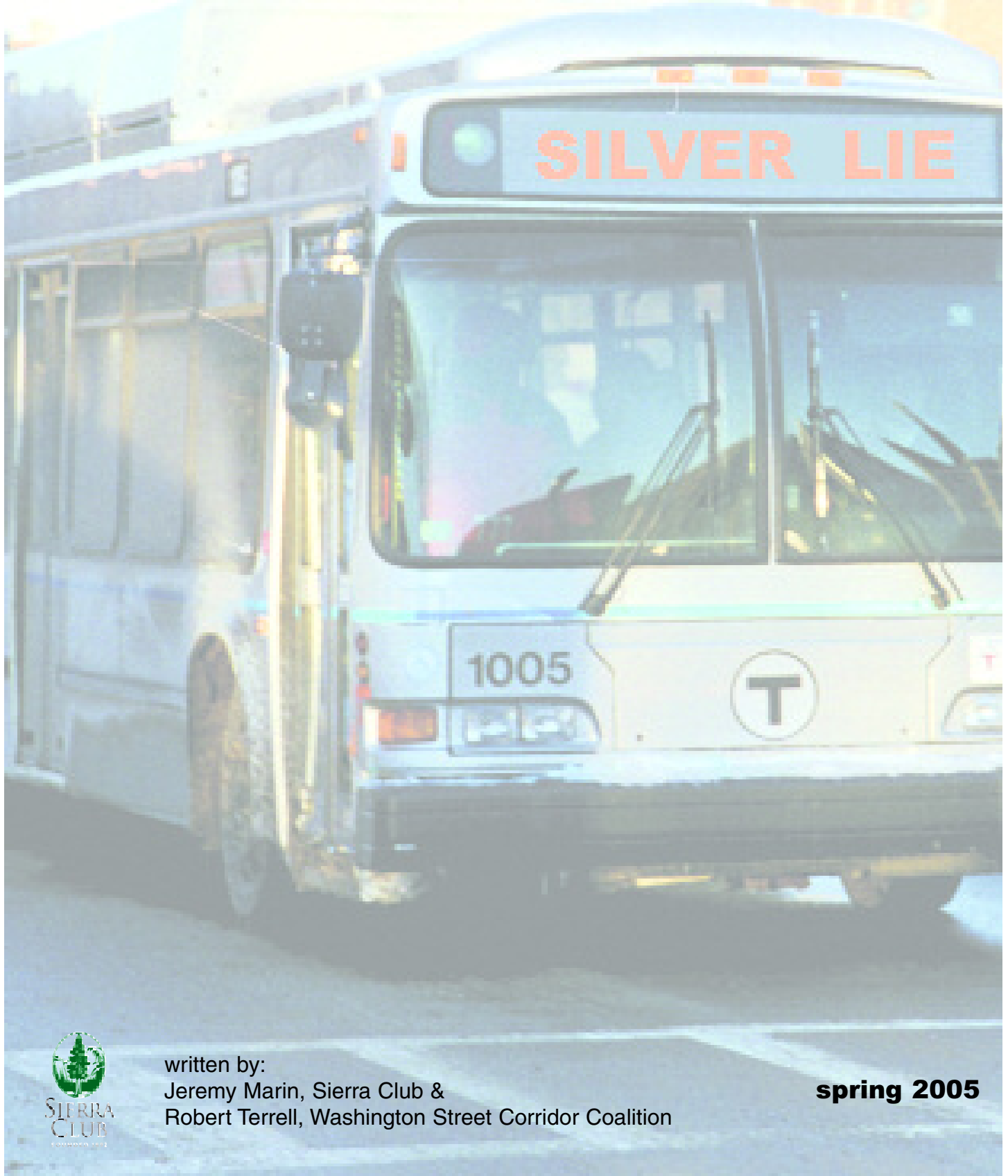


# MBTA's SILVER LINE

**TAXPAYERS GET LESS FOR MORE**



written by:  
Jeremy Marin, Sierra Club &  
Robert Terrell, Washington Street Corridor Coalition

**spring 2005**

## PURPOSE

*The MBTA has put out misleading and blatantly false information for years in an attempt to sell the public on its Silver Lies. This cannot continue and the MBTA must come clean about the project. The MBTA knows that light rail is the best, least expensive way to serve the community and fulfill its promise of "equal or better" service to the communities that lost their Orange Line rail service.*

*Adding to the fuel of discontent, the MBTA's current plan to build a bus tunnel will cost \$1 billion or more, whereas building as light rail would, according to MBTA studies, save \$600 million. The MBTA is already running a crippling deficit. Saving that \$600 million would protect many services. This is environmental injustice at its worst.*

**THIS REPORT SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT.**



A Sierra Club Report

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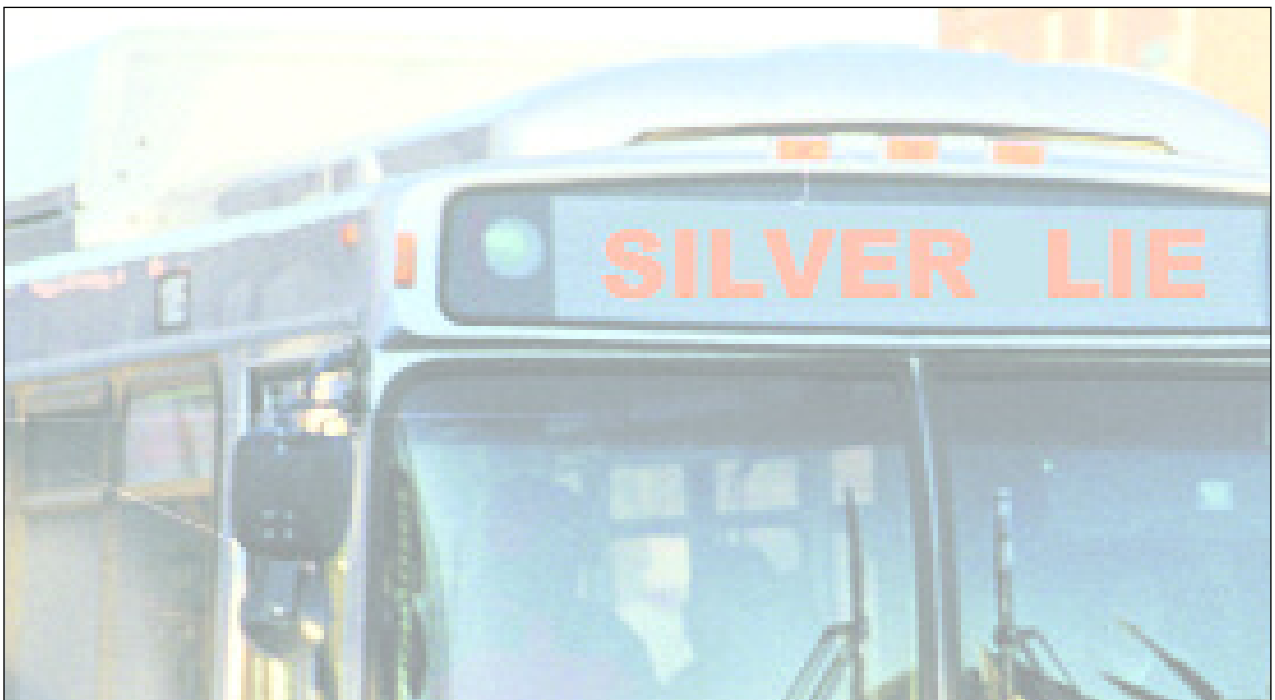
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# MBTA's Silver Line

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## 1

## INTRODUCTION

## History

In 1987 the MBTA tore down the old elevated Orange Line with a promise of equal or better service to the residents of Roxbury and Dorchester. They are still waiting for that promise to be kept.

This is, the MBTA acknowledges, one of the most transit dependent communities in the state. As recently as 1999 the MBTA found that 52.8% of the community did not have any vehicles available to them, making fast convenient service necessary for the financial health of the community.<sup>1</sup>

For 15 years the substitute service was a fleet of dirty diesel buses contributing to area asthma rates six times the state average.

In 2002 the new "Silver Line" bus service was introduced along Washington Street. While the buses are cleaner than the old diesel buses, they are not as clean as rail, and they are still stuck in traffic with a much longer commute than existed with the rapid transit Orange Line.

## Technology That Doesn't Work

The buses were supposed to use "state of the art" global positioning systems (GPS) and "dedicated lanes" to improve speed. That shorter commute has yet to be realized, with a GPS system that does not function as promised and a dedicated lane of only a few hundred yards. Much of the route is a 'diamond lane' that is supposed to be only for buses and parking/turning vehicles. On any given day the bus lane is crammed with double-parked vehicles rendering the dedicated lane useless to the buses.

Today the MBTA is still trying to connect the Washington Street route (Phase I) to South Station (Phase II.) Instead of using existing light rail (abandoned Green Line) tunnels the MBTA wants to build entirely new and expensive bus tunnels.

This connection, Phase III, is fraught with ill-conceived ideas that will cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars more than using the existing light rail tunnels.

## First a Bus, Then a Train

While the MBTA likes to pretend that the "Silver Line" is a fast convenient rail project, it is actually a bus, just like every other bus route. *"It's essentially a road project,"* said former MBTA General Manager Robert Prince.<sup>2</sup> Though service equal to or better than the Orange Line was promised, the bus gets stuck in traffic and service is much slower than promised.

The bus tunnels to connect Phases I & II, according to the MBTA's proposal, must be built significantly taller and wider than the existing but unused Light Rail Vehicle (LRV) tunnels in order to accommodate buses. Years from now, according to the plan, they will switch to light rail vehicles that would not require the billion dollars tunnels.



*Silver buses are regularly overcrowded*

1. MBTA, Notice of Project Change Washington Street/Silver Line Transit Service and Roadway Improvements, May 1999, page 2-21.  
2. "Silver Lining in Boston," Mass Transit Magazine, November/December 2000, page 14.



Community members want light rail, not another bus

## Trampling the Truth

The truth is, the MBTA has hidden the facts in a dishonest public relations effort to stymie public concerns and dismiss promises made. This will also result in wasted money at a time when the MBTA has a \$16 million budget crisis.

**The most logical and least expensive choice is to use the existing light rail tunnels under Boylston Street Station for rail service to Roxbury.** These tunnels are identical to the tunnels that carry Green Line service throughout the city and the surrounding area.

## Romney: We Want the Truth

Governor Romney, in the interest of serving his constituents, protecting the taxpayers, improving public transportation, and reducing traffic and air quality problems, must step up to the plate today.

He must direct the MBTA to stop vacillating, tell the truth, fulfill their promise of equal or better service, and implement the most cost-effective solution - light rail.

*The MBTA has put out misleading and blatantly false information for years in an attempt to sell the public on its Silver Lies. This cannot continue and the MBTA must come clean about the project. The MBTA knows that light rail is the best, least expensive way to serve the community and fulfill its promise of "equal or better" service to the communities that lost their Orange Line rail service. Adding to the fuel of discontent, the MBTA's current plan to build a bus tunnel will cost \$1 billion or more, whereas building as light rail would, according to MBTA studies, save \$600 million. The MBTA is already running a crippling deficit. Saving that \$600 million would protect many services. This is environmental injustice at its worst.*

## 2

## SAVE \$600 MILLION BY BUILDING LIGHT RAIL

**MBTA Says:** Destroying the existing LRV tunnels and then digging new bus tunnels is more cost-effective than using the existing tunnels.

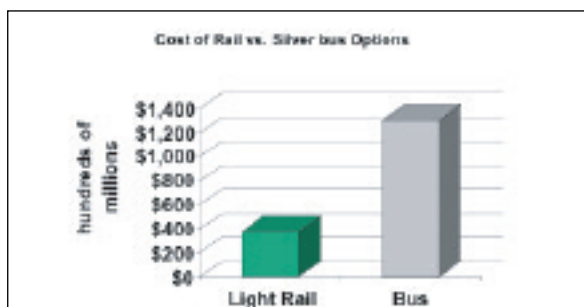
**The Truth:** According to the MBTA's own estimates using the existing tunnels would cost \$600 million less, save taxpayers money and provide better service.

### Why Pay More for Less?

As a rule we all want more for less. The MBTA has turned that theory on its head with the Silver bus Line – they want less for more. According to MBTA studies the price will be approximately \$1 billion to build a bus tunnel. But those same MBTA studies say that to use the existing light rail tunnels for Green Line type trains would only cost \$373 million.

*This project would convert the 2.4-mile long Dudley-Boylston section of the Silver Line bus rapid transit service to light rail. Service would be operated as a branch of the Green Line, making use of an abandoned Green Line tunnel segment located under Tremont Street, to access Boylston station. Stops on Washington Street between Herald St. and Dudley would remain the same as the present Silver Line. The projected capital costs would be \$373.6 million.<sup>3</sup>*

That is a savings of more than \$600 million for initial construction alone. If the MBTA moves ahead according to plans (first building as a bus project and then converting to light rail) the cost would total at least \$1.3 billion.



Such a waste of money should set off alarms for the Governor and every taxpayer. It has not, in part, because the MBTA continuously runs the project through its spin cycle. With dire deficit problems the MBTA should be focused on cost savings through this project instead of pushing for a new bus tunnel. How difficult will it be for the MBTA to first dig tunnels for buses and then light rail?

*"Connecting the [bus] tunnels of the Tremont Street Alignment to the expanded Boylston Station will be a major undertaking due to the location (adjacent to the Boston Commons and the theatre district) and due to the presence of an operating subway line (Green Line) and an existing abandoned subway line. Construction in this area is further complicated by the maze of utilities, complex soil deposits and a high water table. Construction in this area will have to be done very slowly and methodically...."<sup>4</sup>*

**If Governor Romney wants to save taxpayer money there is no quicker way than to stop the bus tunnel and make the MBTA use the existing rail tunnels instead.**

The cost will be high, in part, because of all the existing utilities that will be impacted. According to MBTA reports there are a "maze of utilities" that will need to be moved, replaced or otherwise dealt with including a jumble of sewer, water and electric lines.<sup>5</sup>

But if the MBTA uses the existing tunnels hundreds of millions of dollars could be saved. *"By utilizing the existing historic tunnels beneath Tremont Street, certain impacts from construction operations will be minimized."<sup>6</sup>*

3. MBTA 2004 Program for Mass Transportation, page 5C-77

4. "Conceptual Design Report for Tremont Street Alignment and Dewey Square to South Station Tunnel Segments," prepared by URS Corporation, October 10, 2001, page 3-12

5. Engineering and System Coordination for The Silver Line Phase III Tunnel Sections, Prepared by URS, October 2001, pages 2-11 & 2-12

6. Engineering and System Coordination for The Silver Line Phase III Tunnel Sections, Prepared by URS, October 2001, page vii

# 3

## PROMISES MADE PROMISES BROKEN

**MBTA Says:** Service is fast and convenient.

**The Truth:** The MBTA has broken its promise of "equal or better" service. The Silver bus is slower, more crowded and less comfortable than the old Orange Line service.



*Orange Line service carried more passengers more comfortably than today's Silver bus*

### Equal or Better Service

In 1987, the MBTA and US Department of Transportation promised residents of Roxbury and Dorchester "equal or better service" upon tearing down the old elevated Orange Line. Referring to that promise in 2000, former MBTA General Manager Robert Prince told Mass Transit Magazine *"someone made the promise that we would replace the service on Washington Street with service equal to or better than the service they had."*<sup>7</sup>

This promise was made, among other places in the "Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement" of 1987, where the problem and promise is made clear and labeled an "imperative."

*A highly dependent transit population has lost their primary transit line as a result of the relocation of the Orange Line. It is imperative that a replacement service of equal or better than the Washington Street elevated be identified in order to provide for the public transportation needs of this population while reinforcing the development possibilities that may*

*result upon removal of the elevated structure in this primarily low income section of Boston.*<sup>8</sup>

In its 1987 document discussing alternatives for replacement service, the MBTA stated one of its primary goals was to *"Provide a service emulating the Elevated Orange Line service to downtown and other MBTA rail lines."*<sup>9</sup> Since then the MBTA has fought every effort to fulfill that promise.

### Speed is of the Essence

The Orange Line provided an 8 minute ride from Dudley Station in Roxbury to downtown Boston.<sup>10</sup> It also *"provided direct connections to the three other central subway lines – Blue, Green, and Red – as well as North Station commuter rail...."*<sup>11</sup> The bus service takes at least 20 minutes and is often stuck in street traffic.<sup>12</sup> When considering what service would be best, even the MBTA has said light rail is faster and more convenient:

*Light rail comes closest to the elevated Orange Line service in terms of travel time, providing a one-seat ride to downtown and free transfer to all other rail lines. Bus alternatives penetrating downtown are susceptible to traffic congestion and long delays;*<sup>13</sup>

The buses themselves are often crowded, especially at rush hour. The new 60 foot articulated buses have such a narrow interior walking area that it is difficult for passengers to move past each other when entering or exiting the buses. When a passenger rides with a stroller or in a wheelchair it can become impossible to move past them.

Since the Orange Line came down the community has been asking for light rail service instead of another bus. These pleas have fallen on the deaf ears of the MBTA and Governor Romney.

**Promises made by the MBTA must be fulfilled. A bus is not equal to Orange Line service. Since 1987 Roxbury has been waiting. How much longer should this community be forced to suffer the indignity of broken promises?**

7. Silver Lining in Boston, Mass Transit Magazine, November/December 2000, page 16

8. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page 1

9. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page 8

10. MBTA, Notice of Project Change Washington Street/Silver Line Transit Service and Roadway Improvements, May 1999, page 2-16. "Published schedules from 1983 show that the Orange Line ran between Dudley Station and Downtown Crossing in just over 8 minutes. Outbound running times were slightly faster."

11. MBTA, Notice of Project Change Washington Street/Silver Line Transit Service and Roadway Improvements, MBTA, May 1999, page 2-16.

12. "Silver Line Washington Street (Phase I) - In Service" [www.allaboutsilverline.com/InService.asp](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/InService.asp) Accessed February 10, 2005

13. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page VIII



## 4

## EXISTING TUNNELS WILL WORK FOR LIGHT RAIL VEHICLES

**MBTA Says:** Trains can't fit into the tunnels

**MBTA Says:** Existing tunnels aren't safe

**The Truth:** Trains can and do go into the tunnels

### Existing Rail Tunnels are Safe

Time and time again the MBTA pretends that light rail vehicles (LRVs) cannot fit into the existing tunnels under Boylston Street Station or that the tunnels have fallen into disrepair and cannot be used.

If the tunnels are truly unsafe or unusable then why is the MBTA currently using them for storage of vehicles?

*The West Track of Boylston Station connects to a now-abandoned tunnel beneath Tremont Street which has recently been used for the storage of maintenance vehicles.<sup>14</sup>*

Recently MBTA spokesman Joe Pesaturo said *"That's just foolishness to believe that tunnels were build [sic] over a century ago could be used today."*<sup>15</sup> Actually, much of the Green Line tunnel system was built at the same time. Today we run four separate lines through them every day.

In fact MBTA reports say that the tunnels, including the unused tunnels are just fine.

*An inspection of the existing historic tunnels beneath Tremont Street was conducted to determine their use in the development of the Silver Line Tremont Street alignment. The tunnels were found to be in good condition but did not provide adequate clearances and geometry to meet the specifications of the BRT [proposed bus].<sup>16</sup>*

In other words, the tunnels can be used as they exist today if the MBTA used trains, but not if they use buses – further supporting the idea that we save money by going straight to trains.

*The existing tunnels were found to be in good condition with no significant signs of distress or cracking of concrete or masonry observed during visual inspections of the tunnels.<sup>17</sup>*

So why does the MBTA continue to spread false information about the capacity of the tunnel? It is part of a continued pattern that results in the fleecing of the taxpayers.

Using the existing train tunnels would save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

### Trains Can Use Tunnels, Buses Can Not

Buses require a wider turning radius for many reasons. Buses require extra space to allow drivers to safely navigate tunnels - incorporating space for a driver's margin of error.

**To build the proposed bus tunnels the MBTA will need to fill in the existing rail tunnels and then dig them out again to build a much taller, much wider tunnel.<sup>18</sup>**

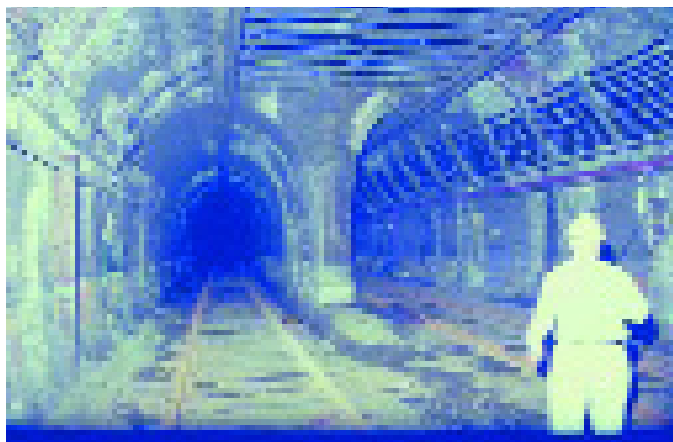


Photo: MBTA and URS Corporation "Silver Line Phase III conceptual Design Report Professional Engineering, October 2001, Page A-3

14. MBTA and Stone & Webster Civil and Transportation Services, Inc., Essex/Boylston Street Alignment Conceptual Design, April 2000, Page 9
15. Chris Orchard, South End News, "Phase III of the Silver Line is on the horizon" January 6, 2005, page 1.
16. MBTA and URS Corporation "Silver Line Phase III Conceptual Design Report Professional Engineering and System Coordination for The Silver Line Phase III Tunnel Sections," October 2001, Executive Summary, page vi.
17. MBTA and URS Corporation, "Silver Line Phase III Conceptual Design Report Professional Engineering and System Coordination for The Silver Line Phase III Tunnel Sections," Executive Summary, October 2001, page 2-7.
18. MBTA and URS Corporation "Silver Line Phase III Conceptual Design Report Professional Engineering and System Coordination for The Silver Line Phase III Tunnel Sections," October 2001, Executive Summary, pages 3-5.



*The vehicle path width for the unguided articulated 60-foot Silver Line BRT vehicle is considerably wider than for the LRV. Therefore, tunnel design is controlled by the BRT vehicle requirements.<sup>19</sup>*

*Due to the required dynamic design envelope for the BRT/LRV vehicle, the existing, historic Tremont Street tunnels constructed in 1897 could not be used without significant modification. Both the height and width required [for BRT] exceeded the envelope of the existing tunnels. Therefore, to provide tunnel service [by bus] for the Silver Line from Boylston Station to New England Medical Center, new tunnel sections were designed.<sup>20</sup>*

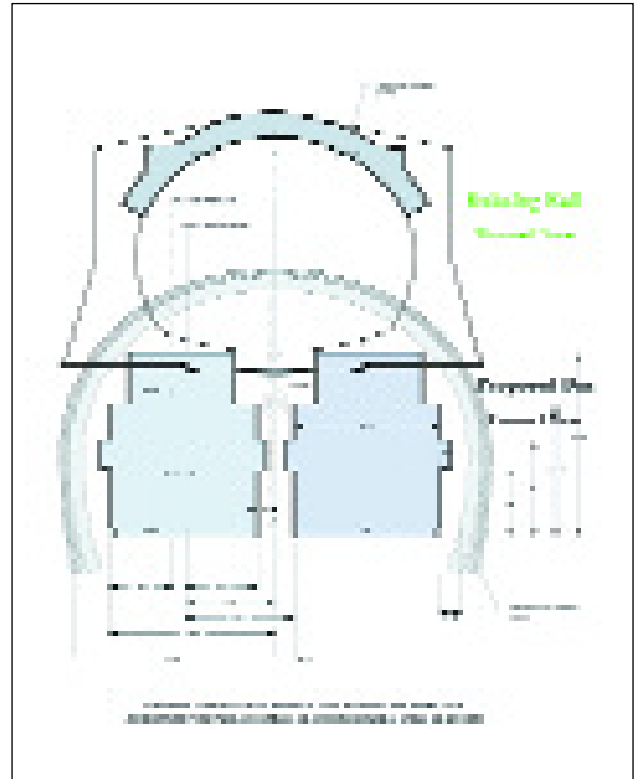
Clearly seen in the MBTA design figure to the right,<sup>21</sup> the bus tunnel needs to be significantly larger and wider than the existing LRV tunnels allow. This begs the question, why build new tunnels if we can use the ones already there with light rail for less money?

## Trains Will Help, Not Hinder, Green Line

The MBTA claims that the Green Line cannot handle more traffic in the tunnels. This is in direct opposition to the MBTA's own reports. Not only can the tunnels handle more traffic but more cars will help alleviate delays within the tunnels.

*Available data indicate that the proposed light rail alternative would not adversely impact Green Line Central Subway operations....<sup>22</sup>*

*Analysis indicates that additional vehicles are desirable to handle downtown demand and that tunnel capacity will be sufficient to handle the increase.<sup>23</sup>*



GRAPHIC: MBTA and URS Corporation, "Silver Line Phase III Conceptual Design Report Professional Engineering and System Coordination for The Silver Line Phase III Tunnel Sections," Executive Summary, October 2001, Figure 2-3.

**Knowing that trains would cost less, provide better service and alleviate crowding problems for the rest of the Green Line, the Governor and the MBTA should move forward with light rail immediately.**

19. MBTA and URS Corporation, "Silver Line Phase III Conceptual Design Report Professional Engineering and System Coordination for The Silver Line Phase III Tunnel Sections," Executive Summary, October 2001, page 2-14.
20. MBTA and URS Corporation, "Silver Line Phase III Conceptual Design Report Professional Engineering and System Coordination for The Silver Line Phase III Tunnel Sections," Executive Summary, October 2001, page 3-8.
21. GRAPHIC: MBTA and URS Corporation, "Silver Line Phase III Conceptual Design Report Professional Engineering and System Coordination for The Silver Line Phase III Tunnel Sections," Executive Summary, October 2001, Figure 2-3.
22. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page 83.
23. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page V.

## 5

TECHNOLOGY HAS  
YET TO WORK

**MBTA Says:** Using new technology the bus will run faster, tell riders exactly how long until the next bus will arrive, and prevent 'bunching'.

**The Truth:** None of these systems have worked to date and service is far worse than it was with the Orange Line.

The old Orange Line service to Roxbury/Jamaica Plain was fast and convenient. According to the MBTA *"The Orange Line operated on an exclusive elevated right of way that eliminated conflicts with vehicular traffic and generally allowed for reliable service during inclement weather."*<sup>24</sup>

With the introduction of the Silver bus Line there were many grand pronouncements about the new Global Positioning System (GPS) and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technology. This was supposed to prevent 'bunching' of buses along the route.

According to the MBTA's web site, *"This real-time information allows the T's Control Center to respond to changing conditions and deliver high-frequency, high-volume service during rush hours and other peak times."*<sup>25</sup>

Before opening the line the MBTA claimed and still insists today that *"ITS also transmits schedule information to electronic displays at each Silver Line Washington Street station."*<sup>2</sup>

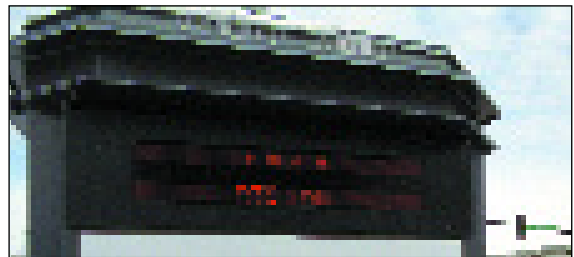


*Buses regularly 'bunch' up along the route, causing delays and poor service*

*The route,... consists of a busway featuring priority lanes, shelters, real-time schedule information, electronic signage, a public address system, and an intercom assistance system.*<sup>27</sup>

In 2000, former GM Prince said, *"We'll have traffic pre-emption. We'll put kiosks in the stations to give customers easy information about the system and when the next bus is coming."*<sup>28</sup> *"At all the stations, when John Q. Public walks up he'll know when the next bus will be coming in. The technology will be there. It's been very successful in San Francisco, at Muni, and it will be here."*<sup>29</sup>

Not true. In fact Silver bus Line buses are regularly 'bunched' together. No buses arrive for twenty minutes and then three will pull in at once. These problems have been rampant since the Silver bus Line opened.



*Technology has yet to work as promised along the route*

*"If the readout says the bus will be there in four minutes, it will be there in four minutes."*<sup>30</sup> Riding the route one will rarely see the signs operating and never as the MBTA promised. Never do they enlighten riders as to when the next bus will arrive other than saying that buses run every (certain number) of minutes.

**Despite the MBTA's statements, two years after opening the bus route, speed and communications promised via improved technology have yet to work properly. Buses consistently bunch together, the electronic displays do not work and passengers wait an excessively long time for service.**<sup>31</sup>

24. MBTA, Notice of Project Change Washington Street/Silver Line Transit Service and Roadway Improvements, May 1999, page 2-17.  
 25. [www.allaboutsilverline.com/BRT\\_text.asp](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/BRT_text.asp) Accessed January 20, 2005  
 26. [www.allaboutsilverline.com/btr.asp](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/btr.asp) Accessed January 20, 2005  
 27. MBTA and URS Corporation, 2004 Program for Mass Transportation, page 2-4  
 28. "Silver Lining in Boston," Mass Transit Magazine, November/December 2000, page 16  
 29. "Silver Lining in Boston," Mass Transit Magazine, November/December 2000, page 14  
 30. "Silver Lining in Boston," Mass Transit Magazine, November/December 2000, page 14  
 31. "What's Intelligent Transportation System technology?" [www.allaboutsilverline.com/faqs.asp](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/faqs.asp) Accessed February 10, 2005

# 6

## YOU CALL THIS FASTER SERVICE?

**MBTA Says:** Service is faster than it ever was.

**The Truth:** Service is much slower than that promised in 1987.

### Orange Line Was Faster

Prior to coming down in 1987, the elevated Orange Line brought riders from Dudley Station in Roxbury to downtown Boston in eight minutes.<sup>32</sup>

Now buses take 20 minutes.<sup>33</sup>

The bus just doesn't compare with light rail for speed and the MBTA knew this before the service started. *"Light rail [would provide] the fastest time to downtown because of an exclusive reservation, and avoidance of downtown traffic congestion north of Kneeland Street."*<sup>34</sup>

To build a strong, fast, convenient system the MBTA needs to implement light rail. The best way to alleviate traffic problems in this area of downtown Boston is to do light rail now.

### Dedicated Lane is a Myth



The MBTA enjoys touting its dedicated bus or 'contraflow' lane claiming that this adds to the success of the Silver Line.<sup>35</sup> They go so far as to claim that service is faster now than it ever was.<sup>36</sup> The MBTA claims that the route *"is [on] an exclusive right-of-way."*<sup>37</sup>



*The 'dedicated bus' lane is consistently blocked by vehicles, rendering the lane useless*

That *"dedicated lane"* runs only for approximately 200 yards across the Mass. Turnpike.

Along the rest of the route the *"dedicated lane"* consists of diamonds painted on the roadway. These lanes are supposed to be for buses and cars that are making right-hand turns. On any given day one can see dozens of cars parked in the lane rendering it effectively useless. This isn't news to the MBTA.

*"It's a dedicated [bus] line, but as we all know it has a lot of traffic and a lot of conflicts," said state Transportation Secretary James H. Scanlan. "That's really going to have to make us work harder to make sure the enforcement is there."*<sup>38</sup>

**"MBTA operations personnel doubted the busway could be operated effectively without excessive and prohibitively costly enforcement. It was believed that even a small number of illegal users of the busway would offset any potential benefits."**<sup>41</sup>

32. MBTA and URS Corporation, Notice of Project Change, Washington Street/Silver Line Transit Service and Roadway Improvements, May 1999, page 2-16.

33. "Silver Line Washington Street (Phase I) - In Service" [www.allaboutsilverline.com/inService.asp](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/inService.asp) Accessed February 10, 2005

34. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page V.

35. MBTA press release of December 23, 2002.

36. "Is it faster than the old service?" [www.allaboutsilverline.com/faqs.asp#108](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/faqs.asp#108) Accessed Feb. 10, 2005

37. Beacon Hill Times, "Downtown Silver Line options get low marks," March 23, 2004. Quote from MBTA spokesman Joseph Pesaturo.

38. "Silver Line's critics press their fight for light rail", Boston Globe, Corey Dade, June 2, 2002, page B1.

*Anne Herzenberg, the T's chief operating officer, admits the route will only be as efficient as traffic enforcement along it. Five MBTA police officers on motorcycles are scheduled to patrol the entire route 20 hours a day, seven days a week to keep the lanes clear, she said.<sup>39</sup>*

Those patrols have not been there, and even the bus drivers acknowledge<sup>40</sup> the bus only lane is regularly clogged with illegally parked vehicles – degrading the quality and speed of service. The MBTA knew this would be a problem as far back as 1987 when a report said:

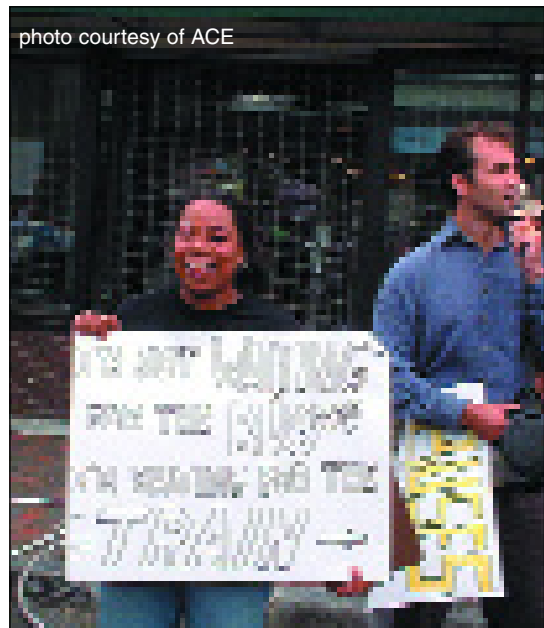
*Throughout the route, Silver Line buses must contend with occasional traffic in the lane, swerve around double-parked cars and trucks, and wait at stoplights. Traffic is not an issue for fixed-rail systems like the Red, Orange, or Green lines, making them generally faster.... Boarding times are also generally faster with trolleys and subways.<sup>42</sup>*

(What about when it snows? See Appendix A.)

Unfortunately, the MBTA ignored its own report and went ahead with the plan anyway. Roxbury residents now suffer the injustice of an agency ignoring its own findings.



*Buses regularly bunch up and cars park in the bus lane with impunity*



*People in Roxbury have been waiting since 1987 for the promise of 'equal or better' service to be met*

39. "Silver Line's critics press their fight for light rail", Boston Globe, Corey Dade, June 2, 2002, page B1.

40. Casey Rose, Boston Herald "Silver Lines Tarnished: Cars, Snow blocks Bus Lanes", Feb. 22 2005, Pg. 1.

41. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page 12.

42. "Silver Line not the shiniest commute," Boston Globe, Anthony Flint, February 23, 2004.



Light rail would use a 'grade separated' lane that would prevent vehicles from parking or standing in the lane. The MBTA knows that light rail would provide a faster, more convenient ride:

*Light rail provides the most convenient service to other rail lines because free transfer at all stations is possible.<sup>43</sup>*

*In the South End, buses on Washington Street provide fewer benefits than light rail in terms of time to access downtown and to transfer to other rail lines.<sup>44</sup>*

"[MBTA spokesman] Joe Pesaturo, said that critics of the Silver Line "are incapable of thinking outside the box" and accepting that "safe and reliable transit service does not have to be on a rail to be successful."<sup>45</sup>

**What more evidence do the MBTA and Governor Romney need?**

**The technology isn't working, the dedicated lane isn't working, service is slower and serving fewer people - Just how is the MBTA measuring success?**



*Buses often start their routes simultaneously, resulting in 'bunching' and long waits for passengers*



43. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page 139.

44. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page 142.

45. According to a Boston Globe investigation. Boston Globe, Commute on Boston's Silver Line Takes Longer than Others, Anthony Flint, February 23, 2004.

## 7

## MBTA: A LEGACY OF MYTHS

**MBTA Says:** A bus is what the community wants, is enjoying lots of riders, and helps the local economy.

**The Truth:** The bus is not what Roxbury wanted and does not help the community the way light rail would.



According to the study, 95% of South End and Lower Roxbury riders had a destination within a half-mile walk from Government Center.<sup>50</sup> The MBTA claims to be solving a problem that their own studies show doesn't exist. The problem remains getting Roxbury residents to downtown Boston quickly and conveniently, not a one-seat ride to Logan Airport.

### MYTH: Community Doesn't Want Rail

The MBTA likes to say it spoke with the community about light rail service and the community did not want it. *"T officials say neighborhood opposition, first from Chinatown and then from the gentrifying South End, killed the light rail idea."*<sup>46</sup> That is simply not true. Roxbury residents wanted light rail and for good reasons. The MBTA's own report says (emphasis added):

*An Interim Findings Report, published in April 1982, recommended that a Washington Street light rail service be studied in Phase II because the service:*

- Generates the most transit riders
- Provides the fastest ride into downtown Boston with good connections elsewhere via the MBTA rail system
- Has substantial community support
- Would be less affected by future traffic increases on downtown streets than bus alternatives
- Provides a one-seat ride to downtown from the South End and Lower Roxbury Is the only transit option that provides service comparable to the current Orange Line <sup>47</sup>

### MYTH: One Seat Ride to Logan

The MBTA keeps claiming they are offering a "one-seat ride" to Logan Airport,<sup>48</sup> but area residents do not want that. As early as 1987 the MBTA studied the needs of the community and found that *"A survey of Orange Line riders showed that 62 percent of trips from the South End and Lower Roxbury have downtown Boston as a final destination."*<sup>49</sup>

### MYTH: High Ridership

The MBTA continues to claim high ridership on the Silver bus Line, but is it true? The MBTA estimates approximately 14,000 daily boardings on the Silver Line. True or not, the basis for comparison is not the #49 bus that served the neighborhood after the Orange Line came down but the original Orange Line itself. Before it came down the Orange Line carried more than twice as many riders daily. Just before it came down in 1982 there were an estimated 37,100 daily riders.<sup>51</sup> When looking at whether bus or light rail would best replicate those results they found that: *"light rail ridership is nearly double that of any other alternative; it is the only alternative to attract new riders relative to the current Orange Line service."*<sup>52</sup> Even more, *"Relative to the existing elevated Orange Line, only light rail attracts additional riders to transit."*<sup>53</sup>

**Gaining new riders should be a top goal of the MBTA. Given that light rail would double ridership and the MBTA is suffering from a spiraling debt load, attracting new riders is their best opportunity to gain revenue – that means implementing light rail along Washington Street.**

46. Boston Globe, "Silver Line not the shiniest commute," Anthony Flint, February 23, 2004.

47. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page 10.

48. "Phase III - In Design" [www.allaboutsilverline.com/phaseIII.asp](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/phaseIII.asp) Accessed Feb. 10, 2005

49. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page v

50. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page v

51. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page 47.

52. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page viii.

53. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page v



## MYTH: Bus is Best for Local Economy



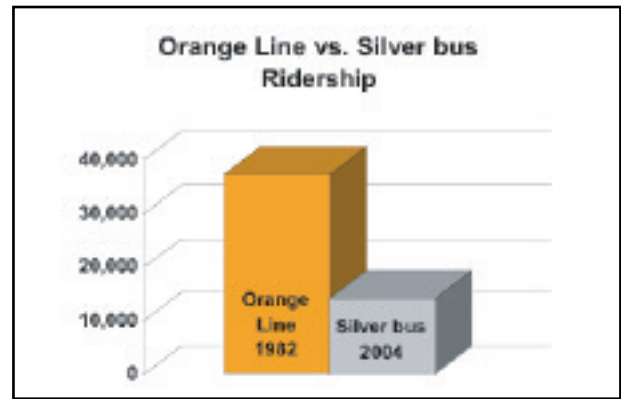
*Riders wait excessively long periods of time under shelters that provide no protection from the elements*

Tearing down the elevated Orange Line was a dramatic economic hit to the community, especially residents of Roxbury near Dudley Square.

*Removal of the elevated Orange Line will impact Dudley Square more than any other community or neighborhood. Because it has the highest investment level and permanence, light rail can be expected to support better existing activity and to stimulate more economic development in Dudley Square than the bus alternatives.<sup>54</sup>*

**Instead commuters have increased travel times and delays. Still the MBTA perpetuates the myths.**

Much has been said by the MBTA about developing the Washington Street area and the economic value of increasing service there.<sup>55</sup> But once again, their own studies show that light rail would benefit the local economy much more than a bus:



*The level of subsequent development is a function of the level of public investment and permanence of transportation. Thus, the light rail alternative, which has the highest investment level and permanence, can be expected to stimulate more economic development than the bus alternatives.<sup>56</sup>*

Removal of the elevated structure and the Silver bus Line has had a positive effect on the local economy, but it has not benefitted the community like light rail would.

## MYTH: Access to Jobs

Contrary to what the MBTA states,<sup>57</sup> the Silver bus Line does not provide adequate and convenient access to jobs. Most people along Washington Street want to get to work in areas served by other rapid transit lines. This need has not been met, and the MBTA knows it.



According to the MBTA:

*Light rail provides the best overall access to regional jobs to the study area, because it provides fast downtown distribution and a convenient free transfer to all other MBTA rail lines. Light rail can also be expected to stimulate more economic development than the bus alternatives because it has the highest public investment and permanence.<sup>58</sup>*

54. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page xi.

55. "The Silver Line - An Overview" [www.allaboutsilverline.com/overview.asp](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/overview.asp) Accessed Feb. 10, 2005

56. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page vi.

57. "It will expand economic opportunities by providing riders with frequent and reliable access to employment centers." From "The Silver Line - An Overview" [www.allaboutsilverline.com/overview.asp](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/overview.asp) Accessed Feb. 10, 2005

58. US DOT and MBTA, Replacement/Transit Improvement Study, Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, 1987, page viii.



## 8

## WAIT FOR A BUS UNDER THIS?

**MBTA Says:** The bus shelters are adequate.

**The Truth:** The bus shelters offer no shelter from the elements and are designed like inverted umbrellas.

### Shelter from the Storm

*All Silver Line BRT stations offer comfortable seating, digital message boards, police call boxes, and area maps. Street-level stations will welcome you with information kiosks, attractive landscaping, and decorative medallions embedded in the sidewalk. Many of non-BRT Silver Line stops also provide lit shelters and passenger information displays.<sup>59</sup>*

Boston enjoys its fair share of foul weather – with snow, sleet and freezing rain during the winter, and rainstorms and heavy winds during the rest of the year. The MBTA responded by providing residents of Roxbury with inadequate bus shelters.

The most apt description of these stations is that they are shaped like a “Y” – allowing wind, snow and rain to shower riders as they wait for a bus. Still the MBTA likes to say that “Silver Line Washington Street

*Stations are designed with rider comfort, convenience and safety as top priorities.”<sup>60</sup>*

To call this “sheltered seating” or “comfortable seating”<sup>61</sup> is more than stretching the truth. That the MBTA paid \$170,000 each - a total of \$2.5 million for 15, only adds insult to injury.<sup>62</sup>

### “Smart Kiosks”

The MBTA likes to take credit for having “‘smart’ kiosks with schedule information, variable message boards, police call boxes, area maps, and bike racks.”<sup>63</sup>

*“ITS transmits this real-time information to digital message boards and smart kiosks at Silver Line Stations.”<sup>64</sup>* That’s news to riders who have yet to see the system tell waiting passengers anything more than the current time and that buses arrive every 7-8 minutes.

Perhaps worse, when buses are re-routed the signs do not change, and do not inform the riders, if they work at all. (See Appendix A for more on problems with the signs.)

**None of the locations contain area maps. The MBTA continues to take credit for these non-existent ‘perks.’**



59. “Rider-Friendly Stations” [www.allaboutsilverline.com/brt.asp](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/brt.asp) Accessed January 20, 2005

60. “What’s a rider-friendly station?” [www.allaboutsilverline.com/faqs.asp](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/faqs.asp) Accessed Feb. 10, 2005

61. “Rider-Friendly Stations” [www.allaboutsilverline.com/brt.asp](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/brt.asp) Accessed Feb. 10, 2005

62. Robin Washington, “No ‘Silver’ lining to T bus shelters,” Boston Herald, June 2, 2003

63. “What’s a rider-friendly station?” [www.allaboutsilverline.com/faqs.asp](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/faqs.asp) Accessed Feb. 10, 2005

64. “What’s Intelligent Transportation System technology?” [www.allaboutsilverline.com/faqs.asp#113](http://www.allaboutsilverline.com/faqs.asp#113) Accessed Feb. 10, 2005

# 9

## CONCLUSION

The MBTA promised the people of Roxbury “equal or better” service to replace the Orange Line when it was torn down in 1987. They have not met that promise.

Instead the MBTA has consistently put out misleading and blatantly false information about the Silver bus Line in an effort to convince taxpayers that a bus is the best option.

This is environmental injustice at its worst – forcing a predominantly minority and low income community to suffer the indignities of poor service – at a higher price tag.



A bus tunnel to complete the Silver bus Line is an irresponsible waste of limited funds. It will require extensive and expensive work – tearing up streets, moving/replacing “a maze” of utilities. It will continue to provide a service of lesser quality than the community was promised.

The MBTA's plans will destroy existing, usable rail tunnels, build larger bus tunnels, and then eventually put light rail in them anyway. Instead the MBTA should do the right thing in the first place and use the existing light rail tunnels to save money and improve service.

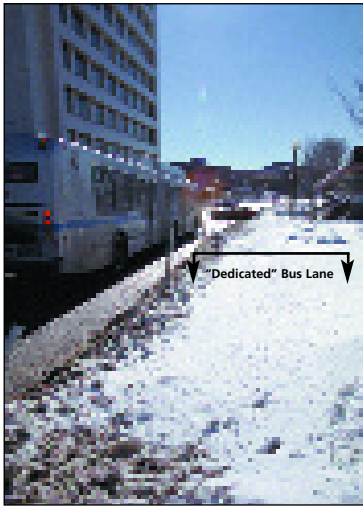


The history of this project is riddled with inconsistencies coming from the MBTA. That deceit continues with the MBTA forcing poorer service upon one of the most transit dependent communities in the state.

The time has come for Governor Romney to stand up and stop the nonsense. He must insist that the MBTA move forward with the original plan for light rail and save a billion dollars by using existing tunnels.

**The Governor must insist that the MBTA fulfill its promise of “equal or better” service. Anything less is a perpetuation of environmental injustice and a waste of taxpayer’s dollars.**

## **APPENDIX A – sNOw SERVICE - sNOw DEDICATED BUS LANE**



In 2005 Boston saw its fair share of snow. With any significant snowstorm bus service will see problems. Generally those issues will be resolved within days, if not hours. Not so for the Silver bus Line.

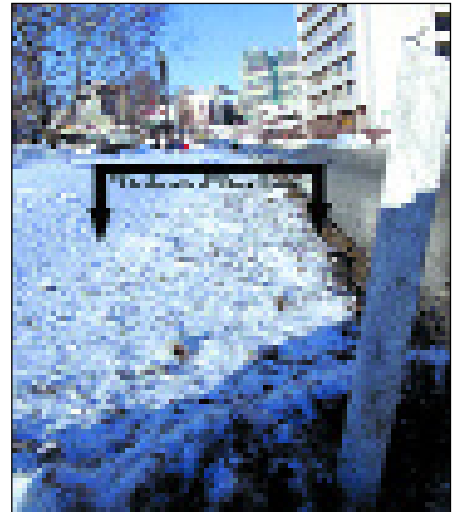
Days after the blizzard of 2005 the dedicated bus lane was entirely filled with snow. Instead of clearing the snow or diverting buses along an alternate route the MBTA put the public at risk by having the 60 foot buses swerve into oncoming traffic for several blocks.

There was no warning to oncoming traffic that buses would be driving directly at them.

After MBTA officials were notified of the problem they diverted *some but not all* buses to turn onto Herald Street. There was no way that Silver bus Line riders could know about this as there were no signs, no staff, and not even any information on the web site to alert riders.

The new 'variable signs' at the affected stops had no notice either – leaving riders in the blistering cold not knowing when, or if, the next bus would arrive.

In the event of an emergency, riders were left to their own devices as the emergency call boxes were completely snowed under – again putting riders at risk.



More than two weeks after the blizzard, snow had not been removed from Washington Street. Vehicles, unable to park at the curb due to snow up and down the route, parked in the 'dedicated bus lane.' This again meant that the bus could not function as promised for a quick, convenient ride.

The elevated Orange Line suffered no such problems.

"The Orange Line operated on an exclusive elevated right of way that eliminated conflicts with vehicular traffic and generally allowed for reliable service during inclement weather."<sup>65</sup>

65. MBTA, Notice of Project Change Washington Street/Silver Line Transit Service and Roadway Improvements, May 1999, page 2-17

# **SILVER LINE: FACT AND FICTION**

**MBTA Says:** Destroying the existing LRV tunnels and then digging new bus tunnels is more cost-effective than using the existing tunnels.

**The Truth:** According to the MBTA's own estimates using the existing tunnels would cost \$600 million less, save taxpayers money and provide better service.

**MBTA Says:** Service is fast and convenient.

**The Truth:** The MBTA has broken its promise of "equal or better" service. The Silver bus is slower, more crowded and less comfortable than the old Orange Line service.

**MBTA Says:** Trains can't fit into the tunnels.

**MBTA Says:** Existing tunnels aren't safe.

**The Truth:** Trains can and do go into tunnels.

**MBTA Says:** Using new technology the bus will run faster, tell riders exactly how long until the next bus will arrive, and prevent 'bunching'.

**The Truth:** None of these systems have worked to date and service is far worse than it was with the Orange Line.

**MBTA Says:** Service is faster than it ever was.

**The Truth:** Service is much slower than that promised in 1987.

**MBTA Says:** A bus is what the community wants, is enjoying lots of riders, and helps the local economy.

**The Truth:** The bus is not what Roxbury wanted and does not help the community the way light rail would.

**MBTA Says:** The bus shelters are adequate.

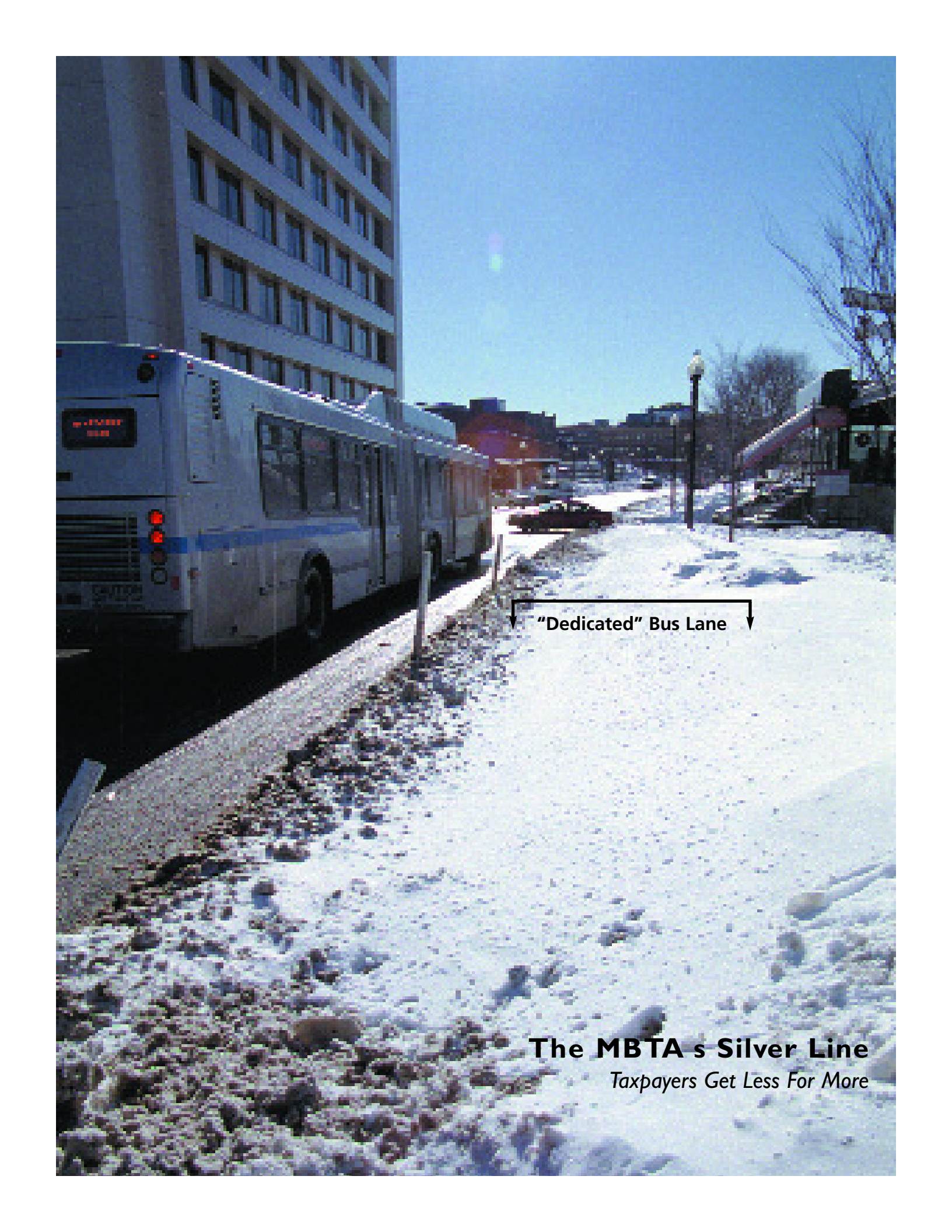
**The Truth:** The bus shelters offer no shelter from the elements and are designed like inverted umbrellas.



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“Dedicated” Bus Lane

## **The MBTA's Silver Line**

*Taxpayers Get Less For More*