



June 29, 2026

Better Bus Project Team  
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Dear MBTA Better Bus Project Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the [proposed updates to select Bus Network Redesign routes](#). As residents of Somerville and members of the City of Somerville's [Pedestrian and Transit Advisory Committee \(PTAC\)](#), we are writing to share our views on the proposed changes to the routes that most directly affect Somerville residents: the 85, 80, 94, and 96.

## Route 85

**We enthusiastically support adding weekend service to the 85.** Adding this service would promote several [goals of the MBTA's Bus Network Redesign](#): providing more all-day service, creating connections to new places, and making the network simpler and easier to use. The 85 connects Somerville's Union Square neighborhood to many places that are employment hubs and common weekend destinations for Somerville residents. We would expect the new weekend service to be well used for transportation to work, shopping, entertainment, and education in Assembly Square, Kendall/MIT, and the Boston University and Longwood Medical areas, among other destinations. Adding weekend service would also make the bus network easier to understand and use. For example, with weekend service, someone who regularly takes the 85 for a Monday-Friday commute to work could take a familiar route to the same area on the weekend rather than trying to identify less convenient alternatives.

In addition to the proposed changes, **we recommend that the MBTA consider extending the operating hours of route 85.** Currently, the final inbound bus departs Ruggles at 7:24pm, and the final outbound bus departs Assembly at 7:35pm. This schedule limits the route's ability to serve riders for evening and nighttime activities in the Fenway, Union Square, and Assembly neighborhoods. It also does not fully support commuting schedules to and from the Longwood Medical Area, as many employees do not work standard 9am-5pm shifts. In combination with the onset of weekend service, this proposed change would improve the 85's utility and could be accomplished without increasing the system's peak capacity.

## Routes 80, 94, and 96 (Medford Access Proposals)

We appreciate the MBTA's commitment to public engagement, along with the information provided at the [June 15, 2026](#) public meeting regarding the proposed options for routes 67, 80, 94, 96, and 350 affecting Somerville, Medford, and Arlington. We understand from the meeting's presentation that the three proposed options for these routes are not mutually exclusive, and that elements of these options could be combined. We also understand that there are constraints on the MBTA's ability to expand service with this proposal, including the number of buses available at peak times.

While we do not have a recommendation for one of the three proposals over the other two, we would like to offer the following observations on how bus network changes would affect Somerville residents:

- **Reliable bus service is important**, especially for trips that involve transfers since delays can cause missed transfers and a much longer trip. The [current unmodified Bus Network Redesign plan](#) involves substantially increasing the length of the 80 by extending it to Burlington. We encourage the MBTA to consider the effect of this change on service reliability. Long routes can increase traffic delay, making shorter route options for the 80 potentially preferable. If the 80 is re-routed as planned to provide a connection between the Green Line / Tufts University area and the Red Line in Davis Square, reliable service will make this change valuable for trips from Somerville to Cambridge and Boston.
- **Increasing frequency can enormously improve bus rider experience.** With route 109, the Bus Network Redesign has already brought frequent service to Somerville for the first time and it has made a dramatic improvement. It is now possible to walk to a bus stop on Washington St and expect a bus to show up within 15 minutes, instead of having to plan around a schedule. This has changed the way people think about the bus as a mode of travel. Similarly, in the area covered by these proposed changes, we're looking forward to more frequent service on the 96 between Davis Square, Medford, and Malden. Since service on Boston Ave would not reach the high-frequency threshold under any proposal options, we encourage the MBTA to consider the benefits of increased frequency by retaining and coordinating the schedules of routes 94 and 80, and/or implementing a higher-frequency route 80.
- **Proposals should account for future population changes and current unmet needs, especially in Somerville's Gilman Square.** Currently, the 80 provides the only accessible transit route for Gilman Square residents. As the MBTA is aware from its desire to [connect bus route 90 with an accessible Green Line station](#), the steep hill at Gilman Square makes the Green Line station inaccessible for residents with disabilities. This means that the 80 is not duplicative of the Green Line for many residents of Gilman Square, as we and the MBTA understandably thought it would be when the Bus Network Redesign was announced in early 2022. In particular, residents of the affordable Pearl Street Park building – including seniors and people with disabilities – depend on the availability of accessible transit service on their street. Additionally, future housing development in Gilman Square (namely on the Homas site) and the [construction of a 900-student school at 115 Sycamore St](#) will increase the number of potential riders. Aware of this, [the City of Somerville is currently improving the bus stops along Pearl Street](#) to facilitate more frequent and reliable service. Losing the Lechmere to Ball Square section of the current route 80 will be a real loss for people who depend on it now, and a missed opportunity to attract future residents to a convenient bus route. We encourage the MBTA to reconsider the decision to cut off this segment of the 80.

Given this proposal's range of potential outcomes, **we recommend that the MBTA share a final proposal for a second round of community feedback** following this public comment period.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Ted Alexander

Ginny Alverson

Meredith Brown

Laura Evans

Christopher Ferry

Susan Foley

Christopher Friend

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Barbara Myers

Vitor Pamplona, *Vice Chair*

Zach Rosenberg

Andrew Rosenfeld

Alessandra Seiter, *Chair*

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*Rachel Chiquoine is a member of PTAC, but abstained from this discussion and letter due to her professional relationship with the MBTA's Bus Network Redesign.*

CC: Jake Wilson, Mayor of Somerville  
Wilfred N. Mbah, City Council Vice President and City Councilor At Large, City of Somerville  
Jon Link, City Councilor At Large, City of Somerville  
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