

Advocacy Toolkit: The FARE Act H.3547 and S.2261

The following is a toolkit containing useful information on the FARE Act (H.3547 and S.2261). The FARE Act is a bill currently under consideration in the Massachusetts legislature, which would make key forms of public transit free for all statewide primaries and elections. The toolkit includes (1) talking points; (2) sample social media posts; (3) graphics; and (4) useful links.

1. Talking Points

What is the FARE Act?

An Act to Establish Free Access to Ride to Elections in Massachusetts, or the FARE Act, would make key forms of public transit free on election day. Specifically, it would make bus, subway, and trolley service free for all statewide primaries and elections. This would apply to the MBTA, as well as the state's 15 regional transit authorities.

The FARE Act was introduced by Sen. Joe Boncore as S.2261 and by Representatives Frank Moran and Chynah Tyler as H.3547.

Why are we supporting the FARE Act?

The 2020 elections in Massachusetts proved sort of paradoxical: although we saw record voter turnout levels in many communities, turnout was greatly unequal. In the state's suburban, white, high-income communities, like Dover, Sudbury, and Lexington, voter turnout reached 85% or more. But in the state's urban, diverse, lower income communities, voter turnout was more than 30% lower. This was especially apparent in communities like Springfield, Lawrence, and New Bedford, where voter turnout rates just barely surpassed 50%.

To close this voter turnout gap, we must implement reforms that break down financial and political barriers, easing accessibility to the polls. This is most true for our Black and brown, low-income, and immigrant communities, who primarily live in cities and endure limited access to the polls. In Massachusetts, for example, approximately 9% of white households did not own a car as of 2017. But for Black households, that rate was 25%. For Hispanic households, it was

27%. Nationwide, 60% of those that depend on public transit are people of color. By easing access to public transit on election day, we would directly benefit underserved communities.

Who could ride for free on election day?

Anyone! The MBTA, as well as the state's 15 regional transit authorities would all provide free bus, subway, and trolley access all day on election day.

Together, the MBTA and regional transit authorities serve virtually the entire state. The Worcester Regional Transit Authority, for example, serves Worcester and the surrounding communities in Central Mass. The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority, meanwhile, serves Springfield and surrounding Western Mass communities.

Riders do not need to present any form of ID or proof of intent to vote. Instead, they would simply board, ride, and vote. This is the norm across the country.

Is this policy in place anywhere else?

Yes! Across the country, dozens of communities, including San Diego, Dallas, and Kansas City provide free public transit on election day.

By far, the largest community to do so is Los Angeles County, which is home to 10 million residents and 5 million voters. In the 2018 midterm elections, LA County tested this program, making subway, bus, and bikeshare services free all day. The county also placed personnel at key locations to point individuals toward their polling place, and answer any questions they may have had. The county also posted relevant materials, like flyers and directions, near public transit locations to further assist voters.

After the election, LA County found that bus and subway ridership increased by more than 5% on election day. Costs also proved minimal, with the city spending only about \$600,000. Due to this success, LA County made bus and subway services free for all statewide primary and general elections.

Wouldn't this policy prove too expensive?

No! The FARE Act would only apply to statewide primaries and elections. That means two days every two years. The FARE Act would only apply to bus, subway, and trolley services. Commuter

Rail services would not be fare free, saving the MBTA money. Even though regional transit funding is down due to decreased ridership amid the pandemic, the pandemic will subside and ridership will return. By the time our next major statewide primary rolls around in 2022, the pandemic will very likely be behind us.

2. Sample Social Media Posts

- The #FAREAct would make public transit FREE on #ElectionDay, breaking down barriers and easing access to the polls. Tell your state legislators to support it (H.3547 and S.2261) NOW! #mapoli
- In the 2020 General Election, barely 50% of voters turned out in cities like Springfield, Lawrence, and New Bedford. One step the state can take to fix this is pass the #FAREAct (H.3547 and S.2261), which would make public transit FREE on #ElectionDay. #mapoli
- Black and brown, low-income, and immigrant communities have faced far too many barriers to voting for far too long. Passing the #FAREAct, which would make public transit FREE on #ElectionDay, would help us confront this inequity. #mapoli
- Dozens of communities, like LA, Dallas, and Kansas City, make public transit free on #ElectionDay. It's time for MA to join that list. Tell your state legislators to support the #FAREAct now! #mapoli
- Breaking down financial and racial barriers is critical to ensuring that everyone can have their voice heard. By implementing the #FAREAct, which would make public transit FREE on #ElectionDay, we move one step closer to breaking down these barriers. #mapoli
- Thank you to Sen. @joeboncore, @repfrankmoran, and @repchynahtyler for introducing the #FAREAct, which would make public transit FREE on #ElectionDay. Your work is key to creating a more just, equitable democracy here in MA. #mapoli
- States like Georgia are moving right now to cripple proven reforms like #VoteByMail and suppress voters. MA must prove its dedication to democracy. How? Pass the #FAREAct, which would make public transit FREE on #ElectionDay. #mapoli

3. Graphics

ONE: [Why support the FARE Act?](#)

Why support the #FAREAct? It would...

1. Boost voter turnout
2. Increase accessibility
3. Serve the entire state



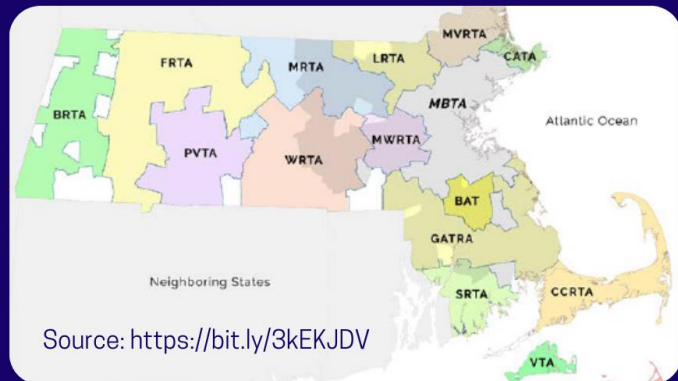
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TWO: [Where would the FARE Act apply?](#)

Where would the #FAREAct apply?

State-wide!

Each of the state's regional transit authorities would offer free transit on election day



Source: <https://bit.ly/3kEKJDV>

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THREE: [Need a ride to the polls?](#)

Need a ride to the polls? The #FAREAct has you covered!

FREE public transit on election day.



H.3547 and S.2261



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FOUR: [Where is public transit free on election day?](#)

Where is public transit free on Election Day?



1) Los Angeles County, CA

4) Kansas City, MO

2) Harris County, TX

5) New Orleans, LA

3) Austin, TX

6) Charlotte, NC



And more! The #FAREAct would add MA to this list.

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4. Useful Links

- (a) [Democracy Briefing: The FARE Act](#)
- (b) [MassVOTE Webpage: The FARE Act - details the bill, and provides a full list of supporters](#)
- (c) [Press Release: Announcing the FARE Act](#)
- (d) [In the News: The Eagle-Tribune Endorses the FARE Act!](#)
- (e) [In the News: MA lawmakers will consider making public transit free on election day](#)
- (f) [The FARE Act: House Version](#)
- (g) [The FARE Act: Senate Version](#)
- (h) [Find your state legislators, and tell them to support the FARE Act \(H.3547 and S.2261\)](#)