

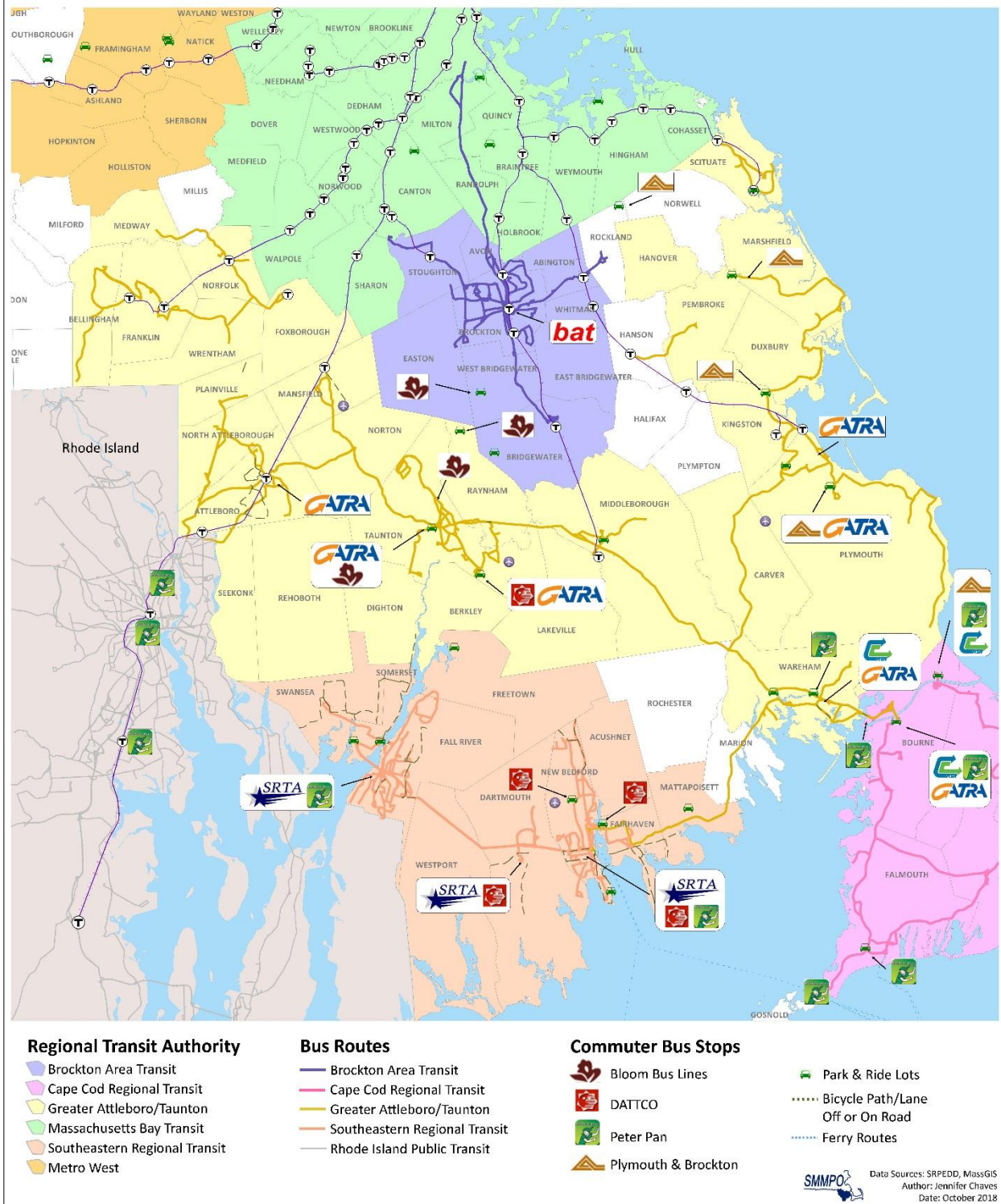
Appendix I: Commuter and Intercity Bus Service

Intercity bus service provides scheduled connections between cities within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and to cities in neighboring states. In the SMMPO region, two public Regional Transit Authorities (RTA) provide local service with connections to private intercity bus service. Both the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) and the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA) provide intercity connections among the region's cities.

Intercity bus service operated by private carriers is also referred to as commuter bus service in that they provide scheduled service during peak commuting hours. Commuter bus service operates on fixed routes with stops at regional park and rides as well as private parking lots.

Three private carriers operate intercity service in the SMMPO region: Bloom Bus Lines, DATTCO, and Peter Pan Bus Lines. Bloom Bus Lines operates service between Taunton and Boston; DATTCO operates service between New Bedford and Boston via Taunton; and Peter Pan Bus Lines provides service from Fall River and Wareham to Boston, and from Fall River, New Bedford, and Wareham to Cape Cod, Rhode Island, and New York. Figure I-1 shows a map of Regional Transportation in Southeastern Massachusetts.

Regional Transportation in Southeastern Massachusetts



F-1: Regional Transportation in Southeastern Massachusetts

Private Company Intercity Bus Service

Bloom Bus Lines has provided service from Taunton to Boston since 1979. Service operates on weekdays between the Bloom Bus Terminal in Taunton to the South Station area stop located at 162 Lincoln Street as well as to the Park Square area located at 212 Stuart Street in Boston. The route stops at the Raynham Dog Track Park and Ride and the Route 106 & Route 24 Park and Ride in West Bridgewater. Bloom operates flag stops at the Liberty & Union Plaza on Broadway in Taunton and at the corner of Route 138 and Route 106 in Easton. Bloom Bus Lines' weekday service begins at 5:15 AM and ends at 7:57 PM.

DATTCO, with a local office in Fairhaven, operates commuter service between Fairhaven and Boston's South Station via New Bedford. Intermediate stops include the Mt. Pleasant Street Park and Ride lot in New Bedford and the Silver City Galleria Park and Ride lot in Taunton. Limited service is available from UMass Dartmouth during the academic year and seasonal service connects with the Seastreak ferry to Martha's Vineyard. Select arrivals in Boston will also drop off in Copley Square. DATTCO's weekday service begins at 4:30 AM and ends at 12:15 AM.

In 2019, DATTCO, through its partnerships Megabus, extended one roundtrip daily service to provide connecting service from South Coastal Massachusetts to Montpelier and Burlington, Vermont.

Peter Pan Bus Lines offers several commuter service lines in Southeastern Massachusetts. Service between Boston and Woods Hole stops in Wareham (commuter service only), Buzzard's Bay (commuter service only), Bourne, and Falmouth. Service between Boston and Hyannis stops in Sagamore and Barnstable Airport and Barnstable Park & Ride. The New York to Cape Code and the Albany, NY to Cape Cod lines both stop in Providence, Fall River, New Bedford, and Bourne; the Newport to Boston line stops in Fall River, and the New York to Newport line stops in Providence and Fall River. Peter Pan also provides transportation from Fall River and New Bedford to the region's two major airports, T.F. Green Airport in Warwick, Rhode Island and Boston's Logan Airport. Peter Pan has also expanded into Cape Cod to provide service between Hyannis and Provincetown, with daily connections to Boston, Boston Logan Airport and Providence/New York City. The Fall River stop is located at the Louis D. Pettine Transportation Center located at 118 4th Street and the New Bedford stop is located at the New Bedford SRTA Terminal located at 134 Elm Street. The Wareham stop is located at the Park and Ride located at US-6/MA-28 and MA-25 at Exit 2.

Security

Bloom Bus Lines has equipped its entire fleet with global positioning systems (GPS) and can track vehicle location, traveling speed, and engine diagnostics remotely. This system was purchased with federal grants from the Department of Homeland Security. Buses, terminals and garage facilities have been equipped with digital video equipment and all personnel entering the facilities have photo identification security key cards to allow entrance.

DATTCO continues to utilize both GPS and event recorders to monitor security and manage driving behaviors. GPS technology will be updated later this year as telecommunication providers begin to phase out the 2G wireless network. Functionality will remain the same though communication speed and reliability is expected to increase with the move to 4G. emailed for update

Peter Pan Bonanza employees have attended special terror/threat recognition training sessions and they have developed new operational policies and procedures to better secure vehicles and luggage bays at garages and terminals. Terminals and garage facilities have been equipped with digital video equipment and have been improved with fencing and better lighting. Peter Pan Bonanza also uses Verizon wireless communication devices, GPS location devices and video cameras on all vehicles.

Vehicles

Since 2017, Bloom Bus Lines has purchased 11 new vehicles to replace older vehicles. Bloom Bus replaces vehicles on a ten-year cycle and currently have only four buses that are older than ten years. The vehicles greater than ten years old are kept as reserve equipment and are not used in regular service. All buses are equipped with seat belts, 110-volt power outlets and Wi-Fi. Bloom Bus was the recipient of 2 buses through the Massachusetts Department of Transportation BusPlus⁺ program and received one bus through a joint federal grant with the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority.

DATTCO coaches procured through the Massachusetts Department of Transportation BusPlus⁺ program during 2014. The new coaches are in service between Boston, Taunton, New Bedford and Fairhaven and feature three-point seat belts, wireless internet capability, 110V power outlets and fully ADA compliant wheel chair lifts. The buses seat 51 passengers and have accommodations for up to two persons in wheelchairs. Emailed for update

Peter Pan Bonanza places an annual order for new buses. The number of buses ordered varies based on factors such as: the current size of the fleet, the age of the oldest buses being replaced, the trade in value, the need to update technologies and more importantly, the state of the business and the resources the company can commit for capital programs. Peter Pan has

ordered 10 new buses with 2019 deliveries. The entire Peter Pan fleet has wireless internet service, seats with 110V outlets or USB ports to charge phones, computers, and other devices. All new buses are ordered with 3-point seatbelts; approximately 75% of the Peter Pan fleet is equipped with seatbelts.

Regional Intercommunity Bus Service

Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority - The Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) contracts with Professional Transit Management (PTM), a division of TransDev, to operate a route from the Taunton bus terminal to downtown Attleboro via Norton, as well as an intercommunity bus route between Norton and Mansfield, connecting to the Mansfield MBTA station. PTM also provides intercommunity bus service between Wareham and Lakeville, connecting at the Middleborough/Lakeville MBTA station. Beginning in February of 2017, GATRA contracted with SRTA to provide intercommunity bus service between Wareham and New Bedford. This service brought much needed connection to those residing in Wareham to connect with social services in New Bedford.

Southeastern Regional Transit Authority - The Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA) contracts with SouthCoast Transit Management, a division of First Transit Incorporated, to operate the Intercity Route between New Bedford and Fall River via US-6. As mentioned above, SRTA is the operator for GATRA's Wareham to New Bedford bus route.

Bus Facilities and Intermodal Centers

Bus facilities in the SMMPO region include intermodal terminals in Fall River, New Bedford, Taunton, and Attleboro. Intermodal centers provide passengers a safe and convenient location to transfer between intercity bus service and local bus service as well as commuter rail services. Intermodal centers also include ticket counters for both intercity and local bus service; in addition, customer service representatives are available to assist passengers with their travel needs. Intermodal centers provide parking for passengers, and may offer food concessions as well. In the SMMPO region, intermodal centers are located in the urban cores with convenient pedestrian access to downtown areas.

Commuter Bus Issues

Commuter bus service provides an excellent alternative to single occupancy vehicle travel, especially for commuting purposes. New modern equipment with free Wi-Fi, comfortable seating, available power outlets, and on-board restrooms provide an opportunity for passengers to make the time spent commuting much more productive than driving alone. The network of intercity bus carriers in the SMMPO region all connect with local transit systems at

many of the destinations served, making it possible to travel throughout the region, Commonwealth, and beyond with limited need for a private automobile. The cost of regular commuting via intercity bus can be affordable, especially when compared against the costs of owning and driving a private automobile.

Intercity buses however, are subject to the same traffic congestion and delays experienced by private automobiles due to the fact that they operate in mixed traffic on the region's roadway network. As the region's roadways become more congested, the reliability of the intercity bus network will diminish, resulting in less predictability in arrival time.

Joint Ticketing with MBTA

Joint ticketing remains an unresolved issue between the region's intercity bus carriers and the MBTA. Joint ticketing would permit a passenger to use a monthly commuter bus pass for MBTA transit services in the same manner that an MBTA Commuter Rail monthly pass holder can access the MBTA transit services using the pass. As of April 2019, an MBTA Zone 8 Monthly Pass, which includes trips from the Lakeville-Middleborough MBTA station and full use of the MBTA transit services costs \$363. By comparison, a monthly pass for intercity service on DATTCO between New Bedford and Boston costs \$349, however to access the MBTA transit system, the passenger would be required to pay a separate fare. Joint ticketing would eliminate the distinction between commuter rail and intercity passengers and eliminate the inequity in modal choice.

In 2013, SRTA implemented the MBTA Charlie Card fare payment system. Charlie Cards with stored value (daily, weekly, and monthly passes are excluded) can be used on both the SRTA and MBTA systems. A similar arrangement could be made between the intercity bus carriers and the MBTA so that at no point in a commuter's journey would a separate fare payment system be required.

Lack of Connectivity and Bus Connections

Despite a well-developed network of intercity bus routes throughout the SMMPO region, gaps in service remain. One main gap that is often voiced through public outreach efforts is service between downtown Fall River and downtown Taunton. Although the real need is documented, this connection does not exist through a direct one seat ride.

Implementation of South Coast Rail will address this need by late 2023. In the interim, efforts need to be made with the intercity carriers to address the unmet need and provide a more convenient and timely connection between downtown Fall River and downtown Taunton.

Congestion on Route 24

Traffic congestion on Route 24 between Taunton and Randolph is a problem for intercity bus carriers. The daily peak hour congestion increases travel times and reduces the reliability of scheduled arrival times. The congested condition not only delays travel, it limits the ability of the intercity carriers from increasing the frequency of service without deploying additional buses. Once the intercity buses reach the HOV lane on the Southeast Expressway in Quincy, they are able to travel at a much more predictable speed into Boston.

The difference in travel times is significant. A peak hour commuter bus trip between Taunton and Boston South Station is scheduled for one hour and fifteen minutes; the same trip mid-day is scheduled for one hour. The difference of fifteen minutes between peak and off peak travel times reflects the level of congestion experienced on Route 24.

Recommendations

I-1 – The absence of joint ticketing creates a disparate financial burden for intercity bus commuters in southeastern Massachusetts. An agreement between the MBTA and the intercity bus carriers to permit joint ticketing will remove the financial burden placed on commuters that require the use of intercity commuter bus and MBTA transit service to reach their destination.

I-2 – With South Coast Rail scheduled to begin in late 2023, coordination between commuter bus companies and MassDOT should be considered in order to achieve hourly service. Schedule changes should be considered for commuter bus during hours when South Coast Rail does not serve. The use of joint ticketing will enable this program.

I-3 – A connection between downtown Fall River and downtown Taunton should be made via a single seat ride on an intercity bus. The need for this connection is well documented and should be explored further for implementation in the near term.

I-4 – Continued implementation of modern vehicles equipped with Wi-Fi, increased leg room, on-board restrooms, and 110V power outlets will make commuter bus service much more attractive and help to increase ridership.

I-5 – Use of HOV lanes on Route 24 will also assist with on-time performance, however, this is a major investment that MassDOT currently has not programmed.

Study Needs

Further study is needed to develop a connection between Fall River and Taunton. Commuter bus companies operate as private entities and make determinations on service availability and frequency consistent with their corporate strategy. The intercity bus companies operate as

private carriers, however, as the recipient of public funds and a provider of public transportation services, they must also operate with the best interest of the public in mind. Service between Fall River and Taunton is an achievable goal that will benefit both the private carrier through additional fares and the traveling public through improved regional connectivity.