



A Better City Feedback from the Field

The following recommendations and comments are based on observations from the field noted by the A Better City Transportation & Infrastructure team from **September 7, 2022, to September 8, 2022**. The intent is to support the MBTA and City of Boston in implementing continuous improvement during the Orange Line (OL)/Green Line (GL) shutdown as well as to ensure collection of data and information to allow for data-based assessment, real-time changes, and lessons learned.

Top Five Recommendations

1. **Address Safety Concerns along Bus Route from Copley to Forest Hills at Amory Street and Dimock.**

The turn from Columbus Avenue to Amory and the bend from Amory at Dimock Street are too tight for the Orange Line shuttle bus turning radius (Figure 1). The turn puts passengers on the shuttle buses at risk as well as the vehicles traveling southbound toward Dimock and Columbus Ave.

Consider adjusting Orange Line shuttle bus route and/or placing signage to indicate the wide turn as well as adding a police officer at the turn to manage safety concerns.

On September 8, 2022, at 8:48 am an A Better City team member witnessed an accident between an Orange Line shuttle bus and a Boston Public School (BPS) bus carrying at least three students (Figure 2). The Orange Line shuttle bus was almost in the left-hand lane on Amory preparing for the bend in the road at Amory and Dimock. There was very heavy traffic southbound on Amory before and at Dimock leaving barely any room for the Orange Line shuttle bus to turn without hitting an ongoing car. While the Orange Line shuttle buses waited for an opening to turn right, a BPS school bus drove up next to shuttle bus to make the right-hand turn. The Orange Line shuttle bus advanced causing the two buses to scrape in the rear and blocking the BPS bus from turning.

The accident did not result in any injuries, but it did require the BPS driver to disrupt traffic and delay students for at least 1 minute and 12 seconds as the driver made several adjustments to allow him to take the turn (Video 1 – *sent via text on 9/9*). In addition to the incident witnessed by A Better City, according to the [Boston Globe](#), “...an Orange Line shuttle bus and gray Honda Civic collided as the bus turned from Washington Street to Williams Street in Jamaica Plain. The collision resulted in significant damage to the Civic’s left front headlights and bumper and blocked traffic on Williams Street for about 10 minutes.”

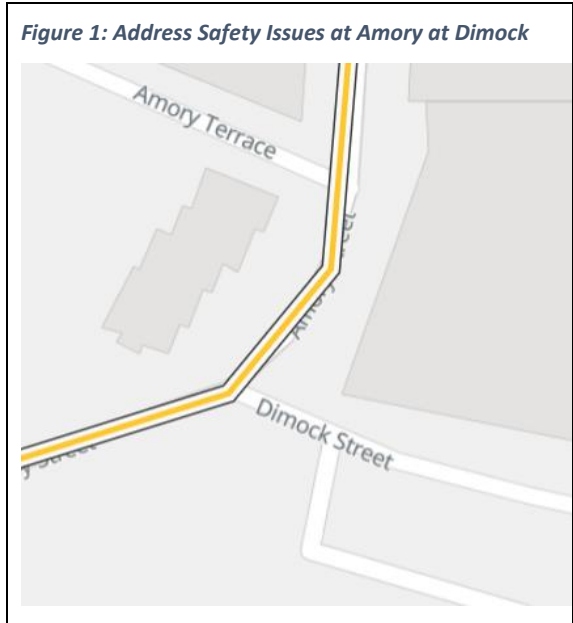


Figure 1: Address Safety Issues at Amory at Dimock

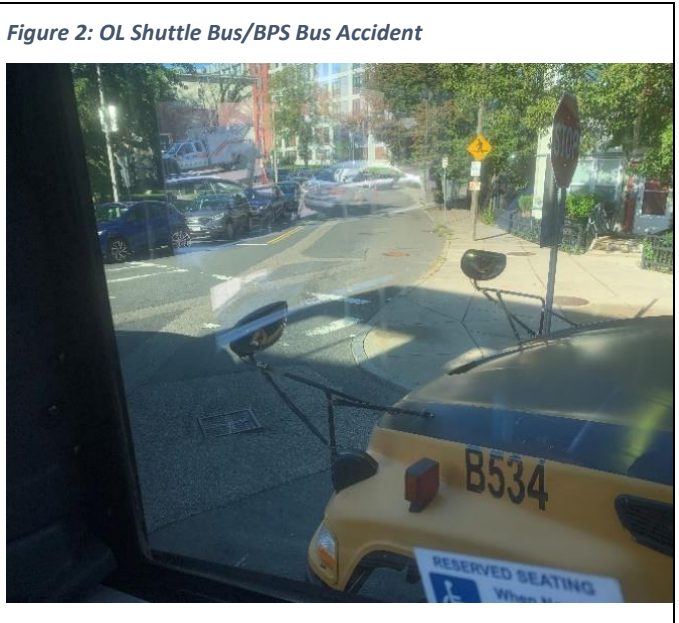


Figure 2: OL Shuttle Bus/BPS Bus Accident

Source: moovitapp / Photo/video by CAC

2. **Update MBTA Trip Planner to Show No Fare for Orange Line Shutdown Alternative Commuter Rail Service and Ensure Trip Planner Always Shows the Free Bus Shuttle Alternative.** The MBTA's online Trip Planner currently indicates a specific cost for the alternative commuter rail service (Figure 3) while at the same time shows there is no fare for alternative shuttle bus service. This likely deters riders from taking the Commuter Rail and benefitting from the related time savings. Further, in some scenarios, the MBTA Trip Planner does not show the free alternative shuttle bus service as one of the top options and suggests riders take a route that requires payment (Figure 4). Maximizing the number of riders on Commuter Rail should be a priority and making this change on Trip Planners as well as electronic signage in stations should encourage riders to take Commuter Rail.

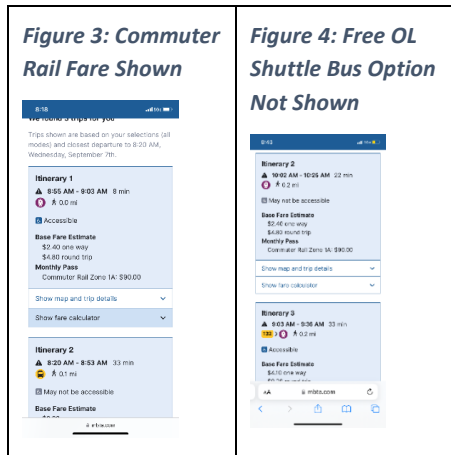


Photo by CAC

- 3. Address Critical Accessibility Needs to Commuter Rail Trains on Tracks 1-3 at Back Bay Station.** The escalators at Back Bay station for Tracks 1-3 remain out of service (Figure 5 – below). This is a significant accessibility issue for riders. If the escalators cannot be fixed, signage should be placed at the top and bottom on them to indicate the nearest accessible exit on the platforms. A Better City notes that the escalator out of service at Forest Hills was fixed.

Figure 5: Out of Service Escalator Back Bay Tracks 1-3

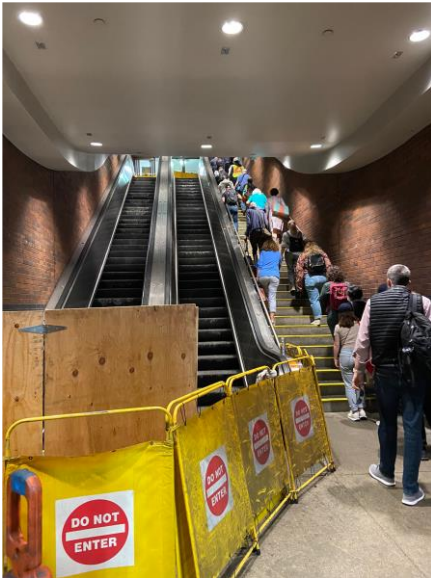


Photo by Glen Berkowitz

Figure 6: High Ridership Forest Hills Commuter Rail



Photo by Glen Berkowitz

- 4. Establish and Implement Process to Track Ridership on Alternative MBTA Shuttle Buses and Commuter Rail as well as Share Data with Public.** It is critical for short-, medium-, and long-term planning to track ridership on the alternative services (shuttle buses and commuter rail) provided by the MBTA during the Orange Line shutdown. With no accounting of bus shuttle ridership, it is impossible to assess if supply meets or exceeds demand as well as to understand the volume of ridership on this mode during the shutdown. Similarly, rider counts at rail stations not previously served by the Commuter Rail could help inform the popularity and value of this service on both the South and North sides, which could be viable and support increased Commuter Rail use post-shutdown. Anecdotal evidence suggests ridership is high (Figure 6 – above).
- 5. Improve Bus Lane Enforcement:** Bus Lane enforcement remains an issue on both the North and the South side. Lack of enforcement causes traffic congestion, increased travel times, and diminishes the value of the shutdown as a pilot for the new bus lanes. During the remaining days of the OL shutdown, proper enforcement of bus lanes could deliver dramatically improved service for riders, especially during the AM and PM peak commuting times.

General Observations

1. Commuter Rail - Forest Hills

A Better City appreciates the additional trains stopping at Forest Hills and the placement of signage with train times.



2. T Ambassadors

All A Better City team members had excellent interactions with the T Ambassadors they encountered and witnessed similar behavior with other riders. The Ambassadors were knowledgeable and extremely courteous and helpful, especially with respect to helping patrons find their way to the appropriate Commuter Rail platforms to access that mode as substitute service.



Photo by Glen Berkowitz



Photo by CAC

3. Temporary Shelter

The team noted the addition of some temporary shelters along the bus routes – thank you. These shelters no doubt vastly improve the workforce and rider experience during inclement weather.

