Requested Improvements to Framingham/Worcester Commuter Rail Line

The requests below were prepared by MetroWest and Central Massachusetts legislators for the Worcester Line Working Group administered by the MBTA and Lieutenant Governor Polito. These requests fall into seven main categories: ***Reliability, Capacity and Ridership, Travel Time, Frequency, Mitigation of Allston Project Impacts, Fare Collection, and Rail Vision Study.***

1. **Reliability**
   The Framingham/Worcester line ranks 10th out of 14 lines for on-time performance (OTP) at 87.5%. Performance is also highly variable, with July 2018 reporting 78.9% monthly OTP, among the lowest monthly averages of any line. Lack of reliability has been a recurring complaint from riders. Recent data provided by the MBTA shows 60% of avoidable delays were due to malfunctioning locomotives/train sets, signals, and switches.
   a. **Plan to upgrade rolling stock and coaches:** Train set mechanical failure was a primary cause of delays, responsible for 9,400 lost minutes on the Framingham/Worcester Line in 2018 according to MBTA data. We request a plan to either replace or refurbish the entirety of the locomotive fleet on the Framingham/Worcester line to both reduce mechanical delays and maximize emissions reductions.
   b. **Interim redundant train set**: Until rolling stock is upgraded, store a secondary train set to call into service in cases when primary sets malfunction. This can minimize cascading effects on the schedule when a train must be taken out of service.
   c. **Schedule for assessing and upgrading all signals and switches.** Signal code line failures, signal failures and switch failures were the cause of 31% of avoidable delays on the line in 2018. We request a plan to inventory signals and switches and a schedule to proactively upgrade equipment in need of replacement.

2. **Capacity and Ridership**
   Ridership on the line has seen a dramatic 45% increase since 2012, the largest overall increase in the system. During peak hours, cars are frequently overcrowded, causing discomfort for passengers and difficulty collecting fares. One of the likely causes of overcrowding in the morning is the lack of parking. Most parking all along the line is full by 7:30 a.m., resulting in overcrowding on early trains. If more parking were available, commuters whose schedules allow for a later departure would be able to park and take later trains.
   a. **A minimum of 9-coach, double stack sets on all peak trains:** All peak commuting hour trains should run nine double-deck cars.
   b. **Parking and access improvements:** Work with legislative delegation and municipalities to evaluate opportunities for parking expansion at all stops on the line. In addition, MBTA should work to ensure access to rail through greener alternatives, including but not limited to first/last mile RTA service and regional trails connections.
   c. **Station safety, maintenance, and cleanliness:** Well-maintained stations encourage ridership and public confidence. We request an assessment of each station and resources for customer-facing upgrades and maintenance. This should include an assessment of the RTA parking management model used at the Framingham Commuter Rail station.

d. **Improved Wi-Fi Access:** Reliable Wi-Fi access encourages ridership by making commutes more productive. Current service is spotty and unreliable. This may be a longer-term investment, but we request an evaluation of options for improving service.

3. **Travel Time**

Consumers consistently express concern with long travel times. The opening of Boston Landing station in 2017 added even more time to already lengthy commutes.

Raised platforms: While raised platforms are already programmed for much of the line, we request that funding for the remaining stations be programmed. Raised platforms significantly decrease travel time and improve ADA access.

4. **Frequency**

A more frequent schedule is needed to address capacity constraints and respond to more fluid work schedules.

a. **Fund new track at Union Station:** A new, center island full-level platform is currently under design which will add a second track at Union Station and allow for more frequent departure of trains. We request that construction be fully funded.
b. **Rail Crossings:** At-grade crossings cause traffic bottlenecks in the region and have been a long-standing concern for impacted municipalities. We request that the MBTA work with municipalities where at-grade crossings are located to identify solutions.
c. **Complete detailed feasibility study of 3rd track between Framingham and Newton and in MetroWest:** We appreciate the Baker/Polito Administration's effort to assess the feasibility of adding a third track between Framingham and Newton. This long-term project has the potential to improve regional service by eliminating conflicts between local and express trains, especially during peak commuting hours.

5. **Mitigation of Allston I-90 Multimodal Project Impacts**

The design of the Allston I-90 Multimodal Project contains significant impacts to MetroWest and Central MA commuters. Multi-year lane reductions on the Mass Pike and 2 years of impacts to Worcester Line commuter rail operations during construction are likely to have dramatic impacts on commute times. The construction timeframe for the project is estimated at 7.5 years and significant planning and investment in mitigation is needed.

a. **Project planning:** Include representation from the MetroWest and Central MA legislative delegations in planning for the viaduct and West Station project short- and long-term impacts. A letter requesting these appointments was sent to Secretary Pollack on 2/21/2019.
b. **Construction mitigation:** We request a detailed mitigation plan for the viaduct construction period, including alternative transit plans considering the use of shuttles, buses, and park and ride parking options.

6. **Fare Collection**

A repeated concern from riders is the lack of consistent fare collection, especially on overcrowded trains. It is especially frustrating for monthly passholders to know that often times single-pass riders are not paying for their ride. We are aware that a technology-based fare collection system is in development (AFC 2.0), but we request a summary of interim steps that are in place to address this problem which undoubtedly results in significant revenue loss as well as a loss of consumer confidence in system management overall.

7. **Commuter Rail Vision Study**
   The recommendations from the MBTA's Rail Vision Study are expected to propose longer-term improvements to the line beyond what is proposed above, including upgrades to mitigate they system's carbon emissions. Given the line's high and increasing ridership, we look forward to continuing conversations between the MBTA and MetroWest/Central MA legislators and communities with respect to local needs and impacts.