



**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**  
**TOWN OF MILTON**  
**PLANNING BOARD**  
**525 CANTON AVENUE**  
**MILTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02186**

**TEL 617-898-4847**

Thomas P. Glynn  
MBTA Board of Directors  
10 Park Plaza – Suite 3510  
Boston, Mass. 02116

September 15, 2023

Subject: Request for Review of Mattapan Trolley Line Classification

Dear Chair Glynn,

The Milton Planning Board writes to respectfully request that the MBTA remove the Mattapan Trolley line from its classification as rapid transit. We believe the past history, present usage, and projected future plans of the line confirm that the Mattapan Trolley is not rapid transit. Below we provide considerable factual and pertinent evidence that supports our position, and we urge your careful consideration of our request.

**Pertinent Evidence:**

The MBTA has previously recognized that the Mattapan Trolley line is not equivalent to the rapid transit lines. For example, in its Fourth Annual Report in 1968, the MBTA acknowledged that it did not go forward with a project to convert the “Mattapan Trolley line to rapid transit by extending the Red Line (Cambridge-Dorchester) from Ashmont to Mattapan Square” (Fourth Annual Report of the Directors of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, at page 4). That conversion never happened, and since 1968 the MBTA has invested extensively in modernization of and improvements to the rapid transit lines, while largely ignoring the Mattapan Trolley line.

**The Mattapan Trolley is distinctly dissimilar and operationally inferior to rapid transit:**

- A small, antiquated, single vessel line with limited carrying capacity (38 seats).
- Operates as a stand-alone loop with several local stops that are within close proximity of each other.
- Its short 2.5-mile connector route provides transport no further than Ashmont Station, which is the Red Line rapid transit terminus.
- The Mattapan Trolley only feeds into Ashmont, similar to a bus in both its operation and carrying capacity.



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- The Mattapan Trolley does not provide direct access to downtown and requires a transfer with yet two additional wait times: one for the arrival of the rapid transit train and another for its synchronized release (dwell time).

Additionally, the redesigned Ashmont Station presents a more cumbersome, lengthier, and prolonged transfer because the trolley offloads passengers “outside” the station, requiring passengers to walk inside before descending one flight of stairs to the rapid transit platform below.

The significant differences in service, infrastructure, and equipment demonstrate that the Mattapan Trolley line is not equivalent to the rapid transit lines, and that its previous classification as not being rapid transit should be restored.

**As of 2023, the Mattapan Reformation Project has no intention of incorporating the Mattapan Trolley into rapid transit:**

Recently, in the context of the Mattapan Line Transformation Project, the MBTA has acknowledged the deficiencies of the Mattapan Trolley line resulting from decades of neglect and its differences from the rapid transit lines.

We look forward to the proposed Mattapan Line Renovation Project, when it may occur. However, we understand that there is no clear timeline for the construction of the proposed Project, and it will not incorporate the trolley as part of the Red Line's rapid transit, whose terminus will remain at Ashmont Station.

While the Mattapan Trolley line runs on a designated right of way, its operation is more equivalent to a bus or streetcar system than to a rapid transit line.

**Rapid transit lines have a direct transit link to downtown Boston; the Mattapan Trolley line does not:**

Unlike passengers on each of the rapid transit lines, who have one-seat rides to downtown Boston, riders from Milton, Mattapan, and Dorchester who utilize the Mattapan Trolley line do not have a direct, one-seat connection into downtown Boston. Rather, they must transfer over to rapid transit trains at Ashmont terminus.

**Rapid transit lines have significantly more capacity than the Mattapan Trolley line:**  
In contrast to the rapid transit lines that operate with multiple stringed vessels, the Mattapan Trolley line operates only a single car at a time with only four working trolleys covering a 2.5-mile loop.



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**Rapid transit lines have benefited from investment and maintenance, while Mattapan Trolley line and its riders have suffered from decades of neglect:**

The existing PCC cars on the Mattapan Trolley line are decades old and in poor condition as a result of neglect, underinvestment, and deferred maintenance. In contrast, the rapid transit lines have benefited from significant investment in refurbishment of cars, tracks and stations.

**Rapid transit lines collect fares.**

Not collecting a rapid transit fare at any point on the Mattapan Trolley line is an admission by the MBTA that they do not consider it rapid transit. Rapid transit fare payment is purposefully made at the point of entry at the Ashmont terminus.

**The Planning Board is requesting this review due to the operational deficiencies and because the MBTA has failed for years to adequately invest in the Mattapan line.**

Confirming that the Mattapan Trolley is not rapid transit, will provide clarity to an erroneous, ambiguous classification that, if not addressed, is unfair and punitive, and not equitable for Milton, her residents, the MBTA, and all passengers of the Mattapan Trolley.

Understanding that this may be a complicated process, at the very least, we respectfully ask the MBTA to provide an official written statement confirming that the Mattapan Trolley, an extension of the Red Line, is not rapid transit.

We are available to meet with appropriate MBTA officials to discuss these issues as soon as next week. Please do not hesitate to contact Milton Planning Board Chair Meredith Hall with any questions or for additional information at 617-930-3977 or [mhall@townofmilton.org](mailto:mhall@townofmilton.org).

Sincerely,  
**Town of Milton Planning Board**

Meredith Hall, Chair

CC:

Acting Secretary Monica Tibbits-Nutt, MBTA Board member  
Mayor Thomas Koch, MBTA Board vice chair  
Robert Butler, MBTA Board member  
Eric L. Goodwine, MBTA Board member



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Thomas M. McGee, MBTA Board member

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Senator Walter Timilty

Representative William Driscoll

Representative Brandy Fluker Oakley

Mayor Michelle Wu