

Blue Hill Avenue Transit Action Plan
Boston, Massachusetts
Small Starts Project Development
(Rating Assigned November 2025)

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 3.0 Miles, 10 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$162.46 Million
Section 5309 CIG Share (\$YOE):	\$80.26 Million (49.4%)
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2030):	\$6.26 Million
Existing Corridor Ridership (Warranted):	13,200 Daily Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	High
Project Justification Rating:	Medium-High
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	High

Project Description: The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) proposes to implement a bus rapid transit project along Blue Hill Avenue in Boston between Warren Street and Mattapan Square. The Project involves construction of exclusive, center-running bus lanes using existing median on Blue Hill Avenue, with implementation of transit signal priority along with other safety and accessibility improvements at intersections along the corridor. The Project also includes installation of curbside bike lanes and construction of stations with shelters, seating, real-time information, improved lighting, security cameras, and emergency call boxes. MBTA intends to use existing fleet inventory for this Project. The service is planned with buses running every 10-12 minutes on weekdays and every 14 minutes on weekends.

Project Purpose: Buses along Blue Hill Avenue are subject to substantial delay due to the high motor vehicle traffic on the roadway. Lack of accessibility and safety features on the corridor renders transit riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians vulnerable to dangerous conditions. The Project is expected to provide reliable and accessible transit along with improved safety to benefit all roadway users in the corridor.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: MBTA completed the environmental review process in November 2022, receiving a categorical exclusion determination for the Project. MBTA selected a locally preferred alternative (LPA) in February 2024 and anticipates adopting the LPA into the region’s fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan in Spring 2026. MBTA anticipates receiving a Small Starts Grant Agreement in mid-2026 and beginning revenue service in January 2030.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan

<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal:		
Section 5309 CIG	\$80,256,412	49.4%
Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Grant	\$14,850,705	9.1%
State:		
Commonwealth Federal Matching & Debt Reduction Fund	\$38,422,098	23.7%
Local:		
City of Boston General Funds	\$18,224,000	11.2%
MBTA Capital Revenues	\$10,709,157	6.6%
Total:	\$162,462,372	100.0%

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

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Factor	Rating	Comments
Local Financial Commitment Rating	High	
Non-Section 5309 CIG Share	+1 level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CIG share of the overall project is 49.4 percent.
Summary Financial Plan Rating	Medium-High	
Current Capital and Operating Condition (25% of local financial commitment rating)	Medium-High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The average age of the bus fleet is 5.6 years, which is younger than the industry average. The most recent bond ratings for MBTA, issued on May 2025, are as follows: Moody’s Investors Service N/A, Fitch’s AAA, Standard & Poor’s Corporation AA+, and KBRA AAA. MBTA’s current ratio of assets to liabilities as reported in its most recent audited financial statement is 1.2x (FY2024). There were no cash flow shortfalls in recent years.
Commitment of Capital and Operating Funds (25% of local financial commitment rating)	Medium-High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 53 percent of the non-Section 5309 CIG capital funds are committed or budgeted, and the rest are considered planned. Sources of funds include USDOT Federal RAISE Grant, , Revenue from the Commonwealth Federal Matching and Debt Reduction and Fair Share funds from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, MBTA Capital ,Revenues dedicated transfers, MBTA bonds, and the City of Boston General Fund Transfers. Approximately 65 percent of the funds needed to operate and maintain the transit system in the first full year of operation are committed or budgeted, and the rest are considered planned. Sources of funds include Commonwealth of Massachusetts Contract Assistance, a dedicated transit Sales Tax, Farebox Revenue, an existing dedicated transit annual local property assessment, existing system-wide operating Transfers and other potential MBTA income sources.
Reasonableness of Capital and Operating Cost Estimates and Planning Assumptions/Capital Funding Capacity (50% of local financial commitment rating)	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumed growth in capital revenues is reasonable compared to recent historical experience. The total capital cost estimate is reasonable. Regarding growth in operating revenue assumptions, farebox collections are conservative and sales tax revenues are reasonable compared to recent historical experience. Operating cost estimates are reasonable compared to recent historical experience. MBTA has access to funds via additional debt capacity, cash reserves, or other committed funds to cover unexpected cost increases or funding shortfalls equal to at least 30.0X percent of the estimated CIG capital cost and 39.6 percent of annual system-wide operating expenses (2.5 months).

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium-High

Supportive Zoning in Station Areas: High

- Within the station areas, zoning is primarily Medium Residential (52%), Open Space (21%), and Single-Family Residential (10%). Recent amendments to Boston’s zoning code allow higher density in residential districts by permitting Accessory Dwelling Units which do not count toward maximum density limits. Thus, zoning in all station areas is very strongly transit-supportive, even in “single-family residential” areas.
- The City of Boston also applies reduced parking requirements for affordable housing projects and maximum parking ratio guidelines for new large developments (over 50,000 square feet).

Performance and Impacts of Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium-High

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* The submission identifies 18 plans and policies promoting transit-oriented development (TOD) at the state, region, and local levels. Six of these plans and policies are specific to project station areas. Furthermore, The City of Boston and its partner agencies advance policies that enhance pedestrian accessibility and reduce car dependency. These include right-sizing parking and implementing shared parking strategies, creative use of underutilized spaces, neighborhood-specific strategies, and support for TOD.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* MBTA and the City of Boston have led extensive community and agency engagement since 2022, including station area outreach in 2024. The City and Commonwealth maintain 11 policies and incentives supporting transit-supportive development, with MBTA actively promoting TOD at station areas.
- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Within station areas, 19 projects are currently under review, board-approved, or under construction. Most of these developments are medium- to high-density multifamily housing, with schools, community centers, health centers, and commercial buildings comprising the remaining development.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* Within station areas, about 153 city-owned parcels (roughly 646,500 square feet) have been identified as underutilized or vacant, with 102 of these parcels flagged for multifamily or mixed-use development. The City has prioritized “High Opportunity Sites” and “Potential Future Project Sites” within this real estate. Station area population and employment is projected to increase to reach 1,275 residents and 875 jobs per square mile by 2045.

Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing in Station Areas: Medium-High

- About 20.8% of corridor households live at or below the poverty line, higher than Boston’s 17.6% and the statewide rate of 10%. The submission cites seven plans and policies focused on preserving and expanding affordable housing, including anti-displacement measures. MBTA is advancing this goal through joint development, with 13 recent or planned projects in the corridor that include affordable units for households earning 60% or less of area median income.

