

Offered by Councilor Breadon, Bok, Flaherty, Lara, Louijeune, Mejia, Murphy and Flynn



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE MASSACHUSETTS LEGISLATURE AND M.B.T.A. TO ADVANCE LOW-INCOME TRANSIT FARES

- WHEREAS*, Riders in Massachusetts take more than 3.5 million trips per week on the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) system in order to commute to work, school or daycare, run errands, access healthcare, and much more; *and*
- WHEREAS*, MBTA bus fares have increased by more than 200 percent since 1991, more than double the rate of inflation, while high transit fares limit mobility and worsen the impacts of poverty; *and*
- WHEREAS*, The MBTA currently offers reduced fares for seniors, people with disabilities, some middle and high school students, and people with low incomes between the ages of 18 and 25, and, for years, advocates have called on the MBTA to pilot a reduced fare for low-income riders of all ages; *and*
- WHEREAS*, According to a report by the Public Transit Public Good Coalition, a reduced-fare program would benefit more than 90,000 riders and afford savings of about \$500 annually per rider, totaling nearly \$50 million in savings; *and*
- WHEREAS*, A June 2019 MIT study reported that a reduced fare increases low-income ridership by 30 percent and increases access to healthcare and social services; *and*
- WHEREAS*, In January 2022, a MassINC statewide poll found that 79 percent of respondents supported a low-income fare program and 71 percent supported fare-free bus service in low-income neighborhoods; *and*
- WHEREAS*, In 2018, the MBTA contracted Cubic Transportation Systems and John Laing Group for an automated fare collection overhaul, but the privatized collection system has since been delayed in implementation and risen in cost to \$935 million, with less than half going to construction and operation costs, and low-income riders are set to bear the burden; *and*
- WHEREAS*, On March 22, 2022, the MBTA announced the introduction of a new \$3 fee to obtain a CharlieCard, yet no fee would apply to contactless-card or mobile-wallet transactions, likely making the T even less accessible for the most financially vulnerable riders, especially the unbanked; *and*
- WHEREAS*, On March 24, 2022, the MBTA Board approved changes to certain fares effective July 1, 2022, including a price reduction on the 1-day LinkPass and the addition of a 7-day LinkPass for reduced fare riders, previously only available as one-way tickets and monthly LinkPasses; *and*

- WHEREAS*, The MBTA has the means to fund a year-long low-income fare pilot using one-time funds from federal pandemic relief aid, totalling less than 2 percent of the MBTA's annual budget; *and*
- WHEREAS*, *An Act relative to low income transit fares* (H.4481), originally filed as H.3526 in the Massachusetts Legislature by Representative Adrian C. Madaro, received a favorable report in a new draft by the Joint Committee on Transportation and is now before the House Committee on Ways and Means; *and*
- WHEREAS*, The legislation would direct the MBTA to start a permanent discounted-fare program for low-income people and open a path for Regional Transit Authorities to institute reduced-fare programs or fare-free systems, extending the benefits of transit affordability to all corners of our Commonwealth; *and*
- WHEREAS*, Implementing a new CharlieCard fee before a plan for a low-income fare is in place, or before increased revenue for the MBTA is secured, would hinder the advancement of transit equity, and the adoption of a low-income transit fare is essential toward ensuring long-term transit affordability for those who rely on our public transportation system the most; *NOW THEREFORE BE IT*
- RESOLVED*: That the Boston City Council, in meeting assembled, go on record supporting *An Act relative to low income transit fares* (H.4481) in the 192nd Massachusetts General Court and urges the House Committee on Ways and Means to issue a favorable report in order for the Legislature to take action; *AND BE IT FURTHER*
- RESOLVED*: That the Boston City Council calls on the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority to advance and implement a low-income fare program before setting new fees in place; *AND BE IT FURTHER*
- RESOLVED*: That the Clerk of the City of Boston be, and hereby is, respectfully requested to transmit a suitably attested copy of this Resolution to the House Committee on Ways and Means, the Senate President, the Speaker of the House, members of the Boston Delegation to the General Court, the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, and the General Manager of the MBTA.

Filed in City Council April 25, 2022