

# July-August 2023

## Sumner Tunnel Closure

### *Status Report Week 8*

*By Caitlin Allen-Connelly<sup>1</sup>*

(August 21-25, 2023)

On July 5, 2023, at 12:01 AM the [Sumner Tunnel Restoration](#) full summer closure began, and the tunnel will reopen on September 1, 2023. In efforts to minimize the congestion surrounding the Sumner Tunnel, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), in collaboration with the MBTA (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority), is encouraging residents and visitors to [#DitchTheDrive](#) and choose public transportation during the closure. Detailed information on Sumner Tunnel mitigation can be found [here](#).

This update provides a status report covering the eighth work week (Week 8) of the closure (August 21-25, 2023) summarized from data and trends provided by MassDOT and the MBTA. Preliminary data from MassDOT and the MBTA continue to suggest that the #DitchTheDrive campaign is inducing demand for some public transportation alternatives. Some high-level observations are summarized below:

- MassDOT data show a 10% decrease in traffic from June 2023, which could indicate mode shift. Major congestion impacts Logan Airport from 5:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. as well as travel along RT-1A SB (Bell Circle and Ted Williams West Portal) and US-1 SB (Copeland Circle and I-93). During Week 8, major congestion made up an average of 70% and 73% of the morning AM peak congestion on RT-1A SB and US-1 SB respectively.
- Commuter Rail ridership for the Newburyport/Rockport line remains strong with 24% more riders during Week 8 than in June 2023.
- When averaged together, during Week 8, free and reduced parking show an 68% increase in usage from June 2023, with free parking showing an average increase of 105% and reduced parking increasing by 31%.
- Week 8 data for Ferry use show a significant decrease in ridership from 169% increase in Week 7 to a 13% increase in Week 8. Ongoing MBTA difficulties capturing and reporting ridership may be skewing ridership numbers.

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MBTA Ridership Week 8 (August 21-25, 2023) versus Pre-closure (June 2023)			
Line	June 2023 Average (daily)	Week 8 Average (daily)	% Change from June 2023
Blue Line	57,354	53,922	-7%
Orange Line	45,146	39,354	-13%
Newburyport/Rockport Commuter Rail	9,837	12,206	24%
Ferry Service	682	772	13%
Silver Line	11,071	9,758	-12%
Chelsea Buses	19,803	18,403	-7%
Free Parking	287	588	105%
Reduced Parking	1,246	1,631	31%

Source: MassDOT Daily Sumner Tunnel Updates with summarized week average daily ridership versus pre-closure ridership

## Sumner Tunnel Restoration Progress

According to MassDOT's daily Sumner Tunnel updates, at the end of Week 8 (as of August 28, 2023), 95.6% of the programmed work was complete with 3 days remaining until the re-opening. Teams are finalizing grouting between precast arch segments and existing ceiling; installation of various system's conduit and wire; installation of granite caps for East Boston boat walls; installation of fireboards at North End box section ceiling and south wall; and cleaning of walls and roadway. No significant issues were flagged by stakeholders or first responders during the daily 10 AM check-ins.

## Traffic Trends

The Sumner Tunnel closure impacts traffic along three primary routes carrying freight and passenger vehicles: 1) RT-1A SB (Bell Circle and Ted Williams West Portal); 2) US-1 SB (Copeland Circle and I-93); and 3) RT-99 SB (Sweetser Circle and Gilmore Bridge). MassDOT is monitoring traffic along these routes throughout the day and reports on impacts during the morning and afternoon peaks.

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Date	June 2023 Average	# of Riders (Daily)	% Change June 2023
7/31/2023	259,434	238,943	-8%
8/1/2023	259,434	238,943	-8%
8/2/2023	259,434	229,611	-11%
8/3/2023	259,434	223,277	-14%
8/4/2023	259,434	234,286	-10%
<b>Week 8 Average</b>	<b>259,434</b>	<b>233,012</b>	<b>-10%</b>

Source: MassDOT Daily Sumner Tunnel Updates with summarized week average daily ridership versus pre-closure ridership

## Transit Ridership Trends

The MBTA and MassDOT are monitoring ridership trends across modes that are part of the Sumner Tunnel closure mitigation plan: Blue Line, Orange Line, Newburyport/Rockport Commuter Rail, Ferry Service, Silver Line, Chelsea Buses. They are also tracking data on parking at lots that offer reduced or free rates during the Sumner Tunnel closure. The following summarizes data and trends provided by MassDOT and the MBTA. Ongoing MBTA difficulties capturing and reporting ridership may be skewing some ridership numbers.

### a. Blue Line

The MBTA is offering free fares on the Blue Line to induce demand and promote mode shift. During Week 8, Blue Line ridership decreased by 7% as compared to June 2023. Ongoing MBTA difficulties capturing and reporting ridership may be skewing ridership numbers.

### b. Orange Line

The Orange Line intersects with the Blue Line at State Street; therefore, ridership trends are now included in the MassDOT and MBTA daily. During Week 8 of the Sumner Tunnel closure ridership decreased by 13% in ridership compared to June. Ongoing MBTA difficulties capturing and reporting ridership may be skewing ridership numbers.

### c. Newburyport/Rockport Commuter Rail

The MBTA decreased the fare along the entire Newburyport/Rockport Commuter Rail Line from (up to) Zone 8 fare (\$12.25) to the Zone 1A fare (\$2.40) each way. During Week 8 of the Sumner Tunnel closure, average weekday ridership was 12,206, which is on average 24% higher than in June 2023.

### d. Ferry Service

The MBTA has made the East Boston Ferry free, has decreased the rate of the Winthrop Ferry to Zone 1A (\$2.40) and has added a new ferry, the Lynn Ferry, with a Zone 1A fare (\$2.40) for the closure. During Week 8 of the Sumner Tunnel closure, average weekday

ferry ridership was 772, which is on average 13% higher than pre-closure ridership. This number is significantly lower than Week 7. Ongoing MBTA difficulties capturing and reporting ridership may be skewing ridership numbers.

**e. Silver Line**

The MBTA is offering increased service on the SL1 and some free fares on the SL3. During Week 8 of the Sumner Tunnel closure, average weekday ridership of the SL1 and SL3 lines of the Silver Line was 9,758, which is on average 12% lower than pre-closure numbers.

**f. Chelsea Buses**

The MBTA made the 111, 112, 114, 116, 117 bus routes free. During Week 8 of the Sumner Tunnel closure, average weekday ridership was 18,403, which is 7% lower than pre-closure numbers.

**g. Free Parking**

The MBTA made the Gloucester, West Gloucester, Beverly Depot, Hamilton/Wenham, Monserrat, Newburyport, North Beverly, Rowley parking lots free. Week 8 parking usage increased on average 105% compared to weekday averages in June 2023.

**h. Reduced Parking**

The MBTA reduced parking rates to \$2 a day at the following station parking lots along the Blue Line and the Newbury/Rockport Commuter Rail line: Beachmont, Suffolk Downs, Orient Heights, Wonderland, Salem, and Swampscott. The average weekday increase during Week 8 was 31% compared to June 2023.