



Future of (how we) Work

September 2022 High Level Meeting Takeaways

Topic: MBTA/Orange Line Shutdown

Meeting & Agenda Overview

September's Future of (how we) Work meeting was held virtually on Zoom to convene KSA members and gain a greater understanding of how the MBTA shutdown is impacting Kendall Square. Members were invited to share employer-based efforts that have proven effective 20 days into the shutdown and share both individual and company practices that have emerged to adapt commutes into the area.

Participants were welcomed into the virtual meeting by Director of Programming Yuqi Wang and invited to share their names, company affiliations and current commute observations. Abbey Phillips, Director of Communications at KSA, provided context and updates on the MBTA Orange Line shutdown (which also affects parts of the Red and Green lines) and gave an overview of employer solutions. Participants were split into two breakout rooms to answer a series of questions related to navigating the shutdown on both an individual and corporate level. Attendees returned to the main Zoom room to share takeaways and consider solutions for future maintenance repair shutdowns that may arise.

Small Group Discussion Questions

In the breakout rooms, participants were invited to reflect and respond to the following questions:

1. What have your experiences been with the MBTA shut down?
 - a. *How has the shutdown changed the way you personally and/or how your team commute into work, if any?*
 - b. *What have your experiences been with the riding shuttle?*
2. How has your company communicated about the shut down?
3. What supports have been most helpful / effective at mitigating the fallout or minimizing the disruption to your work and well-being?
4. Knowing that the red line needs a lot of work, how are we learning from this situation and using those lessons moving forward?

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Group Takeaways: Commuting & Timing Challenges

- Kendall Square employees reside in various locations across Massachusetts. Malden, Bedford, East Boston, Plymouth, Littleton, Brookline, Metrowest, Charleston were noted as points of departure.
- Kendall Square employees often have a combination of commuting methods, including but not limited to: trains & commuter rail, MBTA buses, shuttle buses, driving, biking, walking
- The timing of the shutdown affects commuting alternatives in both positive and negative ways and should be a critical point of consideration for future MBTA line shutdowns.
 - The shutdown of the Orange Line came as an influx of people were preparing to move into or within Boston, new school years were kicking off, and summer vacations were coming to an end. These additional factors contribute to heightened road congestion for both individual drivers and temporary shuttle service.
 - Alternatively, the shut down in late summer allows for a diverse and multi-modal array of transportation options for commuters - such as biking and walking. Many bike and bus lanes were added because of the shut down and invited the city to proactively create more permanent multi-modal transportation improvements to reduce future disruptions.
 - Participants noted a strong preference for peak summer months to be considered as prime windows for major maintenance repairs and strongly advised against winter/holiday time shutdowns.
- Congestion (and therefore commuting times) varies throughout the week - Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays are typically less congested for drivers than Tuesday and Wednesday (peak days).
- Certain routes are almost completely un navigable due to congestion (ex. Route 3 or main transportation corridors out of Boston). Alternative routes or recommendations for avoiding rush hour traffic for drivers were invited in participant exchange.

Group Takeaways: Employee Support & Communication

- Some participants have surveyed employees to better understand commuting patterns across their organization and design appropriate support mechanisms during the shutdown.
- Companies have utilized a variety of communication methods to communicate transit updates and policies to employees. Approaches included:
 - Recurring department meetings and clear managerial touch points for employees
 - Blogs & weekly newsletters
 - Company memos with clarity around alternative routes
- KSA can support member companies and their employees by collating informative resources regarding transportation options, news and alternatives.

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Group Takeaways: Current & Possible Solutions

- A variety of current and potential mitigation strategies and points of advocacy were shared by participants to support commutes into the Kendall Square area.
 - Incentives / Supports for Kendall Square employees:
 - CIC offered temporary, discounted parking for drivers.
 - Short-term free Blue Bike Memberships
 - Ridership on existing shuttle services (ex. Fare-free EZ-Ride shuttle ridership increased 20% after shutdown)
 - Flexible departure and arrival times during shutdown period
 - WFH policies for workers whose role can be remote*
 - Employee carpooling
 - Potential/emergent solutions for the future:
 - Reduced or free fares for commuters affected by the shut down.
 - Flexibility on “lock-in dates” policy for MBTA passes purchased in advance of a shut down.
 - Extended meter parking by the city.
 - Expansion of Blue Bike Memberships (City of Cambridge)
 - E-Scooter & E-Bikes policy changes
 - Rideshare partnerships
 - Activation or Reinvigoration of Commuter Program Pilots ([RideAmigos](#), Ways Carpooling)

Resources Shared:

[City of Cambridge - Cycling Safety Ordinance](#)

[Cambridge Redevelopment Authority - Kendall Transportation Projects](#)

[Ride Amigos - Pave Commute App](#)

Lingering Questions / Member Requests for Input

The following are questions shared by members inviting expertise, collaboration, or recommendations:

1. Are any other companies exploring ride sharing partnerships?
2. Has anyone identified routes that they use to get to greater Boston that avoid major transit corridors?
3. How are fellow companies engaging employees to get back into the office in the midst of commuting challenges? What is working?



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Community Feedback: What Can The KSA Do?

Participants offered several ideas to the KSA staff about the role the organization can play for the remainder of the Orange Line shutdown and in preparation for future shutdowns:

1. Aggregate and centralize information relating commuting alternatives, routes, maintenance updates and policies for companies to broadly share with their employees.
2. Advocate for a similar partnership or incentive program as the City of Boston's Blue Bike program.
3. Invite city and transit leaders to provide transparency, advance notice and mitigation strategies around planned shutdowns or repairs to provide ample time for employers to create alternative solutions for their employees.
4. Recommend that drastic and non-time sensitive repairs be scheduled during non-peak times for employees (ex. Early summer as opposed to winter)
5. Activate collaborative partnerships that provide additional avenues for commuting, such as ride sharing, parking solutions, and accessible/widely-available shuttle service.