

Statewide poll: Open track for regional rail proposals

Massachusetts residents statewide and in key Gateway Cities support a broad array of changes to rail service and fares, and show a broad interest in new development ideas.

The MBTA’s Commuter Rail is getting new scrutiny as part of a set of solutions to Eastern Massachusetts’ three interrelated problems of transportation, housing costs, and income inequality. At the moment, the far-flung rail system functions more or less as the name suggests: carrying workers in and out of Boston during typical commuting hours. The state is currently conducting a “Rail Vision” study examining new ways of running the service, and a diverse set of proposals have made the rounds of political and policy leadership and advocacy groups.

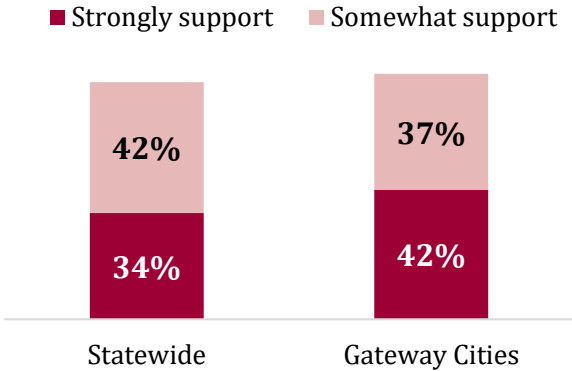
This new survey shows that, if policymakers are serious about remaking commuter rail as part of the solution for those challenges, residents would be willing to get on board. One idea is to remake commuter rail a “regional rail” network, with more frequent and robust service less oriented towards commuting in and out of Boston. Such a network would encourage riders to take the train to more places, at more times, and for more reasons. It could also spur the creation of jobs and economic development beyond Boston, including long-term efforts to revitalize the state’s Gateway Cities.

This survey examines public opinion on this and many other ideas for improving the commuter rail system. It finds that, while residents appreciate the Commuter Rail for what it is now, they also support a more expansive vision of what the system could be, including reimagining the system as a regional rail network (Figure 1). Residents not only support such an approach, they think it would likely result in benefits such as increased rail ridership, decreased road

KEY FINDINGS

- Residents support major changes to rail service in the Commonwealth, including reimagining commuter rail as a “regional rail” service (76%), building the North South Rail Link (81%), and building East-West and South Coast Rail (76% each).
- If built, residents think regional rail would likely increase ridership (84%), decrease traffic congestion (80%), and spread economic development beyond Boston (81%).
- Majorities support several potential revenues to pay for regional rail, but not raising user fees like fares or the gas tax.
- Half of residents think current rail fares are too high, and majorities support lowering fares overall (87%) or offering discounts to low-income (80%) and off-peak riders (88%).
- If regional rail is built, 79% think building Transit-Oriented Development near rail stations in the Gateway Cities would be a good idea. Two-thirds would support state incentives to seed such projects. And significant percentages say they would live, work, shop, or go out in these TODs, suggesting a potential market for them.

Figure 1: Mass. residents support moving towards a regional rail system.
 % who say they would support the proposal after hearing detailed description.



congestion, and more economic opportunity beyond Boston (Figure 2).

The survey also explored the related concept of Transit-Oriented Development, or TOD, in Gateway Cities. TOD refers to siting new development near regional rail stations. Here too, the survey finds support for the broad idea. Residents also express interest in visiting such developments for shopping, recreation, or even as a place to work or live. Support was particularly high among an oversample of residents of 16 specific Gateway Cities.¹

Residents also support various proposals for new revenues to pay for these changes, although they draw the line at raising fares on the current system, which many see as too high already. In fact, proposals to cut fares – across the board, for low-income residents, for off-peak travel, and to relieve pressure on the T’s subway lines – were among the most popular ideas tested in the survey. Even as they support a broader vision for rail, residents also want to prioritize basic maintenance of the current system.

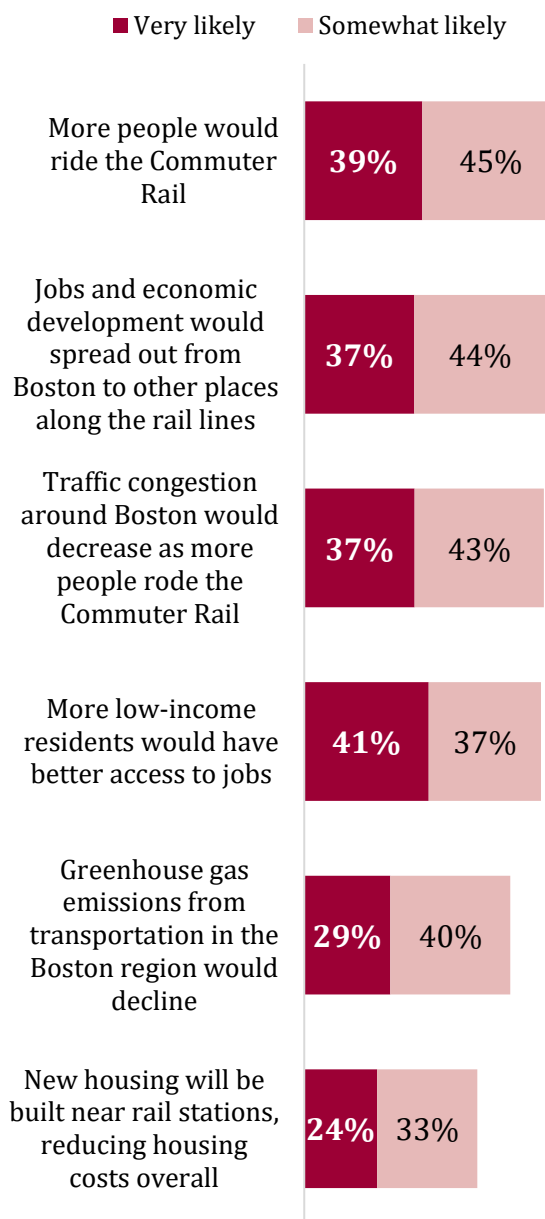
Residents see benefits of regional rail to traffic, climate, and the economy.

Rather than focusing on moving workers into Boston in the morning and back out to the suburbs in the evening, a regional rail network would run more frequently both into and out of Boston throughout the day, at night, and on weekends. Because the specifics of a regional rail concept are unfamiliar to most people, the survey included a detailed description of the proposal².

¹ The cities oversampled were: Attleboro, Brockton, Fall River, Fitchburg, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Pittsfield, Salem, Springfield, Taunton, and Worcester.

Figure 2: Residents think regional rail would likely increase ridership, decrease traffic congestion, and spread out jobs and economic development.

% who saw each outcome as very / somewhat likely



² The description read as follows: “Some have proposed reimagining the Commuter Rail system into a ‘regional rail’ network. Under a regional rail-style plan, trains would travel in both directions every 15 to 30 minutes throughout the day, at night, and on the weekends.”

After hearing this description, 76% of residents statewide say they would support moving the existing commuter rail system towards more of a regional rail-style network. Overall support is similar in the 16 Gateway Cities oversampled (79%), although strong support there is higher (42% versus 34% statewide). Current commuter rail users are among the groups most enthusiastic about the change (84% support, 54% strongly).

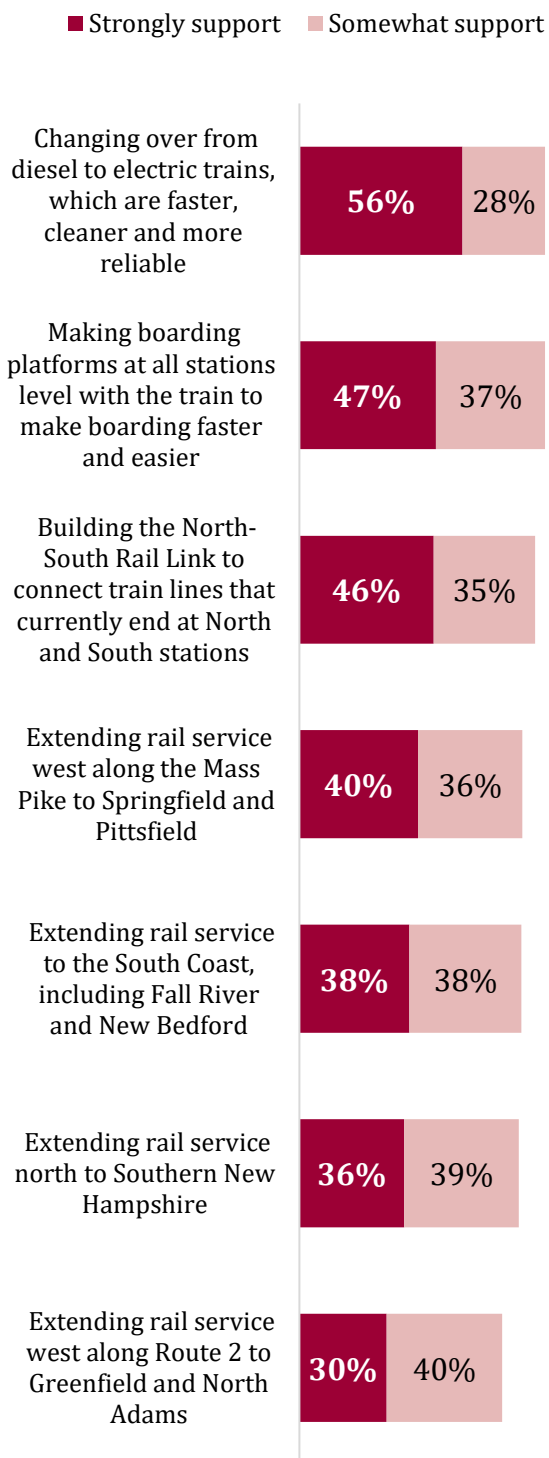
Residents not only support regional rail; they also think that implementing it would likely have various economic and environmental benefits (Figure 2). Enticing more riders to the commuter rail was seen as the most likely outcome; 85% of residents statewide thought that would be likely, including 46% who thought it very likely. Majorities also thought it likely that traffic congestion (80%) and greenhouse gas emissions would decrease (69%), that low-income residents would have better access to jobs (79%), and that jobs and economic development would spread out from Boston along rail lines (80%).

A smaller majority thought regional rail could help ease the region's sky-high housing costs by spurring new construction near rail stations (58%). Past surveys have identified housing costs as a top issue in Boston and its inner suburbs.

Residents support other significant rail investments and expansions.

Residents also support other major improvements to the commuter rail system, some of which would fall under the umbrella of regional rail. For example, some visions of regional rail call for making all station platforms level with the train, to ease boarding, and electrifying the train fleet. These two measures

Figure 3: Resident support a range major rail changes and expansions
% who say they would strongly / somewhat support each proposal



would facilitate the more frequent service that is the core feature of a regional rail concept. Both proved equally popular when tested independently, with 84% of residents supporting electrification and train-level platforms. Electrification was the only capital improvement tested strongly supported by a majority (56%).

Nearly as many (81%) support building the North South Rail Link to connect train lines that currently terminate at North and South Stations. This idea is strongly supported by 46% of residents statewide. The project, which has had high-profile support from former governors Michael Dukakis and Bill Weld, would enable a train starting north of Boston to travel through the city and back out on one of the southern lines, or vice versa. The project is most popular in the suburbs closest Boston, where 52% strongly support the idea.

Residents also support various expansions that would bring service to parts of the state that do not have it currently. Those include the so-called East-West rail to Springfield and Pittsfield (76% support); extending commuter rail north into Southern New Hampshire (75%); South Coast rail down to Fall River and New Bedford (76%); and a second East-West route that would trace Route 2 out to Greenfield and North Adams (70%).

As might be expected, support is strongest for each expansion in the region that would benefit from it. In the Southeast, 53% *strongly* supporting South Coast rail. Out West, an eye-popping 67% strongly support East-West rail to Springfield and Pittsfield.

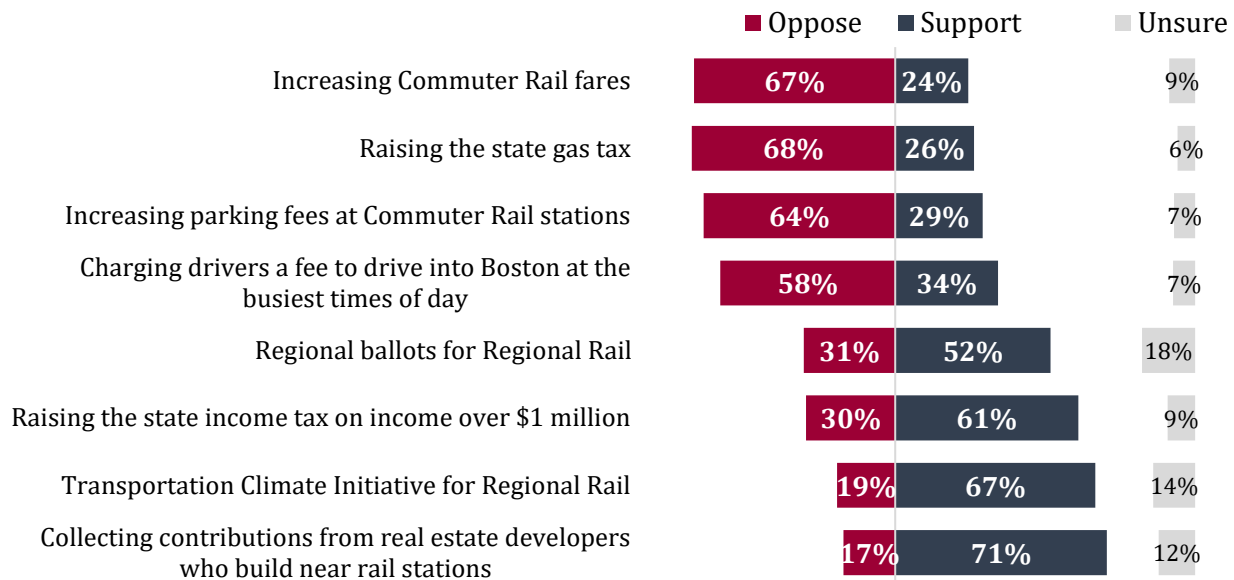
Residents support some potential revenues for regional rail – but not raising rail fares.

It's one thing to support a major project like regional rail; it's another to support paying for it. But even here, residents support some revenue sources earmarked for regional rail (Figure 4). Topping the list is what policy experts call value capture: collecting contributions from developers who want to build near rail stations (71% support). And 61% would support using the long-discussed idea of a surtax on income over \$1 million a year to pay for regional rail. The surtax idea has been around for some time as a potential ballot question. It has often polled even higher when earmarked for the broader goals of funding education and transportation.

Another possible revenue source is the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI), a policy now being developed by Massachusetts and other states that would charge fuel distributors a fee related to the pollution their fuel produces. An MPG survey from earlier this year found that 68% of residents support Massachusetts going forward with TCI. If the proposal is implemented, 67% say they would support putting some revenue from TCI towards regional rail.

TCI would be a multi-state policy, affecting a swath of states up and down the East Coast. Another proposal would focus on the local and regional level. Right now, cities and towns in Massachusetts cannot collaborate on ballot questions to raise funds for transportation projects. MPG polls in recent years have found majorities support giving cities and regions this authority. If cities and regions are given that power, 52% of residents would support a ballot question to advance regional rail in their part of the state.

Figure 4: Residents support several revenue sources for Regional Rail, but not user fees.
 % support / oppose each proposal (full wording for each in Appendix)



Taken together, there is evidence of majority support for regional rail, for creating these revenue streams, and for using them to fund the project.

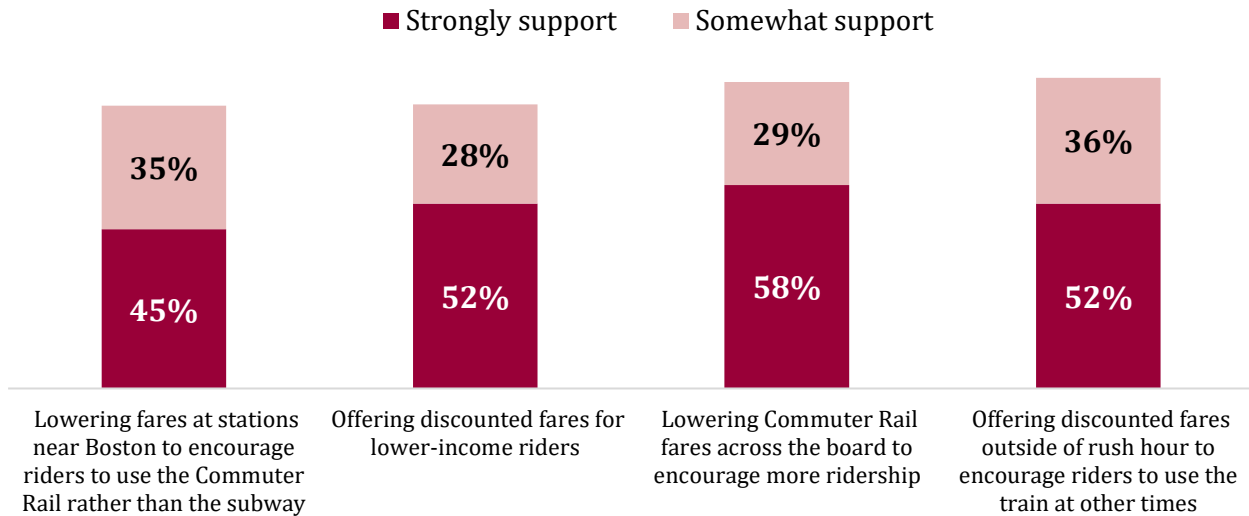
Residents are much less enthusiastic about the idea of using transportation user fees to pay for regional rail. Majorities are opposed to raising commuter rail fares or parking fees, the gas tax, or charging drivers a fee to drive into Boston at peak times. Raising or lowering user fees can have other desirable policy impacts, by encouraging or discouraging certain behaviors. But those outcomes often take a back seat to the price consumers will pay up front. If legislative leaders decide to pursue user fees to fund transportation investments, they will have to make the case to a skeptical public for why those revenues are preferable over more popular ideas.

Residents see promise in revised commuter rail fare policies

Just as they support rethinking rail service, residents support changing the way commuter rail fares are structured. About half (51%) of residents statewide think commuter rail fares are too high right now, including 67% of those who use the system as a part of their regular commute. The remainder are divided between those who say the fares are about right (25%) or who are unsure (22%). Given the regional nature of the system, it is not surprising that considerable portions of those outside of the greater Boston region are unfamiliar with commuter rail fares.

Large majorities across party and demographic groups support several fare proposals, and majorities *strongly* support three of the four (Figure 5). Those include cutting fares across the board (87%), discounting trips taken during off-peak times (88%), giving low-income riders a discount (80%), and lowering fares at rail stops near Boston to attract riders from the overcrowded MBTA subway system (80%).

Figure 5: Wide support for several potential changes to fare structures
 % strongly / somewhat support various fare policy changes



Off-peak and low-income discounts were two of the ideas proposed in a recent MassINC report on fare equity on the commuter rail system.³ That report found evidence that lower-income residents, many concentrated in Gateway Cities in the farthest zones of the current system, are priced out by the distance-based fare structure. Geography, combined with corporate and monthly-pass discounts, mean some of the lowest-income riders are paying the most per ride. The report also found some evidence that lowering fares, as the Commuter Rail did recently on weekends, can entice some new riders. This poll suggests that residents are indeed concerned about the high price of commuter rail fares, and would support an overall drop in fares and targeted discounts.

Residents open to Gateway City TOD, including state incentives to seed them

Changing how the state offers and charges for rail service has the potential to change how residents get around. It also has the potential to change *where* residents travel to and from. As recent economic gains have concentrated in Boston, more and more workers are trying to live close to the city, or to commute into it. This concentration of opportunities has worsened the twin problems of spiraling housing costs and traffic congestion. These reinforce one another: housing prices force workers out even farther from their workplaces, putting more cars on the road.

One potential solution is to boost residential and commercial development outside of Boston, spreading the places residents can live and work beyond Boston. “Transit-Oriented Development” (TOD) areas would concentrate new housing, office space, dining and retail near

³ Elizabeth Haney, Dr. Tracy Corley, and Ben Forman, “Prioritizing Equitable Growth Through Fare Policy,” MassINC, August 2019.

rail stations. This would create new, more affordable housing, and the residents who occupy it would be near more frequent and reliable train service. Activating the areas near stations could also help generate demand for the new rail service. MassINC’s analysis found that the Gateway Cities studied could support 230,000 jobs and an equal number of residents. That’s one-quarter of the state’s projected population growth between now and 2035⁴.

Assuming the state builds regional rail, residents are open to building TOD near rail stations in the state’s Gateway Cities to capitalize on potential new and improved service. After being shown a map of the 16 Gateway Cities that were the focus of this study and a description of Transit Oriented Development, 79% of residents thought creating TOD districts in the Gateway Cities would be a good idea. This overall number is not much different in the 16 targeted Gateway Cities, (82% versus 79%). Enthusiasm for the

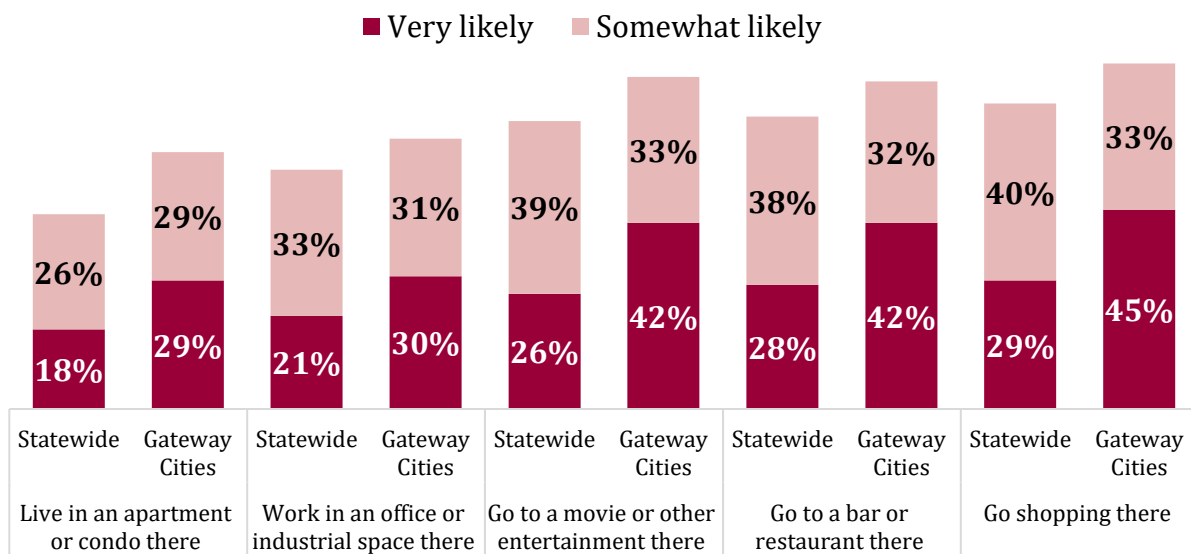
idea is higher there, with 44% in the Gateway Cities thinking this was a very good idea, compared to 34% statewide.

Moreover, 66% of residents would support the state providing incentives to cities and developers to seed these TOD projects, while 20% are opposed to state help. This is key because MassINC’s research has found that some level of state subsidy will likely be needed to get many of these projects off the ground.

If developers build these TODs, large shares of residents say they will utilize them for various reasons (Figure 6). Around two-thirds say it’s very or somewhat likely they would consider visiting a TOD for shopping (69%), dining (66%), or entertainment (65%). When it comes to working (54%) or living (44%) in a TOD, considerable shares expressed interest. These numbers are even higher among current residents of the 16 Gateway Cities oversampled.

Figure 6: Residents say they are likely to consider Gateway City TODs as places to visit, live, or work.

% who said they are very / somewhat likely to use TOD developments for each purpose



⁴ Dan Hodge and Ben Forman, *The Promise and Potential of Transformative Transit-Oriented Development in Gateway Cities*. MassINC, April 2018.

A majority (58%) of these residents say they would likely consider living in a TOD, and about three-quarters would shop, dine or go out for entertainment in one.

These findings are in response to a hypothetical scenario. Much will depend upon how potential Gateway City TODs are designed, programmed, and marketed. But even with those caveats, these findings suggest a significant potential market for TOD in the Gateway Cities if paired with regional rail. If that vision is realized, TOD around rail stations has the potential to reactivate Gateway Cities as anchors of regional economic activity, while helping to ease the state's dual housing and transportation crunches.

Perceptions of the current system.

As it stands now, residents think commuter rail provides a reasonable option for commuting, with 31% rating it "very good" and 47% "somewhat good." But many of these ratings are based on second-hand knowledge of the system. Only 21% of residents consider themselves very familiar with Commuter Rail, and only 20% use it monthly or more often. Many seem to be comparing rail service to driving when making this assessment. Among those who thought the commuter rail was a "very good" option for work commuting, the most common factor cited in making the determination was that it was better than driving into the city.

For the smaller share of residents who thought commuter rail was a bad option, reliability was their top concern about the service, followed by cost. "Unfortunately, it is so unreliable that it forces commuters to drive in rather than rely on the commuter rail," wrote one resident who thought the commuter rail was a bad option for work commuting.

Residents also place a higher priority on improving the current transportation system than expanding it. Improving the public transportation system is a high priority for residents, with 72% calling it a major priority, close to the 78% who said the same of improving the condition of existing roads and bridges. Residents also prioritize reducing congestion, with 75% calling that a major priority.

The fact that transit is close to roads as a priority is notable, given how many more residents in the survey say that they drive than take any form of transit. Previous polling has shown that residents understand the relationship between transit and traffic, and support investing in the former to improve the latter.

By comparison, only 47% of residents consider expanding rail service to other parts of the state a major priority. That's not to say voters are opposed to expansion, and strong majorities support making big-ticket investments like East-West rail, South Coast rail, and the North South Rail Link. Similarly, when asked to rate operational changes to the current rail service, 74% thought investing in basic maintenance to improve reliability should be a major priority. That's much higher than those who wanted to increase the frequencies of trains during the day (54%), at night (41%) and on the weekends (46%).

Residents want a transportation system that functions, and many other polls show strong doubts about the current system's capabilities. But looking further ahead, residents also support a more robust and expansive visions of rail service than the regional commuter-oriented service currently in place.

Conclusion

Improving rail service in the Commonwealth, up to and including a “regional rail” concept, has the potential to help address the state’s transportation and housing crises. This survey shows that residents, statewide and in the Gateway Cities that would be most affected by this plan, are quite open to the idea. Residents support regional rail, and other big improvements and expansions of the current rail system, as well as smaller changes to improve service. They see regional rail’s potential to increase rail ridership, reduce congestion, and spread jobs and economic growth. To get there, residents are open to new revenue from the state, but not from increased user fees.

They also support the kinds of developments improved rail service could enable. Many, especially in the Gateway Cities, say they would likely consider using these new TODs. This potential market TOD could trigger a virtuous cycle, as better rail service sparks development, which in turn helps generate ridership for the train. As the state grapples with the future of the rail system and the transportation and housing issues the state faces, residents are ready to see the rail system do more.

Statewide Survey on Rail and Transit-Oriented Development

Topline Results

Statewide Survey of 1,430 Massachusetts residents
with oversample of residents in 16 Gateway Cities⁵

Field Dates: August 14-23, 2019

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Charlie Baker?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Very favorable	20%	25%
Somewhat favorable	44%	36%
Somewhat unfavorable	11%	9%
Very unfavorable	4%	4%
Heard of him, but not sure	14%	14%
Never heard of him	5%	9%
Prefer not to say	2%	4%

Do you approve or disapprove of how Governor Charlie Baker and his administration are handling transportation in Massachusetts?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Strongly approve	11%	22%
Somewhat approve	38%	36%
Somewhat disapprove	21%	16%
Strongly disapprove	9%	6%
Unsure	20%	21%

When it comes to the state's transportation system, how much of a priority do you think each of the following issues should be for state government here in Massachusetts?

ROTATE ORDER		Major priority	Minor priority	Not a priority	Unsure
Improving the condition of highways, roads, and bridges	Statewide	78%	17%	3%	2%
	Gateway Cities	74%	18%	3%	5%
Reducing the greenhouse gas emissions from transportation	Statewide	49%	34%	12%	5%
	Gateway Cities	55%	28%	10%	7%
Improving the existing public transportation system of trains, buses, and ferries	Statewide	72%	22%	4%	2%
	Gateway Cities	69%	22%	5%	4%
Expanding train service to parts of the state that currently do not have it	Statewide	47%	39%	11%	4%
	Gateway Cities	54%	32%	8%	6%
Reducing traffic congestion	Statewide	75%	20%	3%	3%
	Gateway Cities	65%	25%	4%	5%
Improving bus service in cities outside of the Boston area	Statewide	46%	40%	9%	5%
	Gateway Cities	53%	33%	8%	6%

⁵ The cities oversampled were: Attleboro, Brockton, Fall River, Fitchburg, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Pittsfield, Salem, Springfield, Taunton, and Worcester. The "Gateway Cities" results in this report refer to responses from residents of these 16 cities.

How familiar would you say you are with the commuter rail, the network of trains that serves Eastern Massachusetts beyond the core MBTA service area?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Very familiar	21%	25%
Somewhat familiar	41%	32%
Not too familiar	24%	25%
Not at all familiar	13%	16%
Unsure	1%	2%

How often do you use the Commuter Rail service run by the MBTA?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Nearly every day	4%	6%
A few times a week	6%	10%
Once or twice a month	10%	13%
Less than monthly	37%	30%
I never use the Commuter rail	41%	39%
Unsure	1%	3%

For those who have the option of taking for Commuter Rail to get to and from work, do you think the Commuter Rail is a ...?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
A very good commuting option	31%	36%
A somewhat good commuting option	47%	39%
A somewhat bad commuting option	9%	9%
A very bad commuting option	4%	5%
Unsure	9%	11%

How about for other, non-commuting trips like going shopping or visiting friends? For these trips do you think the commuter rail is a ...?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
A very good option	22%	29%
A somewhat good option	47%	42%
A somewhat bad option	14%	14%
A very bad option	8%	5%
Unsure	9%	10%

What factors are you thinking of when rating the commuter rail this way? *Options sorted for display.*

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Location of routes / stations	10%	10%
Condition / comfort	10%	11%
Safety	3%	4%
General negative comment	2%	2%
Reliability	18%	14%
Cost	25%	15%
Convenience	12%	10%
Speed / efficiency	14%	12%
Comparison to driving (congestion, parking, cost, pollution)	12%	12%
Frequency / schedule	11%	5%
General positive comment	5%	8%
Other	6%	7%
Unsure / Non-responsive	14%	20%

Here are some ideas that some people have suggested for improving the Commuter Rail system run by the MBTA. How much of a priority do you think each of these should be in improving the Commuter Rail?

ROTATE ORDER		Major priority	Minor priority	Not a priority	Unsure
Investing in basic maintenance to make Commuter Rail service more reliable	Statewide	74%	19%	5%	3%
	Gateway Cities	74%	16%	5%	6%
Having more parking at Commuter Rail stations	Statewide	48%	38%	8%	6%
	Gateway Cities	50%	35%	6%	9%
Having shared bikes, shuttles, and other types of transportation at Commuter Rail stations to help riders get to their final destinations	Statewide	36%	42%	16%	6%
	Gateway Cities	46%	35%	13%	6%
Running the trains more often at midday, between rush hours, going both into and out of Boston	Statewide	54%	35%	6%	5%
	Gateway Cities	61%	30%	3%	6%
Running trains more often at night	Statewide	41%	45%	10%	5%
	Gateway Cities	47%	38%	7%	8%
Running trains more often on the weekends	Statewide	47%	41%	7%	5%
	Gateway Cities	54%	34%	6%	7%

Here are some ideas for changing how riders pay for Commuter Rail service. How much would you support or oppose making each of these changes to Commuter Rail fares?

ROTATE ORDER		Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Unsure
Lowering Commuter Rail fares across the board to encourage more ridership	Statewide	58%	29%	5%	2%	6%
	Gateway Cities	59%	24%	9%	2%	7%
Offering more discounted fares for lower income riders	Statewide	52%	28%	10%	3%	6%
	Gateway Cities	58%	24%	7%	3%	7%
Lowering fares at stations near Boston to encourage riders to use the Commuter Rail rather than the subway	Statewide	45%	35%	8%	2%	10%
	Gateway Cities	50%	32%	8%	3%	7%
Offering discounted fares outside of rush hour to encourage riders to use the train at other times	Statewide	52%	36%	4%	2%	6%
	Gateway Cities	56%	30%	6%	3%	5%

Overall, do you think Commuter Rail fares are...? **ROTATE OPTIONS**

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Too high	51%	44%
Too low	3%	6%
About right	25%	28%
Unsure	22%	22%

Here are some larger projects that have been proposed to improve the Commuter Rail. How much would you support or opposing each of the following Commuter Rail projects?

ROTATE ORDER		Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Unsure
Changing over from diesel locomotives to electric trains	Statewide	56%	28%	4%	1%	11%
	Gateway Cities	58%	26%	5%	3%	7%
Extending rail service west along the Mass Pike to Springfield and Pittsfield	Statewide	40%	36%	8%	3%	13%
	Gateway Cities	48%	33%	7%	2%	10%
Extending rail service west along Route 2 to Greenfield and North Adams	Statewide	30%	40%	10%	3%	18%
	Gateway Cities	40%	33%	9%	2%	16%
Extending rail service to the South Coast, including Fall River and New Bedford	Statewide	38%	38%	7%	3%	14%
	Gateway Cities	48%	33%	6%	3%	10%
Extending rail north to southern New Hampshire	Statewide	36%	39%	9%	4%	12%
	Gateway Cities	45%	36%	7%	3%	10%
Building the "North South Rail Link" to connect train lines that currently end at North and South stations	Statewide	46%	35%	5%	2%	13%
	Gateway Cities	50%	32%	4%	3%	12%
Making boarding platforms at all stations level with the train to make boarding faster and easier	Statewide	47%	37%	6%	1%	9%
	Gateway Cities	52%	32%	5%	2%	9%

Some have proposed reimagining the Commuter Rail system into a “regional rail” network. Under a regional rail-style plan, trains would travel in both directions every 15 to 30 minutes throughout the day, at night, and on the weekends. Would you support or oppose moving the Commuter Rail toward a regional rail system?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Strongly support	34%	42%
Somewhat support	42%	37%
Somewhat oppose	8%	6%
Strongly oppose	2%	3%
Unsure	14%	12%

The following asked only of those who said they were opposed, N=140 Statewide.

Which of following describes why you are opposed to moving the Commuter Rail towards a regional rail network? **SELECT ALL THAT APPLY**

	Statewide
Don't have commuter rail in my area	6%
Would cost too much	37%
We have other problems to solve first	36%
Not confident state could deliver the project	41%
Some other reason	6%
Unsure	12%

Here are some potential outcomes that might occur if the Commuter Rail were reimagined as a “regional rail” network – with trains in and out of Boston and key stations every 15 to 30 minutes throughout the day, at night, and on the weekends. How likely do you think each of the following outcomes would be?

ROTATE ORDER		Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Unsure
More people would ride the commuter rail	Statewide	39%	45%	6%	1%	8%
	Gateway Cities	46%	38%	6%	2%	8%
Traffic congestion around Boston would decrease as more people rode the commuter rail.	Statewide	37%	43%	11%	2%	7%
	Gateway Cities	42%	36%	11%	2%	8%
Greenhouse gas emissions from transportation in the Boston region would decline.	Statewide	29%	40%	12%	5%	15%
	Gateway Cities	35%	33%	12%	5%	15%
More low-income residents would have better access to jobs.	Statewide	41%	37%	11%	2%	8%
	Gateway Cities	50%	31%	8%	3%	7%
Jobs and economic development would spread out from Boston to other places along the rail lines.	Statewide	37%	44%	10%	1%	9%
	Gateway Cities	43%	36%	8%	2%	10%
New housing will be built near rail stations, reducing housing costs overall.	Statewide	24%	33%	23%	6%	14%
	Gateway Cities	28%	35%	19%	6%	12%

How much would you support or oppose each of these ideas for raising money to pay for this regional rail concept for the Commuter Rail system?

ROTATE ORDER		Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Unsure
Increasing Commuter Rail fares	Statewide	5%	19%	34%	33%	9%
	Gateway Cities	10%	18%	30%	33%	9%
Collecting contributions from real estate developers who build near rail stations	Statewide	36%	34%	12%	6%	12%
	Gateway Cities	35%	36%	10%	7%	12%
Charging drivers a fee to drive into Boston at the busiest times of day	Statewide	13%	21%	22%	36%	7%
	Gateway Cities	17%	22%	20%	32%	9%
Increasing parking fees at Commuter Rail stations	Statewide	7%	22%	34%	30%	7%
	Gateway Cities	11%	23%	32%	26%	9%
Raising the state gas tax	Statewide	10%	16%	25%	43%	6%
	Gateway Cities	13%	16%	21%	40%	10%
Raising the state income tax on income over \$1 million	Statewide	38%	23%	11%	19%	9%
	Gateway Cities	38%	21%	10%	19%	11%

Massachusetts and other northeast states are currently considering a plan that would charge gasoline distributors a fee based on the amount of pollution their fuels produce. Each state would get a portion of the proceeds to invest in better and cleaner transportation. If the states were to go forward with such a plan, would you support or oppose Massachusetts using some of its funds to pay for this regional rail concept for the Commuter Rail system?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Strongly support	27%	28%
Somewhat support	40%	40%
Somewhat oppose	11%	11%
Strongly oppose	8%	8%
Unsure	14%	13%

Right now, cities and regions of Massachusetts cannot raise their own funds for transportation projects of their choosing. Would you support or oppose letting cities or regions of the state vote to raise their own taxes or fees to fund extending or improving rail service in their part of the state?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Strongly support	19%	19%
Somewhat support	33%	35%
Somewhat oppose	17%	19%
Strongly oppose	14%	12%
Unsure	18%	15%

Are you familiar with the term “Gateway Cities” as it relates to certain cities in Massachusetts?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Yes	28%	39%
No	69%	57%
Unsure	3%	4%

Let’s assume that rail service in the Commonwealth has been reimagined and expanded in the ways that were discussed above: trains run in and out of Boston and key stations every 15 to 30 minutes throughout the day, night, and on the weekends, and service has been extended to the Gateway City closest to you.

One idea would be to create Transit-Oriented Developments in these Gateway Cities – compact, walkable districts with housing, shopping, offices, and public space within half mile of commuter rail stations. Does this sound like a ... ?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Very good idea	34%	44%
Somewhat good idea	45%	38%
Somewhat bad idea	6%	5%
Very bad idea	2%	2%
Unsure	12%	10%

Would you support or oppose the Commonwealth providing tax or other incentives to cities and developers to help create these Transit-Oriented Developments in the Gateway Cities?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Strongly support	22%	27%
Somewhat support	44%	42%
Somewhat oppose	14%	12%
Strongly oppose	6%	6%
Unsure	15%	13%

If Transit Oriented Developments were developed in the Gateway City closest to where you live, how likely would you be to consider doing each of the following in that area?

ROTATE ORDER		Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Unsure
Live in an apartment or condo there	Statewide	18%	26%	22%	25%	9%
	Gateway Cities	29%	29%	16%	16%	10%
Work in an office or industrial space there	Statewide	21%	33%	17%	21%	8%
	Gateway Cities	30%	31%	13%	15%	11%
Go shopping there	Statewide	29%	40%	14%	10%	7%
	Gateway Cities	45%	33%	9%	7%	6%
Go to a bar or restaurant there	Statewide	28%	38%	17%	11%	6%
	Gateway Cities	42%	32%	10%	11%	6%
Go to a movie or other entertainment there	Statewide	26%	39%	17%	11%	7%
	Gateway Cities	42%	33%	11%	8%	7%

Which modes of travel do you use regularly to get around? Please check all that apply.

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Drive alone	71%	58%
Drive or ride with others	52%	52%
Take a taxi, Uber or Lyft	23%	30%
Take the MBTA subway	24%	18%
Take a MBTA or other public bus	18%	18%
Take a corporate or private shuttle	2%	1%
Take a ferry	3%	4%
Take the commuter rail	14%	14%
Ride a bicycle	9%	14%
Walk	42%	44%
Take paratransit or on-demand transit	2%	3%
Other	1%	3%

Which one of the following best describes your work status?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Employed full time	44%	35%
Employed part time	13%	14%
Self-employed	6%	7%
Not currently employed	35%	42%
Prefer not to say	3%	3%

The following asked only of those who said they were not currently employed.
If not employed, how would you describe your participation in the workforce?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
A student	7%	9%
A homemaker	11%	15%
Retired	57%	48%
Unemployed but seeking work	14%	14%
Unemployed, not seeking work	11%	13%
Prefer not to say	<1%	<11%

The following asked only of those who said they were employed or a student.

On a normal day, how long is your one-way commute to work or school?

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
15 minutes or less	32%	39%
More than 15 minutes up to 30 minutes	30%	29%
More than 30 minutes up to an hour	23%	15%
More than an hour	9%	9%
I do not commute to work or school	6%	6%
Unsure	<1%	1%

The following asked only of those who said they were employed.

Which of the following best describes your role within your company?

	Gateway	
	Statewide	Cities
Administrative / support staff	22%	26%
Skilled laborer	14%	17%
Trained professional	26%	18%
Consultant	6%	6%
Management	15%	15%
Executive (CEO, COO, etc)	2%	3%
Self-employed / partner	8%	10%
Prefer not to say	8%	6%

How would you describe your current residential situation?

	Gateway	
	Statewide	Cities
I own my home	53%	40%
I rent my home	31%	42%
I live rent-free with friends or family	11%	11%
Some other arrangement	4%	4%
Prefer not to say	1%	3%

Do you have any children under age 18 in your household?

	Gateway	
	Statewide	Cities
Yes	24%	27%
No	74%	71%
Prefer not to say	2%	3%

How many cars, if any, does your household own?

	Gateway	
	Statewide	Cities
None	10%	13%
One	37%	41%
Two	38%	36%
Three or more	15%	11%

Demographics

Party Identification

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Democrat	34%	37%
Independent / Other	48%	38%
Republican	14%	17%
Prefer not to say	5%	8%

Race and Ethnicity

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
White	77%	54%
Black or African-American	6%	9%
Hispanic or Latino	9%	28%
Asian	6%	6%
Some other race	1%	1%
More than one race	1%	1%
Prefer not to say	<1%	1%

Age

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
18-29	22%	27%
30-44	24%	25%
45-59	27%	24%
60+	27%	23%
Prefer not to answer	<1%	<1%

Gender

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
Male	47%	46%
Female	52%	52%
Neither / some other gender	1%	2%
Prefer not to answer	<1%	0%

Education

	Statewide	Gateway Cities
High School or less	35%	50%
Some college, no degree	26%	28%
College graduate (BA/BS)	23%	14%
Advanced degree	16%	7%
Prefer not to say	<1%	1%

About the Poll

These results are based on a survey of 1,430 Massachusetts registered voters, including an oversample of residents from 16 of the state's Gateway Cities. Responses were collected via online survey interviewing August 14-23, 2019. Responses from the oversample cities were weighted to population parameters for those cities and then downweighted to their true proportion of the state's population. The final survey data were weighted to known and estimated population parameters for the state's residents by age, gender, race, education, geography, and party. The survey questionnaire and sample were designed by The MassINC Polling Group with input from MassINC. This project was made possible thanks to support from The Barr Foundation.