



## Initiative 1

# Improve Existing Services



A fundamental starting point for Transit Forward RI will be to improve existing services. Existing services will be improved in a number of different ways:

### Local Bus, Express Bus, and Flex Service

- Development of a Frequent Transit Network
- More frequent service for longer hours
- Transit Priority to make service faster
- More frequent and faster express bus service
- Flex service improvements

### Rail to and from Boston

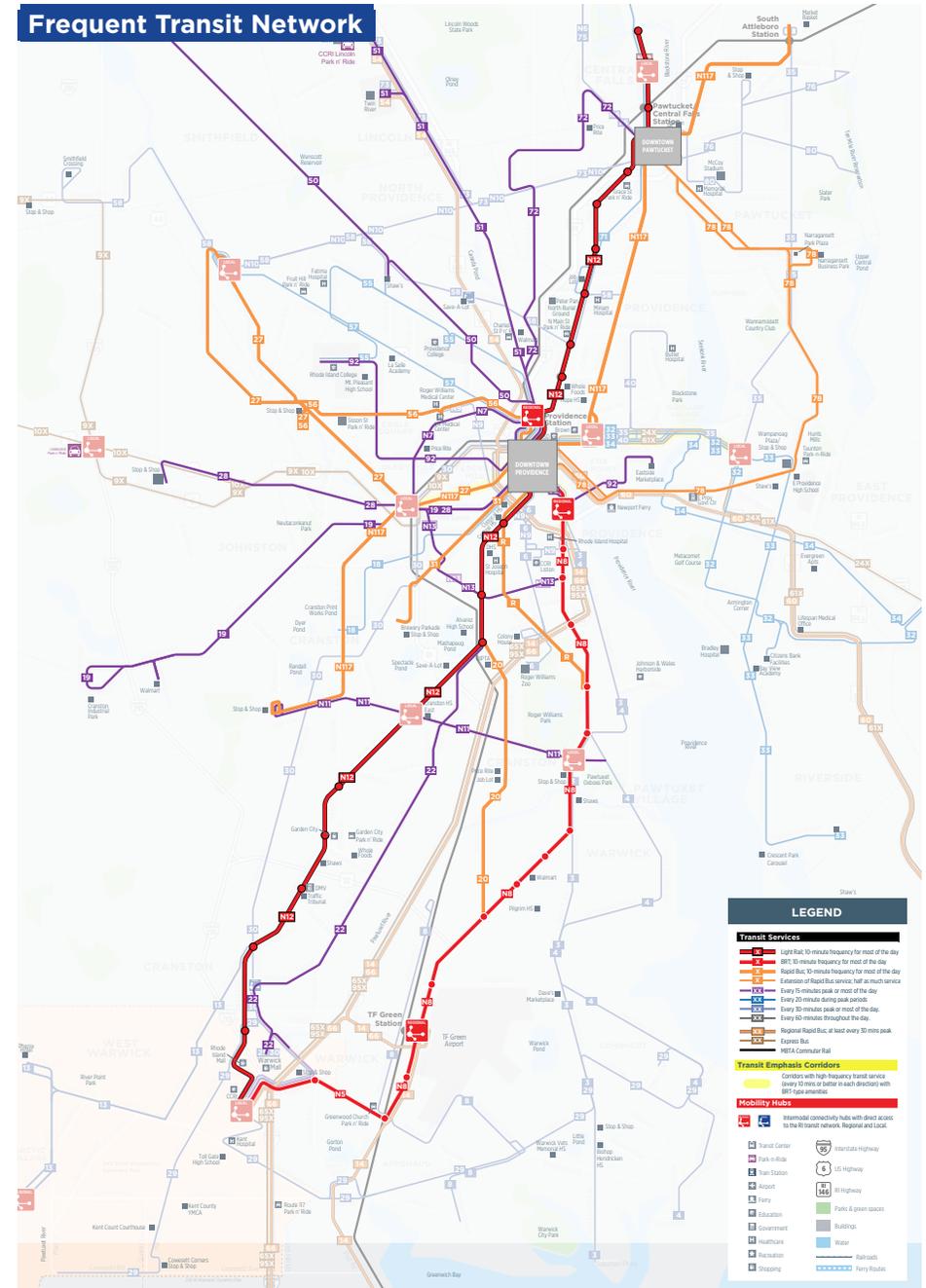
- Faster service
- More frequent service



# A Frequent Transit Network Will Make It Easy to Get to Rhode Island's Most Popular Destinations

The most important way to improve transit service is to make it frequent. Frequent transit is typically defined as services that operates every 15 minutes or less. Frequent transit allows riders to use services without a schedule and connect areas of highest demand to one another. Networks of frequent transit allow for short, convenient transfers, which greatly expand the reach of travel by transit in a shorter amount of time.

The Frequent Transit Network would consist of a total of 19 routes with service frequencies of 15 minutes or better.



## More Frequent Service for Longer Hours Will Make it Much Easier to Travel by Transit

In addition to the Frequent Transit Network, more frequent service for longer hours would also be provided on nearly all other routes – changes designed to make service more convenient and to better match service levels with demand. All routes would be classified according to one of the route classifications shown below. Nearly all routes would operate more frequently and for longer hours. Equally important, far fewer routes would operate infrequently.

### Changes in Service Frequencies (Number of Routes)

Route Type	Today	Recommended
<b>Light Rail, BRT, and Rapid Bus (Every 10 Minutes)</b>	1	9
<b>Regional Rapid Bus</b>	0	4
<b>Frequent Local (Every 15 Minutes)</b>	4	10
<b>Local (Every 16 to 30 Minutes)</b>	19	32
<b>Local (Every 31 to 60 Minutes)</b>	15	0
<b>Local (Less frequent than every 60 Minutes)</b>	7	0
<b>Express</b>	8	7
<b>Flex Zones</b>	7	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>68</b>

Earlier and later service will also be provided to serve a greater range of work hours as well as more flexibility for other types of trips.

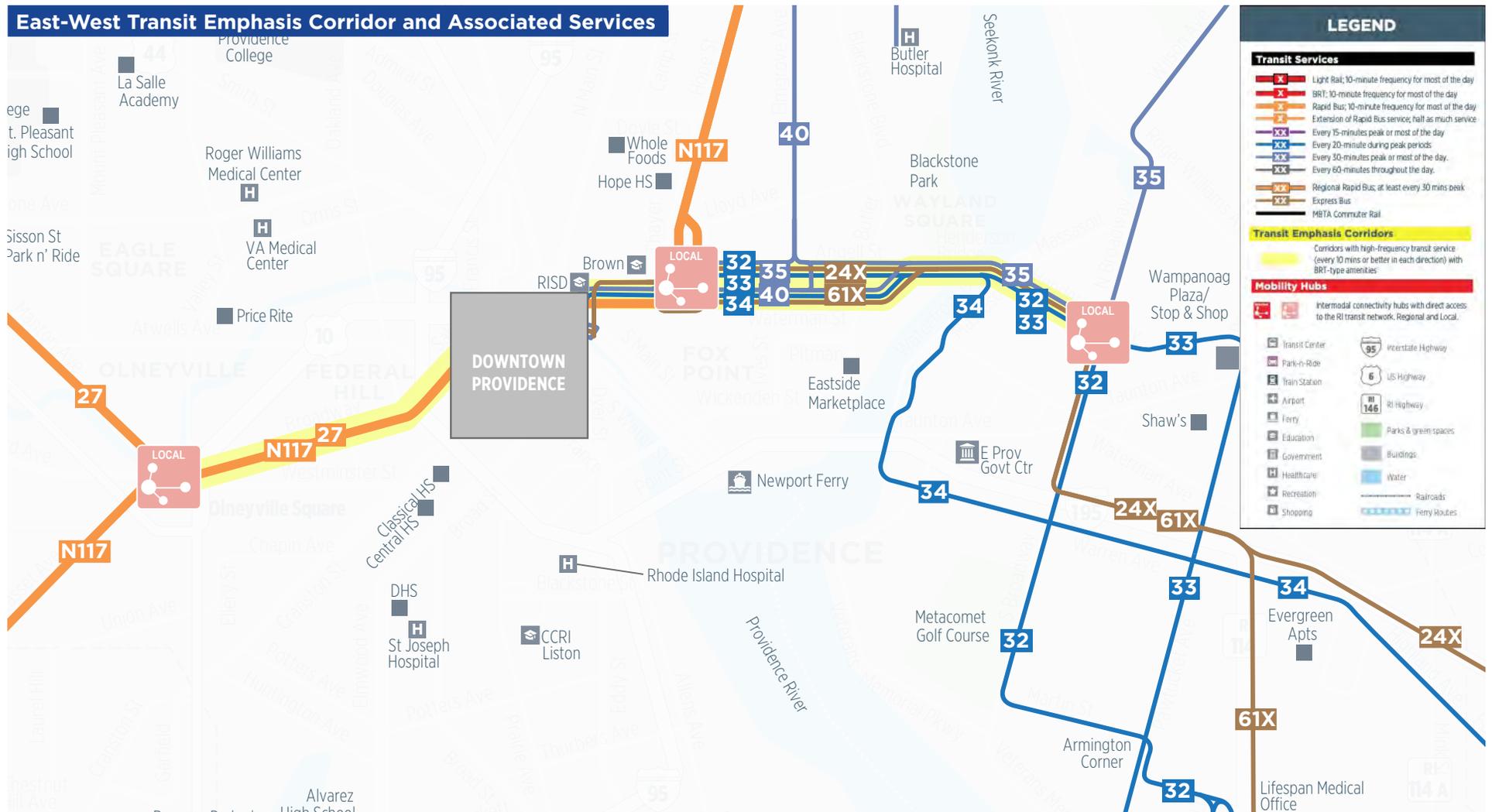
### Changes in Service Spans (Number of Routes)

Number of Routes	Today	Recommended
<b>Service Before 6 AM</b>	22	23
<b>Service After 10 PM</b>	22	32
<b>Service After Midnight</b>	5	19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>74</b>

# Transit Emphasis Corridors and Transit Priority Will Make Transit Faster

Aside from more frequent service, the other improvement that passengers want the most is faster service. High-capacity transit lines would operate at least partially in dedicated lanes free from traffic delays, and Rapid Bus and Regional Rapid Bus routes would operate with queue jump lanes, transit signal priority, and bus on shoulder use that would minimize traffic-related delays. There would also be:

- **An east-west Transit Emphasis Corridor (TEC)** between Olneyville Square and East Providence. This TEC would be similar to the Downtown Transit Corridor (DTC) and would use Broadway through Federal Hill, Angell and Waterman Streets on College Hill, and the Henderson Bridge and Henderson Expressway in East Providence.
- **Transit priority at traffic chokepoints** at key locations throughout Rhode Island as part of roadway improvement projects.



## Better Express Bus Service Will Improve Commutes

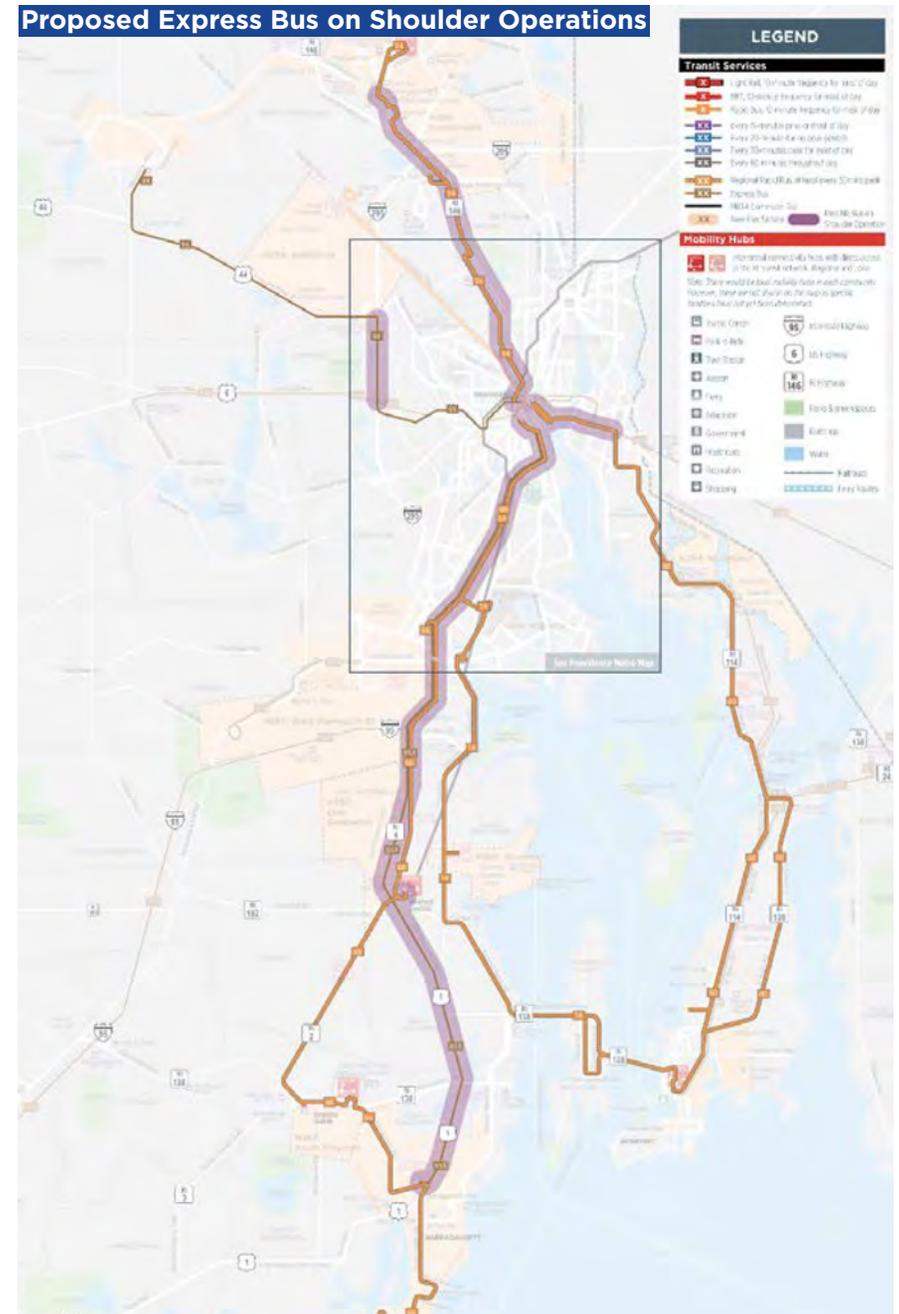
At present, service on some express routes is very limited, with only one or two trips in each direction. Three types of express bus improvements would be made:

- **More frequent service:** At present, service on some express routes is very limited, with only one or two trips in each direction. Service on all routes would be increased to at least four AM inbound and four PM outbound trips.
- **The use of commuter coaches** to provide more comfortable service.
- **Bus on Shoulder service:** Bus on shoulder service would be implemented on Regional Rapid Bus and express routes, in cases where only moderate roadway changes (such as changes to signing and striping) would be needed.

Commuter Coach Bus in New York City



Proposed Express Bus on Shoulder Operations

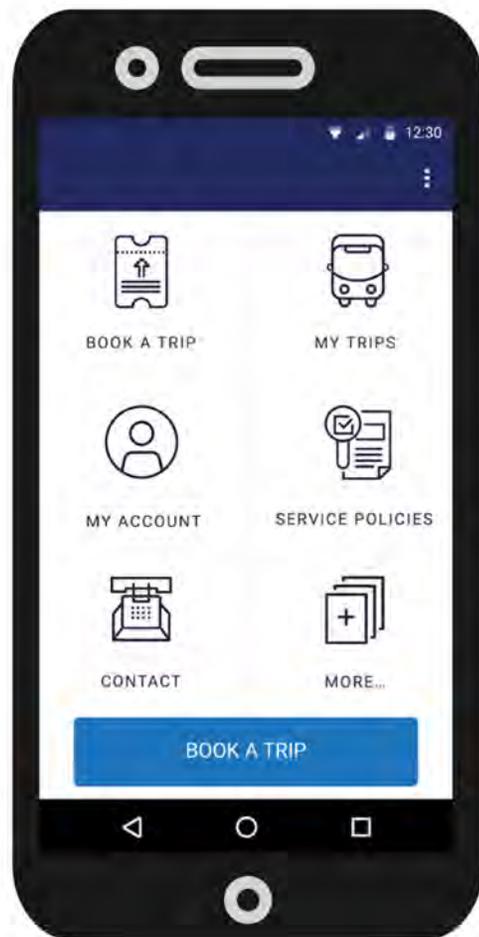


## Flex Service Improvements Will Improve Service to the Suburbs and Lower-Density Areas

RIPTA's Flex services currently require prior day advance reservations by phone and sometimes deny rides because the service is full. To improve service, the following improvements would be added to RIPTA's existing phone-based system:

- **App-based same-day/on-demand booking**
- **App-based fare payment**
- **App-based vehicle tracking**

In addition, and as required, the capacity of the existing services would be increased to accommodate all demand.



## WHAT IS FLEX?

Flex Service brings a public transportation option to areas that have little or no regular service. Flex Service is unique in that it combines designated bus stops with custom reservation options—all in one service! Passengers have the option of picking up the Flex van at a scheduled stop or choosing their own pick-up or drop off points within the designated Flex Zone.

And even though Flex primarily provides local service within its designated zone, it can connect you to our statewide network.

### How Flex Can Work For You

- Just **board at a scheduled Flex stop\*** or **make a reservation** to be picked up at the curb at any address within your Flex Zone (*please see accompanying map*).
- Once on board, you can request to **get off anywhere in the Flex Zone**—just remember that the Pascoag/Slatersville Flex van operates in the area indicated on the map. Custom stops will be made in the areas the van is traveling.
- If you aren't boarding at a scheduled Flex Stop, you need to **make a reservation** by calling 1-877-906-3539 or 401-784-9500, ext. 220. You cannot make reservations with the driver.

*\*Because of custom stops, the Flex van may arrive at stops up to 10 minutes after the designated time.*

### Traveling Outside Your Flex Zone

To travel outside your Flex Zone it is necessary to connect to fixed-route service. In Pascoag/Slatersville, the Flex route has scheduled stops on **Sayles Avenue** where you can **transfer to regular RIPTA Route 9X**. There are also scheduled stops at **Wal-Mart** where you can **transfer to regular RIPTA Routes 54 and 59x**. The Flex vehicle cannot travel outside its zone.

## More Frequent Commuter Rail Service Will Serve a Greater Range of Trips

In Spring 2019, the Rhode Island Governor's Office and RIDOT began discussions with their Massachusetts counterparts on ways to enhance and shorten the trip time between Providence and Boston. Concepts ranging from cross-honoring MBTA commuter rail passes on Amtrak trains to pilot/demonstration services to full electrification on the Providence Line continue to be investigated by both states. In addition, RIDOT remains very active with Massachusetts on efforts to improve commuter rail service overall through Rail Vision and the Northeast Corridor Commission.

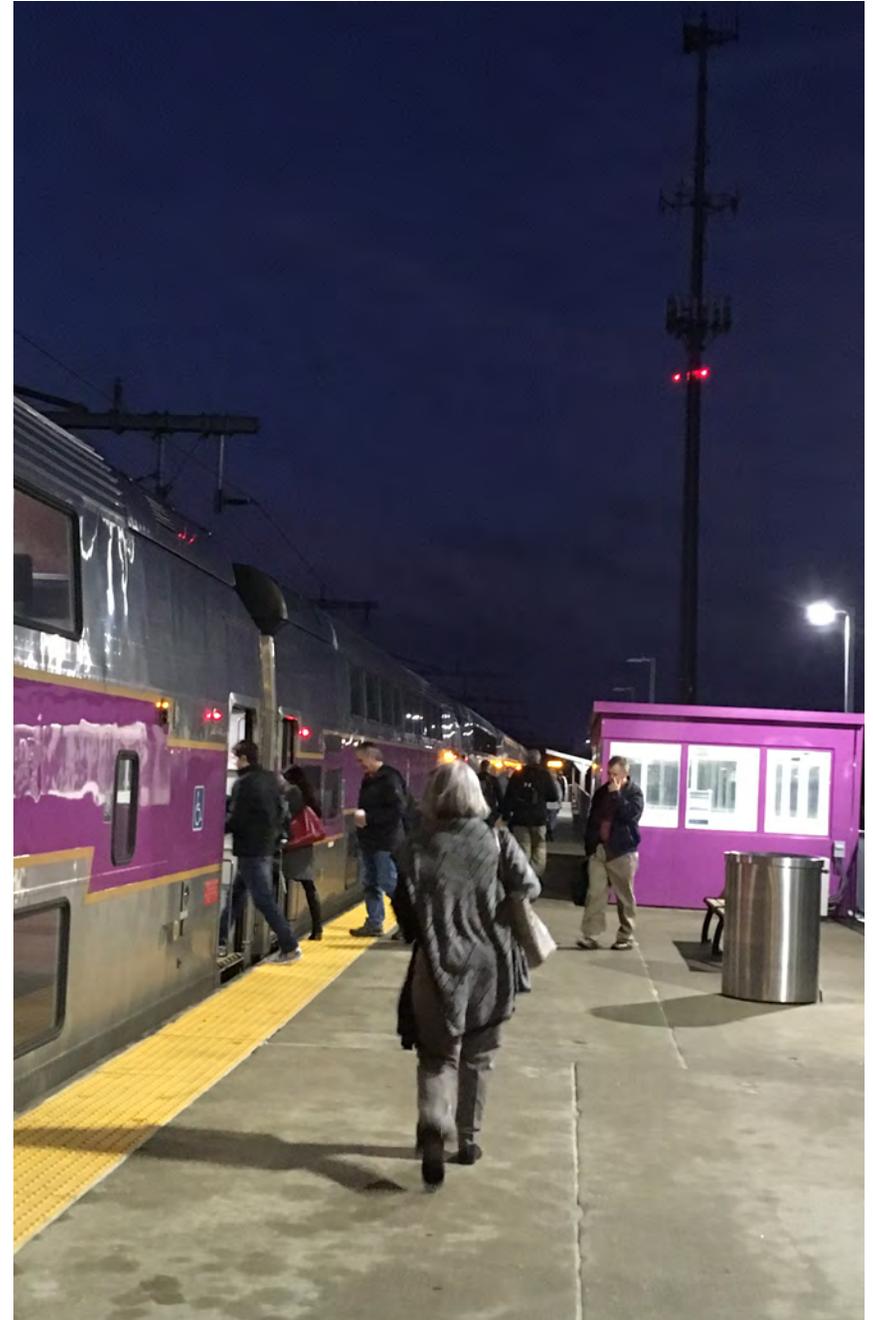
In November 2019, the MBTA Fiscal Management and Control Board (FMCB) passed a number of resolutions related to commuter rail improvements, including the Providence Line. The MBTA envisions a commuter rail system that will be more similar to rapid transit and will include the following features:

- **All-day frequent service**
- **Electrified service that uses Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) railcars**
- **High level platforms and all-door boarding and alighting**

The MBTA FMCB identified the Providence lines as one of the first three lines for these improvements (although a schedule has not yet been set). A key element will be that **service between Providence and Boston would operate more frequently**, which would be major improvement from today's service levels.

South of Providence, where service levels will be determined by Rhode Island and demand is significantly lower, **service to TF Green would be improved to 20 round trips on weekdays, nine on Saturdays, and seven on Sundays**. To and from Wickford Junction, where demand and ridership are fairly low, service will be maintained at 10 round trips per weekday.

In addition, **cross-honored fares with Amtrak** will be implemented to provide access to select Amtrak trains, which will provide additional service. This is described in more detail below in the fare integration section.



## Faster Commuter Rail Service Will Reduce Travel Times

The planned improvements will also include elements to make service faster. These details also need to be worked out, but important improvements could include:

- **High-level platforms at all Massachusetts stations will significantly reduce dwell time at stations**
- **The use of electrified trains will reduce acceleration times**



## Cross-Honored Fares with Amtrak will Fill Gaps in Service and Provide Access to Faster Service

RIDOT is planning to implement a cross-honor fare agreement with Amtrak that will provide the ability for Providence Line passholders to ride select Amtrak trains. This will provide more frequent service to passholders as well as access to faster and more comfortable trains, and fill gaps in off-peak service.