

Post-Labor Day traffic looms

The beginning of September marks the return of students to school and the Boston-area work force to its normal schedule. A post-Labor Day increase in traffic is normal for the region and happens predictably each year.

This year, however, Boston's central highway system will be challenged due to the recent ceiling collapse in the I-90 connector. This critical link in our regional transportation system is still mostly closed and is expected to complicate post-Labor Day congestion.

A Better City and A Better City Transportation Management Association, in collaboration with state and city officials, are asking employers to plan ahead, provide resources to their employees and consider policies or incentives that help commuters exercise their full range of options. Shifting more trips to public transit especially will help commuters avoid prolonged congestion and increased travel times.

Although there are many things that employers and employees can do to plan ahead, below are a few ideas that can help.

Flextime: Employers can help employees use public transportation by allowing an adjustment in their schedules by 30 minutes earlier or later than normal. This flexibility can reduce the crunch on the MBTA system during peak periods, allowing additional riders to use the system more comfortably.

MBTA Trip Planner: The MBTA's trip planner, found online at www.mbta.com, enables commuters to find the quickest and most efficient ways to

get to their destination via public transit. We suggest utilizing this helpful resource when researching the best route for you.

Available MBTA Parking Facilities: MBTA parking lots at the Anderson Regional Transportation Center in Woburn, 128 Station and Lynn Station have enough capacity to serve more than 2,000 additional vehicles. These facilities are conveniently located near major highways, including I-95 and I-93. We encourage commuters to take advantage of this excess parking capacity and take the commuter rail into Boston.

Water Transportation: Water transportation services from Hull, Hingham and Quincy provide nonstop service from the South Shore to Boston. There is plenty of available capacity on the boats and at parking facilities that will enable a smooth and efficient trip to work.

Logan Express: Public transportation is definitely the best way to get to Logan International Airport right now. In addition to taking the MBTA's Blue or Silver Lines, commuters can take Logan Express to the airport. See the Massachusetts Port Authority's Web site at www.massport.com for more information.

Lastly, with the MBTA adding service, this might be a great time to try a new commute. If you have never commuted to work via the MBTA, we encourage you avoid post-Labor Day traffic and give it a try.

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AND
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