



Maura Healey, Governor
Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor
Gina Fiandaca, Secretary & CEO
Phillip Eng, General Manager & CEO



September 8, 2023

Michael F. Zullas, Chair
Office of the Select Board
525 Canton Ave.
Milton, MA 02186

Dear Mr. Zullas,

Thank you for your letter of August 10 seeking an explanation for the classification of the Mattapan trolley line as rapid transit under the MBTA's Service Delivery Policy. Your request has made its way to my desk to help explain our reasons for including Mattapan as part of rail transit services.

As you note, the Mattapan line is one of two light rail lines that the MBTA operates as part of its fixed-route service. Fixed-route modes include bus, light rail, heavy rail, commuter rail and ferry in accordance with federal definitions established in 49 USC §5301 et seq.

It is important to note, while the MBTA Communities Act, MGL c.40A, s3A, targeted municipalities in our service area, the authority in that law and the subsequent guidance promulgated, fall into the purview of Department of Housing and Community Development (now the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities - EOHLC). Those guiding documents built upon the MBTA's service definitions, as you noted, which are found in our Service Delivery Policy, under guidance of our Board of Directors. We are not a party to, nor do we have any oversight whatsoever, of EOHLC's implementation of the law in question.

In classifying transit modes, consideration by the MBTA is not given to destination (e.g. whether the mode includes service to downtown Boston), capacity, or service delivery levels. Rather, the designation is a technical one based on characteristics of the vehicle, such as whether it operates on a fixed guideway, uses a designated right-of-way, or uses a fixed catenary system. While quality and frequency of service are certainly an important part of the riders' experience and are areas in which the MBTA is seeking to improve, they are not material to the designation of the Mattapan Line as a light rail.

Sincerely,

Lynsey M. Heffernan

Lynsey M. Heffernan
Assistant General Manager for Policy and Transit Planning
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

Cc: Chair Thomas Glynn, MBTA Board of Directors
Philip Eng, General Manager MBTA
Nicholas Milano, Town Administrator
Senator Walter F. Timilty
Representative William J. Driscoll
Representative Brandy Fluker Oakley