



TOWN OF NORTH READING
Massachusetts

Community Planning

TO: Community Planning Commission
FROM: Danielle McKnight, Town Planner
DATE: August 1, 2023
RE: North Reading's MBTA History

In response to questions raised at our last meeting about the Town's history as a community assessed by the MBTA, I did some research into the incorporation of North Reading into the MBTA system. I found a few interesting resources on it, which I am placing in the Sharefile for you.

Here's a summary of what I have found: a number of private companies operated various bus and trolley lines in the suburbs of Boston, including North Reading, up until 1964. In that year, the Commonwealth abolished the old Metropolitan Transit Authority, which had operated transit in Boston and the inner core cities and towns, and replaced it with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. The new MBTA subsumed the various transit systems that had existed in 64 suburbs, including North Reading. Reviewing the Acts of 1964, this appears to have been an act of the state Legislature and not the individual towns. I read through North Reading's annual report from 1964, including all of the Town Meeting warrants, and I could not find any references the warrants that year to any Town action relating to the new MBTA service.

From 1964 through the 1970's, the MBTA operated the 318 and 137 bus routes in North Reading intermittently, with changes, cuts and experimental new additions to service due to changes in ridership. This included service from Lawrence to the Andover line, and also to the former Everett station at what used to be the northern end of the orange line.

I have included a scanned copy of the acts of 1964 establishing the MBTA system with North Reading as one of the communities (see my yellow highlighted areas for relevant portions. There are also margin notes on this document, but those are not mine). I'm also including a history of MBTA routes from 1964-2023. This paper is very long, but I have also highlighted relevant sections here. See especially pages 171-180.

As to the more recent history of MBTA assessments, I reviewed the Division of Local Services page on Mass.gov to find historic cherry sheets from 1981 on, and so we can view the history of the last 40 years of what we paid to the MBTA. To view any particular year's assessment, open the spreadsheet, and go to the Municipal Assessments or Municipal Charges tab at the bottom of the page (they are referred to both ways interchangeably in different years). Each year has an entry under the column heading "MBTA". North Reading paid \$195,400 in 1981, and through the 1980's the assessment gradually increased from that point,

rising through the mid to high \$200,000's through the 1990's. It dropped in both 2002 and 2003 and was down to \$171,097 in 2004. In 2005 it was \$126,800. In 2006 it was \$82,868.

My understanding is that the decrease was due to efforts on the part of the Town to lower the assessment due to the discontinuation of in-town bus service, but that North Reading continues to be assessed at a lower rate, as an abutter to two towns with commuter rail service. I have not yet located documentation with details about what actions resulted in the lowering of the assessment; however, I will continue this research and provide the information in the Sharefile as I receive it.