



January 12, 2026

MBTA Better Bus Project & Service Planning Teams
10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116

Dear MBTA Better Bus Project and Service Planning Teams,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the future of the 90 and 88 bus routes serving Somerville. Last summer, the 90's service in East Somerville was re-routed from Broadway and Cross St onto Washington St. This change was made to facilitate the 90's eventual consolidation with the 88 under the [Bus Network Redesign](#), alleviate operational difficulties on Cross St, and provide an accessible connection to the Green Line at East Somerville station. PTAC – along with a large number of fellow community members, including students and families – [advocated that the 90 be restored to its previous route](#). This advocacy focused on the plan's worsened service for East Somerville residents, small businesses, and school communities, particularly the Winter Hill families displaced to Edgerly Education Center since 2023. We are thankful the MBTA responded to this advocacy by reinstating service on Broadway and Cross St, and appreciative that the team has continued to engage with us in the months since. We extend particular gratitude to Melissa Dullea, Senior Director of Service Planning and Somerville resident, for joining two of our meetings and sharing valuable information about the T's goals.

After careful consideration involving five committee discussions, the weighing of several service options against a set of relevant criteria, and committee rides of the 90 and 88 buses, **we recommend that the MBTA maintain status quo service on the 90 and 88 until at least 2032**, when two fundamental changes are expected to take place. Until then, **we also recommend that the MBTA collaborate with Somerville staff and community members** to holistically re-evaluate bus service needs in East Somerville and Gilman Square. Finally, to enable this holistic re-evaluation, **we recommend that the MBTA work with MassDOT's McGrath Blvd project team to ensure bus stops are implemented at either Pearl St or Otis St**. These recommendations are detailed below.

To clarify, our recommendation is that the 90 continue running from Davis Square to Assembly Row via Highland Ave, Cross St, and Broadway, and that the 88 continue running from Clarendon Hill to Lechmere via Highland Ave and McGrath Hwy. We recognize this recommendation keeps in place the segments of the 90 and 88 that are duplicative of one another and the Green Line, and does not allow the MBTA to avoid operational difficulties on Cross St. However, we believe this scenario will best serve Somerville community members of all ages and abilities for the time being. Namely, it will maintain direct bus service for Winter Hill families commuting from central Somerville, ensuring an element of stability for a school community going on three years of displacement. Additionally, it will maintain an accessible Green Line connection at Lechmere for residents of Highland Ave and Davis / West Somerville, and maintain bus service between East Somerville and Somerville High School.

Eventually, we would love to pursue the MBTA's vision of a more efficient service model for the 88 and 90, especially to enable a consolidated route that runs more frequently than every 40-70 minutes (for the 90) or 20-30 minutes (for the 88). However, there are **two fundamental changes** scheduled to happen over the next six years that we believe should be completed before such service changes are made to the 90 and 88. These two fundamental changes are [the construction of a new school at the former Winter Hill site](#) and the [transformation of McGrath Highway into a multimodal boulevard](#), expected for completion in 2031 and 2032 respectively. Once Winter Hill families can return to Sycamore St, there will be much less community need for direct bus service between central Somerville and East Somerville schools. Once McGrath is reconstructed, the MBTA will regain the ability to consider implementing bus service along the length of the corridor. If a consolidated route were to stop on the eastern side of McGrath Blvd at Pearl St or Otis St, students of the four East Somerville schools would have a 3-12 minute walk and would not have to cross a dangerous roadway (as they would if service were routed onto Washington St again). Implementing bus service along as much of McGrath as possible would also provide a sorely needed north-south connection, which would be particularly helpful for residents of Gilman Square who stand to lose accessible direct bus service with the retirement of the 80 under the Bus Network Redesign.

Back in 2022, [our committee was impressed](#) by the meaningful engagement the MBTA pursued with the Somerville community between the initial proposed Bus Network Redesign and the revised map. It was clear the MBTA had carefully considered the 6,400 public comments received and made impactful changes to the proposed future of Somerville's bus service. We urge the MBTA to open another round of substantive engagement with the Somerville community members invested in the future of the 90 and 88, particularly those in East Somerville, Gilman Square, and the school community. We are confident that with active collaboration and creativity, we can align on a service model for these routes that will best serve Somerville for many years to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

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