

MBTA Fare-Free Bus

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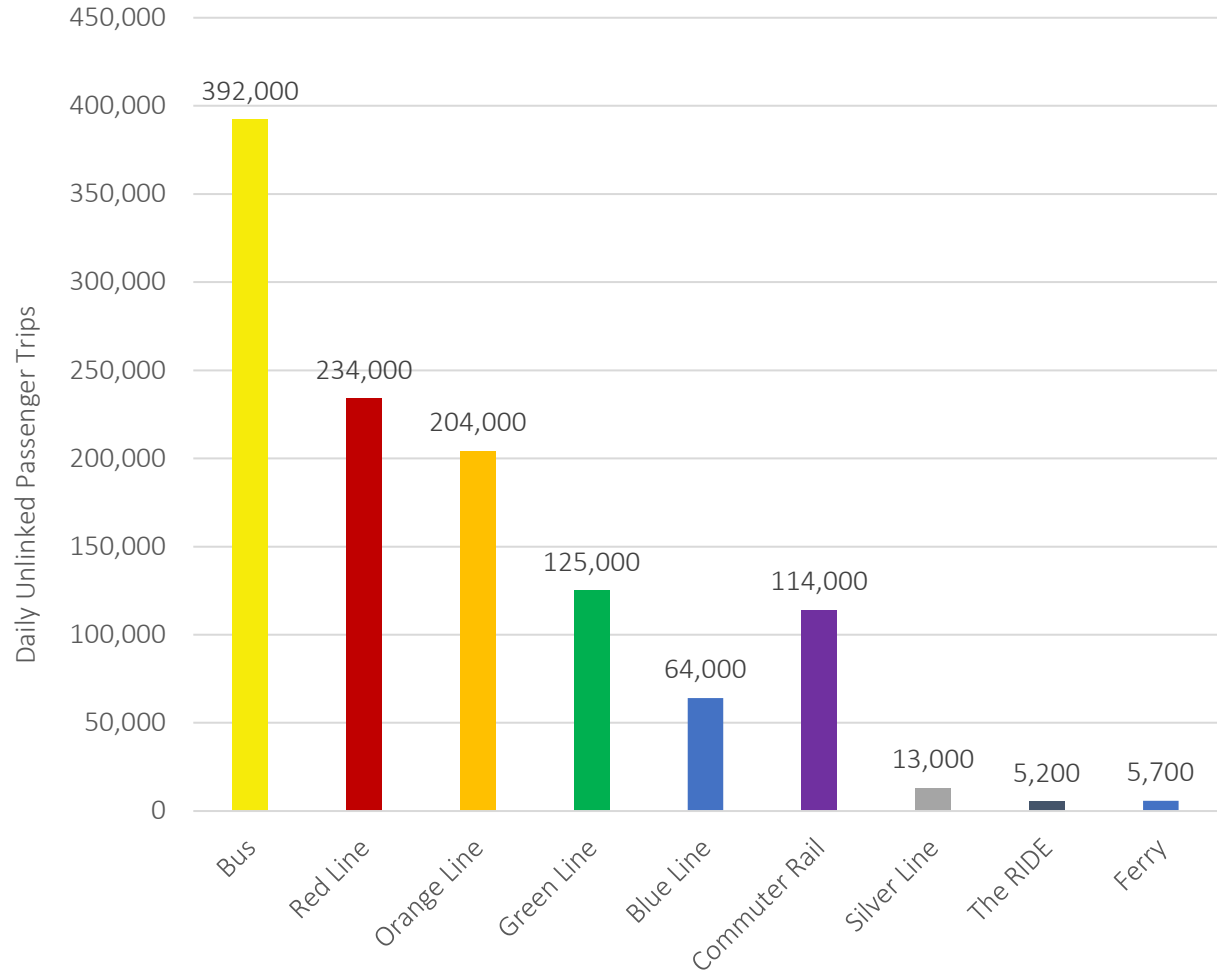
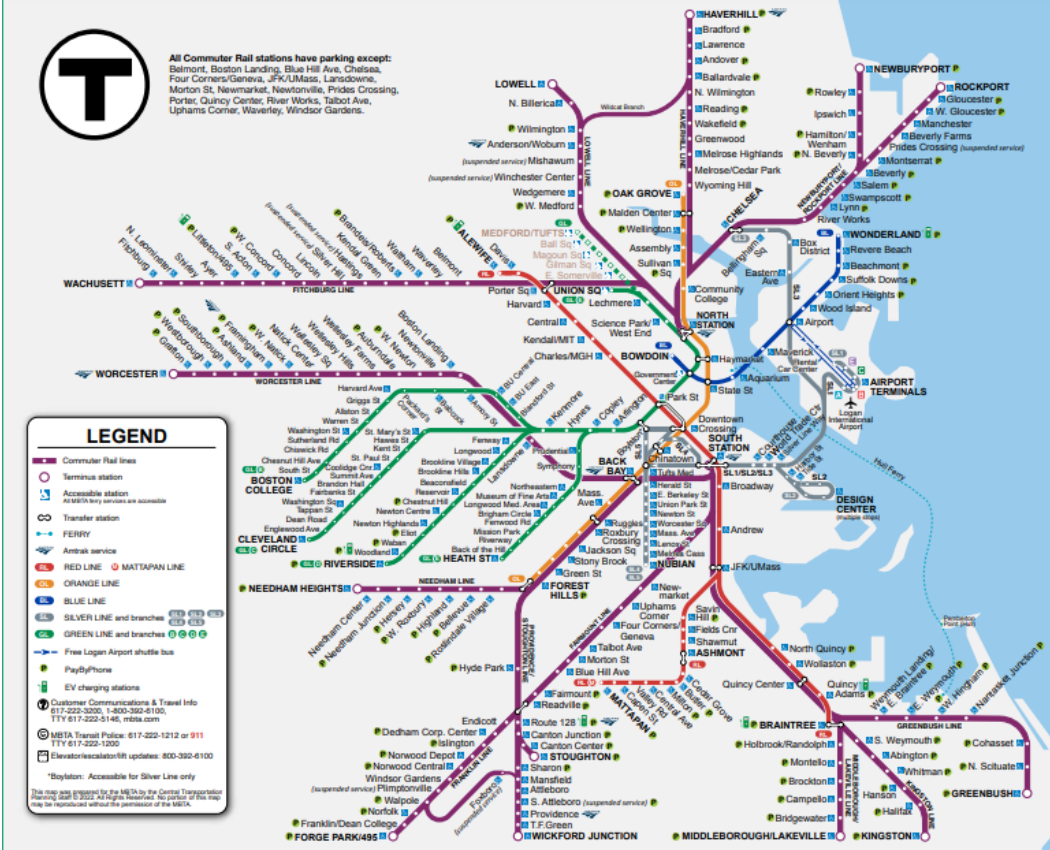


MBTA Context

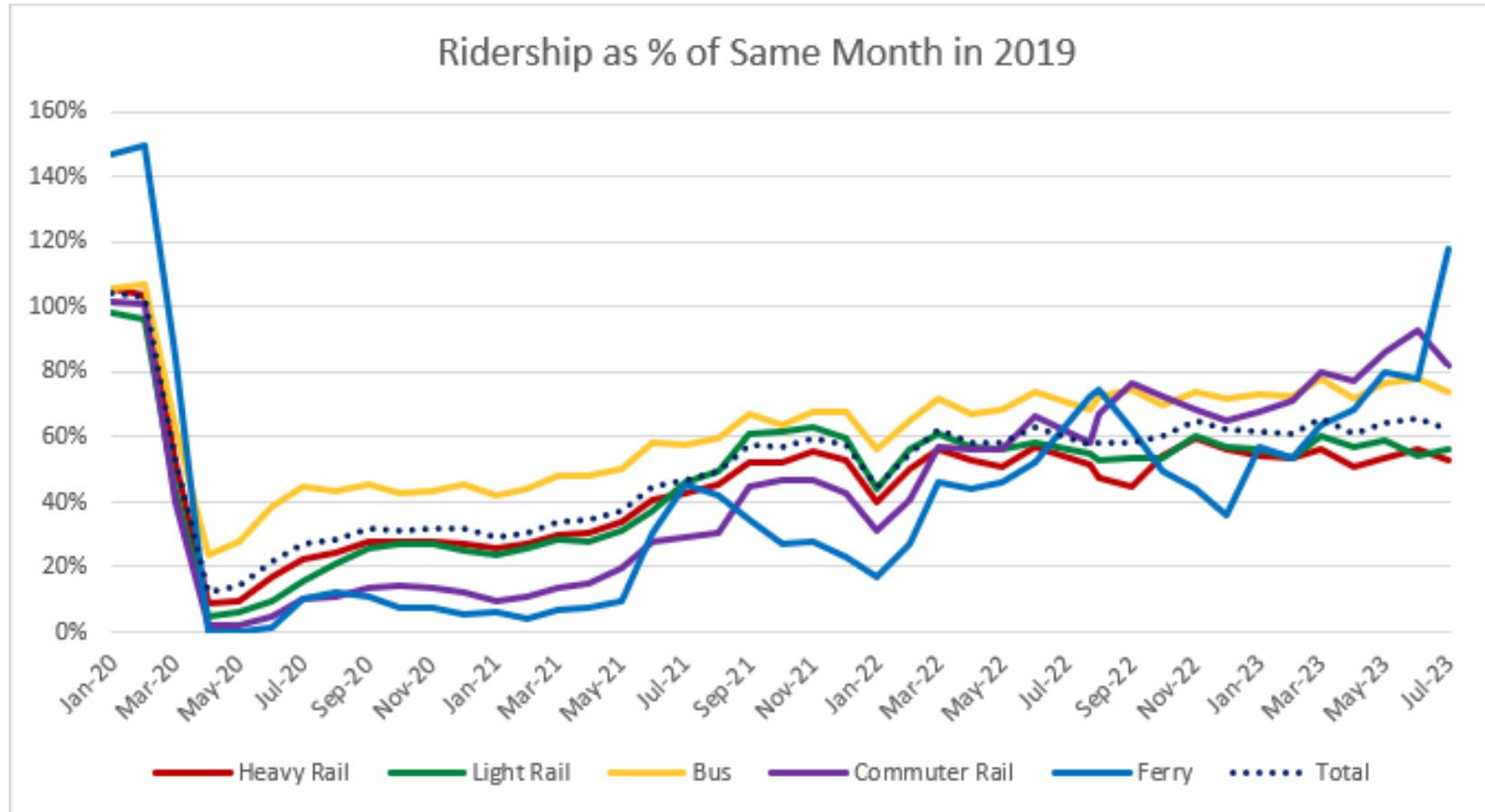
Fare-Free Bus Programs

Fare-Free Bus Outcomes

Baseline Ridership by Mode



Average Daily Ridership by Month



MBTA Key Fare Facts (Pre-Covid)



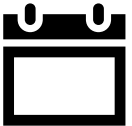
\$700 million total fare revenue (30-40% of operating budget)

➤ FY24 budget: \$418 million



~50% monthly passes

➤ ~50% of passes purchased through the Perq Corporate Program



5 - 10% weekly and daily passes



40 - 45% stored value and single ride tickets

MBTA Context

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Fare-Free 28 Pilot Overview



Impact: Signed MOU with the City of Boston to provide fare-free service on bus route 28. Fare-free RIDE trips that start and end within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of this route

- Route selected based on location entirely within Boston and rider demographics



Dates: August 29, 2021 through February 28, 2022

- 6 month pilot



Funding: \$500 thousand of ARPA funds



Fare-Free 23-28-29 Program Overview



Impact: Signed MOU with the City of Boston to provide fare-free service on bus routes 23, 28, and 29. Fare-free RIDE trips that start and end within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of these routes

- Routes selected based on location entirely within Boston and rider demographics

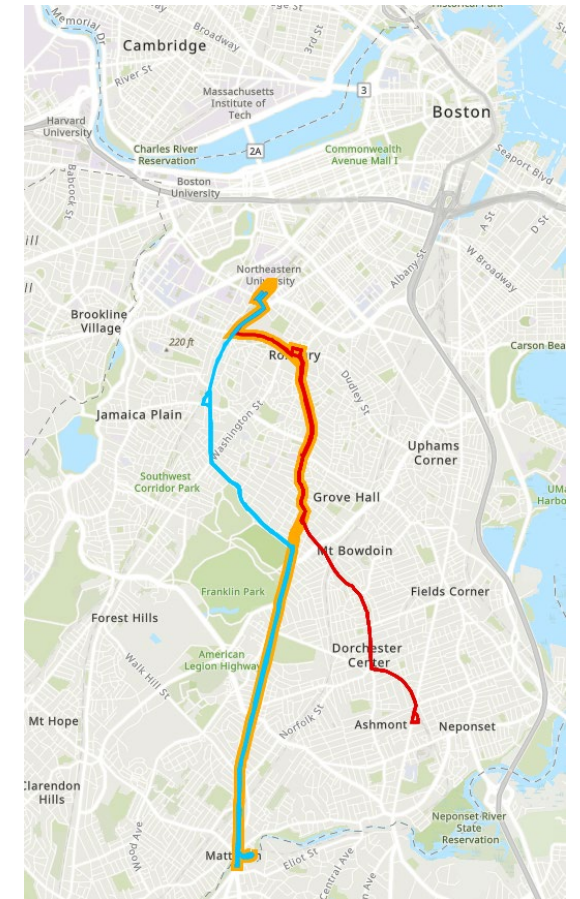


Dates: March 1, 2022 through February 29, 2024

- Technically a permanent fare change lasting >6 months



Funding: All costs paid for by the City of Boston (estimated total cost of \$8 million)



Route 23

Route 28

Route 29

Fare-Free 23, 28, 29: Route Detail

Route	Current Weekday Ridership	Route	Demographics	
			<i>% Minority</i>	<i>% Low Income</i>
23	~9,000	Ashmont - Ruggles	85%	59%
28	~11,000	Mattapan - Ruggles	92%	65%
29	~1,500	Mattapan – Jackson Square	91%	70%
The RIDE	~200	$\frac{3}{4}$ radius around fare-free routes		

City Partnership and Funding

- The City of Boston is reimbursing the MBTA for the cost of the program, estimated to be **\$8 million total** over the two-year period, but dependent on ridership. Components of the cost include:
 - Routes 23, 28, and 29: Lost fares per rider, increased operating costs if demand warrants increased service
 - The RIDE: Lost fares, increased operating costs
 - Other costs: administrative costs, cost of 3rd party equity analysis
- The City continues to study the impacts of free fares through surveys and other data collection methods

MBTA Context

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Fare-Free 28: Pilot Outcomes



Ridership: The free fares successfully encouraged increases in ridership (+20%), some of which came from trips that would have been car trips (5%) or wouldn't have happened at all (2%)



Service: Route 28 absorbed a material increase in ridership with minimal negative impacts on travel times and reliability. Notable reduction in dwell times per rider (-20%) as compared to similar routes for all riders.



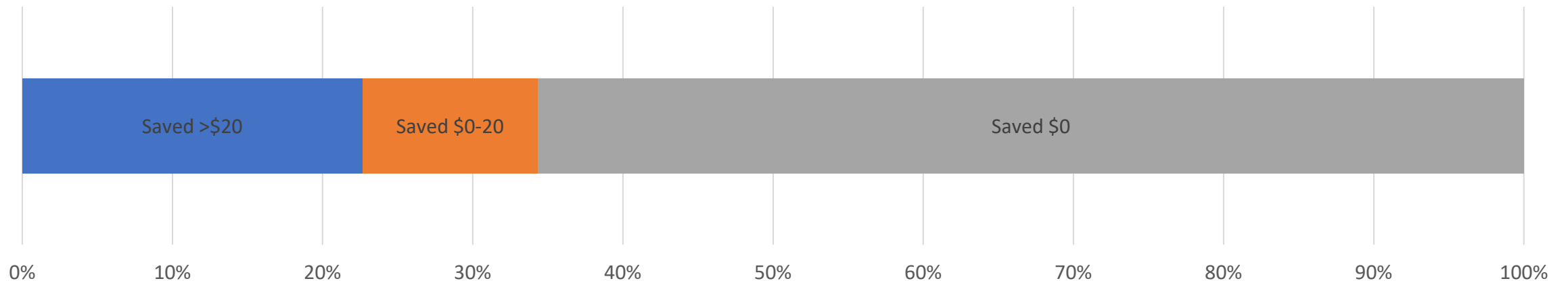
Economic Impact: This pilot cost the City of Boston \$500,000. All riders of the 28 experienced operational benefits, but few saw direct economic benefit.

Survey collection and data analysis of the Fare-Free 23, 28, 29 Program remains ongoing.

Fare-Free 28: Summary of Rider Savings

While the service benefits were shared across all riders, the economic benefits were felt by narrow groups based on behavior, rather than based on need. Beneficiaries of the program were 28-only, non-monthly pass riders; in other words, riders saved based on where they go and if they transfer

Per Month Rider Savings



Fare-Free Bus: Discussion

Fare-Free Bus saves few riders significant money, distorts use of the MBTA network toward an imperfect subset of the complete service offering (bus-only and The RIDE), and poses serious concerns for Paratransit operations. While popular, it is not an effective policy to achieve fare affordability for most riders in need.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple: Reduces barrier to use bus system; simple to understand; limited administrative burden• Dwell Time: Bus operations performance improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very Limited Effectiveness: Offers very limited economic impact as only paratransit and bus-only riders save money. Does not address affordability for fixed-route riders outside of the bus network.• Disrupts Network: Distorts the fare incentives relative to system design, pushing riders to bus instead of the complete network• Operational Burden: Risk of crowding on buses• The RIDE Challenge: The RIDE has a highly variable cost structure and the MBTA is required to serve every trip

Thank you!

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