the FMCB
- **October 15:** Present *Forging Ahead* principles and approach to Boston Region MPO
- **November 2:** Present capital reallocation proposal consistent with scenario planning analysis to the FMCB
- **November 9:** Present summary of capital reallocation proposal to MassDOT Capital Programs Committee
- **November 16:** FMCB approval of capital proposals
- **November 19 (*tentative*):** Present Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment to MPO and release for 21-day public comment
- **December 17 (*tentative*):** Seek MPO endorsement of the TIP Amendment
- **December:** MassDOT submit revised Statewide TIP (STIP) to FHWA/FTA
- **January:** MBTA begin to submit grant applications for preventative maintenance
- **February:** Execute FTA grants, and begin draw down of funds for eligible preventative maintenance expenses



# Appendix



# Overview of Essential Service analysis

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- Based on the Essential Service definition of services providing access to transit-critical populations with high ridership propensity, the following services will be maintained at or above the minimum service levels set in the Service Delivery Policy<sup>†</sup>:
  - **Heavy Rail:** Blue Line, Orange Line, Red Line
  - **Light Rail:** Green Line (trunk), Mattapan line
  - **Bus:** Majority of bus routes (~65% of bus service hours)
  - **Commuter Rail:** Fairmount CR line,
  - **Ferry:** Charlestown ferry\*

<sup>†</sup>the MBTA Service Delivery Policy can be found online at: <https://www.mbta.com/policies>, summary found [here](#).

\*Data for the Charlestown ferry is incomplete and placement as essential service is subject to change



# To preserve essential services, some tradeoffs required

	Serving high transit critical population	Serving low transit critical population
Higher ridership (current or propensity)	Blue Line, Orange Line, Red Line, Green Line (trunk), Mattapan line, most bus routes (65% of service hours), Fairmount CR line, Charlestown ferry*	Some bus routes
Lower ridership (current or propensity)	Some bus routes, some Commuter Rail lines	Hingham/Hull ferry, some bus routes, some Commuter Rail lines

We are currently assessing potential service changes at the bus and ferry route, rail line, and commuter rail corridor or line. Proposed changes will vary depending on ridership levels, alternatives available, ridership by seniors and people with disabilities.



# Service Delivery Policy - Frequency & Span

		Commuter Rail	Ferry	Rapid Transit	Bus – Key Bus Routes	Bus – Local Routes*
Frequency	AM & PM Peak	3-4 trips in peak direction	3 trips in peak direction	Every 10 minutes	Every 10 minutes	Every 30 minutes
	All other weekday periods	Every 3 hours in each direction	Every 3 hours	Every 15 minutes	Every 15-20 minutes	Every 60 minutes
	Saturday	Every 3 hours in each direction	-	Every 15 minutes	Every 20 minutes	Every 60 minutes
	Sunday	-	-	Every 15 minutes	Every 20 minutes	Every 60 minutes
Span of Service	Weekday	7:00 AM – 10:00 PM	7:00 AM – 6:30 PM	6:00 AM – midnight	6:00 AM – midnight	7:00 AM – 7:00 PM
	Saturday	8:00 AM – 6:30 PM	8:00 AM – 6:30 PM (seasonal)	6:00 AM – midnight	6:00 AM – midnight	8:00 AM – 6:30 PM*
	Sunday	-	-	7:00 AM – midnight	7:00 AM – midnight	10:00 AM – 6:30 PM*

\*Commuter or Community Route Standard not shown; Minimum span only standard for high-density areas. There is no span standard for low-density areas on weekend