



## BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Monica Tibbits-Nutt, MPO Chair | Secretary and CEO, Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Tegin Leigh Teich, Executive Director, MPO Staff

### WORK PROGRAM

## MBTA TRANSIT DATA COLLECTION FY 2026-28

AUGUST 7, 2025

### Proposed Motion

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) votes to approve this work program.

### Project Identification

#### Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Classification

Agency and Other Client Transportation Planning Studies and Technical Analyses

**Project Number** 11434

#### Client

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

*Client Supervisor: Melissa Dullea*

#### Project Supervisors

*Principal: Jen Emiko Kaplan*

*Manager: Jonathan Belcher*

#### Funding Source

Future MBTA Contract

### Schedule and Budget

**Schedule:** 36 months from notice to proceed

**Budget:** \$690,000

Schedule and budget details are shown in Exhibits 1 and 2, respectively.

### Relationship to MPO Work

This study is supported in full with non-MPO funding. Committing MPO staff to this project will not impinge on the quality or timeliness of MPO-funded work.

## Background

In 1996, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) began the Comprehensive Ridecheck Program for the MBTA. This effort produced a full set of bus ridership and schedule adherence data, covering all of the routes within the span of one year. Since January 1999, CTPS has been performing ongoing monitoring of MBTA transit service, including ridechecks and pointchecks. Even with the installation of automated data collection devices, the MBTA still needs to use manual data collection.

Beginning in late 2007, the MBTA began using automatic passenger counters (APCs) on some of its buses. APCs were first introduced on some Green Line vehicles in 2018. Although the need for manual data collection has decreased since the introduction of APCs, it can take several months to collect enough data using APCs to review peak-period crowding conditions because of the limited number of APC-equipped Green Line vehicles. Therefore, pointchecks continue to be a valuable method for quickly collecting data on multiple routes during peak periods.

The MBTA also completed the installation of an automated-fare-collection (AFC) system in 2007. While this system can be used to determine daily counts of boardings at rapid transit stations, manual counts are still required at key transfer stations in order to determine the distribution by mode (heavy rail, light rail, and bus rapid transit). Additional manual counts may also be required to determine boardings by direction.

During the past 26 years, CTPS has also provided the MBTA Service Planning Department with analytical assistance for interpreting the ridership and schedule adherence data. In particular, raw data are examined immediately after being collected to determine whether there are any acute problems in the field. CTPS regularly recommends adjustments to the scheduled frequency and running times to address identified problems.

## Objectives

The objectives of this work program are as follows:

1. Perform various forms of data collection on MBTA transit services, primarily the following tasks:

*Pointchecks:* Peak-load checks may be conducted to monitor ridership on selected routes.

*Ridechecks:* Data on ridership at each stop and on running times will be collected on selected routes or trips as requested by the MBTA.

*Green Line passenger counts:* Full counts may be conducted at surface Green Line stations where AFC equipment is not installed.

2. Provide analytical assistance to the MBTA to identify crowding or schedule adherence problems on bus and rapid transit routes, and to recommend changes in the scheduled frequency and running times to address those problems.
3. Provide ongoing support to the MBTA Rider Oversight Committee.

## **Work Description**

### **Task 1 Collect Data**

CTPS will carry out data collection assignments as directed by MBTA staff. The primary data collection activity will be pointchecks conducted at or near the peak-load point along a bus or rail route, or for a group of routes that have a common stop. Pointchecks are usually conducted at 15 to 20 locations in the fall and again in the spring. Pointcheck data include the vehicle number, direction, and time at each location, and the number of passengers on board.

As a supplement to data collected automatically by the MBTA, if requested by MBTA staff, CTPS will also collect ridecheck data. These data would include boardings and alightings by stop, farebox display readings, vehicle trip times, departure and arrival times, and intermediate times.

CTPS will also be available, as requested by MBTA staff, to conduct manual rapid transit or light rail station counts to supplement data collected automatically. Station counts require having personnel at all entry locations in order to count all of the passengers entering the system, and sometimes require counts at stairwells, escalators, and elevators within a station to determine which modes passengers are using and the direction in which they are traveling.

#### ***Products of Task 1***

Ridership and schedule adherence data in digital or paper form

### **Task 2 Process and Analyze Data**

CTPS will summarize the pointcheck data—after the data have been transferred to spreadsheets—in order to provide peak-load summaries. CTPS will examine those data, as well as data collected automatically by the MBTA, to identify problems with vehicle loads or schedule adherence on a route-by-route basis. CTPS will then review existing schedules to develop plans for appropriate corrective actions. These actions may include assigning additional vehicles to a route, lengthening or reducing segment-level running times, implementing short-turn services, and other modifications. CTPS will also provide the MBTA with the projected hours-of-service costs of implementing any recommended corrective actions.

CTPS will participate in the quarterly process of the MBTA Service Committee and will suggest possible modifications, additions, or reductions to MBTA service

based on an analysis of pointcheck and station count data collected by CTPS, as well as data collected automatically by the MBTA. If requested, CTPS will assist the MBTA in reviewing and updating the data that were automatically collected by the MBTA.

CTPS will summarize any requested rapid transit station counts in a database.

***Products of Task 2***

- Summaries of pointcheck data
- Participation in the MBTA Service Committee's quarterly process
- Database of rapid transit station counts

**Task 3 Provide Ongoing Technical Support to the MBTA**

CTPS will provide ongoing technical assistance to the MBTA, as necessary, to address service planning needs. CTPS will also provide technical support to the MBTA's Bus Network Redesign efforts if requested to by MBTA staff.

**Task 4 Provide Ongoing Support to the MBTA Rider Oversight Committee**

CTPS will provide ongoing assistance to the MBTA Rider Oversight Committee.

**Exhibit 1**  
**ESTIMATED SCHEDULE**  
**MBTA Transit Service Data Collection FY 2026-28**

Task	Month																																			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
1. Collect Data																																				
2. Process and Analyze Data																																				
3. Provide Ongoing Technical Support to the MBTA																																				
4. Provide Ongoing Support to the MBTA Rider Oversight Committee																																				

Exhibit 2  
ESTIMATED COST  
MBTA Transit Service Data Collection FY 2026-28

Direct Salary and Overhead							\$690,000
Task	Person-Weeks by Pay Grade			Direct Salary	Overhead (122.59%)	Total Cost	
	G-8	G-1	Total				
1. Collect Data	0.0	63.2	63.2	\$56,089	\$68,760	\$124,849	
2. Process and Analyze Data	0.0	20.0	20.0	\$17,764	\$21,777	\$39,541	
3. Provide Ongoing Technical Support to the MBTA	117.5	0.0	117.5	\$230,255	\$282,269	\$512,524	
4. Provide Ongoing Support to the MBTA Rider Oversight Committee	3.0	0.0	3.0	\$5,879	\$7,207	\$13,086	
Total	120.5	83.2	203.7	\$309,987	\$380,013	\$690,000	
Other Direct Costs							\$0
TOTAL COST							\$690,000

Funding  
Future MBTA Contract

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