

MBTA Weighs Ending Weekend Commuter Rail Service for a Year

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority is considering eliminating all weekend commuter rail service for a year as part of a cost-cutting effort to close a \$42 million budget gap.

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BOSTON (AP) — The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority is considering eliminating all weekend commuter rail service for a year as part of a cost-cutting effort to close a \$42 million budget gap.

The Boston Globe reports the transportation agency also is considering ending thousands of door-to-door rides for disabled passengers for a year.

State Transportation Secretary Stephanie Pollack said the cuts are needed to put the MBTA on a more sustainable fiscal path.

Republican Gov. Charlie Baker described the proposed cuts Monday as a "menu of options" for the MBTA's fiscal management control board to consider.

The proposal is expected to meet resistance from riders, including advocates for the disabled who rely on the paratransit service known as the Ride.

The service is mandated by the federal government, but the MBTA goes beyond that requirement, and the proposal would eliminate those rides that aren't federally mandated.

Activists say the change could make it more difficult for disabled riders to keep medical appointments and family visits.

The MBTA must provide door-to-door service within certain areas around bus and subway stops but has expanded the service area to sometimes include entire towns.

The Globe reports the proposal would stop providing service to areas that are more than three-quarters of a mile away from an MBTA bus or subway stop. https://www.usnews.com/news/massachusetts/articles/2017-03-13/mbta-weighs-ending-weekend-commuter-rail-service-for-year%3Fsrc=usn_fb
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Mass Senior Action Council executive director Carolyn Villers said the changes could affect up to 8,000 people.

"For some, it would mean they lose access to their medical and family connections," Villers said.

Cuts to weekend commuter rail service would save about \$10 million while cutting back on trips on the Ride would save \$7.4 million. The agency already hopes to save \$27.6 million by privatizing much of its bus maintenance and customer service departments.

A final agency budget doesn't need to be finalized until April 15.

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