



## **MBTA GM Discusses Future Commuter Rail Service, Contract**

*ABC releases White Paper, holds panel discussion on Commuter Rail at Federal Reserve Bank*

**For Immediate Release:**

**Date: November 30, 2011**

### **A Better City**

Contact: Richard Parr

Director of Policy

Phone: (617) 502-6244

Email: [rparr@abettercity.org](mailto:rparr@abettercity.org)

BOSTON – MBTA Acting General Manager Jonathan Davis joined experts from across the country to discuss the future of the T Commuter Rail service at a panel event organized by A Better City (ABC) this morning at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.

The event coincided with the release of ABC white paper *On the Right Track: The Future of Massachusetts' Commuter Rail*. A copy of the report is available online at <http://abettercity.org/about/publications.html>

“The commuter rail is facing some serious challenges heading into the winter,” notes ABC President and CEO Rick Dimino. “At the same time, there is an opportunity in that the T will be beginning the bidding process for the next commuter rail contract. We hope this paper and event will help to frame that conversation.”

Among the paper’s findings:

- The MBTA Commuter Rail is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest in the nation, by ridership, but investment in its aging infrastructure has not kept pace with demand, resulting in delays and breakdowns.
- The current contract with MBCR has been successful in preserving labor harmony and developing a locally based professional staff to run commuter rail, but government and media reports have called into question certain penalties and incentives in the deal and led to calls for a new direction in the next contract.
- The T faces three options: continue with a short-term contract, internalize operations within the T, or pursue an innovative, long-term public-private partnership (P3) to help recapitalize the aging system.
- Given the staffing and labor issues associated with internalization and complexity of a long-term deal, the T may have to pursue parallel actions: a short-term deal to maintain service while laying the groundwork for a longer contract.
- A P3 may bring up-front capital to help repair the system, but it’s not a panacea. Ultimately, the fate of the commuter rail, and the rest of the T, will hinge on the public’s willingness to provide adequate funding for public transportation.

Joining Dimino and GM Davis on the panel Wednesday morning were distinguished experts on transportation infrastructure and public-private partnerships:

- Joseph Aiello, North American CEO of Meridiam Infrastructure,
- Damian Carey, Design/Integration Manager for Denver's Eagle P3 Commuter Rail project, and
- Steve Poftak, Director of Research at the Pioneer Institute.

The panel discussed the pros and cons of P3s in general, the success of the Denver model and whether such a deal could be implemented here in Massachusetts.

"We're very mindful of the time and capacity constraints facing the T, and the last we would want is for them to rush through a long-term deal without careful vetting," said Dimino. But we hope this paper and panel will inspire some creative thinking about the next contract and how to improve commuter rail service."

### **About A Better City**

A Better City (ABC) represents Greater Boston's business and institutional community on matters related to transportation land development and environment. Comprising leaders from Boston business and major institutions, ABC encourages collaboration between the public and private sectors to act on challenges facing the region today and into the future.

A Better City is built on the foundation of more than 15 years of success as the Artery Business Committee, widely credited with being a key contributor to achieving consensus and keeping Boston open for business during the Central Artery/Tunnel project, the largest and most complex urban infrastructure project ever undertaken in the United States. For more information, visit [www.abettercity.org](http://www.abettercity.org).

###