



Introduction

1.1 Background

The private carrier regional bus network in Massachusetts that is examined in this study consists of the state's intercity and commuter services; some services of both kinds extend outside the state. This network has seen a reduction in both communities served and the number of bus operators providing service over the past 30 years. Operating-subsidy programs offered in the past are no longer available. However, capital subsidies in the form of new vehicles have been provided from time to time, though not on a consistent basis. Capital assistance has also been provided to build park-and-ride facilities through MassDOT and its predecessors, and to build intermodal facilities in urban areas through regional transit authorities (RTAs).

Further reductions in service and attrition of carriers may occur in the future. This study examines changes that have taken place in regional bus service in Massachusetts since 1980 and discusses probable reasons for those changes. It suggests measures and opportunities for the retention of important routes, improvement of existing service, and expansion of the network in the future. What the capital needs would be of an improved and expanded regional bus network, including vehicles, stops, stations, and parking facilities, is also discussed. In addition, the study considers the potential for RTAs to provide feeder service to the intercity bus network, as well as the possibility of using Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) fare media on regional bus services.

1.2 Study Objectives

This study will look at how existing regional bus services that provide service within Massachusetts have changed since 1980, identify the reasons for the changes, and examine how these regional services relate to rail and local bus services. The study will look at both intrastate and interstate bus services. How interstate services have served intrastate trips in both the past and present will

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be discussed, as well as the degree to which they constrain the potential for expanded intrastate services by using existing infrastructure (such as gates at South Station Transportation Center).

Based on these examinations of regional bus services, the study will identify issues that have historically prevented the retention or expansion of important services. It will suggest measures that could be implemented in the future, including possible funding support, to better meet the needs of unserved and underserved markets, foster desirable system growth, and promote improved mobility options in the state.

1.3 Organization of This Report

- Chapter 2 reviews the existing regional bus network, including how it has evolved in recent decades and how those changes relate to changes in RTA bus, commuter rail, and Amtrak services. (For details of coverage, see Chapter 6.)
- Chapter 3 summarizes existing state and federal regulations that apply to regional bus operations.
- Chapter 4 describes the existing operations of Boston terminal facilities, including the South Station bus terminal.
- Chapter 5 describes the bus fleet in use by Massachusetts-based carriers for fixed-route bus service.
- Chapter 6 reviews the existing regional bus and rail network coverage.
- Chapter 7 reviews existing and potential new methods to market regional bus service. This chapter also contains the results of a CTPS survey of regional bus passengers on in-state routes.
- Chapter 8 reviews existing state and federal funding programs that are or could be utilized to support regional bus service. A peer review of other state funding programs is also included.
- Chapter 9 summarizes other services provided by the private carrier bus industry in Massachusetts.
- The appendix includes a detailed summary of route rights presently held by private carriers in Massachusetts.