

Equity Analysis Briefing on Fitchburg and Wachusett Commuter Rail Improvements

Background - The MBTA received two separate FTA grants to improve the Fitchburg Line.

TIGER – to extend service four miles from Fitchburg to Wachusett, along with a new station and layover facility

Small Starts – to provide line improvements including speed upgrades

Each grant requires that an equity analysis be conducted prior to initiating service under the FTA's Title VI Circular. The Wachusett extension also meets the MBTA's major service change threshold, which also triggers the equity analysis requirement.

FMCB Role – The FMCB must be briefed by MBTA staff on the equity analysis and vote to indicate its consideration, awareness and approval of the analysis.



The Title VI law provides that both **benefits** and **burdens** of major service changes be analyzed to determine if there is a risk of disparity. The analysis is conducted under the MBTA's Disparate Impact / Disproportionate Burden Policy (DI/DB).



- **Minority Analysis** - The ratio of the percentage of minority passengers on the Fitchburg Line (13.0 percent) to the percentage of minority commuter rail riders systemwide (14.4 percent) is 0.90; minority riders are receiving more than 80 percent of the benefits that nonminority riders are receiving, thus **no disparate benefit** is found.
- **Low-income Analysis** – The ratio of the percentage of low-income passengers on the Fitchburg Line (5.8) to the percentage of low-income commuter rail riders systemwide (7.2 percent) is 0.81; low-income riders are receiving more than 80 percent of the benefits that non-low-income riders are receiving, thus **no disproportionate benefit** is found.

- **Minority** - The ratio of the percentage of minorities in the market access area surrounding Wachusett Station (15.28 percent) to the percentage of minorities in the MBTA systemwide service area (26.19 percent) is 0.58; minority populations are receiving less than 80 percent of the benefits that nonminority populations are receiving, thus a **disparate benefit** is found.
- **Low-income** - The ratio of the percentage of low-income households in the market access area surrounding Wachusett Station (30.19 percent) to the percentage of low-income households in the MBTA systemwide service area (31.85 percent) is 0.95; low-income populations are receiving more than 80 percent of the benefits that non-low-income populations are receiving, thus **no disproportionate benefit** is found.

- The Fitchburg Line has the oldest infrastructure in the MBTA system that has gone over 50 years without being addressed.
- The Fitchburg Line is the longest commuter rail line in terms of distance and travel time, has had one of the worst on time performance records in the MBTA system and serves a region with limited commuter options.
- The Wachusett project replaces a layover facility that provided a burden in a municipality with significant Title VI and low-income populations.
- The Montachusett region is one of few Massachusetts areas with significant population growth, and both local and greater Boston area employees can access greater reverse commute opportunities.
- The MBTA has made and continues making significant capital investments of benefit to minority and low income areas, such as Silver Line Gateway extension to Chelsea and Fairmount line improvements.