

Better
Bus
Project

Making transit
better together

Bus Network Redesign

MBTA Board of Directors
September 29, 2022



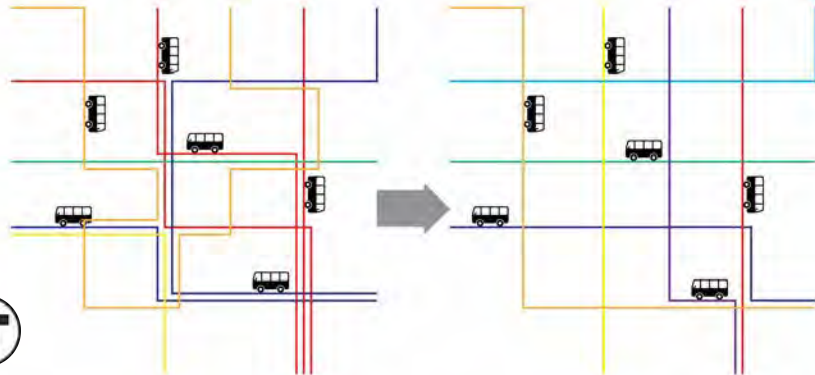
What is the Better Bus Project (BBP)?

A series of integrated projects across the authority to transform and create a better experience for both current and future bus riders



What is Bus Network Redesign?

A complete re-imagining of the MBTA's bus network to better reflect the travel needs of the region and create a better experience for current and future bus riders.



Why are we doing this?

The region has changed.

But our bus network has not changed with it.

Transit is essential to the region's economy. And the bus serves our most transit-dependent populations.

However, there isn't enough frequent service when people need it, and the network is difficult to understand due to route variations/deviations.

So it's essential that our bus network changes.

What we are trying to do

- 1 Equity first*, prioritizing the needs of those who depend on buses and need frequent, reliable service**
- 2 More frequent service in busy neighborhoods**
- 3 More all-day service**
- 4 New connections to more places (including non-downtown centers)**
- 5 A network that's simpler and easier to use**
- 6 More transit priority and other infrastructure to improve reliability and accessibility**

***Equity is defined as improving access and quality of service for transit-critical populations**

(low-income populations, people of color, seniors, people with disabilities, or people who live in households with few or no vehicles)

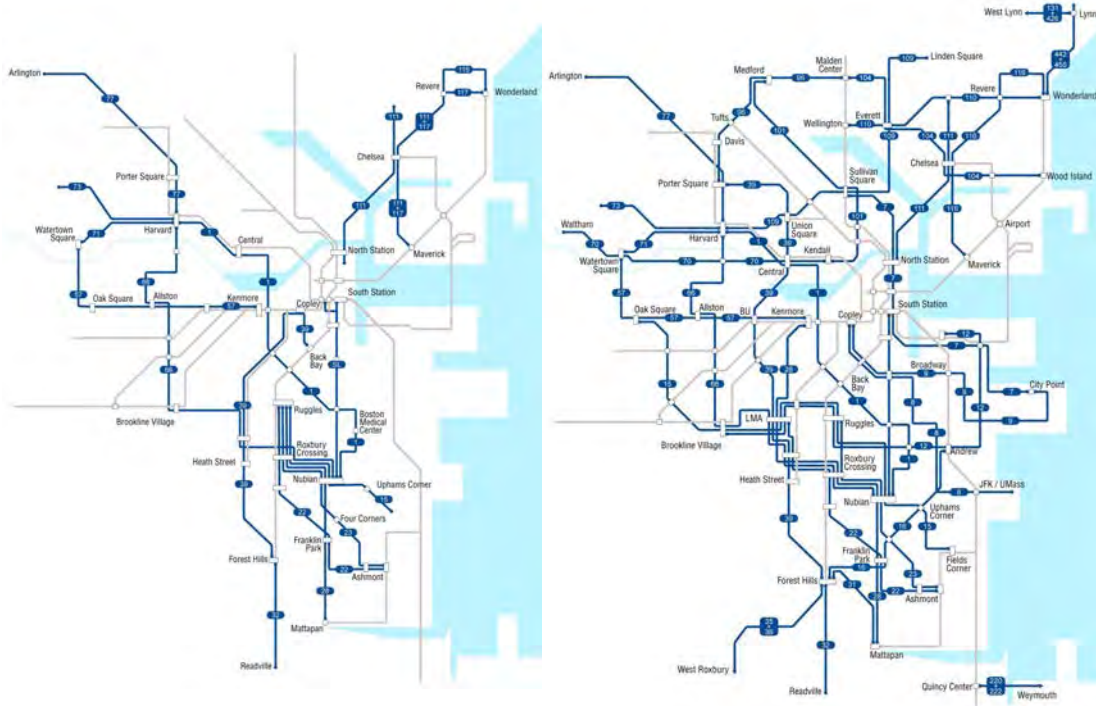


Draft Bus Network Proposal

May 2022

1 We proposed to double the amount of high frequency service

Frequent service, current network (left) and proposed network (right)

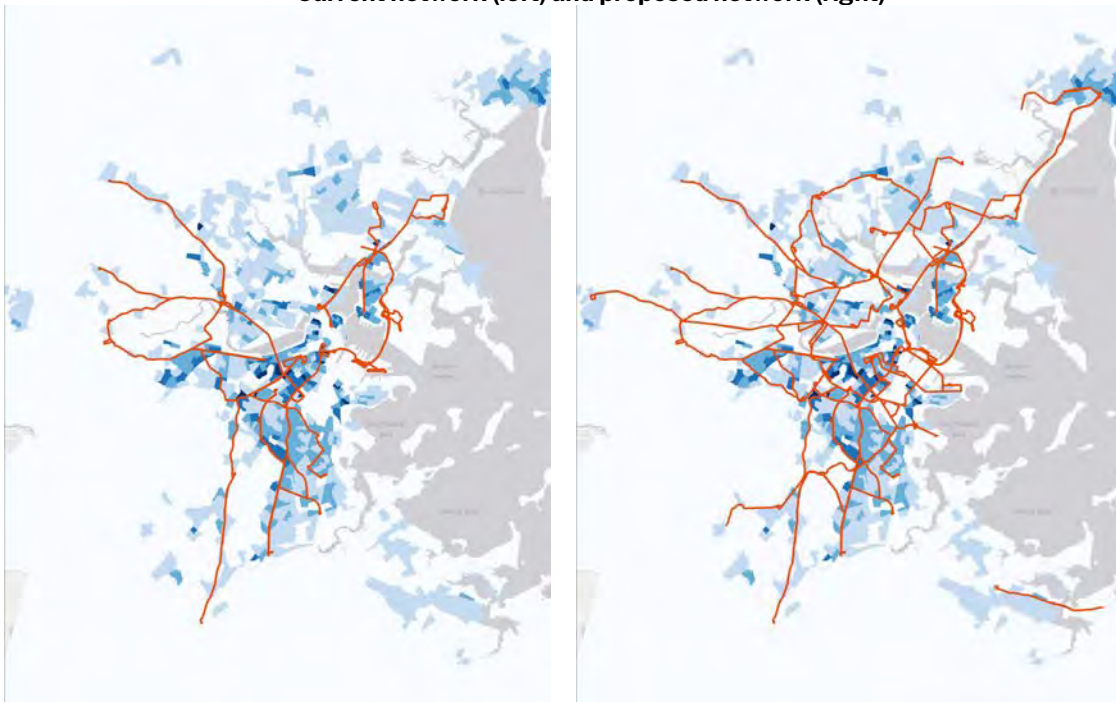


275,000 more residents with access to 15 min or less all-day 7-day-a-week service

- **15 corridors → 30 corridors**
- Today, only **27%** of weekday service is frequent – in this plan it's **50%**.
- Today Everett, Lynn, Medford, Somerville, South Boston, and West Roxbury have no all-day high frequency routes – now they would.
- Today LMA has only 2 frequent routes – now it would have 6. Seaport and Kendall also get new frequent service.

2 We proposed providing better service for low-income populations and communities of color

Frequent service (red) and low-income populations (blue)
Current network (left) and proposed network (right)



In the proposed network:

- **70% residents of color** have access to high frequency service.
- **115,000 residents of color** gain access to high frequency service.
- **One in every two low-income households** has access to high frequency service.
- **40,000 low-income households** gain access to high frequency service.

We developed the draft network proposal using service design principles based on public feedback

- 1 Prioritize frequency over one seat rides**
- 2 Create rapid transit connections, but also keep going for crosstown trips**
- 3 Focus on all-day service**
- 4 Combine routes to create high frequency corridors**
- 5 Minimize route variations**
- 6 Minimize deviations on high frequency routes**

Public Feedback is a key component of bus network planning

- We created a draft network proposal based on quantitative travel data, but that data does not tell us about our riders lived experience, or how bus service relates to other aspects of their lives (housing, employment, etc.)
- **Quantitative data-driven decision making must be balanced with qualitative data gathering through public engagement efforts**
- We're following our service design principles as we seek to adjust the draft network proposal to match the stated needs of our riders



What we heard during public engagement June - September 2022

We conducted one of the most extensive public engagement efforts in MBTA history

Since releasing the draft map in May 2022 we have received **nearly 20,000 comments**:

- **16,000+ comments received on online survey** in multiple languages
- **2,500+ signatures across 8 petitions submitted to the MBTA**
- **1,400+ comments at 8 virtual regional public meetings** to present the proposed changes to the network
- **1,100+ comments received through a dedicated voicemail line and project email address**
- **300+ riders attended focus groups** held in partnership with community organizations in multiple languages
- **13 street team events and 12 station open houses across the network** with multilingual staff
- **Advertising in multiple languages** in newspapers, radio, stations, and **audio announcements on buses**
- **Meetings with municipalities and roadway owners, and briefings for elected officials**
- **Spoke to bus operators at bus garages throughout the system to get route-specific feedback**

What people like about the network redesign

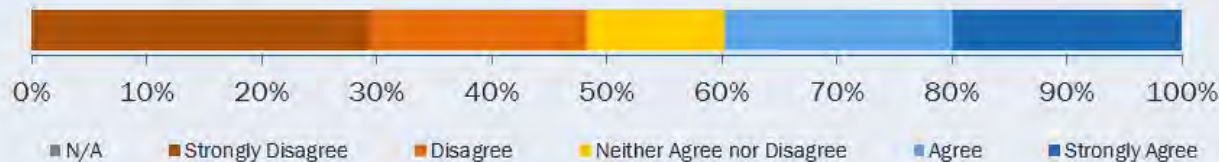
- Strong support from the public and municipalities for:
 - more frequent service
 - more mid-day and weekend service
 - service to new destinations

“The City of Boston strongly supports many of the key tenets of Bus Network Redesign, particularly the commitment to increase bus service by 25%. The implementation of high frequency routes and improved crosstown services will be crucial to the future of the transportation network.”

- Mayor Michelle Wu

Support

I generally support the redesign bus network, including the 25% increase in the service in this neighborhood.



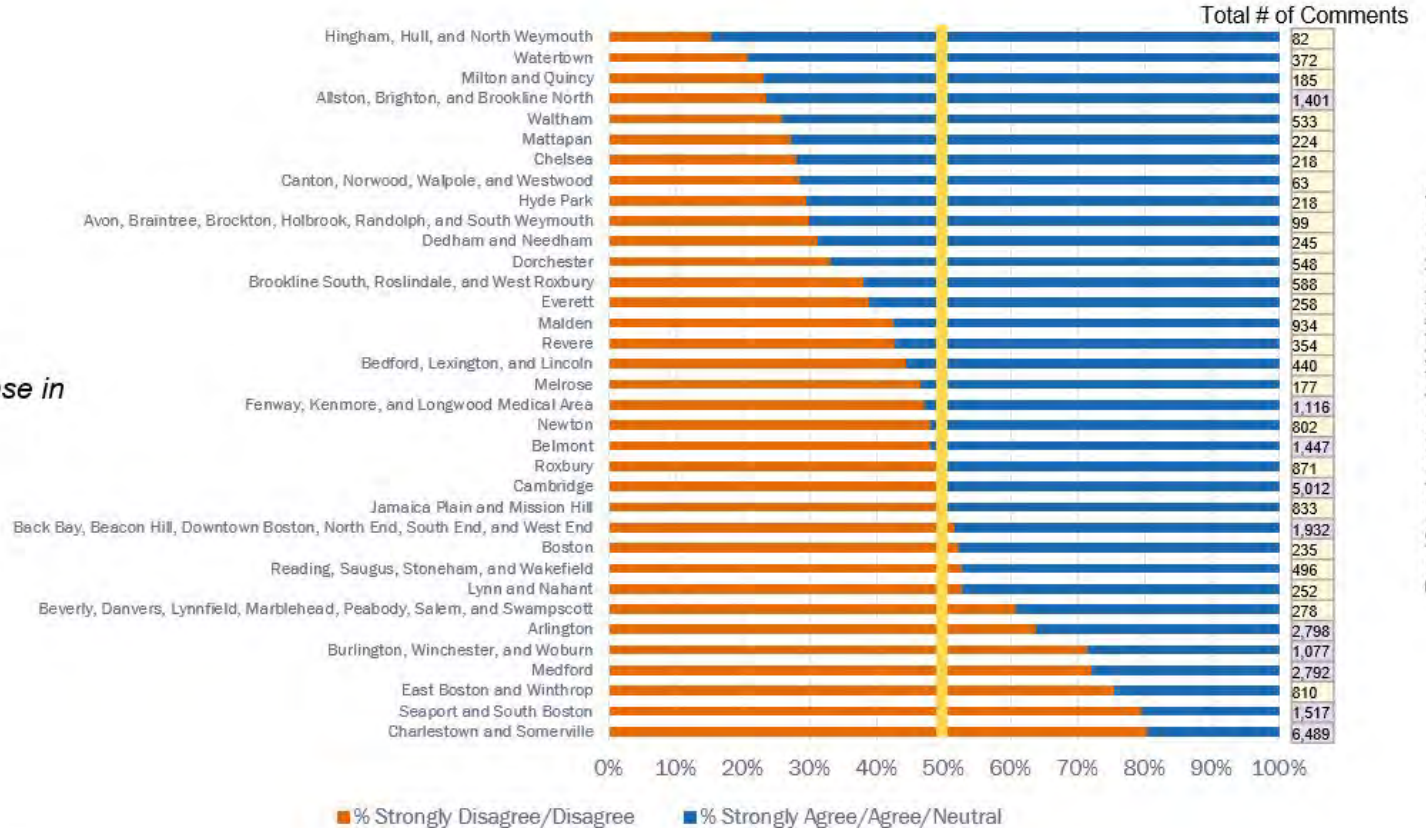
40% of respondents **agree** or **strongly agree**

48% of respondents **disagree** or **strongly disagree**

Feedback varies by neighborhood

I generally support the redesign bus network, including the 25% increase in the service in this neighborhood.

Online Feedback Form only, one person can comment on multiple Neighborhoods/routes.



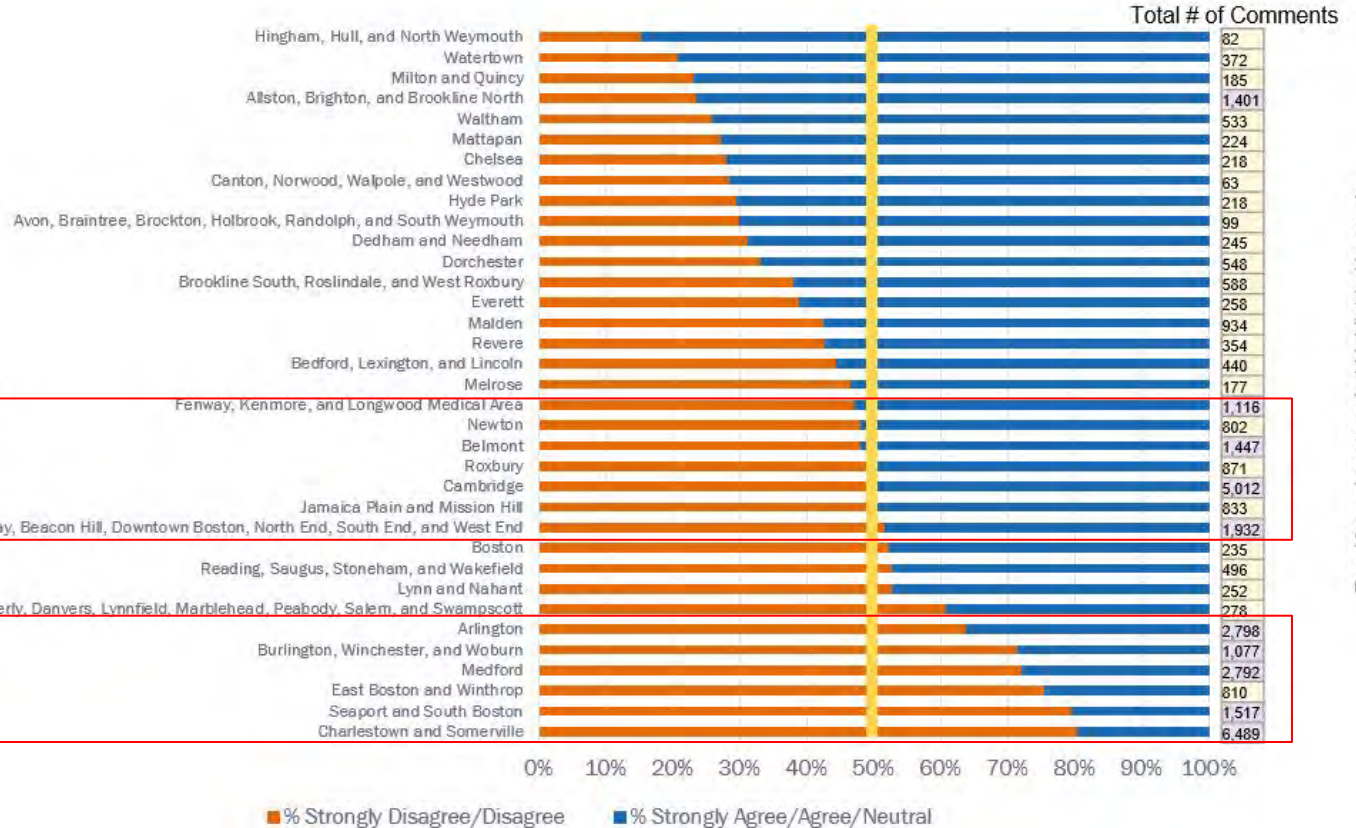
Top 10 most-commented highlighted in purple



Feedback varies by neighborhood

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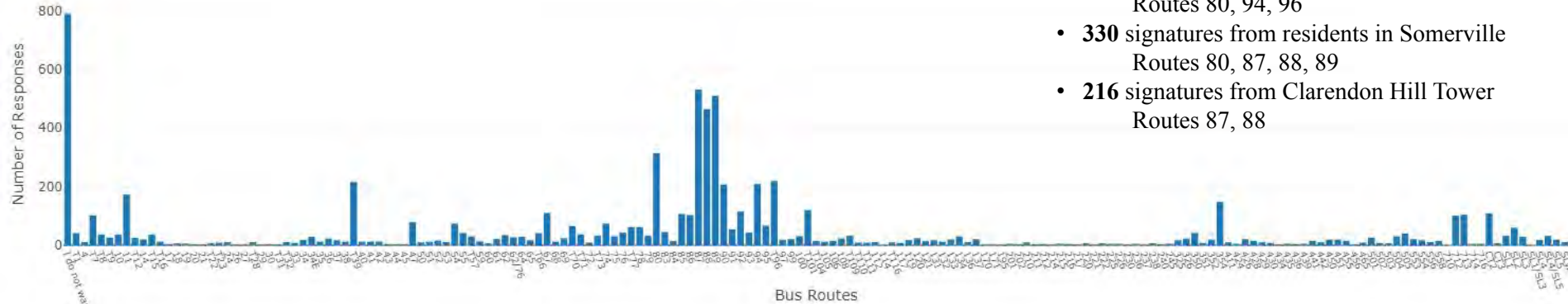
Online Feedback Form only, one person can comment on multiple Neighborhoods/routes.



Top 10 most-commented highlighted in purple



Feedback varies by route



Petitions:

- **1,681** signatures from residents in Medford
Routes 80, 94, 96
- **330** signatures from residents in Somerville
Routes 80, 87, 88, 89
- **216** signatures from Clarendon Hill Tower
Routes 87, 88

Ten Most Frequently-Commented Routes (feedback form)

Route 87 (Somerville, Arlington)	531	Route 39 (Jamaica Plain, Back Bay)	216
Route 89 (Somerville)	510	Route 94 (Medford, Somerville)	209
Route 88 (Somerville)	464	Route 90 (Somerville)	207
Route 80 (Arlington, Medford, Somerville)	314	Route 11 (South Boston)	173
Route 96 (Medford, Somerville, Cambridge)	219	Route 354 (Burlington, Woburn, Medford)	148



Critical Feedback can be grouped into general themes:

1 Concerns from public, elected officials, municipal staff, etc. on specific route changes, connections, and new routes proposed in the May 2022 draft network

- Boston: 11, 39, 55
- Somerville/Medford/Arlington: 80, 87, 88, 89, 96
- Cambridge: 74, 83, 87
- Chelsea: 104, 112
- Woburn, Burlington, Medford express: 354
- Newton: 505

2 Desire to maintain one-seat ride and/or front-door access to medical facilities, senior housing, etc.

- Boston: 11, 8, 12, 18, 55
- Waltham: 53
- Newton: 54
- Malden/Everett: 97/99
- Chelsea: 112

3 Route length and reliability concerns (both from municipalities and operators)

- 15, 39, 90, 133



How we're using public feedback

Public Feedback is a key component of bus network planning

- We developed service design principles in consultation with the public to inform the May 2022 draft network proposal
- We're evaluation potential changes to the May 2022 draft network proposal based on the public feedback gathered from June through September
- Our recommendations will incorporate our service design principles and public feedback while evaluating tradeoffs to the network
- We won't be able to make every adjustment that was requested of us, but the revised network will be reflective of what we heard during public engagement

Next Steps

- **We are finalizing our review of the nearly 20,000 comments received from the public and evaluating potential changes to the May 2022 draft network proposal**
- **We will present a revised network to the public and the Board in late October**
- **The revised network will be presented to the Board for vote in November**

From Planning to Implementation

Spring-Summer
2022

Fall
2022

2023

2024

2025

2026

2027

Draft network
proposal

Adopt revised
network

Phase #1

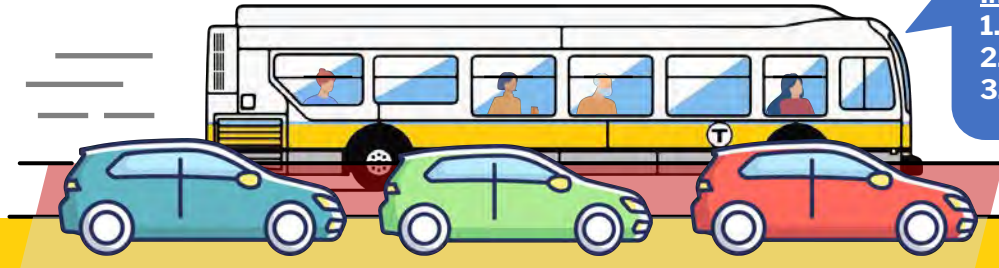
Phase #2

Phase #3

Phase #4

Phase #5

Transit Priority, Bus Stop Installation, Busway Modifications, Signage



Implementation Challenges:
1. Bus operator shortage
2. Delivering transit priority projects
3. Fleet and facilities program





Appendix

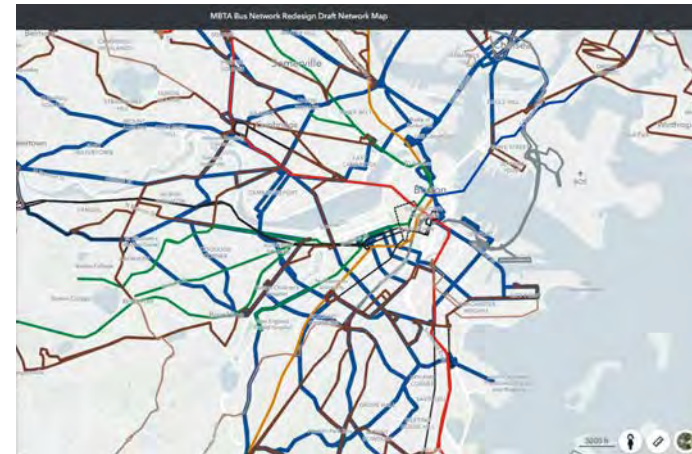
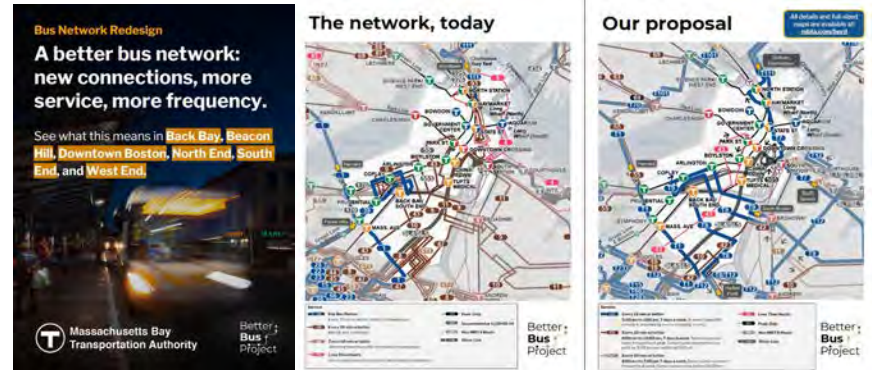
Outreach Toolkit

Variety of physical and digital materials

- Neighborhood-specific booklets in 9 languages
- Project postcards
- Posters in English and Spanish
- Interactive Remix map
- Online trip comparison tool
- Audio announcements on buses
- Advertisements in stations, radio, online

Multiple ways for people to provide comments

- Project voicemail line
- Email address, mailing address
- Feedback form (paper and online)
- Public meeting comment period



In Person Outreach

Meeting people where they are

- Street teams and station open houses
- Mayor Wu's coffee hours
- Community events

Public Hearing

- In-person public hearing (recorded on Zoom and posted on project website)

In Person Focus Groups

- Hosted by community based organizations



Virtual Outreach

Eight Virtual Public Meetings

- Each focused on a different region of the network
- Breakout groups for in-depth discussion
- Simultaneous language interpretation
- American Sign Language

Virtual Focus Groups

- Hosted by community based organizations

Online Feedback Form

- Provided in nine languages



Internal Outreach

Goal: Putting bus operators at the focal point of bus transformation

Bus Operator Feedback

- Project Team visited MBTA bus garages to speak directly with our operators about proposed routes
- Operators provided critical insight on:
 - Route length, roadway characteristics, bathroom facilities, stop locations, rider experience and demographics, etc.



Strategies for Equitable and Accessible Outreach

Outreach to specific communities:

Senior Centers

- Mass Senior Action Council
- Asian American Service Association

ESL Communities

- Union Capital Boston
- Quincy Asian Resource Inc.
- The Brazilian Worker Center

Other Priority Groups

- Quincy Head Start
- Boston Disability Commission



Multilingual Materials, Interpretation and ASL Support

- Project Booklets – Available in 9 languages
- Project Postcards – Available in 9 languages
- Feedback form – Available in 9 languages
- Online Remix map – translated by Google Translate
- Event Posters – English and Spanish
- ASL and captioning at all meetings