

The Pokey/Schleppie Awards 2026

Awards for Bus Inefficiency
Fall 2026



TRANSITMATTERS

Authors and Contributors

TransitMatters NextGen Bus Campaign Leads

Cole Lewis

Catherine MacLean

TransitMatters NextGen Bus Volunteers

Emma Reiner

Liam Beretsky-Jewell

JJ Isom

Seth Willden

Jacob Deck

TransitMatters Executive Director

Caitlin Allen-Connelly

TransitMatters Interns

Úna Gogstetter

Spencer Ng

TransitMatters Labs/NextGenBus Volunteer

Austin Paul

Photos

James Wang

Graphics

Toby Pannone

Cedric Ye

Spencer Ng

TransitMatters Editors

Seth Willden

Cole Lewis

Report Sponsors

TransitMatters is grateful to our Pokey/Schleppie report sponsors.

Anonymous

Benjamin Harris

Jessica Ferguson

Jonathan Mishar

Kyle Steinike



Introduction

This year marks TransitMatters' third Pokey/Schleppie Awards report, continuing our fight for equitable, fast, and reliable bus service across Greater Boston. System performance data – and a vision for improving our worst routes – remains crucial for delivering better daily service to bus riders. Adapted from NYPIRG's Straphangers Campaign, to whom we remain grateful for originating this analysis, our annual report highlights the slowest (Pokey) and most bunched (Schleppie) routes in the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA).

Over the past three years we have consistently found that many of the system's slowest and most unreliable buses are the routes predominantly serving Black and Brown communities and low-income neighborhoods – neighborhoods which often depend on transit. Poor bus service is not just an issue of inefficiency; it is an issue of opportunity, mobility, and quality of life for these communities. Additionally, inefficient service is felt every day by riders who may have to wait fifteen minutes longer in the extreme heat or cold because of a bunched bus or have to leave for school twenty to thirty minutes earlier to not risk being late. With the Pokey/Schleppie Awards, we intend to convert data into concrete change for bus riders' mobility and comfort by highlighting areas of urgency and making recommendations for better bus priority and improved operations.

The past year since the release of our [Second Pokey/Schleppie Report](#) has been marked by delayed action on the part of the City of Boston in building bus priority

infrastructure. Every Pokey and Schleppie route this year runs entirely or partially within Boston's borders. Since spring 2025, progress has been held up on some of the City's most critical bus infrastructure projects by the Mayor's office out of political caution. In total, the City removed or slowed planning for bus lanes along the routes of eight buses on this year's Pokey/Schleppie lists¹.

While many of these projects have been held back, bus service remains slow and bunched across the city – seven routes from last year's Pokey list and eight routes from last year's Schleppie list remain on this year's list. Bus riders continue to waste hours on unreliable buses stuck in traffic. Delaying progress on bus lanes may seem like a political move, but it has a very tangible effect on bus riders trying to get to work or school on time.

“Seven routes from last year's Pokey list and eight routes from last year's Schleppie list remain on this year's list. Bus riders continue to waste hours on unreliable buses stuck in traffic.”

In April of this year, the Wu administration released their [2030 Climate Action Plan](#). The document announced a slate of goals related to reducing vehicle miles traveled in the City of Boston, among other targets. One goal identified is to “Encourage bus use with improvements to affordability, convenience, and accessibility,” including an action item to “Provide Bus Priority in Key Locations” along seven named corridors² – many of which are used by buses on this year's Pokey/Schleppie

lists. To meet these goals by 2030, progress on streets infrastructure cannot be delayed.

The past few months have also shown us that fights for bus priority and safe streets are intertwined. The tragic death of Louisa Gag – a lifelong bike advocate and transportation planner for the City of Boston – after being hit by a truck in a bike lane on Tremont St. in Mission Hill, [has reminded everyone of the urgency and severity of building safe streets infrastructure](#). Demands for concrete-separated bike lanes, speed humps, safer crosswalks, and bus lanes all follow the same guiding principle that streets should be for everyone, and high-speed, congested roads through our communities cannot be the status quo. Louisa’s death was preventable, yet was tragically [one of so many vulnerable road users killed by cars in Massachusetts this year](#).

In the wake of Louisa’s death, Mayor Wu has [announced new efforts towards safe streets](#), including expanding concrete cast-in-place barriers for bike lanes; recommitments to redesigns on Blue Hill Ave., Columbus Ave., and Rutherford Ave.; and restarting engagement on a slate of critical streets projects³. The City has followed up on these commitments by scheduling four community meetings related to the [Blue Hill Ave. redesign](#) this month and announcing that they will hold community engagement sessions for the [Tremont / Columbus Bus Lanes](#) project – among other key streets projects – later this fall. As the City works to build back trust, we hope to see the Streets Cabinet get back on track with their impressive record of building bus priority infrastructure that was exhibited during Mayor Wu’s first term.

We’ve also seen slow progress on commitments related to bus operations made over the past few years. At MBTA General Manager Phillip Eng’s [“Full T Ahead” presentation](#) to the Board of Directors in early 2025, the agency announced plans to begin implementing headway management on some frequent buses⁴. [Headway management](#) is a proven operational practice in which buses are dispatched based on the progress of the previous bus instead of on a concrete schedule, and has been shown to reduce bunching⁵. The public has yet to be provided an update on any implementation of headway management since the announcement, though.

After enabling legislation passed the Massachusetts legislature in January 2025, the MBTA board approved the use of automated enforcement cameras on MBTA buses last September – allowing the state to fine drivers blocking bus lanes and bus stops⁶. Fines will range from \$25 to \$125 for vehicles parked in bus stops or stopped in bus lanes⁷. A [key caveat of the enabling legislation](#) though, is that the MBTA can only send fines for cars that are stopped – whether they are parked in a bus stop or stopped in a bus lane – and cannot recognize violations for in-motion cars driving in bus lanes⁸.

Bus-mounted enforcement cameras were originally supposed to begin operating on the SL4 and SL5 buses this fall, but the no-penalty educational period for violators has been [delayed to October 2026](#), meaning the MBTA has confirmed they will not start issuing official tickets until January 1, 2027. After those Silver Line routes, camera installation will expand to the 28 and 39 buses, and then to the rest of the system. As this report details, many routes which already run in bus lanes continue to face delays because cars drive and park in dedicated bus lanes, eliminating time and reliability savings for riders. Delaying rollout of automated enforcement adds more hours of passenger delay, pushing out badly-needed progress toward quality bus service in areas like Roxbury. Cars parked in bus lanes also cause safety and accessibility concerns, as they block buses from being able to pull up to the curb.

“Many routes which already run in bus lanes continue to face delays because cars drive and park in dedicated bus lanes, eliminating time and reliability savings for riders. Delaying rollout of automated enforcement adds more hours of passenger delay, pushing out badly-needed progress toward quality bus service in areas like Roxbury.”

In an encouraging development, the City of Boston is following up on a January 2025 [joint announcement with the MBTA](#) which committed to expand transit signal priority (TSP) across Boston. The City will install TSP at eighteen Boston intersections – seventeen along

the SL4 and SL5 bus routes and one along the [Lower Broadway – Alford Street Transit Priority Corridor](#) – estimating early fall installation. TSP is an impactful tool for increasing bus reliability and reducing traffic delay.

66 The top ten slowest and most bunched routes are most concentrated in Roxbury (7 Pokey, 3 Schleppie), Dorchester (1 Pokey, 3 Schleppie), Chelsea (2 Schleppie), and Charlestown (2 Pokey).

The results of this year’s analysis are reviewed further in the Overview of Findings section, with discussion of the concrete impact on bus service that this inaction has had.

Methodology

TransitMatters uses the MBTA’s publicly-available [Open Data Portal](#) to calculate bus speeds and bunching rates, along with headway and route geometry information from the [MBTA’s archive of General Transit Feed Specification \(GTFS\) feeds](#). The Open Data Portal provides arrival times for each bus trip at select “time-points” along its route, allowing us to calculate the total runtime of a bus trip and the observed headway at each point. Using GTFS, we’re able to gather the length of the route and the scheduled headway in order to calculate the average speed and the difference in observed headway, respectively.

Analysis is limited to bus trips in October 2025, which allows for faithful year-over-year comparisons with 2024 and 2023 data from past reports, which also used October data. This keeps variability in seasonal traffic, schedules, and routing consistent.

The following parameters were used for the Pokey analysis:

- The mean total run time was calculated based on all weekday trips between 7:00 AM and 7:00 PM
- Analysis included both inbound and outbound trips
- Route length calculations were based upon October 2025 GTFS data
- On routes with variants, the most common route was analyzed
- Routes were limited to those with at least 500 weekday riders

The following parameters were used for the Schleppie analysis:

- Observed headway was calculated for all weekday timepoints between 7:00 AM and 7:00 PM for each route
- Each headway was compared to the scheduled headway for that route at that stop, as calculated from the GTFS schedule for the applicable date
- If the observed headway was less than 25% of the scheduled headway, that trip was considered “bunched” at that time point
- The bunching rate was computed by averaging all time points for all routes (inbound and outbound)
- Routes that operated fewer than three trips per hour each way between the hours of 7:00 AM and 7:00 PM were excluded
 - This was to emphasize routes frequent enough for headway management to be an important factor, as opposed to schedule-based routes.

Overview of Findings

As was the case in our 2025 report, many of the same routes continue to appear on the slowest and most bunched list, as similar service issues persist without infrastructure and operations interventions. Seven out of ten Pokey routes from this year appeared on the list in 2025, six of which were also on the 2024 list. Eight of ten Schleppie routes repeated from last year, of which seven were also in the top ten in 2024. Without action from municipalities and the MBTA, it seems likely that these routes will remain on the list year after year. As is far too common, unreliable bus service is localized to specific communities with a history of disinvestment: the top ten slowest and most bunched routes are most concentrated in Roxbury (7 Pokey, 3 Schleppie), Dorchester (1 Pokey, 3 Schleppie), Chelsea (2 Schleppie), and Charlestown (2 Pokey).

Area	Median Annual Household Income ⁹	Percentage of Households with no car access ¹⁰
Roxbury	\$45,948	38.6%
Dorchester	\$83,154	26%
Chelsea	\$72,179	28.4%
Charlestown	\$157,247	19.4%

While bunching among the top ten most-bunched routes saw improvement this year, the speeds of the top ten slowest bus speeds continued to decline. In October 2025, average bunching rates among the top ten fell to 13.9% from 15.8% the previous year, while the average rate was 14.1% in 2023. Bunching is also improving at the extremes: the most bunched bus this year, the 32 bus, has a lower bunching rate than the top three most bunched last year. While this is an improvement, an average of fourteen out of one hundred buses arriving bunched and causing lengthy wait times is far too many, and continued action must be taken.

Bus speeds among the top ten Pokey routes, meanwhile, have been slowing down over the past few years. The average speed among the top ten slowest buses was 6.42 miles per hour (mph) this year, a drop from 6.52 last year and 6.83 in the previous year. Whether congestion is worsening or existing bus priority infrastructure has become less effective, traffic-slowed and blocked buses impact the daily lives of riders by introducing uncertainty into their schedules and costing them time with loved ones. For a commuter riding a three-mile bus route five days a week over a year, a 0.41 mph loss in average speed since 2023 amounts to over 14.5 more hours lost on the bus.

“Traffic-slowed and blocked buses impact the daily lives of riders by introducing uncertainty into their schedules and costing them time with loved ones. For a commuter riding a three mile bus route five days a week over a year, a 0.41 mph loss in average speed since 2023 amounts to over 14.5 more hours lost on the bus.

2026 Pokey Awards

Bus Route	Average Speed (mph)
SL4	6.09
1	6.20
93	6.27
47	6.44
CT3	6.45
92	6.47
66	6.50
SL5	6.58
19	6.61
10	6.62

On the Pokey list, two of last year's top three slowest buses – the 1 bus and the SL4 bus – kept their place, while the CT3 bus was replaced by the 93 bus in the top three. New additions to the list include the 47 and 93 buses. The 92 bus, which has not been ranked since 2024, the 93 bus, which is new to the Pokey list, and the 111 bus all use the same route along North Washington St., where the [Wu Administration removed one direction of a bus lane](#) last July. Maps showing average speeds by route section for all ten Pokey routes this year are provided in the appendix.

After being ranked third in 2025 and sixth in 2024, the SL4 bus was calculated to be the slowest bus route across the MBTA this year – as congestion and blocked bus lanes seem to be increasing along Washington St. and Essex St. This year, we calculated the SL4 and SL5 buses' speeds separately, revealing a significant difference in the average speeds of the two routes. The SL4 bus jumped to first on the list, while the SL5 fell to eighth. This underscores the need for targeted transit priority on the Chinatown section of the SL4 bus' route before it joins with the SL5 on Washington St., and stresses the urgency for no further delays on implementation of [automated enforcement](#) on the Silver Line by the MBTA.

2026 Schleppie Awards

Bus Route	Bunching Rate
32	17.1%
116	16.3%
1	15.3%
39	14.3%
66	13.1%
22	12.9%
31	12.9%
57	12.8%
23	12.8%
111	11.5%

On the Schleppie side, the only route to remain in the top three most bunched was the 1 bus – which has ranked in the top three each year – while the 23 and 111 buses dropped to the bottom of the list. The 32 bus – running from Readville/Hyde Park to Forest Hills – rose to the number one most bunched spot after ranking fifth last year and not being ranked the previous. The 116 bus – serving Revere, Chelsea, and East Boston – is second on the bunched list despite not being on any previous Pokey/Schleppie list. Bunching is clearly on the rise on both of these routes, and the City of Boston has identified solutions for bus priority along both routes. But when it comes to solutions like [bus lanes along Hyde Park Ave.](#) for the 32 bus or adding bus priority infrastructure to the Meridian St. corridor in East Boston for the 116 bus¹, there has been no move on the City's part to address the need for bus priority with any urgency.

The 31 bus is another new addition to this year's Schleppie list, running along Blue Hill Ave. from Mattapan to Morton St., where it turns to connect with Forest Hills. With heavy traffic, double parking, and no bus priority, buses on Blue Hill Ave. are very susceptible to becoming bunched. The 22 bus is also featured on this year's Schleppie list, and the 28 bus, which runs all along Blue Hill Ave., receives an "honorable mention," as its 11% bunching rate puts it at eleventh on the Schleppie rankings. [Plans to redesign Blue Hill Ave.](#) would address these service problems by building a center-running bus lane from

Mattapan to Grove Hall, improving rush hour one-way travel times by ten to fifteen minutes. Public engagement on the project will restart this month.

Each route profile below is accompanied by an up arrow, down arrow, or level symbol to note whether speeds and bunching rates have increased or decreased in the past year. They do not represent change in ranking, but rather improvement or in speed or bunching rate. For Pokey routes, a green up arrow means speeds are increasing and therefore improving, whereas a red down arrow indicates that speeds are dropping. For Schleppie routes, a red up arrow means bunching is increasing, whereas a green down arrow indicates that bunching is improving. A blue level symbol either indicates that there was no change from the previous year, or that the route was not on last year's list.

To address the speed and reliability of the eighteen bus routes outlined on the Pokey and Schleppie lists, TransitMatters recommends the following set of actions:

1. **Resume progress on key Boston bus priority and multi-modal streets projects:** Recommit to providing bus riders with priority by progressing planning efforts on Boston's slowest and most unreliable bus corridors, specifically the Blue Hill Avenue Transportation Action Plan, Tremont / Columbus Bus Lanes, Hyde Park Avenue Multimodal Corridor, and Roxbury Resilient Corridors projects.
2. **Reinstate bus lanes on North Washington St. and Boylston St.:** Restore vital bus priority to riders in Chelsea and Charlestown and riders in Mission Hill and Jamaica Plain after bus lanes were removed without proper community input.
3. **Expand bus priority infrastructure across the system:** Implement bus lanes, transit signal priority, and queue jumps that properly prioritize bus riders on our roads, emphasizing bus corridors used by these eighteen bus routes.
4. **Begin implementing headway management practices on frequent, often-bunched MBTA bus routes:** Dedicate resources towards recruiting more dispatchers, and ensure that technology and layover infrastructure are sufficient to allow implementation of headway maintenance when enough dispatchers are hired.
5. **Roll out operation of automated enforcement as soon as possible:** Ensure that hiring and technology adoption stay on track so that the MBTA can begin issuing tickets as soon as possible for cars blocking SL4 and SL5 buses, and begin rollout on other high-priority routes soon after.
6. **Re-establish transparency around streets infrastructure and include communities in the process of change:** Work with residents to come to designs that serve everyone in the community equitably, keeping neighborhoods continually informed about the infrastructure investments being planned in their area.
7. **Dedicate capital funding towards bus priority infrastructure:** Identify a plan for sustainable transportation financing at the state level, and allocate capital funding towards infrastructure that prioritizes bus riders and increases reliability.

Route Profiles: Pokey (slowest)



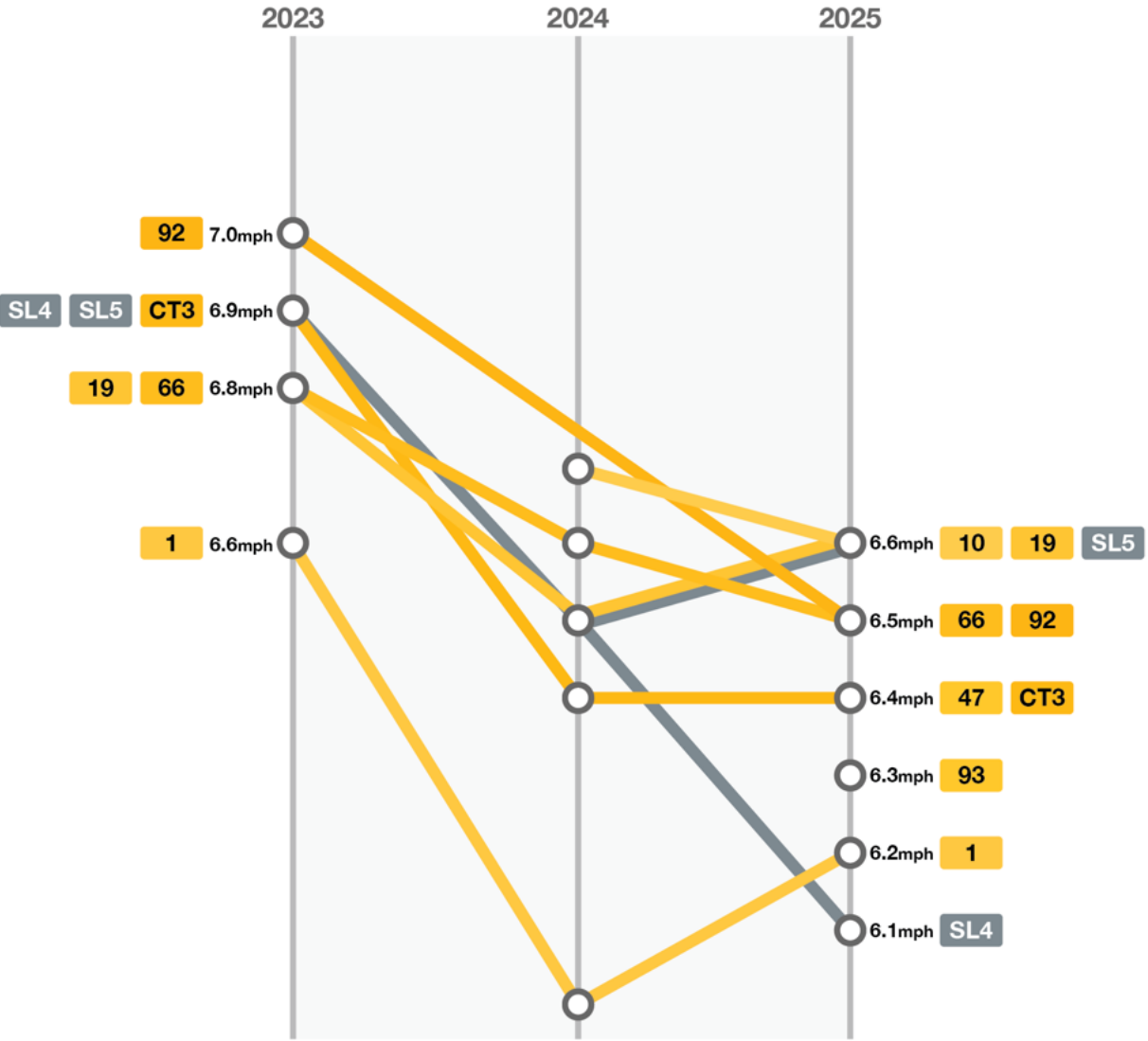


TRANSITMATTERS

2026 Pokey Awards

2026 Rank	Bus Route	Average Speed (mph)	2025 Rank	Areas Served
1	SL4	6.09	3	Roxbury, South End, Chinatown, Downtown Boston
2	1	6.20	1	Roxbury, Back Bay, Fenway, Central Square, Harvard
3	93	6.27	N/A	Downtown Boston, Northern Charlestown
4	47	6.44	N/A	Central Square, LMA, Roxbury, South End, South Boston
5	CT3	6.45	2	LMA, South End, Roxbury, Andrew Square
6	92	6.47	N/A	Downtown Boston, Southern Charlestown
7	66	6.50	5	Roxbury, Mission Hill, LMA, Brookline, Allston/Brighton, Harvard
8	SL5	6.58	3	Roxbury, South End, Chinatown, Downtown Boston
9	19	6.61	4	Dorchester, Roxbury, LMA, Fenway
10	10	6.62	9	South Boston, Newmarket, South End, Back Bay

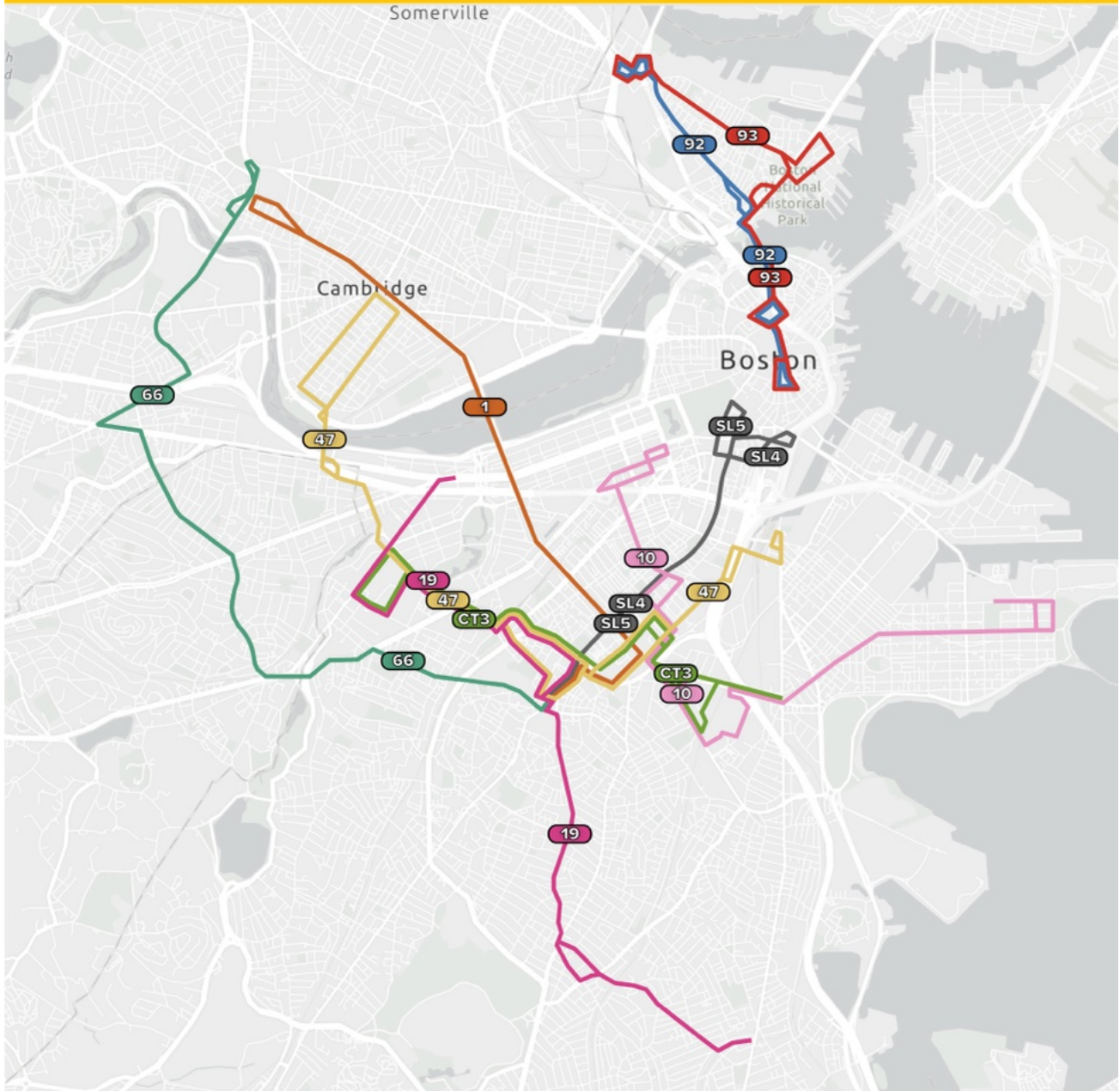
Change in Average Speed of Pokiest Buses



All speeds rounded to the nearest tenth of a decimal place. Only the top 10 slowest bus routes were included.
 Graph by Toby Pannone.

POKEY BUS ROUTES

10 Slowest MBTA Bus Routes in 2026



Map by Cedric Ye.

#1 Pokey Route: SL4 Bus

Despite being promised as an “[equal or better](#)” alternative when the [Orange Line was re-routed away from Washington St.](#) in 1987, the Silver Line appears on the Pokey list for the third consecutive year. The SL4 bus (combined with the SL5 in previous reports) has slowed from 6.90 mph in October 2023 to 6.49 mph in October 2024 to **6.09** mph in October 2025. The route runs from South Station to Nubian, serving Downtown Boston, Chinatown, the South End, and Roxbury. As a designated Frequent Bus Route, the SL4 bus runs trips every fifteen minutes or less for most of the period between 5 AM and 12:30 AM each day. Together, the SL4/SL5 buses rank in the top five highest-ridership bus routes across the MBTA system, with average weekday ridership of almost 12,000 in October 2025.

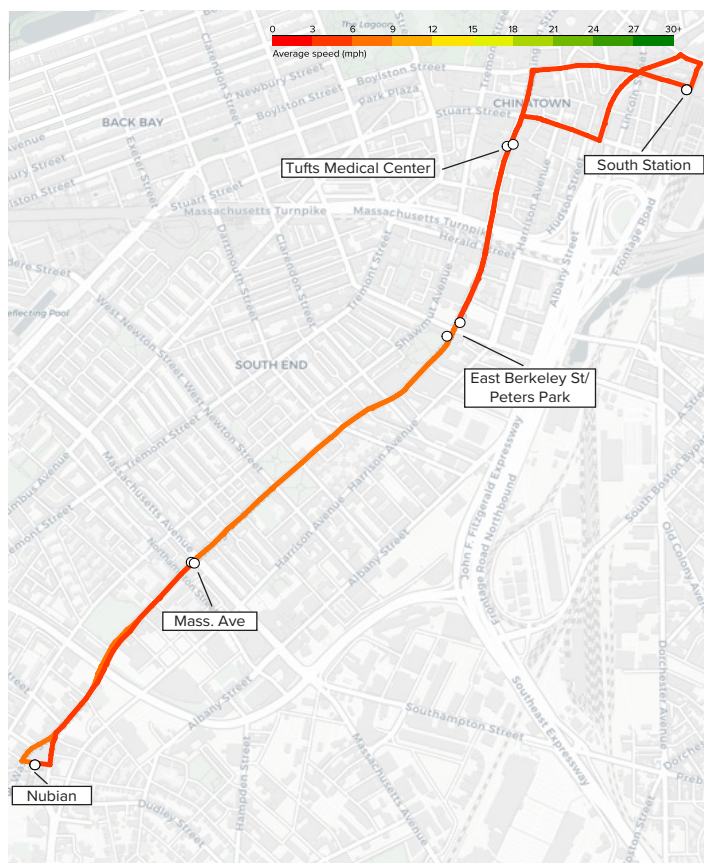
Despite the SL4 and SL5 buses having almost the same route, the SL5 ranks seven places below the SL4 on this year’s Pokey list (about a 0.5 mph difference). Thus, the SL4’s route portion between Washington St. and South Station is a major contributor to its slow speed. While the route uses northbound bus lanes on Essex St., a lack of dedicated bus lanes between South Station and Washington St. on the outbound route may exacerbate slow speeds.

Bus lanes are present on the majority of the SL4 bus’s route. These lanes are often blocked by cars driving and double parking nonetheless. However, the SL4 and SL5 buses will be the first to operate [the MBTA’s automated enforcement program](#), scheduled to begin in January 2027. The program was intended to begin operating this fall, but citations will not be issued until next year after delays. The SL4 bus’s placement as the slowest bus in the MBTA underlines the urgency to begin operating automated enforcement cameras. Every month that the rollout is delayed is another month with no progress on an efficient bus ride for thousands of Roxbury riders. The MBTA and City of Boston are, however, [planning to upgrade TSP](#) along the SL4 and SL5 buses’ route on Washington St. and in Nubian Square – more information about the improvements is included in the box below.

The section of the SL4/SL5’s route between Nubian Station and Melnea Cass Blvd. does not have dedicated bus lanes, but was identified as having the highest need for transit priority investment by [the MBTA’s Bus Priority Vision](#). Northbound buses see very slow speeds on this stretch, traveling at an average speed of 5.74 mph.

As part of [the MBTA’s Bus Network Redesign](#), the SL4 and SL5 buses will be combined. Its operating hours will be similar to the current SL4/SL5 bus, and will run between South Station

and Nubian with four- to six-minute headways. An operational practice of maintaining headways will be very important as part of this change, given how easy it is for such a frequent bus service to become bunched. Implementing [headway management](#), in which buses are dispatched based on the real-time progress of the previous bus and dispatchers work with operators to appropriately hold or advance buses along their route, keeps arrival times consistent. The MBTA has not implemented headway management on any of its bus routes, but the SL4/SL5 would be a great pilot for the operational practice.



Map: Route SL4 Average Speed. View larger map in Appendix.

“ACE is headquartered in Nubian Square, one of the biggest and most important transportation hubs in Boston. Black bus riders in Boston wait 64 more hours/year for the bus than white riders¹². Roxbury is disproportionately impacted, with the 2024 Pokey/Schleppie report finding that of the 10 slowest bus routes in the MBTA, 7 serve Roxbury residents. This 2026 report confirms that there is still much to do to improve transportation for our community. Since the takedown of the elevated Orange Line, Roxbury has dealt with years of failed transportation promises. Our concession, the SL4, is ranked #1 as the slowest bus route on the MBTA system. We are only as strong as our weakest link. Strengthening this link would benefit Roxbury residents while also addressing a critical gap in Boston’s public transportation network, improving connectivity, speed, and reliability for all. – Tristan Thomas, Director of Policy, Alternatives for Community and Environment

MBTA / City of Boston Transit Signal Priority Expansion

The MBTA and City of Boston are working together to fulfill their commitment to expand [transit signal priority \(TSP\)](#) across Boston after a [successful pilot](#) in January 2025.

TSP improves reliability and travel time by reducing delays at intersections. It has been proven to work as an infrastructure solution in Boston, and more TSP will create a better experience for everyday riders.

Together, the City and MBTA will install TSP at eighteen intersections in Boston. Seventeen of the TSP installations will be along the trunk route of the SL4 and SL5 buses on Washington St. and in Nubian Square, replacing signal priority installed in 2008 which may no longer be functional. As the SL4 and SL5 buses are the first and eighth slowest buses on this year’s Pokey list, signal improvements like these are necessary first steps toward improving reliability.

An additional installation of TSP is planned for the intersection of Alford St. and Dexter St., serving the 109 bus and future SL3 bus expansion to Sullivan Square, as part of the [Lower Broadway – Alford Street Transit Priority Corridor](#). Installation is expected to begin early this fall¹³.

of the day, Monday through Sunday, with early morning and late night service. On the average weekday in October 2025, over 10,000 people rode the 1 bus, placing it within the top ten highest-ridership MBTA bus routes.

The route is crucial for the many people who ride it, and its slow speed is a consistent issue. As discussed in [the City’s Go Boston 2030 report](#), released in 2017, a dedicated bus lane along Massachusetts Ave. ranked fourth in public voting out of forty-eight potential mobility-related projects¹⁴.

The [MBTA’s Bus Priority Vision](#) identifies nearly the entire 1 bus corridor as in high need of bus priority infrastructure. According to the report, particular chokepoints occur between Central Square and Sidney St., and between Nubian Station and Melnea Cass Blvd., with each of these corridors averaging over 1,300 person-hours of delay per mile¹⁵. On Massachusetts Ave. between Washington St. and parts of Cambridge, the 1 bus’ speed frequently dips below five mph.

Nonetheless, there are no further planned bus priority infrastructure projects focused on the 1 bus’ route, and the [MBTA’s Bus Network Redesign](#) involves no routing changes for the 1 – though [more frequent late-night service is being implemented](#). Small transit priority measures have been enacted for parts of the 1 bus’ route in the past, including bus lanes on small portions of Massachusetts Ave. Further change is still needed, however, such as implementing a TSP system for Massachusetts Ave. – [as was previously proposed in the City of Cambridge Participatory Budgeting process](#) – and substantially extending the existing bus lanes.

#2 Pokey Route: 1 Bus

This is the 1 bus’ third consecutive year on the Pokey list, with its speed decreasing from 6.55 to 6.03 mph between October 2023 and October 2024, then increasing to **6.20** mph this year. The 1 bus serves Roxbury, Back Bay, Fenway-Kenmore, the South End, and Cambridge, and is the only transit route running along Massachusetts Ave. between Boston Medical Center and Cambridge. The 1 bus is a designated Frequent Bus Route, running trips every fifteen minutes or less for most



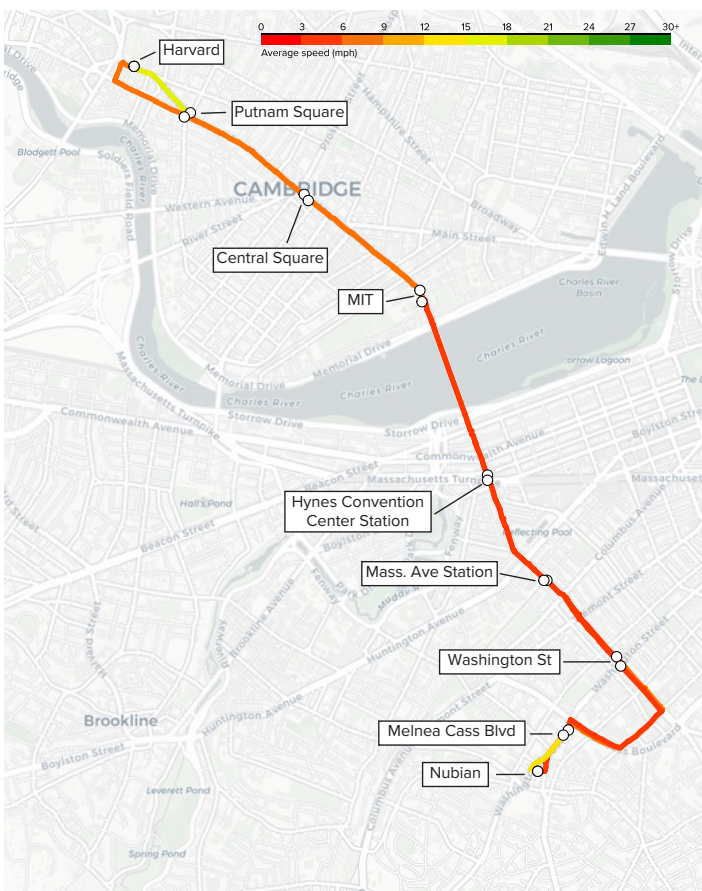
#3 Pokey Route: 93 Bus

Despite not appearing in past reports, the 93 bus took the third spot on this year's Pokey list with a mean speed of **6.27** mph. The route shares Charlestown service with the 92 bus (ranked sixth). While the 92 bus follows Main Street, the higher-ridership 93 bus runs along Bunker Hill St. to serve northern Charlestown, carrying over 2,000 weekday riders. Both terminate westward at Sullivan Square Station and eastward in Downtown Boston's financial district, [where speeds often drop below 5 mph](#). The 93 bus runs on a limited schedule: headways are twenty-five minutes during peak hours, stretching to forty minutes during off-hours. Spanning just 3.8 miles, the 93 bus is short but packed with 53 stops. This means trip times are lengthened by passenger boarding and time spent maneuvering around stops. Long light cycles along Chelsea St. and Congress St. worsen delays, causing buses to repeatedly miss green signals while weaving through traffic.

Implementing transit priority infrastructure would address these chokepoints. The 93 bus should also undergo stop consolidation along Chelsea St. and Bunker Hill St. Implementing TSP along Chelsea St. and Congress St. would dramatically increase speeds, and [relocating stops to the far-side of intersections would make TSP operate most efficiently](#). The 93 bus currently benefits from a bus lane running the length of two blocks on Congress St., reported to save riders forty seconds on an average trip and 130 seconds on highly-congested trips¹⁶.

Additional bus signal priority infrastructure would also help speed up the route along the approaches to the North Washington Street Bridge. A northbound bus lane between the bridge and Haymarket was [removed by the City of Boston last year](#), despite its utility for Chelsea and Charlestown riders returning home. The City has said they have no plans to reinstate the bus lane. Repainting this lane would contribute to relieving evening rush congestion for the 92, 93, and 111 buses, complementing the existing Congress St. bus lane.

Under the [MBTA's Bus Network Redesign](#), the 93 bus will [eventually be replaced by the T7](#) bus. This new Frequent Bus Route will mirror the 93 bus' alignment but extend past South Station through the Seaport to South Boston. While this expansion unlocks important crosstown connections, stretching a route through these heavily congested neighborhoods threatens reliability. Without strict headway management and dedicated transit priority infrastructure, the new line faces high risks of bunching and major delays.



Map: Route 1 Average Speed. View larger map in Appendix.

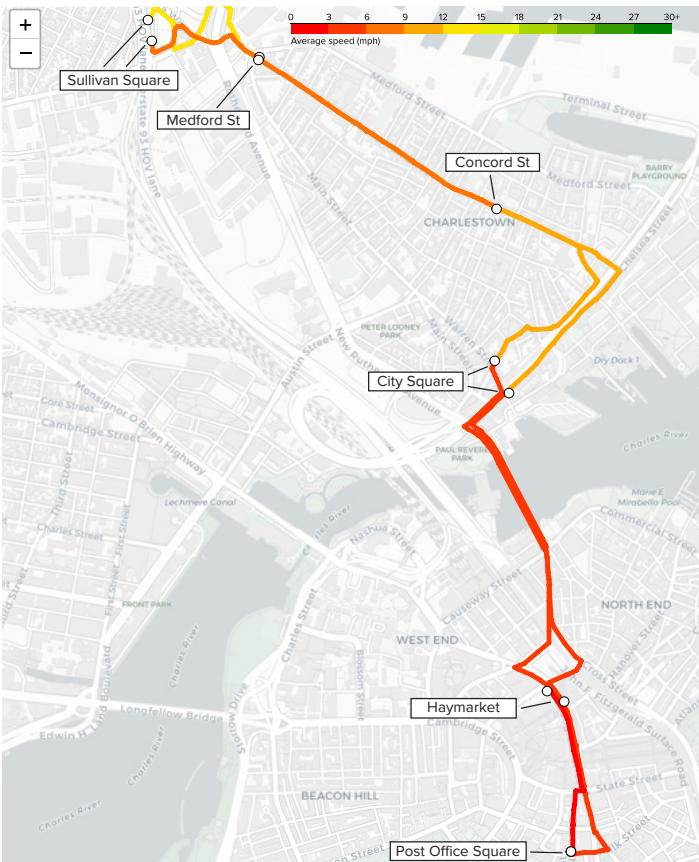
“ I use the 1 to connect me from Northeastern up to Cambridge to see friends, go to work, and make onward connections in the MBTA system. I have regularly had to wait 15+ minutes with large crowds of others doing the same thing, had quick, 10-minute hops take over 20, and experienced buses so full we could not take any more passengers. – Esther Tulchin, Northeastern student



This is the first time the 47 bus is appearing on any Pokey/Schleppie list, signalling that speeds have been slowing on the route in the last year. The route sees its slowest speeds on Harrison Ave., on the approach to Nubian Square, on Brookline Ave. through the LMA, and on Park Dr. between Fenway and I-90. This section of Brookline Ave. was identified as one of the highest-need corridors for transit priority infrastructure in the MBTA's Bus Priority Vision. This corridor would greatly benefit from a bus lane, as well as a queue jump at the intersection of Brookline Ave. and Park Dr. The ongoing LMA routing study should provide recommendations about how chokepoints like these can be mitigated.

The section of Melnea Cass Blvd. used by the 47 bus was slated to be redesigned with better priority for buses, cyclists, and pedestrians under the Roxbury Resilient Corridors project. Grant funding was revoked by the Trump administration in September of last year¹⁷, leaving the planned bus priority improvements with no path forward. Bus priority infrastructure is vitally needed in the area around Nubian Square.

Under Bus Network Redesign, the 47 bus is planned to terminate at Ruggles and extend to Union Square, with the 42 bus being extended from Nubian to Broadway Station to take the 47 bus' place. The 42 bus will continue to have to contend with slow speeds around Nubian Square, as the 47 bus does today. Bus priority infrastructure remains critical in that area.



Map: Route 93 Average Speed. View larger map in Appendix.

#4 Pokey Route: 47 Bus

Coming in at fourth on this year's slowest list with an average speed of **6.44 mph**, the 47 bus is a long, circumferential route that serves the South End, Roxbury, the Fenway, Longwood Medical Area (LMA), Cambridgeport, and Central Square. The route runs roughly fifteen-minute headways during morning and evening rush hours, with twenty- to thirty-minute service the rest of the day. Buses run from early morning to late night, with reduced service on the weekend. Average daily ridership of about 3,800 puts the 47 bus at twenty-second among most rode buses in October 2025.

MBTA Hot Spot Pilot Program

The MBTA and City of Boston are collaborating on an effort to make impactful, targeted, and quick improvements to the bus system in order to improve reliability, safety, and ease of use, which they're calling the "Hot Spot Pilot Program." Improvements range from upgrading bus stops, adding or updating queue jumps in key areas of delay, and reworking signals for better reliability. Installation work is expected to begin this fall, with other improvements coming in the winter and spring¹⁸.

#5 Pokey Route: CT3 Bus

Ranking fifth on this year's slowest list with an average speed of **6.45 mph**, the CT3 bus makes its third Pokey list appearance. This is a marginal increase of 0.03 mph from its speed of 6.42 mph last year. The CT3 bus connects about 1,700 people per weekday between Andrew Square, Roxbury, South End, and the LMA. The CT3 bus also has one of the most infrequent services on the Pokey list this year, running only on weekdays between roughly 6 AM and 9 PM.

In terms of speed, the CT3 bus faces many struggles throughout the entirety of its route. A particular sore spot is the LMA route segment between Ave. Louis Pasteur and Binney St. on Longwood Ave., where the CT3 bus and other buses crawl at an average speed of 3.62 mph. This could potentially be related to the [high rates of blocked bus stops in the LMA](#), which makes bus stops in this area a potential priority area for [automated enforcement](#). The CT3 bus' slow overall speed is in spite of its designation as a "limited stop service," which could also potentially point to needed bus priority infrastructure upgrades such as TSP and bus lanes. Before its funding was revoked by the Trump administration, the [Roxbury Resilient Corridors](#) project was exploring potential bus priority infrastructure upgrades for the Melnea Cass Blvd. section of the CT3 bus' route.

The CT3 bus is the only remaining crosstown route. As a part of the [Bus Network Redesign](#), it will be replaced by the 10 bus. Though the CT3 bus may not exist going forward, many of its problems, especially infrastructural problems, are not isolated to the CT3 service. The new 10 bus will continue to face the same problems without bus priority infrastructure.



#6 Pokey Route: 92 Bus

After disappearing from the list in 2025, the 92 bus makes its return to the Pokey list at sixth place with an average speed of **6.47** mph. This marks a significant decrease of 0.57 mph from the 2024 Pokey list. The 92 bus is a shorter route, connecting Sullivan Square to Downtown via Charlestown, and has a relatively low ridership of just 515 average weekday riders, the lowest of any Pokey route this year. The 92 bus' route is similar to that of the 93 bus, running through Charlestown via Main St. instead of Bunker Hill St. The 92 bus operates daily except on Sundays, with twenty- to sixty-minute frequencies. The bus sits on the lower end of ridership at 515 daily riders.

Alongside its sister route, the 93 bus, the 92 owes much of its slow speeds to its routing directly through the heart of Downtown. Indeed, between City Square and Haymarket, buses travel about five mph, and between Haymarket and its terminus near Post Office Square, buses can slow down to between one and three mph. Unsurprisingly, this lackluster speed in Downtown isn't unique to the 92 bus, as the 93 and other buses in the same area share the same struggle.

Operating in such a highly congested Downtown, the 92 bus desperately needs bus priority infrastructure. The City of Boston, however, has taken steps backward at speeding up bus service in Downtown. In July 2025, the City of Boston [removed a northbound bus lane](#) on North Washington St. which today would help almost 15,000 daily bus riders travel from Downtown to Charleston and Chelsea faster. This bus lane was [identified](#) as a top target for [automated bus lane enforcement](#), which would have further improved the bus lane's effectiveness. Reinstating this bus lane, along with the implementation of automated enforcement, would make a tangible impact on bus riders' commute home. Bus riders deserve fair priority, even if it is not politically popular with drivers.

Under the [Bus Network Redesign](#), the 92 bus is slated to be [replaced by the 7 and 101](#) buses, both of which are supposed to be designated as Frequent Bus Routes and run at headways of fifteen minutes or better. These headway improvements reinforce the urgency for the City of Boston to build bus priority infrastructure along these corridors so that these revamped routes can be fast and reliable.

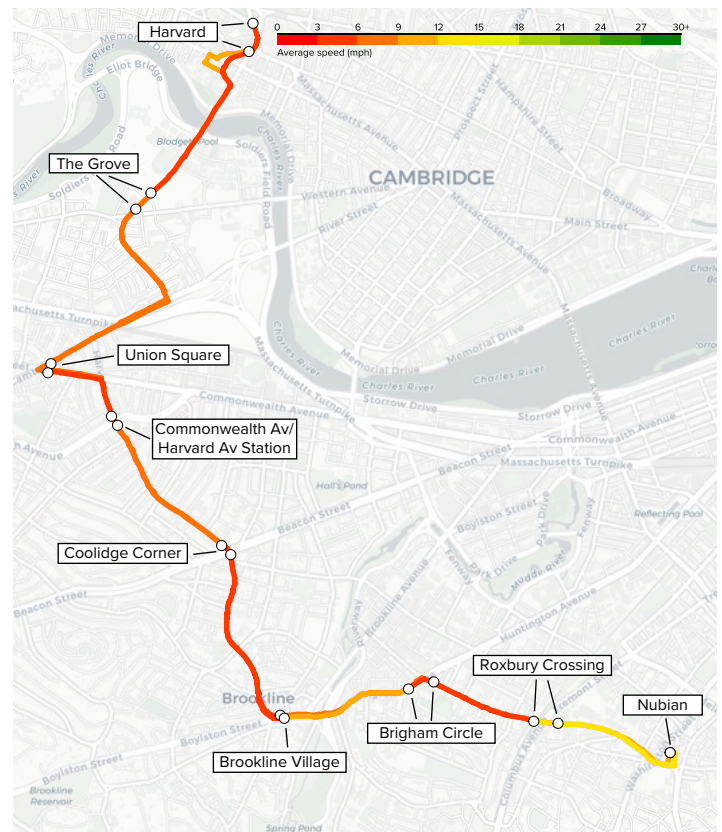
#7 Pokey Route: 66 Bus

The 66 bus places seventh on this year's Pokey list with an average speed of **6.5** mph. Appearing on both the Pokey and Schleppie lists for the third consecutive year, the 66 bus operates an orbital service through Boston and some of its densest inner suburbs. It connects Nubian Station, the Orange Line at Roxbury Crossing, LMA, and all four branches of the Green Line with the Red Line at Harvard Square. Enjoying a Frequent Bus Route designation and the highest ridership of any of the Pokey/Schleppie routes with over 13,000 daily riders, the 66 bus has also benefited in recent years from the installation of bus priority infrastructure on Washington St. in Brookline, Brighton Ave. in Boston, and a re-routing through the Harvard Bus tunnel.

These changes have served to make the 66 bus more reliable. While bunching rates are down to 13.1% on the route, the same improvement hasn't been seen in average speeds. Since 2024, they've declined by 0.35 mph, with an average 66 bus travelling at only 6.5 mph. As not only one of the busiest but also one of the longest bus routes in the MBTA system, slow average speeds on this route are especially impactful.

The 66 bus would benefit substantially from bus priority like center-running bus lanes on Malcolm X Blvd. as part of the Roxbury Resilient Corridors project, but \$20 million in federal grant funding for the project was cancelled by the Trump administration last year. Identifying funding for this project should be a high priority, given the number of Pokey and Schleppe routes that use the three scoped corridors.

The MBTA and City of Boston are planning to install TSP and a dedicated right-of-way for buses and the Green Line E Branch trains along the 66 bus' route as part of the Huntington Avenue Transit Corridor project. These improvements would substantially increase speeds on the 66 bus, especially during rush hour when congestion is at its worst. A Bus Network Redesign change could reroute the 66 bus away from this lower section of Huntington Ave. to the LMA at some point in the future, however. The MBTA has not released a targeted completion date for the project, and designs are still underway. Given the 66 bus' frequent stops on narrow and congested streets, the route would benefit greatly from stop consolidation throughout.



Map: Route 66 Average Speed. View larger map in Appendix.

“The 66 is one of the only MBTA bus routes connecting Boston to Cambridge and provides our neighbors with access to grocery stores, hospitals, schools, childcare, and job centers. Riders of the 66 experience significant delays because the route is constantly gridlocked in commuter traffic, stopped for vehicles double-parked in bus lanes, or stuck behind delivery vehicles parked in traffic lanes. This causes frustration, and commuters must budget a significant amount of time to reach essential destinations like healthcare or work. The lack of transit priority infrastructure along the 66 route exacerbates existing delays and makes life harder for people who rely on this bus. With more traffic on the roads and a growing number of people calling Boston home, we need more dedicated transit priority infrastructure across the city to provide the reliability and mobility so many of our neighbors depend on.” – Jasmine Feng, Allston Brighton Health Collaborative



What's a Project vs. a Plan?

The City of Boston Streets Cabinet must be more clear with its residents when a streets infrastructure initiative is a project (work with an established scope that is in design, implementation, or construction) versus a plan or study (identifying potential future investments that remain subject to further design, engagement, funding, or approval). Otherwise, residents and transit riders are left frustrated and confused about the lack of progress they see in their neighborhoods. This is partially an issue of terminology and partially of communication.

When it comes to terminology, there is very little clarity in the naming of projects about what is a project and a plan. For example, the Blue Hill Avenue Transportation Action Plan is a project that the City is aiming to finalize and build in the next few years, whereas the Maverick Square Transportation Action Plan is an effort to draw up ideal plans of how the area around Maverick Square Station could be improved, with no plan for funding or timeline on building those improvements. This frustrates the people that depend on these upgrades, as the lack of progress is understood as delay or inaction. When plans for a Hyde Park Ave. redesign, officially called the Hyde Park Avenue Multimodal Corridor and given a 30% design, have been effectively shelved by being rolled into the Southwest Boston Transit Action Plan – a planning effort with no timeline – it confuses the meaning of “action plan” for the public.

While the City must continue to be ambitious about re-shaping our streets and providing equitable priority on Boston roads, communities also must be given candid information when the lack of capital funds or operational budget do not allow for action in the short term. The City loses trust when it does not label these initiatives as planning or visioning efforts, especially in neighborhoods with long legacies of broken promises and disinvestment. The Streets Cabinet has recognized this need for clarity around what residents can expect out of streets projects, especially in a fiscally-constrained City Hall. Separating projects and plans cannot be an excuse, however, for not acting to address bus riders needs or to keep cyclists and pedestrians safe on Boston roads in the face of political pressure.

#8 Pokey Route: SL5 Bus

At eighth, the SL5 bus' average speed was **6.58** mph this year. The SL5 bus also appeared on the previous two years' Pokey lists, where it was combined with the SL4 bus. In October 2023, the SL4/SL5's speed averaged 6.90 mph, decreasing to 6.49 mph the following year. The SL5 runs from Downtown Crossing to Nubian, serving Downtown, Chinatown, the South End, and Roxbury. As a Frequent Bus Route, the SL5 bus runs trips every fifteen minutes or less from 5 AM and 12:30 AM each day. The SL4/SL5's average weekday ridership totaled almost 12,000 in October 2025, ranking it among the top five in the MBTA bus system.

The SL5 bus uses bus lanes for much of its route on Washington St., but those lanes are often blocked by cars. The rollout of [automated enforcement](#) by the MBTA aims to mitigate these delays by sending fines to drivers stopped in bus lanes. The kick-off of full automated enforcement – when drivers will begin to see real penalties for blocking buses – has been delayed to January 2027.

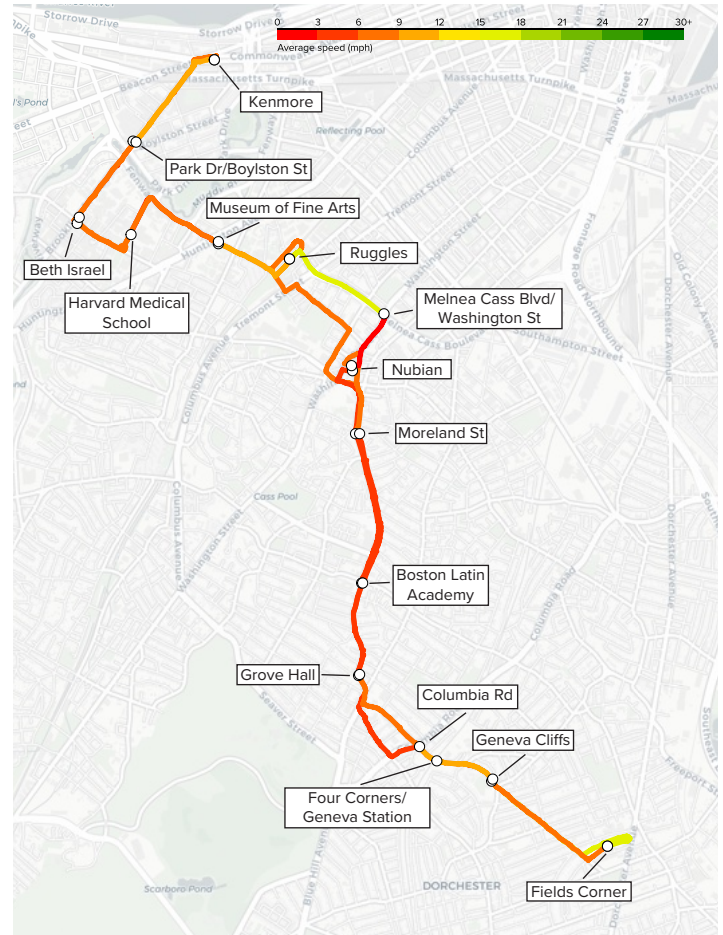
The SL5 bus is still in need of further bus priority infrastructure. Washington St. between Nubian Square and Melnea Cass Blvd. lacks dedicated bus lanes, despite being [deemed by the MBTA](#) to have high need for transit priority investment. The Downtown sections of the SL5's route are particularly congested as well. In an improvement, the City of Boston and MBTA are currently planning to TSP at seventeen Washington St. and Nubian Square intersections along the SL4 bus and SL5 bus route.

As part of [the MBTA's Bus Network Redesign](#), the SL4 and SL5 buses will be combined, and the combined service will use a very similar route to that of the current SL4 bus to South Station. New SL5 trips may begin encountering speed issues as severe as the current SL4's (calculated to be 0.5 mph slower than the SL5) increasing the urgency of delivering on the [“equal or better”](#) transit promised when the [Orange Line was re-routed](#) nearly four decades ago.

“Failed promises from 30+ years ago! The bunching, the waiting at lights, boarding challenges, and delays all resemble a failed promise of “better or equal” that the state made when taking down the Orange Line many years ago. This line could so easily be improved with existing solutions like TSP, all-door boarding, and cameras to fine bus lane violators. It is far past time that the MBTA bring this line up to the standard of BRT, and their promise.” – Jonathan Alves, South End Community Leader



Under [Bus Network Redesign](#), the 19 bus is slated to begin terminating at Ruggles instead of continuing to Kenmore, which may improve speeds by avoiding the congestion in the Fenway. However, no public timeline has been released for this change, and bus priority improvements are still needed for this route.



Map: Route 19 Average Speed. View larger map in Appendix.

#9 Pokey Route: 19 Bus

This year's report marks the 19 bus' third appearance on the Pokey list, coming in at ninth slowest in the MBTA, after coming in fourth in both prior reports. Its average route speed of **6.61** mph is up from last year at 6.49 mph, but still slower than in our first report, when its average speed was 6.80 mph. The 19 bus travels through the Fenway and the LMA to Roxbury and Dorchester, terminating at Fields Corner.

The 19 bus provides service only on weekdays, with service starting around 6 AM and ending around 8 PM. 19 buses arrive roughly every twenty to thirty minutes throughout the day. Given this limited span of service, the bus has a relatively high ridership of over 2,300, ranking in the top third of all MBTA bus routes by ridership.

The area around Nubian Square, including Warren St. and Malcolm X Blvd. – part of the scope of the [Roxbury Resilient Corridors project](#) – have long been known for traffic congestion and are in need of bus priority infrastructure upgrades. The project would benefit riders on this route considerably through bus lanes on these corridors. Speed analysis indicates the slowest sections of the 19 bus' route are along Warren St. and around Nubian Square. After the project's [federal grant funding was revoked by the Trump administration last year](#), there have been no updates. This area has been designated as part of the [MBTA's Bus Priority Vision](#).

The route is also subject to the traffic congestion of the Kenmore areas, as well as frequent diversions due to events in the Fenway neighborhood which decrease speeds, as well as traffic within the LMA.

“The MBTA's bus number 19 is an example of how extending bus routes into highly congested areas is not always the best idea. It is great that the T's route 19 bus goes to the Longwood Medical Area and on to Kenmore Square, and it has been doing that for a while now. But it also gets bogged down on school days, and in the hospital area traffic, and Fenway Park game day traffic. It then schlepps slow-pokily back to Fields Corner - often off schedule – leaving riders standing out in the rain, sleet, snow and burning heat of climate change. Adjusting the schedule to fit reality and not having pie-in-the-sky ideas of on-time performance would make so much difference. – Mela Bush, Transportation Specialist, Action for Equity

#10 Pokey Route: 10 Bus

The 10 bus closes out this year's Pokey list at an average speed of **6.62** mph – a marginal difference from 6.65 mph last year – in its second consecutive appearance among the ten slowest. The route runs from City Point in South Boston to Arlington Station near Copley, threading Newmarket, the South End, and Back Bay to tie South Boston's residential blocks to job centers and Orange Line transfers across the channel. Ridership is comparatively thin, averaging just over 2,400 riders on weekdays. The 10 bus' headways run from roughly fifteen minutes at rush hour to thirty or more midday, with weekday service from about 5:15 AM until just past midnight.

The 10 bus' route north of Newmarket through the South End and Back Bay is the slowest section, with speeds between 4.50 and 6.25 mph. Southbound buses on Broadway in South Boston routinely take five minutes to travel a stretch scheduled to take two. While the 10 bus uses many corridors and winds through a number of local streets, there are opportunities for bus priority interventions on Dartmouth St., the lower section of Massachusetts Ave., and Broadway in South Boston.

Stop consolidation would also speed up the route, as it currently serves forty stops. Under the [Bus Network Redesign](#) as planned, the route splits: the Boston Medical Center to Copley trunk becomes the new all-day T8 Frequent Bus Route, while a residual 10 bus will still serve South Boston but extend to Ruggles instead of Copley.

“The Route 10 bus is an essential resource for our residents. It connects them to South Bay Center for groceries, prescriptions, and other daily necessities, helping them maintain their independence and quality of life. More frequent buses would help our residents immensely. – Ginger DeShaney, Development & Communications Director, SBNDP

Route Profiles: Schleppie (bunched)



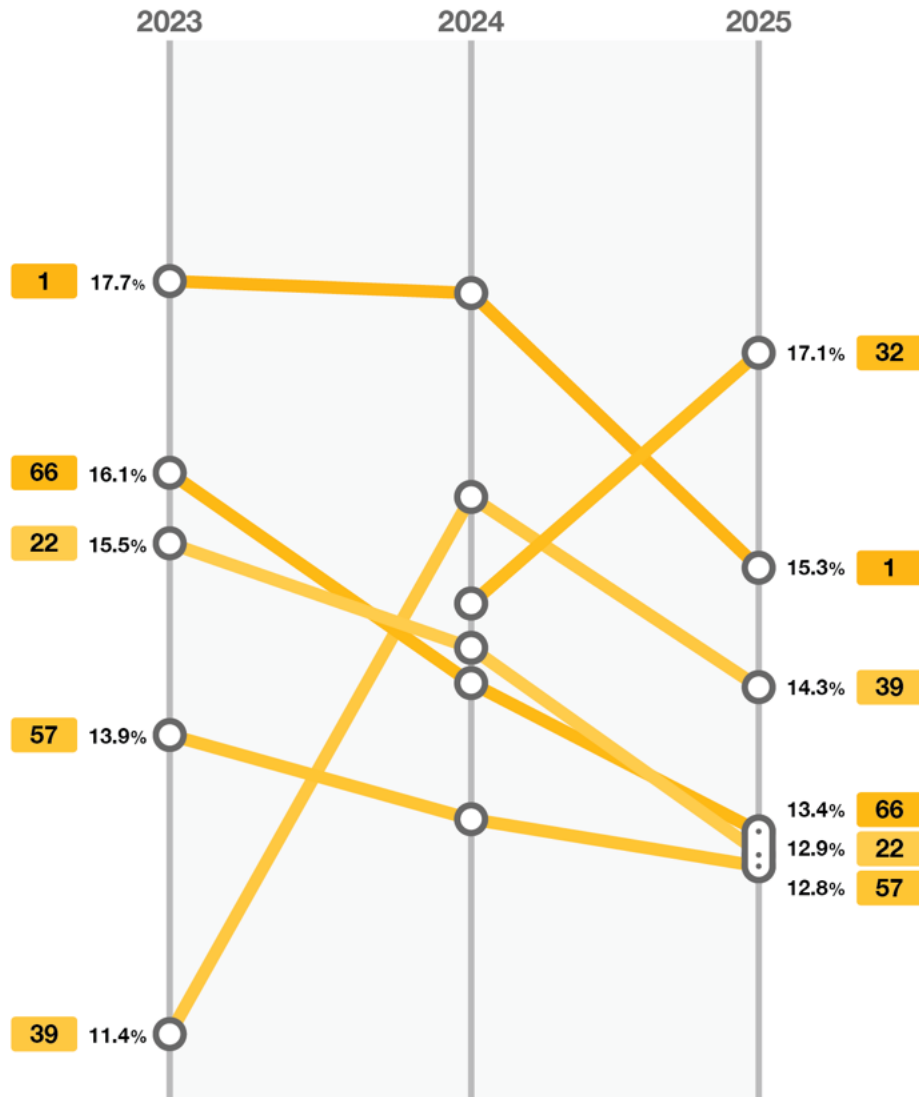


TRANSITMATTERS

2026 Schleppie Awards

2026 Rank	Bus Route	Bunching Rate	2025 Rank	Areas Served
1	32	17.1%	5	Hyde Park, Roslindale, Jamaica Plain
2	116	16.3%	N/A	Revere, Chelsea, East Boston
3	1	15.3%	3	Roxbury, Back Bay, Fenway, Central Square, Harvard
4	39	14.3%	4	Jamaica Plain, Mission Hill, Fenway, Back Bay
5	66	13.1%	8	Roxbury, Mission Hill, LMA, Brookline, Allston/Brighton, Harvard
6	22	12.9%	7	Dorchester, Roxbury, Mission Hill
7	31	12.9%	N/A	Mattapan, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain
8	57	12.8%	10	Watertown, Newton Corner, Brighton, Allston, Brookline, Fenway
9	23	12.8%	1	Dorchester, Roxbury, Mission Hill
10	111	11.5%	2	Chelsea, North End, Downtown Boston

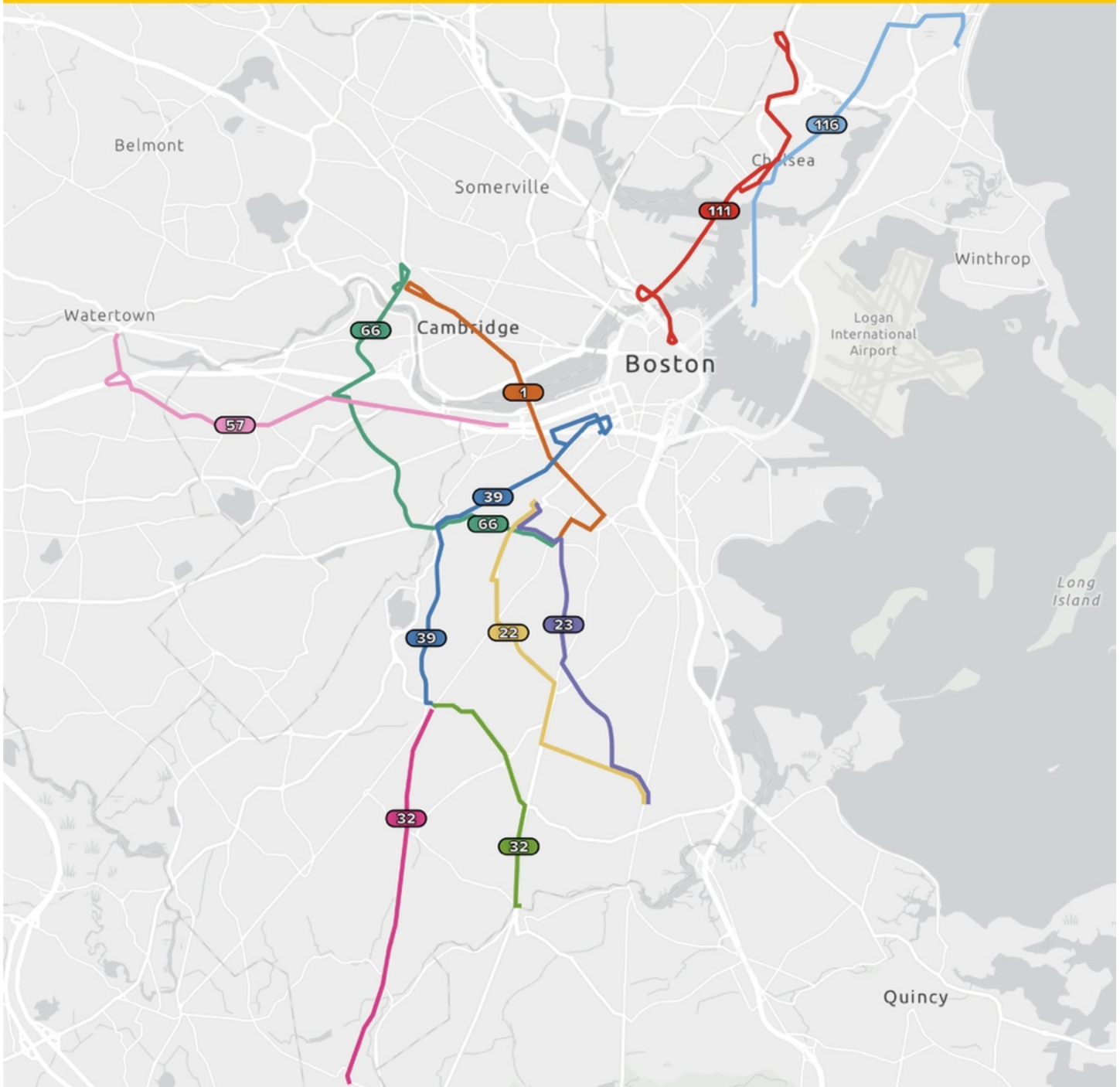
Change in Bunching of Schleppiest Buses



Bunching rates rounded to the nearest tenth of a decimal place. Routes 116, 31, 23, and 111 omitted for clarity. Graph by Toby Pannone.

SCHLEPPIE BUS ROUTES

10 Most Bunched MBTA Bus Routes in 2026



Map by Cedric Ye.

#1 Schleppie Route: 32 Bus

Taking the crown for this year's Schleppie list, the 32 bus ranks as the MBTA's most bunched bus route with a **17.1%** bunching rate. This marks an increase from its previous bunching rate of 15% last year, highlighting the growing need for change on the route. Riders on either side of two bunched buses will face a longer than average wait time, meaning many riders experience a much longer headway than promised. The 32 bus runs on Hyde Park Ave. between Readville Station and Forest Hills Station, serving the neighborhoods of Readville, Hyde Park, eastern Roslindale, and Forest Hills. In October of 2025, the 32 bus had an average of over 7,000 weekday riders, many of whom are Black and Brown. The 32 bus serves as a [crucial transportation link](#) for riders living in a very car-dominated area.

During December 2025, the 32 bus' frequency was upgraded to 15 minutes or less and became a designated Frequent Bus Route. While increased headways may have made the route even more susceptible to bunching – exacerbating an ongoing problem – the 32 bus' increased bunching rates signal that further improvements are needed. The route's portion of Hyde Park Ave. has been frequently cited as an area in need of improvement. The MBTA has identified Hyde Park Ave. as in need of new bus priority upgrades as a part of their [Bus Priority Vision](#). The [Hyde Park Avenue Multimodal Corridor](#) project has proposed bus priority improvements, namely bus lanes, as part of a much larger effort to improve safety and usability for all users on the road. The [30% design plans prepared in 2020 include side-running](#) bus lanes and changes to signal timings.

Despite the 32 bus' importance, the City of Boston and Mayor Wu have started over efforts to redesign Hyde Park Ave., much to the frustration of the communities served by the route. Instead of moving forward, supporting, or implementing major planned improvements for Hyde Park Ave., the [City of Boston has hired a consultant](#) to study traffic around Forest Hills¹⁹ and planned minor, early-action installations. Designs presented in May 2025 proposed a reduced set of pedestrian safety improvements to a set of blocks on Hyde Park Ave. near Forest Hills Station (from Arborway to Ukraine Way) which the City will install this

Fall²⁰. The improvements do not address bus priority, though, and there is currently no plan for bus lanes or other infrastructure along the 32 bus' route after the City moved away from their original [30% design](#). The project has been rolled into the [Southwest Boston Transit Action Plan](#), with no timeline or plan for funding on the horizon.



“

For thousands of people in Hyde Park and Roslindale, the 32 is their connection to work, school, appointments, and the rest of Boston. Yet riders are too often left waiting, only to see two buses arrive together. That unreliability steals time from people who can least afford to lose it and undermines confidence in the entire transit system. Hyde Park Avenue must be redesigned to give buses priority and make the street safer for everyone. Making the hard but important trade-offs needed to make faster, more consistent Route 32 service possible would give our neighborhoods more reliable access to opportunity and affirm that residents of southwest Boston deserve high-quality transit. – Benjamin Siegel, Hyde Park Resident, Boston Better Streets Coalition

#2 Schleppie Route: 116 Bus

Despite not appearing on the 2024 and 2025 Schleppie lists, the 116 bus has jumped to second place in 2026, with a bunching rate of **16.3%**. The 116 bus typically runs between Wonderland and Maverick Stations, connecting central Chelsea, Revere, and East Boston with the Blue Line and multiple bus lines at both ends of the route. With buses every fifteen minutes or better for most of the day and a Frequent Bus Route designation, the bus runs between 5 AM and 2 AM

daily. As of October 2025, about 12,000 riders rode the 116 bus each weekday, making it among the top three highest-ridership bus routes in the MBTA system.

As of December 2024, as part of [the MBTA's Bus Network Redesign \(BNRD\) Phase 1](#), the 117 bus was dissolved into the 116 bus – which shared much of the same route – making it a new designated Frequent Bus Route. This increase in the 116 bus' frequency may be a cause for the route's sudden appearance on the 2026 Schleppie list, as more frequent routes are more likely to bunch. Appendix 2 of [last year's Pokey/Schleppie Report](#) showed that the 116 bus' March 2025 bunching rate (14.73%) was by far the highest of all the BNRD Phase 1 routes.



“

For Chelsea residents, Routes 116 and 111 are essential connections to the region's public transportation network. Because Chelsea does not have a subway station or a ferry providing direct access to Downtown Boston, thousands of residents rely on these bus routes every day to make multiple transfers to MBTA rapid transit stations. The implementation of Route 116 as a high-frequency service represented an important opportunity to improve mobility, but we need a high-frequency bus service that is truly reliable. Improving service requires moving forward with long-overdue bus priority infrastructure projects. For older adults, students, people with disabilities, and Spanish-speaking residents, improving bus service means much more than saving travel time. It means arriving on time for medical appointments that often take months to schedule, accessing jobs, education, and essential services more reliably, participating more fully in community life, and spending more quality time with their families. – Giovanni Zuniga, Transit Justice Organizer, GreenRoots

The unpredictability of the McArdle Bridge raisings, [as well as the intersection of Meridian St. and Condor St.](#) just south of the bridge, are primary contributors to delays on the 116 bus. According to October 2025 weekday data, bunching rates on the 116 bus increased by about four percentage points between central Chelsea (north of the bridge) and about half-way down Meridian St., in both directions. That being said, the McArdle Bridge is not the only cause of bunching on the route. Data from October shows that about 14.3% of southbound trips were already bunched before they reached the bridge, and over 5.5% of northbound trips reached the bridge already bunched as well.

While headway management is most crucial for reducing bunching on the 116 bus, the [MBTA's Bus Priority Vision](#) describes a need for bus priority infrastructure on almost the entirety of the 116 bus' route. Notably, Phase II of the [City of Chelsea's Downtown Broadway Project](#) plans to bring a dedicated bus/bike lane to Broadway in downtown Chelsea, and is slated for completion in 2028.

The [Maverick Square Transportation Action Plan](#) is slated to provide safety and accessibility improvements for walking, biking, and transit in Maverick Square. However, the project does not address the substantial bus delays and [traffic congestion](#) present on Meridian St., which extends northwest from Maverick Square²¹. [Project materials](#) recognize that an urgent need exists for bus priority infrastructure on the corridor, but no plans for constructing bus lanes, TSP, or queue jumps on Meridian St. are currently in the pipeline.

Headway Management

High-frequency buses, with frequencies of every fifteen minutes or less, are more useful to riders when they operate based on consistent, predictable headways (how often the bus comes) rather than at scheduled times. When buses are dispatched based on rigid schedules, they often become bunched because of an initial late departure or because of high passenger boarding volumes. Bunched buses cause longer waits and more discomfort for riders.

Headway management keeps headways consistent by dispatching and directing buses based on their real-time locations and adjusting when buses are becoming too close along their route. This includes a few operational changes:

1. Dispatchers send out buses at regular intervals instead of at scheduled times, dispatching based upon the previous bus' progress along the route in order to ensure headways stay even.
2. Bus operators need to be able to keep track of their distance from the leading and following buses, which can be achieved through on-board screens.
3. Bus operators and dispatchers must stay in contact during the trip, monitoring real-time headways and employing methods like brief holds, slowing down or speeding up, switching to drop-off only, or skipping ahead of the leading bus.

Headway management is currently used by Washington, DC's Metrobus and San Francisco's Muni systems, as well as other bus systems nationwide²². In January 2025, the MBTA [announced they would implement headway management](#) on some of the system's most frequent bus routes, but there has been no update provided to the public since then.

The MBTA does not currently have enough dispatchers to implement headway management on its most frequent routes, and internal recruitment policies and training periods make the process of hiring more dispatchers a lengthy one²³. In the meantime, though, the MBTA can bolster the infrastructure it needs to implement headway management (on-board vehicle-location tracking technology, layover space, and hold points) and ensure that best practices to maintain even headways for each route are iron-clad. Read more best practices in TransitMatters' [Headway Management technical report](#).

#3 Schleppie Route: 1 Bus

Fortunately, the 1 bus's bunching rate has decreased from 17.7% in October 2023 to 17.6% the following year to **15.3%** this year, placing it third on the Schleppie list. Unfortunately, this is the third consecutive year where route 1 ranks among the top three most bunched buses.

The 1 bus runs between Harvard Square and Nubian Station, intersecting with the Red and Orange Lines, all four Green Line branches, and many bus routes. A designated Frequent Bus Route, the 1 bus makes trips every 15 minutes or less for the majority of its operating time. The 1 bus runs for about 90% of the total hours in each week, providing late-evening, early-morning, and weekend service. Thus, the route is vital for residents of Roxbury, Back Bay, Fenway-Kenmore, the South End, and Cambridge. As of October 2025, the 1 bus' average weekday ridership exceeded 10,000, ranking among the top ten highest-ridership MBTA bus routes.

The 1 bus is a prime candidate for implementation of [headway management methods](#), as the route sees repeated issues with bunching, and 1 buses are dispatched from major transportation hubs with layover space at either end of its route. As previously mentioned, [the MBTA has already endorsed this operations methodology](#), but has not provided any update on its implementation. When the T eventually begins to roll out headway management, the 1 bus would be a great place to start.

The [MBTA's Bus Priority Vision](#) identifies nearly the entire 1 bus corridor as highly in need of bus priority infrastructure. In both directions, October 2025 data shows bunching on the 1 bus increasing by about three percentage points between Mass Ave. Station (Orange Line) and Hynes Convention Center Station (Green Line). A comparable increase also occurs between Melnea Cass Blvd. and Massachusetts Ave. headed northbound on Washington St. Dedicated bus lanes and/or TSP would be particularly beneficial to implement between these pairs of stops in order to reduce bunching. Queue jumps in the Hynes Convention Center area would be particularly impactful. Despite changes being so clearly necessary and desired along the 1 bus' route, [there are no pending bus priority infrastructure projects slated to address it](#).



“The 1 is a vital high ridership bus route that lacks the frequency needed. I take the 1 from Central Square to Hynes/Newbury for work and sometimes for leisure trips. It seems to always be crowded, except for very off-peak hours, because it serves a very diverse clientele outside of 9-5 commuters. Often when I’m leaving Hynes around 6 pm, there is a mob of ~20 people waiting for the bus. Tracking is unreliable at Hynes because traffic is so horrendous causing huge volatility in travel times. The high ridership also slows the bus down when there are so many people getting off and on at every stop.” – Vik, 33, 1 bus rider and Cambridge resident

#4 Schleppie Route: 39 Bus

This is the 39 bus’ third year on the Schleppie list, with its bunching rate increasing from 11.4% in October 2023 to 15.9% in October 2024, then decreasing to **14.3%** on this year’s report – which puts it at fourth. The 39 bus runs between Forest Hills and Back Bay, serving Back Bay, the Fenway, Mission Hill, and Jamaica Plain. The route provides service every fifteen minutes or less for most of the day, every day, as a Frequent Bus Route. The 39 bus sees weekday ridership of over 8,000, ranking within the top ten highest-ridership routes. The 39 bus is a crucial route for many Boston residents.

Despite the bus’ high bunching rate, the 39 bus’ route is not featured in the [MBTA’s Bus Priority Vision](#). There is not a clear trend in the data revealing chokepoints where bunching significantly worsens; bunching increases relatively steadily along the 39’s route. Therefore, improvements such as headway management, bus lanes, and TSP may be similarly helpful along all sections of the 39’s corridor.

In recent years, the MBTA has implemented bus lanes [on Huntington Ave. and Boylston St.](#) The [Huntington Ave. bus lanes are effective](#), saving outbound riders at least 64 seconds, and inbound riders 45 seconds, during evening peak times²⁴. The Boylston St. bus lane, however, [was removed](#) in March 2025 amid blowback from Back Bay residents and businesses. This removal occurred despite [morning trip times dropping by about 40%](#) along the bus lane corridor after the lane was installed²⁵. The decision was informed by a very narrow set of stakeholders, and did not weigh the needs of bus riders fairly. Reinstating this bus lane would make a tangible difference

to those who rely on this bus daily, beyond demonstrating a commitment to equitably allocating space on our streets to all road users.

Some infrastructure solutions identified in the [Route 39 Transit Priority Corridor](#) project – which proposed bus service improvements [such as stop consolidation, bus lanes, queue jumps, and TSP](#) – will be implemented as part of the upcoming Green Line E Branch [platform accessibility and street safety project](#). Though the project is still in design, the MBTA currently plans for the 39 and 66 buses to use the same right-of-way as Green Line E Branch trains – separated from car traffic. The MBTA and City of Boston will also add new TSP to the corridor. The E Branch project has not been given a public timeline. These changes would create a much faster and more reliable 39 bus, so it is crucial that these infrastructural improvements to the corridor be implemented with urgency. Automated enforcement cameras will soon be installed on the 39 bus, which will begin issuing citations in January 2027. This is expected to substantially improve performance on the route, as buses can better operate in bus lanes and bus stops without being blocked by cars.



#5 Schleppie Route: 66 Bus

The 66 bus arrives at fifth on this year’s Schleppie list with a bunching rate of **13.1%**. Across the last three years, bunching rates have fallen from 16.1% to 14.4% to 13.1%, and the improvements are earned: bus priority infrastructure on Washington St. in Brookline and Brighton Ave. in Boston, together with the rerouting through the Harvard bus tunnel, have made the route measurably steadier. The 66 bus carries the highest ridership of any Pokey/Schleppie route as it runs its orbital arc from Harvard through Allston, Brookline, the LMA, Mission Hill, and Roxbury to Nubian, serving over 13,000 riders daily. This leaves the Frequent Bus Route at both one of the most used

routes and among the least dependable – at nearly one bus in eight arriving bunched.

The 66 bus relies heavily on Malcolm X Blvd., part of the [Roxbury Resilient Corridors](#) project, whose \$20 million in federal grants were cancelled by the Trump administration last year. As outlined, the project would provide dedicated bus lanes on Malcolm X Blvd. to make trips far more reliable for the plethora of high-ridership bus routes that use the corridor. The 66 bus could also benefit from better signal priority at the intersection of Malcolm X Blvd. and Columbus Ave. as part of the [Tremont / Columbus Bus Lanes Phase II](#) project, were it to be included in the ongoing redesign. As previously mentioned, the 66 bus could benefit from planned TSP installation and a dedicated right-of-way along the lower section of Huntington Ave. as part of [accessibility improvements to the Green Line E branch](#). While the project currently has no timeline, these improvements would bring a tangible benefit to riders' ability to rely on the 66 bus, which is currently one of its biggest issues.

The 66 bus' deepest remedy, though, is operational. As one of the longest and busiest routes in the system, a late 66 bus can easily become a bunched one and cause a long headway gap after it passes. TransitMatters continues to advocate for the 66 bus as a leading candidate for headway management. [Automated camera enforcement](#) will also substantially improve the effectiveness of the route's existing bus lanes, given the density of curbside conflict along its route. The route has already shown what priority buys it through successful priority infrastructure introduction on Washington St. and Brighton Ave. The remaining question is whether municipalities and the MBTA will keep buying.

#6 Schleppie Route: 22 Bus

The 22 bus makes its third appearance on the Schleppie list, with a bunching rate of **12.9%**. This route runs from Ashmont to Ruggles, serving the Boston neighborhoods of Dorchester and Roxbury. This rate of bunched buses is a notable improvement from prior years: rates have come down from 15.5% in the 2024 report and 14.6% in the 2025 report.

The 22 bus is a high ridership bus, with average weekday ridership of over 7,800, and is one of the MBTA's Frequent Bus Routes – with service every fifteen minutes or better, seven days a week. It begins service at approximately 5 AM each day and ends at approximately 2 AM. Despite this excellent service, with over 80 trips per day, more than 1 in 8 is bunched.

The 22 bus will benefit most from recent planning progress on bus lanes on both Blue Hill Ave. and Columbus Ave. There are also a number of major intersections where TSP could

support the operation of the 22 bus, such as at Blue Hill Ave. and Seaver St. or at Talbot Ave. and Blue Hill Ave. Blue Hill Ave. and Talbot St. were both [identified by the MBTA](#) as priorities for installing bus priority infrastructure.

There is already a stretch of center-running bus lane installed on Columbus Ave. which benefits this route, [saving three to four minutes per trip at rush hour](#)²⁶, but completion of the [project's Phase 2](#) would provide further benefits. The City of Boston and MBTA had planned to extend center-running lanes from Jackson Square to Ruggles, providing crucial time savings and reliability improvements, but Mayor Wu [announced in March](#) that her administration would pursue side-running lanes for much of the project instead. We urge the City to rethink this approach, as side-running bus lanes are far less effective at preventing delays, and a Tremont St. / Columbus Ave. with side-running lanes will certainly see cars driving in the bus lane. Automated enforcement cannot be completely effective in mitigating this, as citations can only be issued for cars stopped or parked in the lane. In an encouraging development, the City of Boston will resume public engagement on the project in late fall of 2026.



The 22 bus also uses the Blue Hill Ave. corridor, which is slated for a [major redesign and center-running bus lanes](#). These dedicated lanes and additional bus priority would shorten travel times considerably and improve a congested bus corridor that is frequently bunched and stopped by double-parked cars. Engagement for this project will resume this month – read more about the improvements in the box below.

Because this route begins and ends at T stops, it would be an excellent candidate for headway management as the additional staff needed to facilitate management of headways could easily be made present, and there is more layover space for buses to hold as they await departure than at a typical bus stop.

“Reliable public transportation is essential to the economic stability and quality of life of the Dorchester residents we serve. Route 22 is more than a bus line – it is a critical connection to employment, schools, healthcare, grocery stores, and other essential services. When service is slow or inconsistent, it disproportionately impacts working families, older adults, students, and residents who depend on public transit every day. Improving the reliability of Route 22 would strengthen access to opportunity, reduce transportation barriers, and support more equitable outcomes for our neighborhoods. Investments in dependable bus service are investments in the long-term vitality, mobility, and resilience of the Dorchester and Roxbury communities.” – Shamekia Gordon, Director of Community Engagement, Dorchester Bay EDC

#7 Schleppie Route: 31 Bus

In the first appearance of the 31 bus on the Schleppie list, the route comes in with a bunching rate of **12.9%**. The 31 bus connects Mattapan to Forest Hills Station, running from 4:30 AM to 1:00 AM on weekdays as well as on weekends. Headways are roughly every fifteen minutes. This route has an average of 3,300 riders each weekday. As part of the [Bus Network Redesign](#) project, the 31 became a Frequent Bus Route in fall of 2025²⁹.

The 31 bus mainly runs down Blue Hill Ave. and Morton St., which have both been highlighted for needing bus priority infrastructure. Riders have reported that buses traveling on Blue Hill Ave. are usually delayed due to traffic, and the data shows that, on an average weekday, riders lose about 3,000 collective hours on buses due to traffic and delays³⁰. This figure includes all routes that use Blue Hill Ave., so it's clear that traffic on this corridor impacts more than just riders on the 31 bus. Morton St. and Blue Hill Ave. were identified in the MBTA's [Bus Priority Vision](#) report as one of twenty-six corridors that the MBTA deems as high-urgency to receive bus priority infrastructure³¹.

Blue Hill Avenue Transportation Action Plan

The City of Boston and MBTA have been working to re-shape designs for a [redesign of Blue Hill Ave.](#) that work for communities in Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury since May of this year. Bus riders make up over half the traffic on Blue Hill Ave. during rush hour, totaling about 37,000 daily riders, yet buses on the corridor are continually delayed by traffic and double parking. The City and MBTA plan to build a center-running bus lane along the corridor – which would save riders ten to fifteen minutes on a single bus ride from Mattapan to Grove Hall – in addition to safety improvements for pedestrians and cyclists and beautification efforts as part of a \$160 million budget²⁷. Dedicated lanes and installation of transit signal priority will bring much-needed travel time, reliability, and frequency benefits to the 22 (sixth most bunched), 31 (seventh most bunched), and 28 buses (eleventh most bunched), which are currently very difficult to depend on.

After drawing up a new design, the project team will complete another round of engagement this month to collect feedback from members of the community. Bus riders should be a strong presence in this conversation in order to ensure they're given fair priority in the redesign. The City and MBTA's new design includes:

- A preserved center-running bus lane
- Two lanes of car travel for most of the corridor
- A net increase in parking spaces along the corridor
- Preservation of trees along the corridor, in addition to nearly 200 new street trees
- A two-way protected bike lane for much of the corridor
- Twenty new crosswalks and crosswalk shortening along Blue Hill Ave²⁸.

Nearly the entire 31 bus route was given the highest priority rating for infrastructure investment. No plans to add bus priority to this section of Morton St. are currently in the project pipeline.

As previously mentioned, the MBTA and City of Boston are currently working to [redesign Blue Hill Ave.](#) to be safer and better prioritize bus riders, cyclists, and pedestrians, expected to improve bus service up and down the corridor substantially³².



“The 31 bus is an important route for the community because it connects riders with access to different neighborhoods and stations. Riders who live in Mattapan and may work in the JP/Roslindale/Hyde Park Area are able to take this bus to Forest Hills Station, allowing them access to several different buses and the Orange Line. Lately, the service for the 31 has decreased a lot. It is not as consistent as it used to be before the pandemic, and riders are waiting more than 20 minutes for the 31 bus. Improving the service will benefit the community for riders to be able to get to their respective destinations without such a long wait time or the buses being too overcrowded because of how slow the service has become over time. – Kay Savage, Active Living & Environment Coordinator, MFFC

#8 Schleppie Route: 57 Bus



While transit riders could once travel between Kenmore and Watertown on the Green Line, today they must use the 57 bus, which earns itself eighth place in this year’s Schleppie list with a bunching rate of **12.8%**. Despite moving up two spots from last year, the 57 bus has seen an improvement of bunching rates from 13.2% in 2025 and 13.9% in 2024. Connecting about 8,500 average weekday riders to Watertown, Newton Corner, Brighton, Allston, and Kenmore, the 57 bus continues to be a key route in the MBTA system.

The entirety of the 57 bus is included in the MBTA’s [Bus Priority Vision](#) as in need of upgrades. Indeed, the route has been the target of several initiatives to improve service. Since the last Pokey/Schleppie report was released, the route was upgraded to frequencies of fifteen minutes or better, and was designated as a Frequent Bus Route. The 57 bus was also the beneficiary of a TSP test on three intersections along Brighton Ave., which [improved bus travel times by 8%](#) and opened the door for future TSP infrastructure projects. Upgrades to the 57 bus should serve as an example of how bus priority infrastructure delivers positive results for riders, evident in the route’s improved bunching rates in the last two years.

In the future, Brighton Ave. will also benefit from [automated bus lane enforcement](#), which will help to increase the effectiveness of the bus lane by issuing tickets to drivers who block the bus lane. The full rollout of this program has been delayed to January 2027, though, and it is unclear when routes like the 57 bus will receive automated enforcement cameras. Implementing this program is urgent for reducing delays in bus lanes on routes like the 57 bus. Many additional bus priority improvements for the 57 bus – including TSP, bus lanes, and parking reforms – were being planned in the [Route 57 Transit Priority Corridor](#) project, but the effort has been stagnant since 2024.

“ The [57] route and frequency are great, but far too many cars park in the bus lane, causing delays and frustration from being stuck waiting for cars to move. – Patrick Connolly, 27

#9 Schleppie Route: 23 Bus

Making its third appearance on the Schleppie list, the 23 bus comes in ninth place with a bunching rate of **12.8%**. This is a significant decrease from last year, when the 23 bus was ranked first with a bunching rate of 19.3%, but its repeated appearance on this list shows the pressing need to improve this route. The 23 bus is a key connection between Dorchester and Roxbury, serving 12,000 daily riders between Ashmont and Ruggles, the fourth highest October 2025 ridership of any bus in the MBTA. The MBTA has labeled the 23 bus as a Frequent Bus Route.

A number of upgrades for this route are planned, but have experienced delay and pushback over the last year. [Roxbury Resilient Corridors](#) aims to deliver bus priority improvements like dedicated bus lanes to Malcolm X Blvd. and Warren St., which make up a large part of the 23 bus' route – and are some of its slowest sections. Center-running bus lanes prevent conflict with turning vehicles and illegally parked cars, which would lower bunching on the 23 bus by reducing unexpected delays, resulting in more consistent bus spacing. Similar upgrades are also planned on the section of [Tremont St.](#) between Ruggles and Malcolm X Blvd., used by the 23 bus, as well as on [Blue Hill Ave.](#)

Unfortunately, each of these projects have faced significant pushback and delay, including the Trump administration [re-voking federal funding for the Roxbury Resilient Corridors project](#); the Wu administration delaying progress on Phase

II of Columbus Ave. / Tremont St. by [blocking communication with the MBTA earlier this year](#) and [advocating to shift designs away from center-running lanes](#); and major political backlash over plans to install center-running bus lanes on Blue Hill Ave. Progress is now moving forward on the Tremont / Columbus Bus Lanes and Blue Hill Ave. redesign projects, with public engagement periods scheduled for late fall and September 2026, respectively.

#10 Schleppie Route: 111 Bus

Coming in at number ten, the 111 bus saw a bunching rate of **11.5%** in October 2025, a major drop from the October 2024 rate of 18.9%. As one of the MBTA's most frequent routes – running every four minutes during morning peaks, six minutes in evenings, and eight minutes off-peak – it faces especially high bunching potential. The 111 bus is the eighth busiest MBTA route, serving an average of over 9,000 weekday riders as a Frequent Bus Route. It is an essential lifeline for Chelsea's dense and largely transit-dependent population. Much of Chelsea's workforce are essential workers, many of whom commute to Boston. The route serves as a crucial rapid rail substitute, offering the only frequent, direct link to downtown Boston, more practical than the Commuter Rail or Silver Line SL3 bus.

The dramatic improvement in bunching is largely due to the spring 2025 completion of the reconstructed North Washington Street Bridge. Fully opening the bridge eliminated [a three-lane construction bottleneck and added a dedicated inbound bus lane](#), speeding up service and reducing variability. In turn, bunching rates dropped.

However, In July 2025, Boston repaved a section of North Washington St. in the North End and [removed a northbound bus lane](#) serving the 111, 92, and 93 buses, announcing afterward that they would not reinstate the bus lane. This follows a concerning trend of removing dedicated bus infrastructure under the Wu administration. Despite the lack of data and rider input that went into the decision, the City of Boston has confirmed that they will not reinstall the bus lane. The northbound bus lane would provide badly-needed reliability improvements to 111 bus riders, in addition to bus riders in Charlestown.

Outside Boston, dedicated lanes serving the 111 bus remain intact, including a southbound lane on the upper deck of the Tobin Bridge. MassDOT should consider adding a northbound bus lane and additional bus priority infrastructure – such as a dedicated right-of-way – as they study bridge upgrade/replacement options.



Additionally, [Chelsea's 3.3 miles of bus lanes underperform](#) due to a lack of enforcement around cars driving in bus lanes³³, as discussed in last year's report. The 111 bus would benefit heavily from the [automated bus lane enforcement](#) the MBTA is planning. The [MBTA's Bus Priority Vision](#) identifies the entire 4.5-mile Haymarket-to-Woodlawn corridor for upgrades. High priority is given to the North Washington Street and Tobin Bridges. It also targets 0.8 miles of lanes in downtown Chelsea and Washington Ave. north of downtown. These areas feature dense traffic signals and intersections that disrupt headway consistency during rush hour. Implementing queue jumps, TSP, and dedicated lanes will effectively reduce travel variations. Finally, the 111 should be a priority for implementation of [active headway management](#) because of its high bunching rates, with remote dispatching out of Haymarket.



Conclusion

As riders, advocates, and decisionmakers in Greater Boston, we cannot accept that certain bus routes continue to appear on these slowest and most bunched lists, year after year, and will continue to appear even while we have solutions in front of us. Seven Pokey and eight Schleppie routes repeated from last year on this year's list, and the 66 and 1 buses were featured on both lists for a third straight year. Average bus speeds among the top ten slowest routes continue to decline.

The last three years have shown us that routes like the 1, 19, 22, 23, 39, 57, 66, 111, CT3, SL4, and SL5 buses will dependably reappear on future Pokey/Schleppie reports unless tangible action is taken to improve service. Each additional year that these routes are ranked on Pokey/Schleppie is another year that bus riders in areas like Chelsea, Roxbury, and Dorchester

spend hours of their lives waiting in traffic on the bus or standing on curbs not knowing when the next bus will come. We cannot take this as a given when there are clear actions that can be taken to provide bus riders with dependable and dignified service across Greater Boston.

It has been disappointing to see many of these transformative solutions be delayed or narrowed by the City of Boston over the last year and a half. With proper bus priority included in designs, projects like the [Tremont St. / Columbus Ave. bus lanes](#) and redesigns on [Blue Hill Ave.](#) and [Hyde Park Ave.](#) would make sizable impacts on the mobility of residents of Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park – yet their progress was slowed for significant stretches of the last year and a half. Concretely, this decision put in jeopardy the significant amounts of time that would be saved from a morning commute and the extra dignity afforded to riders by making the buses they rely on more dependable. City officials chose to listen to a small subset of residents, namely drivers, in making the closed-door decision to delay these projects.

In the past few months, the City of Boston has made several public commitments to resume work on streets projects. This includes recommendations to some bus priority projects outlined in [Mayor Wu's July letter](#) following the death of Louisa Gag and an expansion of transit signal priority installation in Boston after a successful 2025 pilot. That being said, decisions to [reduce planned center-running bus lanes on the Tremont / Columbus project to side-running lanes](#) and to further [push out the Hyde Park Ave. redesign](#) to some unknown date will contribute to these bus routes remaining slow and bunched. The City of Boston and MBTA have had a good track record of designing and building impactful bus priority infrastructure over the past 5 years; the intent of this report is to serve as a catalyst to the Wu administration and the MBTA to recommit to giving bus riders fair priority on Boston's roads as part of these planning efforts. The set of best-practice tools for bus priority infrastructure remain at hand: install bus lanes, transit signal priority, and queue jumps.

While buses will continue to be at the mercy of worsening traffic given constraints on municipal capital investment into bus priority infrastructure, the MBTA has in their hands a solution to mitigate bunching which they have already endorsed. [Headway management](#) is a proven solution to maintaining evenly-spaced bus arrival times by operating bus trips based on real-time data as opposed to rigid schedules³⁴. By dispatching buses dynamically based on real-time GPS data, the MBTA could substantially reduce bunching on these routes. Bus routes that are very frequent or especially long are particularly susceptible to bunching, as we see with so many of this year's top ten Schleppie routes.

Currently, the main hurdle to implementing headway management is the capacity of the MBTA's dispatching center. The center does not have enough staff to dedicate dispatchers to maintaining headways today, and dispatchers must be trained and promoted internally from the existing pool of MBTA bus operators³⁵. Despite a [commitment by MBTA General Manager Phillip Eng](#) in early 2025 to improve headway management on key, frequent buses as part of the Full T Ahead initiative, the public has been given no update on progress for this operations solution. The MBTA can make strides toward addressing bunching on these vital bus routes by placing more resources and organizational energy behind promoting additional dispatchers, while ensuring that both on-bus technology and bus layover space are sufficient for future implementation in the meantime.

The MBTA can also make progress towards efficient buses by staying on track for their already-delayed [January 2027 timeline for fully launching automated enforcement](#), starting with the SL4 and SL5 buses. We urge the MBTA to begin issuing tickets as soon as possible. Automated enforcement is a promising solution that is expected to significantly reduce bus delays caused by cars stopped in bus lanes and bus stops. TransitMatters will continue to advocate for which bus routes should be prioritized in the expansion of automated enforcement cameras beyond the SL4, SL5, 28, and 39 buses.

The time to act is now. Delayed projects put off real quality of life benefits for bus riders who disproportionately rely on public transportation to get around. Municipalities must commit to treating bus riders fairly by building infrastructure that prioritizes them. The MBTA must come through on its goals to deliver automated enforcement and implement headway management. TransitMatters will continue to advocate for a bus system that is dependable, frequent, fast, safe, and dignified for all transit riders in Greater Boston. We encourage municipalities, planners, and riders to join that fight, working towards a system where these bus routes never show up on future Pokey/Schleppie reports again.

To address the speed and reliability of the eighteen bus routes outlined on the Pokey and Schleppie lists, TransitMatters recommends the following set of actions:

- 1. Resume progress on key Boston bus priority and multi-modal streets projects:** Recommit to providing bus riders with priority by progressing planning efforts on Boston's slowest and most unreliable bus corridors, specifically the Blue Hill Avenue Transportation Action Plan, Tremont / Columbus Bus Lanes, Hyde Park Avenue Multimodal Corridor, and Roxbury Resilient Corridors projects.
- 2. Reinstate bus lanes on North Washington St. and Boylston St.:** Restore vital bus priority to riders in Chelsea and Charlestown and riders in Mission Hill and Jamaica Plain after bus lanes were removed without proper community input.
- 3. Expand bus priority infrastructure across the system:** Implement bus lanes, transit signal priority, and queue jumps that properly prioritize bus riders on our roads, emphasizing bus corridors used by these eighteen bus routes.
- 4. Begin implementing headway management practices on frequent, often-bunched MBTA bus routes:** Dedicate resources towards recruiting more dispatchers, and ensure that technology and layover infrastructure are sufficient to allow implementation of headway maintenance when enough dispatchers are hired.
- 5. Roll out operation of automated enforcement as soon as possible:** Ensure that hiring and technology adoption stay on track so that the MBTA can begin issuing tickets as soon as possible for cars blocking SL4 and SL5 buses, and begin rollout on other high-priority routes soon after.
- 6. Re-establish transparency around streets infrastructure and include communities in the process of change:** Work with residents to come to designs that serve everyone in the community equitably, keeping neighborhoods continually informed about the infrastructure investments being planned in their area.
- 7. Dedicate capital funding towards bus priority infrastructure:** Identify a plan for sustainable transportation financing at the state level, and allocate capital funding towards infrastructure that prioritizes bus riders and increases reliability.

Appendix

Boston Streets Projects of Concern

In February 2025, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu [announced](#) that her Streets Cabinet would undergo a “thirty-day review” of all streets infrastructure projects completed in the last three years related to bus priority, bike lanes, and pedestrian improvements, and speed humps³⁶. The process also included a very narrow process of outreach to neighborhoods, which heavily favored the feedback of drivers frustrated by speed humps and bike lanes. [Wu said in a letter in July that](#) the review “was not meant to document the full range of residents’ perspectives”³⁷. What resulted was nearly a year and a half of [minimal progress and very little transparency about infrastructure projects](#) from the Streets Cabinet. This review was accompanied by the [removal of bus lanes on Boylston St.](#) in Back Bay and on [N. Washington St. northbound](#) in the North End. In spring of 2026, sixteen projects of concern were identified as being deliberately held back by leaders in Mayor Wu’s administration. These streets infrastructure projects spanned bike protection upgrades, pedestrian safety investments, and plans for bus priority across Boston. It is important to note, however, that the City of Boston has since resumed active progress on many of these sixteen projects. Below we’ve provided a profile on each project related to bus priority infrastructure, along with a status update.

Tremont / Columbus Bus Lanes Phase 2

[This project](#) is a continuation of a center-running bus lane built from Egleston Square to Jackson Square in 2021. The City of Boston and MBTA originally planned to extend the center-running lane along Columbus Ave. and Tremont St. to Ruggles, providing a much quicker, more predictable ride on one of Boston’s most congested corridors for some of the most crucial bus routes in the system. The 22 and 23 buses, on this year’s Schleppe list, use this corridor. Plans will also make intersections with the multi-use path along the Southwest Corridor linear park safer for bikers and pedestrians. The project was scheduled to go to bid for a contractor this fall, but construction has been postponed to 2027.

After being [delayed](#) for over six months, Mayor Wu [announced](#) that her administration had asked the MBTA to change the existing 75-100% design from center-running bus lanes to side-running bus lanes from Jackson Square to Malcolm X Blvd. – the majority of the project’s length. The City has confirmed they are still pursuing this design layout, and will resume public engagement with this new design in October or November 2026, after a year and a half of not hearing from the community.

Blue Hill Avenue Transportation Action Plan

[This redesign project](#), also a joint venture between the MBTA and City of Boston, will invest \$160 million in a center-running bus lane, protected bike lanes, pedestrian safety overhauls, green space and street trees, and a complete rebuild of Blue Hill Ave. The 22 and 31 buses, both on this year’s Schleppe list, use Blue Hill Ave. Center-running bus lanes and TSP are expected to make the bus ride from Mattapan to Grove Hall ten to fifteen minutes shorter, in addition to major reliability increases. By adding more signalized crosswalks, shorter crossing distances, and protected bike lanes, the plans seek to make Blue Hill Ave. a more welcoming community space for pedestrians and bikers³⁸.

After a long pause on this project, the project team has reworked the design to include more parking and 2 lanes of car travel for most of the corridor, and will now resume public engagement on the project this month³⁹.

Hyde Park Avenue Multimodal Corridor

The [Hyde Park Ave. redesign](#) proposes to reshape Hyde Park Ave. as a corridor that is safer for bikers and pedestrians to use and more reliable for bus riders from Wolcott Square to Forest Hills. Route 32, the most bunched bus on this year’s report, runs 4.5 miles up and down Hyde Park Ave., and a [previous design](#) included bus lanes meant to make the long route much quicker and more reliable.

After the City of Boston chose not to move forward with the previous design that included a bus lane, the project has now been folded into the [Southwest Corridor Transportation Action Plan](#) and has no timeline for reworking designs or resuming public engagement. The City has done some work to improve the corridor, with plans to improve pedestrian safety at a set of crossings near Forest Hills Station in fall 2026, but these improvements will not address bus service⁴⁰.

Roxbury Resilient Corridors

The [Roxbury Resilient Corridors project](#) seeks to make improvements to the pedestrian and cyclist experience and improve bus service along three Roxbury corridors: Malcolm X Blvd., Warren St., and Melnea Cass Blvd. These three roads are some of the highest priority corridors for bus priority infrastructure in the system, as traffic congestion repeatedly causes delays.

The City of Boston received a \$20 million RAISE grant from the federal government (USDOT) in August 2022⁴¹ to fund this critical project which [included bus lanes for all 3 corridors](#)⁴²;

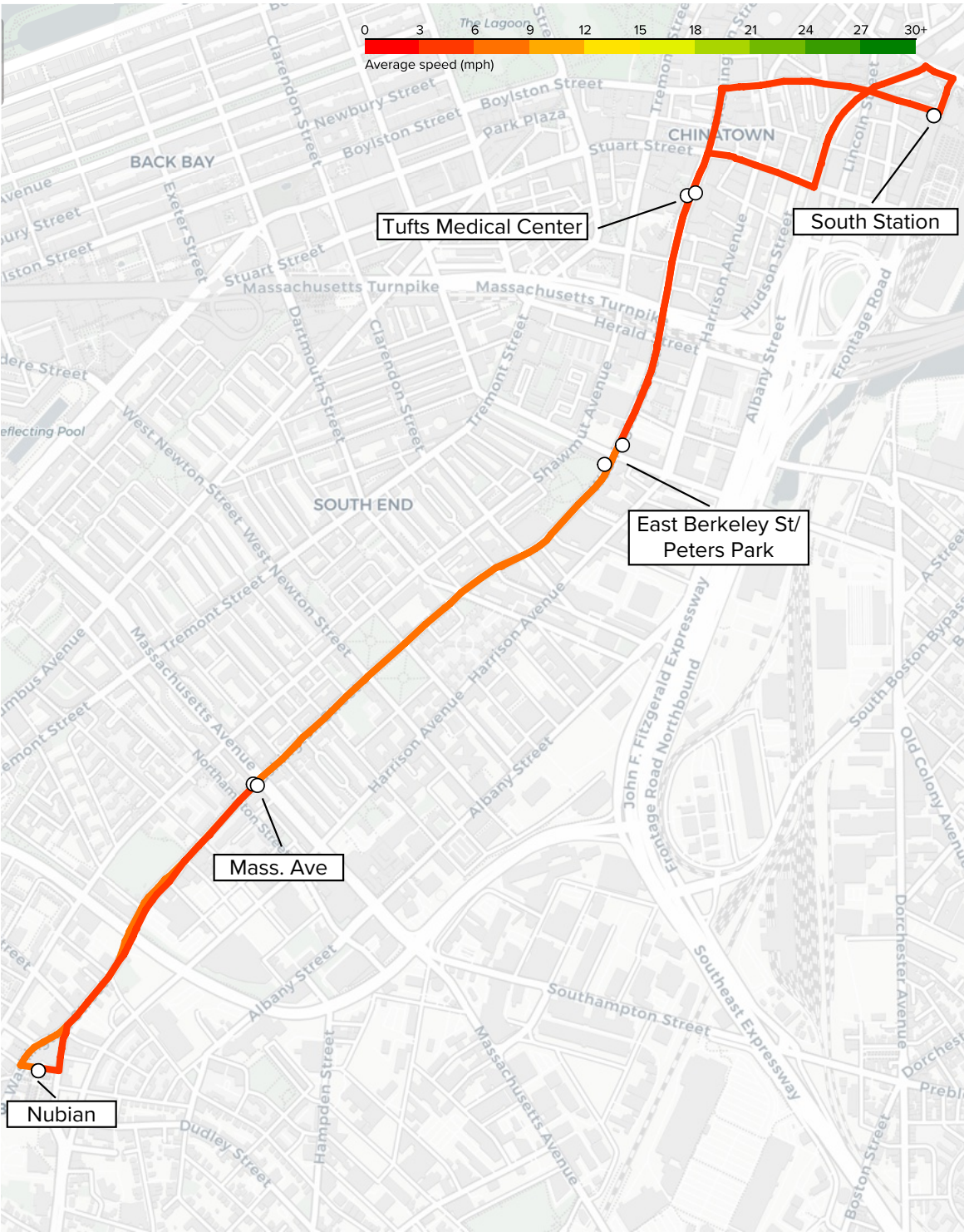
however the grant was rescinded by the Trump administration in 2025⁴³. Given the loss of funding, the project has not progressed past preliminary planning stages and there are currently no design recommendations.

Below is a synopsis of the other 12 projects of concern:

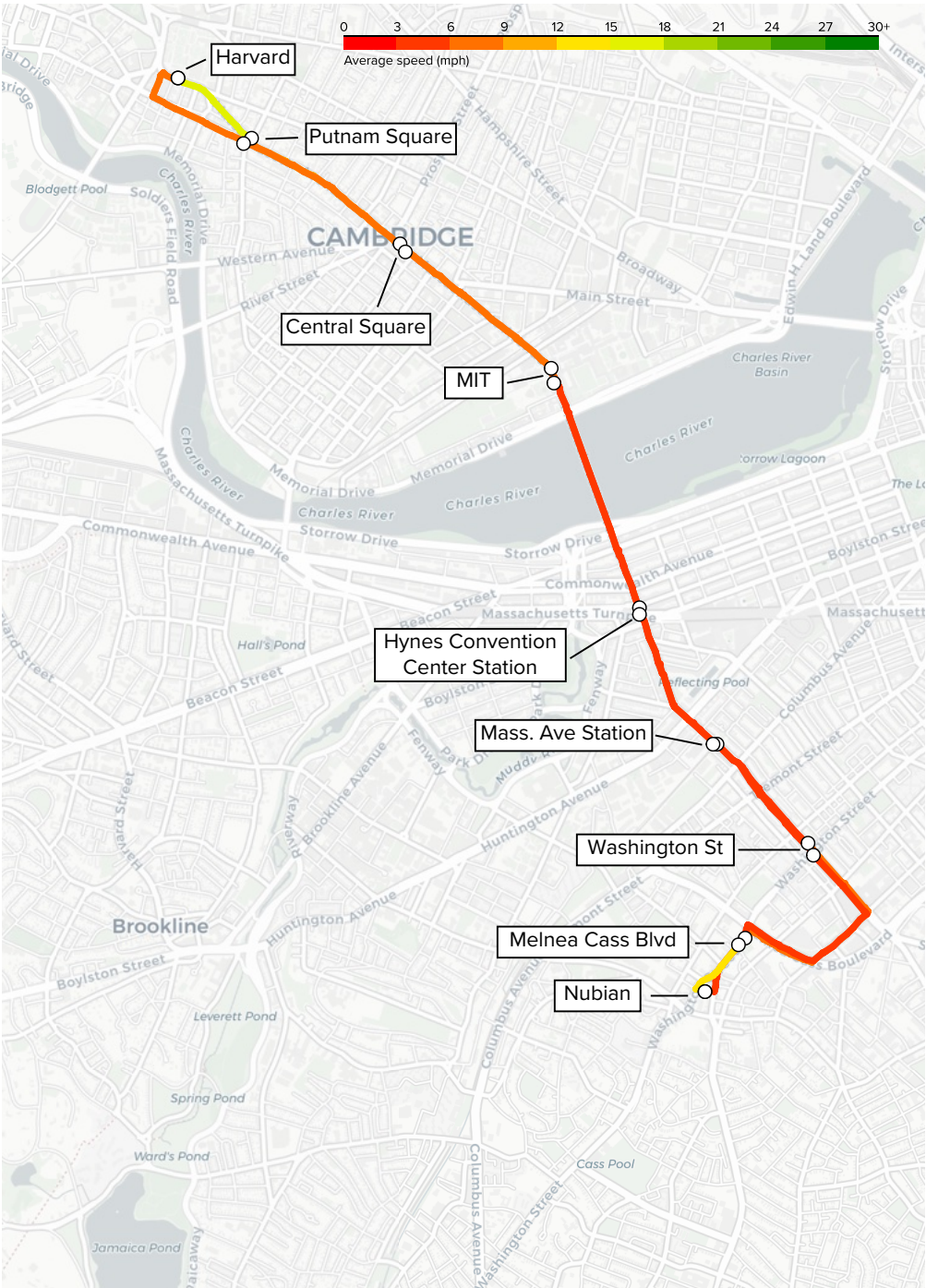
Project	Scope	Status
Boylston St. / Fenway	Pedestrian safety, bike lanes, transit access	Working towards 30% design submission to MassDOT.
Downtown Crossing	Sidewalk accessibility, transportation safety improvements, regulations for loading and vehicular access	Public engagement to restart later this year.
Egleston Square	Pedestrian and bike safety, public realm improvements	Engagement expected to restart this fall.
Center South St. Jamaica Plain	Pedestrian and bike safety	Planning study in progress.
Mission Hill Parker and Terrace St.	Accessibility, mobility, traffic mitigation	Planning study is complete.
North Station to Seaport Multimodal Corridor	Transit users, cyclists, pedestrians, and traffic	Removed from Capital Plan due to fiscal constraints.
Maverick Square	Safety and accessibility, walking, biking, transit	Final public engagement likely to be in fall 2026, with completion of plan by end of 2026.
Roslindale Square	Safety and accessibility, walking, biking, transit	Final public engagement likely to be in fall 2026, with completion of plan by end of 2026.
Lower Roxbury Neighborhood Safety Improvements	Safety, speed bumps	Under construction.
Connect downtown public garden crossings (bike project)	Accessibility, infrastructure improvements, mobility, multimodal access, traffic mitigation	Project is being rescoped.
Western Ave.	Bike lanes	Vertical separation will be re-installed this fall.

Pokey Routes Average Speed by Route Section (Maps by Spencer Ng)

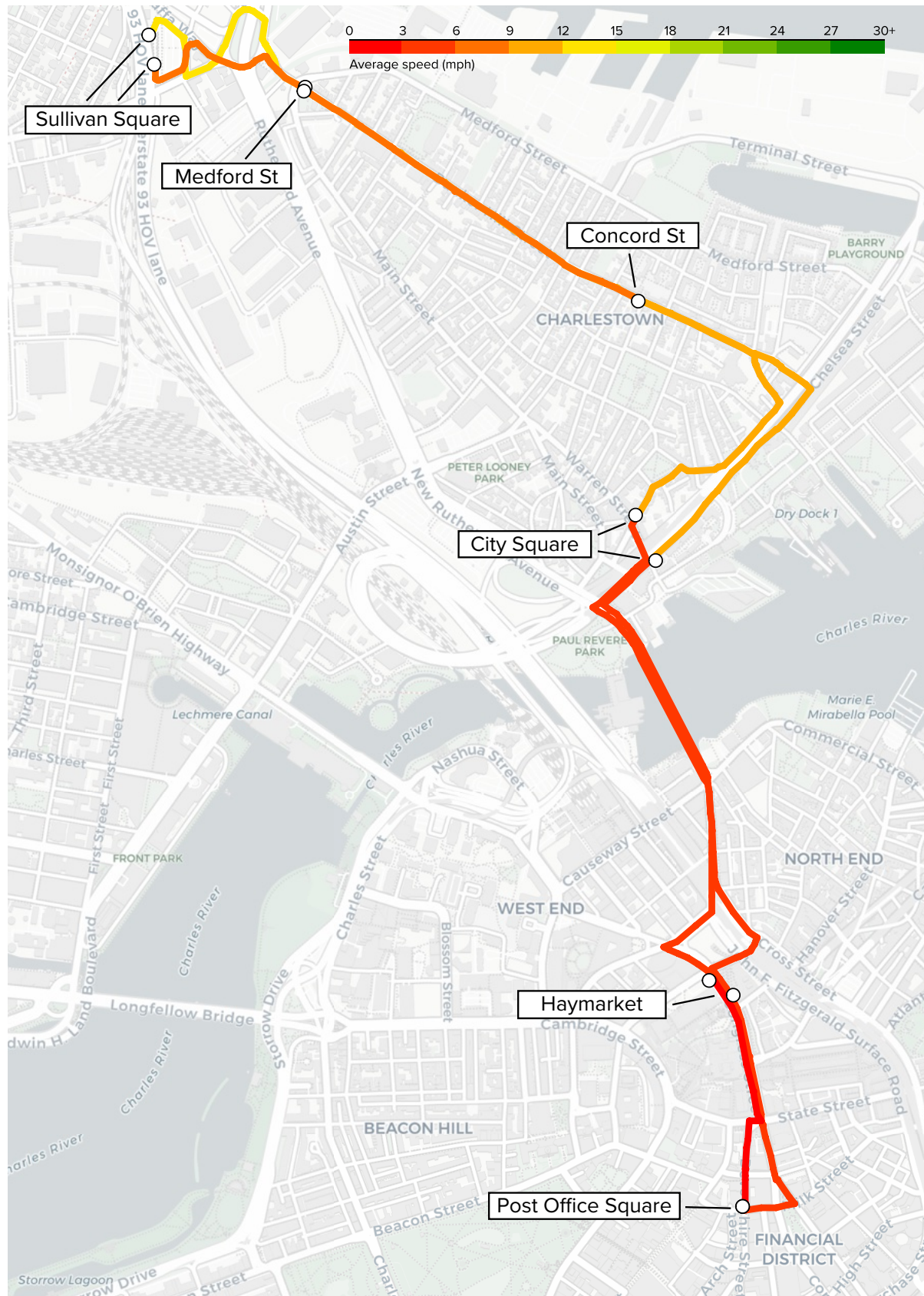
SL4 bus:



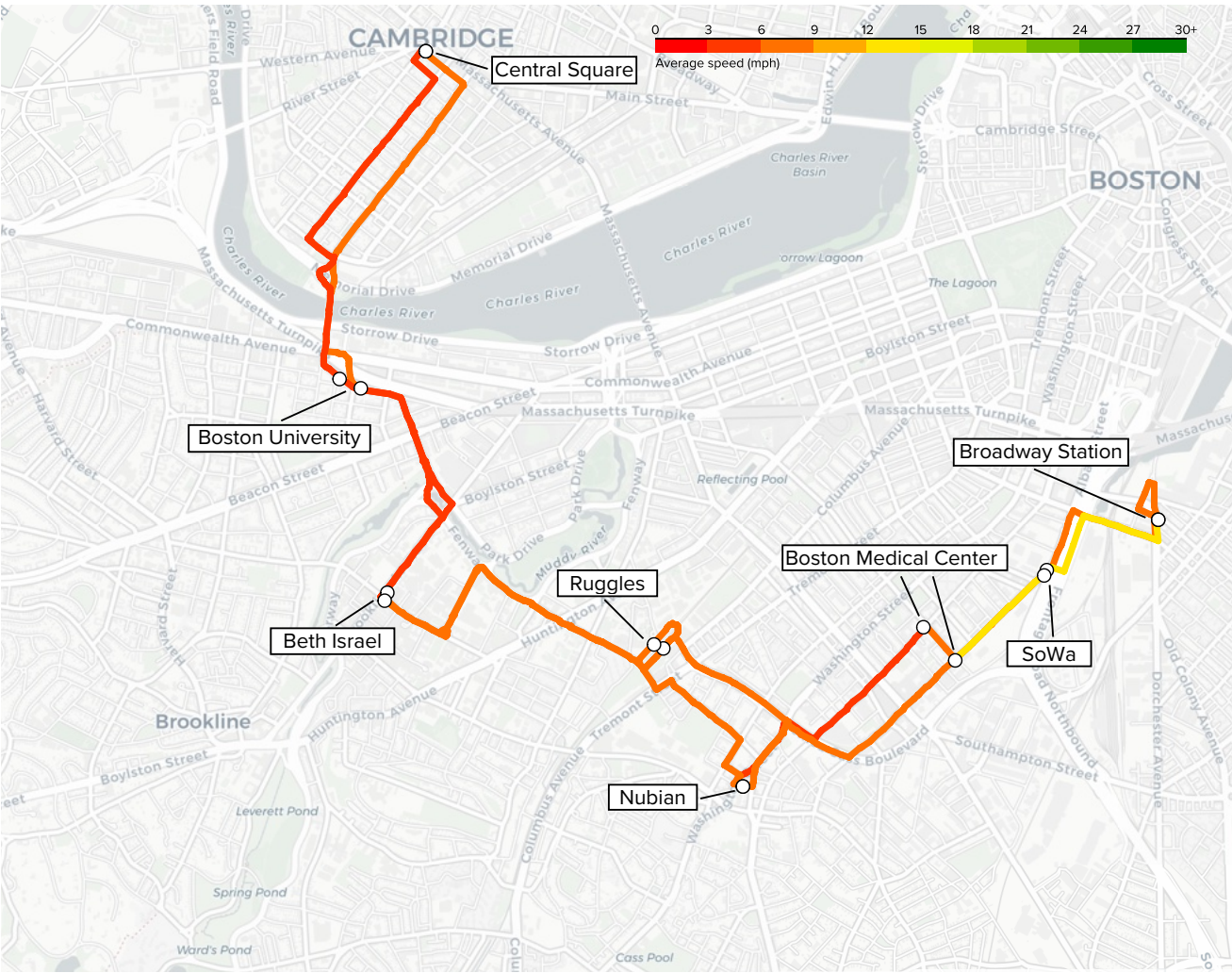
1 bus:



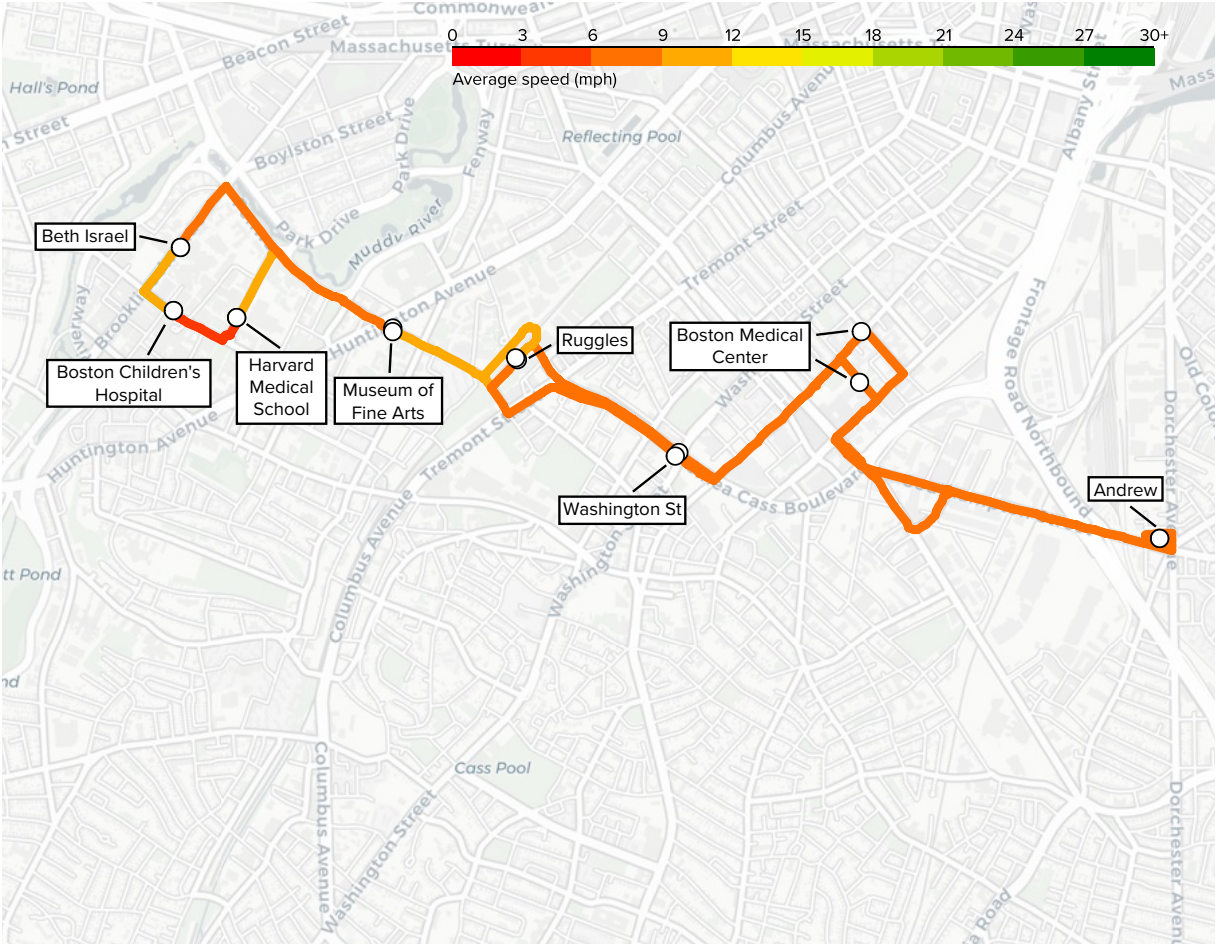
93 bus:



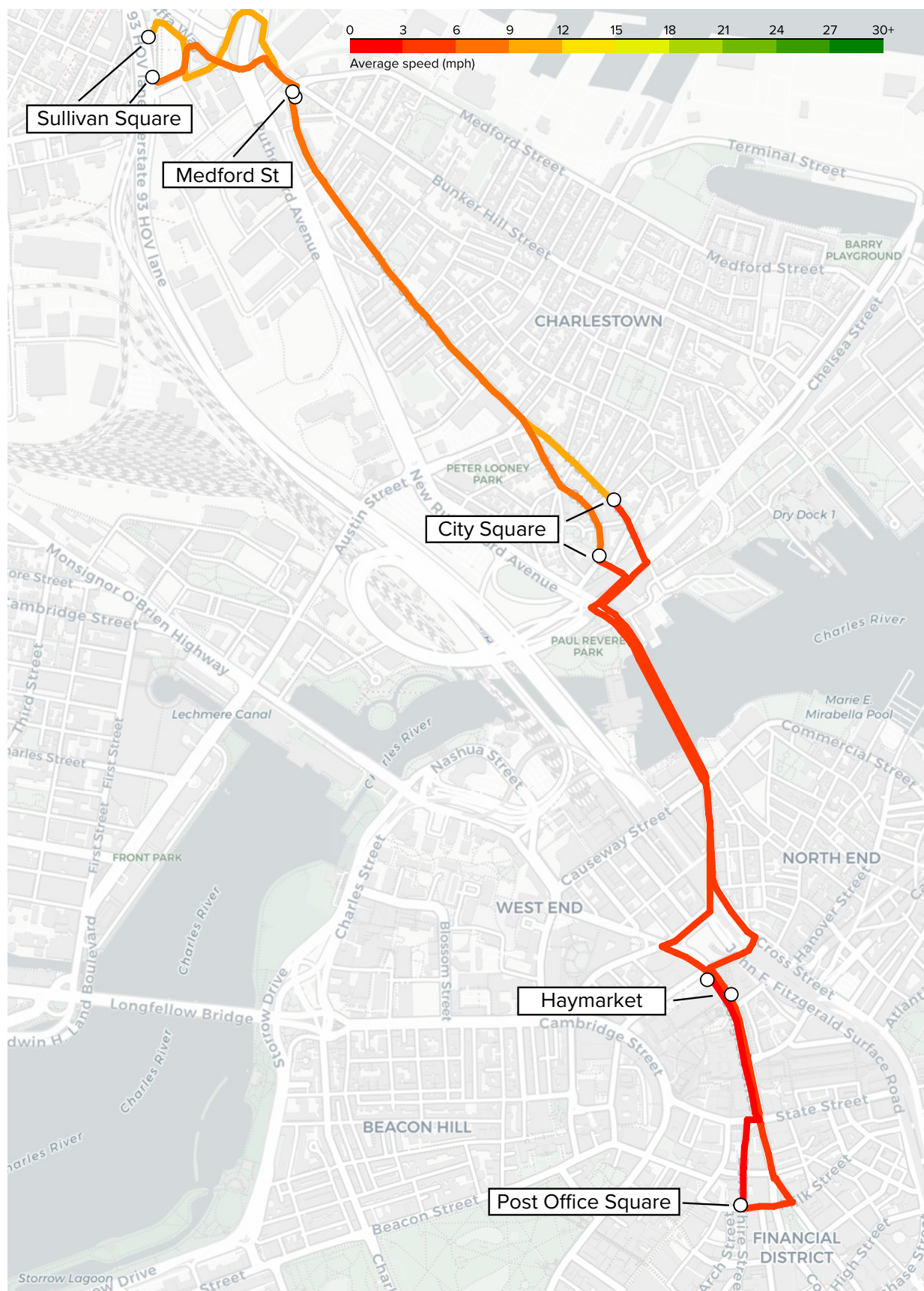
47 bus:



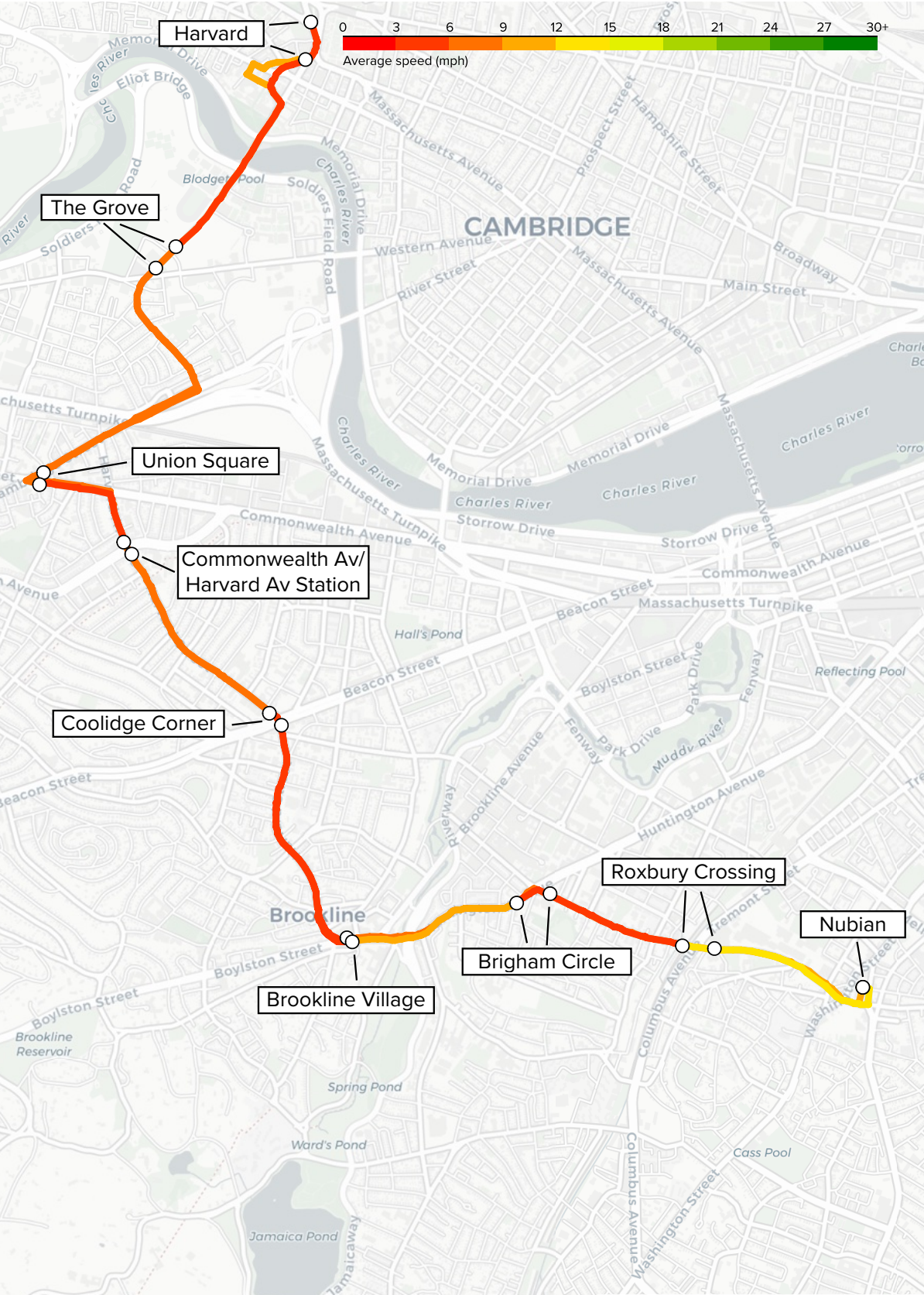
CT3 bus:



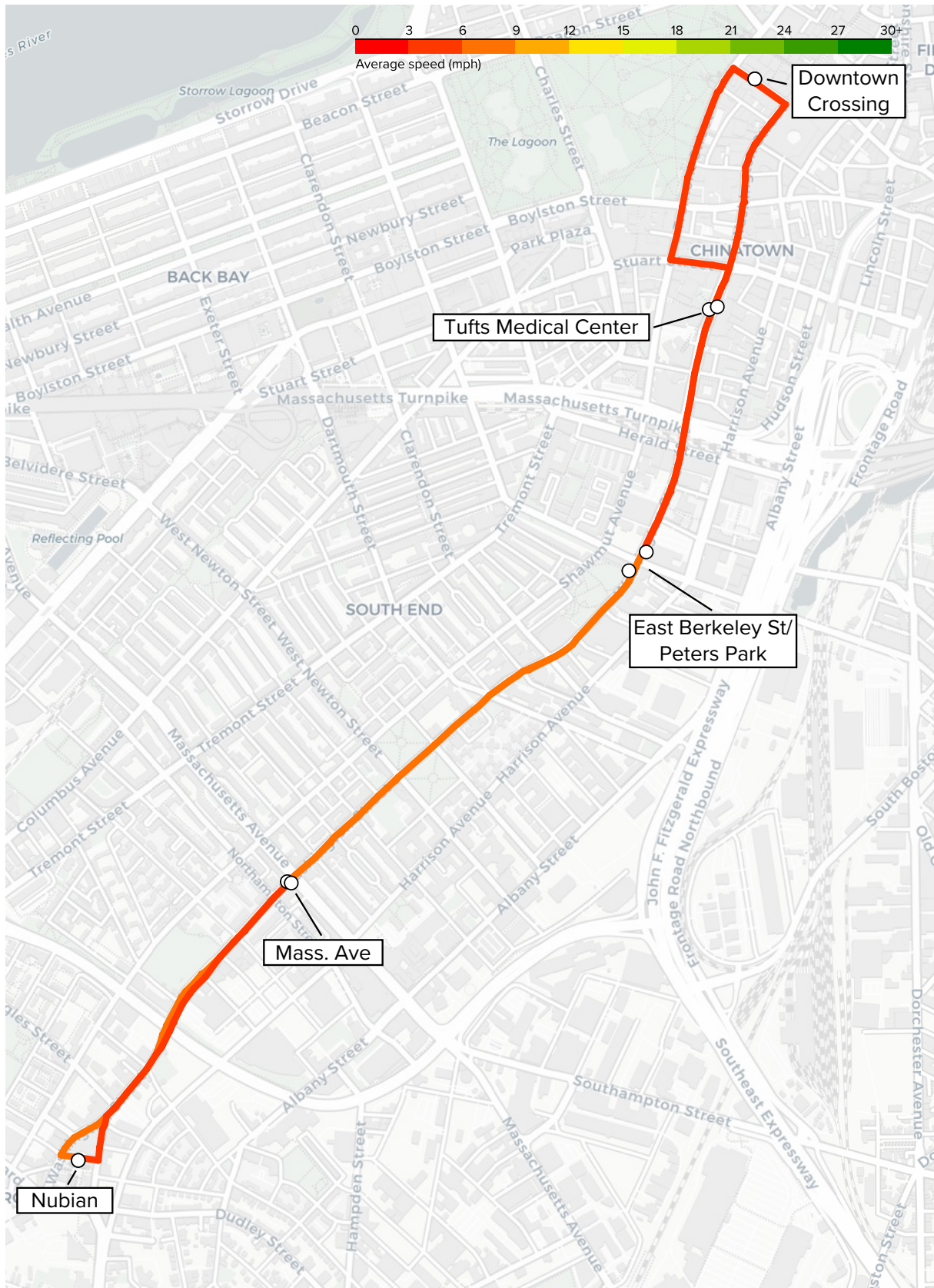
92 bus:



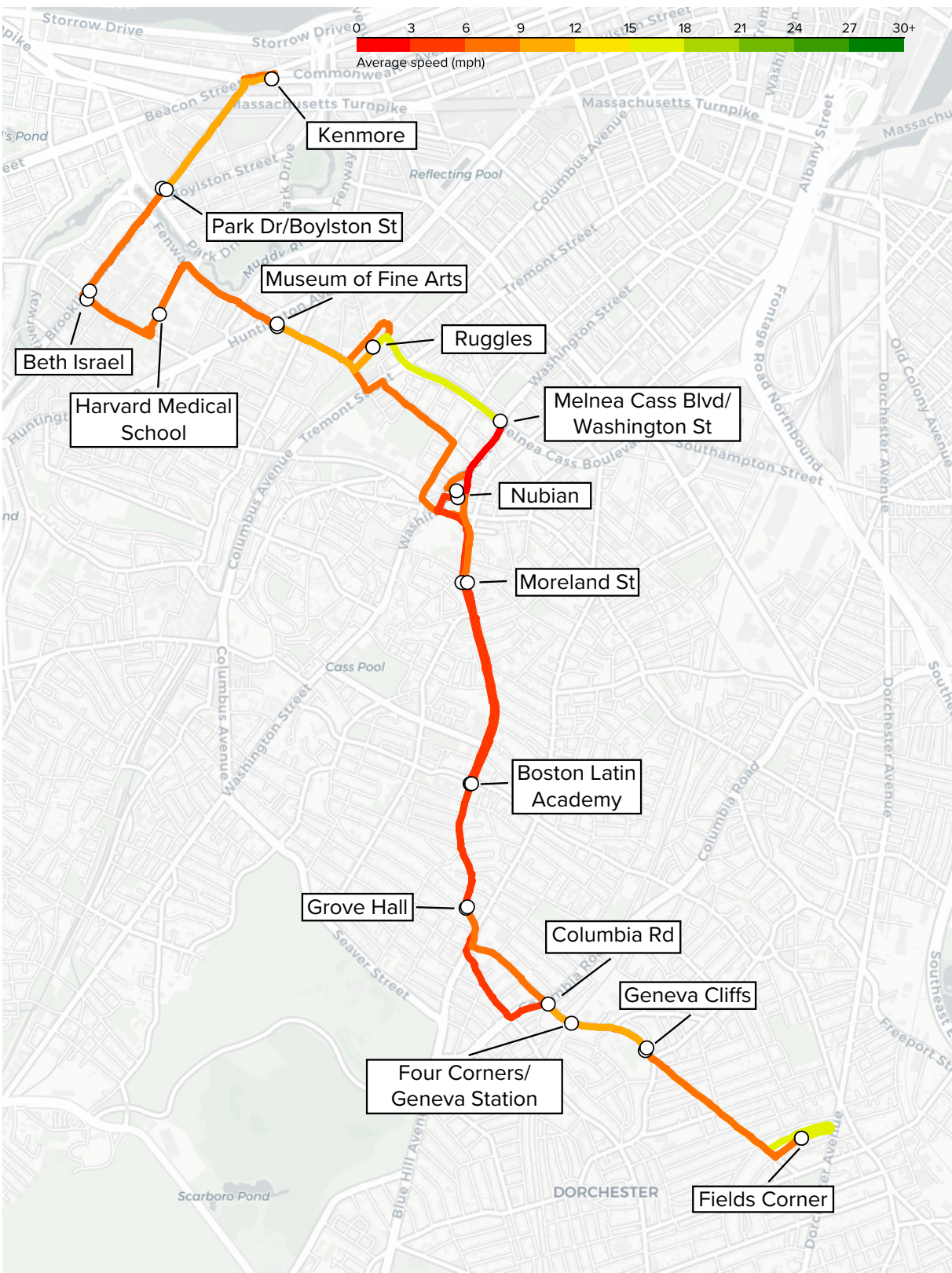
66 bus:



SL5 bus:



19 bus:



10 bus:



Glossary

Automated camera enforcement (ACE). A program that uses cameras mounted on buses to identify and fine drivers who park or stop in bus lanes or at bus stops. Massachusetts law allows fines only for stopped vehicles, not for cars driving in a bus lane while in motion. The MBTA plans to begin enforcement on the SL4 and SL5 buses in January 2027.

Bunching. When two or more buses on the same route arrive close together instead of at even intervals, leaving a long gap before the next bus. Bunching means longer waits for riders and crowded, unevenly loaded buses. In this report, a trip is counted as bunched when the observed gap between buses is less than 25 percent of the scheduled gap.

Bus Network Redesign (BNRD). The MBTA's ongoing overhaul of its entire bus network, which redraws routes and increases frequencies across the system. Several routes in this report are slated to be renamed, rerouted, or combined under the redesign.

Bus Priority Vision. An MBTA planning document that identifies the corridors across the system where buses face the worst delays and would benefit most from bus priority infrastructure.

Bus rapid transit (BRT). A high-quality bus service that approaches the speed and reliability of rail by combining features such as dedicated lanes, transit signal priority, all-door boarding, and limited stops.

Center-running bus lane. A dedicated bus lane placed in the center of the roadway rather than along the curb. Center-running lanes keep buses clear of double-parked cars, turning vehicles, and curbside activity, making them more effective than side-running lanes at preventing delays.

Frequent Bus Route. An MBTA service designation for routes that run at least every fifteen minutes for most of the day, every day of the week. Because they run so often, Frequent Bus Routes are also more prone to bunching, making headway management especially important.

General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS). A standardized open data format that transit agencies use to publish route, schedule, and stop information. This report draws on the MBTA's archive of GTFS feeds to determine each route's length and scheduled headways.

Headway. The time between consecutive buses on a route. For example, a fifteen-minute headway means a bus is scheduled to come every fifteen minutes. Riders experience headway directly as how long they wait at the stop.

Headway management. An operational practice in which buses are dispatched and adjusted based on the real-time position of the bus ahead rather than a fixed timetable, keeping gaps between buses even. Dispatchers may briefly hold, slow, or advance buses to prevent bunching. It requires enough dispatchers, vehicle-location technology, and layover space to work.

Layover. Scheduled time and space at the end of a route where a bus waits before beginning its next trip. Adequate layover space lets operators reset headways and is one of the conditions needed for headway management.

Limited-stop service. A route that skips some stops to travel faster, serving only higher-demand locations along the corridor.

Queue jump. A short stretch of bus lane at an intersection, usually paired with an early green signal, that lets a bus move ahead of waiting traffic and merge back in front of the queue.

Side-running bus lane. A dedicated bus lane placed along the curb. Side-running lanes are easier to install but are more often blocked by double-parked cars, deliveries, and turning vehicles than center-running lanes.

Stop consolidation. Removing or combining closely spaced bus stops so buses stop less often. Fewer stops reduce the time lost to decelerating, boarding, and pulling back into traffic, speeding up the route.

Timepoint. A designated location along a route where the MBTA records a bus's arrival time. This report uses arrival data at timepoints to calculate each trip's total runtime and observed headway.

Transit signal priority (TSP). Technology that lets an approaching bus extend a green light or shorten a red one so it spends less time waiting at intersections. TSP is a proven, relatively low-cost tool for improving bus speed and reliability.

Endnotes

1. Slowed and removed bus lanes include: Tremont / Columbus Bus Lanes Phase II (22 and 23 buses), Blue Hill Avenue Transportation Action Plan (22, 23, 31 buses), Hyde Park Avenue Multimodal Corridor (32 bus), removed Boylston St. bus lanes (39 bus), and removed northbound N. Washington St. bus lanes (92, 93, and 111 buses).
2. "Boston Climate Action Plan," City of Boston, April 2026, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1o1DsLogF2eZYLScOloH-Trh-UP5oI_pg9/view.
3. "Mayor Wu Streets Letter," Michelle Wu, July 24, 2026, https://media.wbur.org/wp/2026/07/Streets_Letter-1.pdf.
4. "GM's Report to the Board," Phil Eng, MBTA, January 23, 2025, <https://vimeo.com/1045061549?share=copy&fl=cl&>.
5. "Headway Management," TransitMatters, May 2023, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/533b9a24e4b01d-79d0ae4376/t/645e82de1f570b31497c44dc/1683915486889/TransitMatters-Headwaymanagement.pdf>.
6. Christian MilNeil, "MBTA Proposes Fines, Rules for Its New Bus Camera Enforcement Systems," StreetsblogMASS, July 29, 2025, <https://mass.streetsblog.org/2025/07/29/mbta-proposes-fines-rules-for-its-new-bus-camera-enforcement-systems>.
7. "Automated Camera Enforcement Program," MBTA, accessed August 14, 2026, <https://www.mbta.com/projects/automated-camera-enforcement-program>.
8. "703 CMR 6.00: ISSUANCE AND ENFORCEMENT OF AUTOMATED BUS LANE AND BUS," <https://cdn.mbta.com/sites/default/files/2025-09/2025-09-24-enforcement-of-bus-camera-regulations-703-cmr.pdf>.
9. U.S. Census Bureau, "Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2024 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)," American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1901, accessed on August 14, 2026, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2024.S1901>.
10. U.S. Census Bureau, "Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units," American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S2504, accessed on August 14, 2026, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2024.S2504>.
11. "PLAN: East Boston," Boston Planning and Development Agency, January 18, 2024, 97-102, <https://www.boston-plans.org/getattachment/ce2b7495-6808-4a4d-8bdc-74a5c20664fd>.
12. "64 Hours: Closing the Bus Equity Gap," LivableStreets Alliance, September 2019, https://www.livablestreets.info/64_hours_report.
13. Personal Communication with MBTA.
14. "GO Boston 2030 Vision and Action Plan," City of Boston, 2017, https://archive.org/details/go_boston_2030_-_full_report_to_download.
15. "MBTA Bus Priority Vision," MBTA, 2023, <https://cdn.mbta.com/sites/default/files/2023-10/MBTA%20BNRD%20Bus%20Priority%20Vision%20FINAL%204.pdf>.
16. "Congress St, Boston Bus Lane Review," MBTA, February 2025, <https://cdn.mbta.com/sites/default/files/2025-03-14-congress-st-boston-2025-review.pdf>.
17. Christian MilNeil, "USDOT Cancels \$20 Million Pledge to Fund Street and Transit Improvements In Roxbury," StreetsblogMASS, September 17, 2025, <https://mass.streetsblog.org/2025/09/17/usdot-cancels-20-million-pledge-to-fund-street-and-transit-improvements-in-roxbury>.
18. Personal Communication with MBTA.
19. "After the Safety Walk, the City Says Hyde Park Avenue Must Start Over," Boston Better Streets Coalition, July 1, 2026, <https://www.bostonbetterstreets.org/updates/hyde-park-avenue-city-starts-over>.
20. "Hyde Park Avenue Multimodal Corridor," City of Boston, August 2026, <https://www.boston.gov/departments/transportation/project/hyde-park-avenue-multimodal-corridor>.
21. "PLAN: East Boston," Boston Planning and Development Agency, January 18, 2024, 97-102, <https://www.boston-plans.org/getattachment/ce2b7495-6808-4a4d-8bdc-74a5c20664fd>.
22. "Headway Management," TransitMatters, May 2023, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/533b9a24e4b01d-79d0ae4376/t/645e82de1f570b31497c44dc/1683915486889/TransitMatters-Headwaymanagement.pdf>.
23. Personal Communication with MBTA.

24. "Boston Huntington Ave 2025 Performance Review," MBTA, February 2025, <https://cdn.mbtta.com/sites/default/files/2025-03-14-boston-huntington-ave-2025-performance-review-mbta.pdf>.
25. "Media Statement: TransitMatters Calls Upon the City of Boston to Pause Boylston Street Bus Lane Removal," TransitMatters, March 3, 2025, <https://transitmatters.org/blog/media-statement-calls-upon-the-city-of-boston-to-pause-boylston-street-bus-lane-removal>.
26. "Columbus Avenue Bus Lanes Project Report," City of Boston, July 2023, https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/file/2023/10/Columbus%20Ave%20Report%2020230705%20%281%29_1.pdf.
27. "Blue Hill Avenue Transportation Action Plan," MBTA, accessed August 19, 2026, <https://www.mbtta.com/projects/blue-hill-avenue-transportation-action-plan>.
28. "Community Meetings for Transformative Blue Hill Avenue Project Announced," City of Boston, August 5, 2026, <https://www.boston.gov/news/community-meetings-transformative-blue-hill-avenue-project-announced>.
29. "Fall 2025 Bus Service Changes | Previous Service Changes | MBTA," accessed August 8, 2026, <https://www.mbtta.com/service-changes/fall-2025-bus-service-changes>.
30. November 2024, "Blue Hill Avenue Transportation Action Plan," ArcGIS StoryMaps, December 20, 2024 <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e42a74b392ec412c8fdaca4416da16d2>.
31. "MBTA BNRD Bus Priority Vision Report," accessed August 8, 2026, <https://cdn.mbtta.com/sites/default/files/2023-10/MBTA%20BNRD%20Bus%20Priority%20Vision%20FINAL%204.pdf>.
32. Christian MilNeil, "Mayor Wu and MBTA Announce Compromises and Another Round of Meetings for Blue Hill Ave. Project," Streetsblog Massachusetts, August 4, 2026, <https://mass.streetsblog.org/2026/08/04/mayor-wu-and-mbta-announce-compromises-and-another-round-of-meetings-for-blue-hill-ave-project>.
33. "Bus Lane & Bus Stop Enforcement, Presentation ot the MBTA Board," MBTA, April 24, 2025, https://cdn.mbtta.com/sites/default/files/2025-04/4_20250424%20Camera%20Enforcement%20and%20Bus%20Priority_v2.pdf.
34. "Headway Management," TransitMatters, May 2023, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/533b9a24e4b01d-79d0ae4376/t/645e82de1f570b31497c44dc/1683915486889/TransitMatters-Headwaymanagement.pdf>.
35. Personal Communication with MBTA.
36. Christian MilNeil, "Mayor Wu Begins 'Review' of Recent Street Safety Upgrades – Here's How to Weigh In," StreetsblogMASS, February 28, 2025, <https://mass.streetsblog.org/2025/02/28/mayor-wu-begins-review-of-recent-street-safety-upgrades-heres-how-to-weigh-in>.
37. "Mayor Wu Streets Letter," Michelle Wu, July 24, 2026, https://media.wbur.org/wp/2026/07/Streets_Letter-1.pdf.
38. "Blue Hill Avenue Transportation Action Plan," City of Boston, November 2024, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e42a74b392ec412c8fdaca4416da16d2>.
39. "Community Meetings for Transformative Blue Hill Avenue Project Announced," City of Boston, August 5, 2026, <https://www.boston.gov/news/community-meetings-transformative-blue-hill-avenue-project-announced>.
40. "Hyde Park Avenue Multimodal Corridor," City of Boston, August 2026, <https://www.boston.gov/departments/transportation/project/hyde-park-avenue-multimodal-corridor>.
41. "Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$40.2 Million in Funding for Two Projects in Massachusetts to Modernize Transportation and Make it More Affordable, Increase Safety and Strengthen Supply Chains," U.S. Department of Transportation, August 11, 2022, <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2022-08/RAISE-Massachusetts-2022.pdf>.
42. "RAISE Grant Fact Sheets," U.S. Department of Transportation, 2022, https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2022-09/RAISE%202022%20Award%20Fact%20Sheets_1.pdf.
43. Christian MilNeil, "USDOT Cancels \$20 Million Pledge to Fund Street and Transit Improvements In Roxbury," StreetsblogMASS, September 17, 2025, <https://mass.streetsblog.org/2025/09/17/usdot-cancels-20-million-pledge-to-fund-street-and-transit-improvements-in-roxbury>.