

OFFERED BY COUNCILOR MINIARD CULPEPPER



CITY OF BOSTON

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY SIX

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO EXAMINE OPTIONS TO EXTEND AND FUND THE FARE-FREE BUS PROGRAM FOR ROUTES 23, 28, AND 29

WHEREAS, Since 2022 the City of Boston has partnered with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) to implement a fare-free pilot program on Routes 23, 28, and 29 in order to improve access to reliable and affordable public transportation for Boston residents; *and*

WHEREAS, Routes 23, 28, and 29 all travel through Boston City Council District 7, serving neighborhoods including Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan; *and*

WHEREAS, Many riders on these routes are low-income residents, essential workers, seniors, students, and families who rely on the fare-free bus program as a critical means of accessing employment, healthcare, education, and other essential services; *and*

WHEREAS, Since the implementation of the fare-free pilot program, nearly 24,000 fare-free trips have been taken each weekday on Routes 23, 28, and 29, demonstrating the program's significant role in meeting daily transportation needs for Boston residents; *and*

WHEREAS, Ridership on these routes increased by approximately 35 percent during the first year of the pilot, which was more than double the MBTA systemwide average, and these routes are now serving roughly 16 percent more riders than prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; *and*

WHEREAS, Surveys indicate that more than one quarter of riders save at least \$20 per month through the fare-free program, allowing households to redirect funds toward essential expenses such as food, housing, healthcare, and education; *and*

WHEREAS, The fare-free pilot program has been extended through City funding supported by COVID-19 relief funds that are set to expire, and Mayor Wu has announced the program will continue through June 30, 2026, however the program's status beyond June remains uncertain, potentially impacting riders who depend on this vital service; *and*

WHEREAS, Identifying sustainable long-term funding mechanisms is necessary to ensure continued equitable access to public transit for residents who depend on these routes; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to examine options to extend and fund the fare-free bus program for Routes 23, 28, and 29, and that the Boston Transportation Department, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, the Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion, the Office of Budget Management, and other interested parties shall be invited to attend.

Filed on: March 4, 2026