

MBTA Advisory Board

Tough Choices

The Tough Choice lies between two options to close the MBTA's budget gap: a fare-only approach and a combination of raised fares and service cuts.

This is a survey on the community's response.



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The **MBTA** Advisory Board

Since the Governor's plan for finance transportation based on *The Way Forward: A 21st-Century Transportation Plan* has not yet passed, and the *Joint Ways and Means Bill* is still being debated and may be vetoed outright, the MBTA may have to close its \$120 million budget gap on its own. The MBTA Advisory Board asked what happens if the legislation doesn't help the MBTA? That if you were the MBTA, what option would you choose? The two options were a fare-only approach and a combination between fare raises and service cuts.

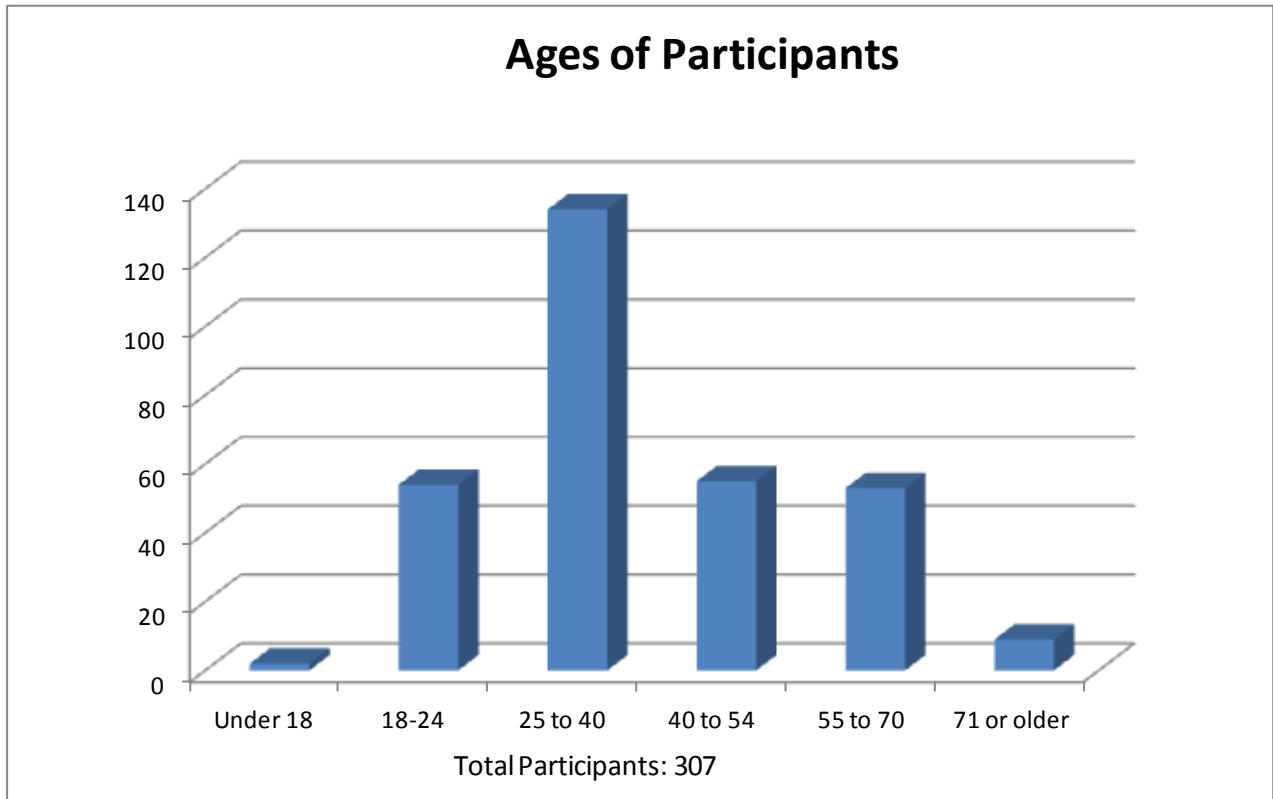
The MBTA Advisory Board asked what happens if the legislation doesn't help the MBTA?

The survey had a total of three hundred and seven participants. Participants were asked four questions to keep the survey concise and to get an informal opinion from a variety of individuals. Space was left at the end of the survey to offer their thoughts and opinions.

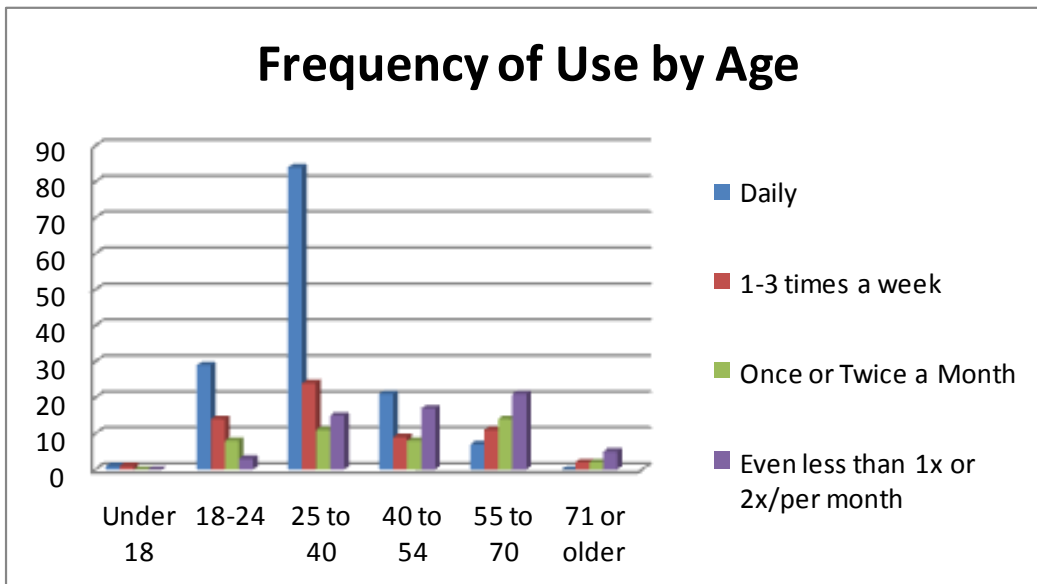
Participants were told that last year the MBTA balanced its budget with a fare increase, service cuts, and a bailout from the state budget. Everyone involved in the process acknowledged that it was a stop-gap solution and that action would be needed to fix the MBTA's finances for this year and beyond. In the absence of a solution the MBTA's budget shortfall for this year is around \$120 million. Without Legislative action and support the MBTA (like all state agencies) must balance its budget. The remaining choices are through fare increases, service cuts or both again this year.

The results of the survey are below.

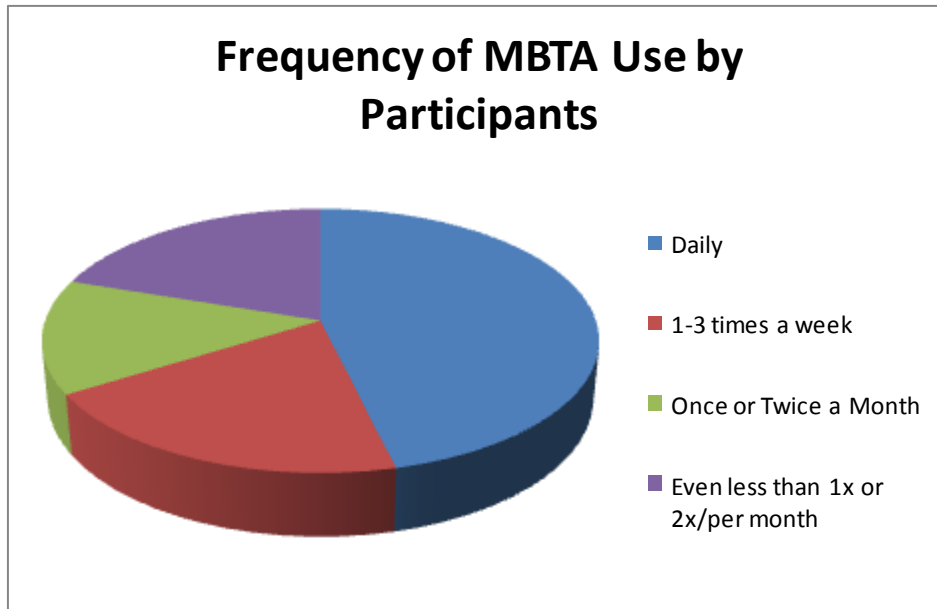
Age



The biggest group was 25-40 year-olds and they comprised 44% of total participants. They were also the largest percentage of daily MBTA users (41%).

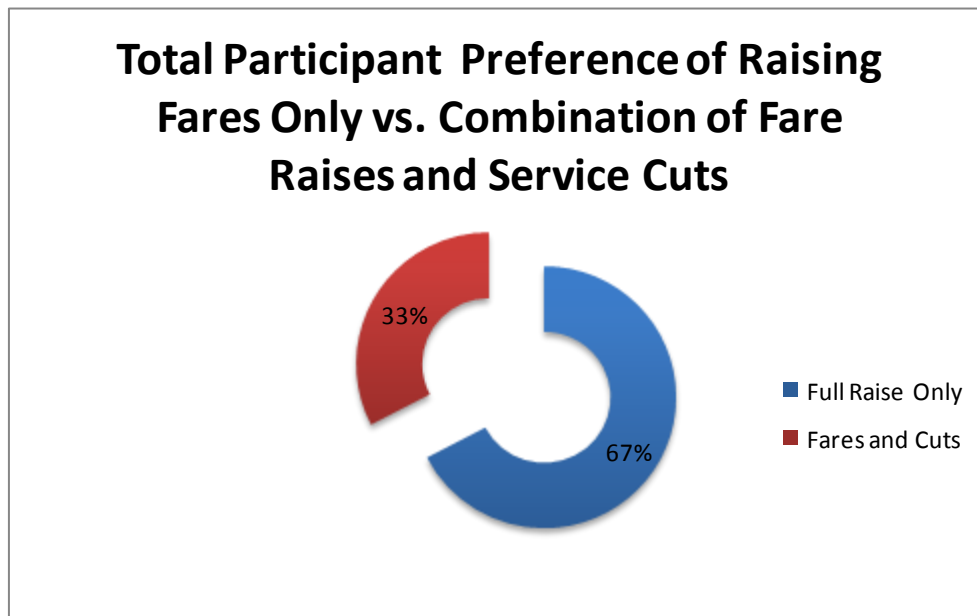


Frequency of Use



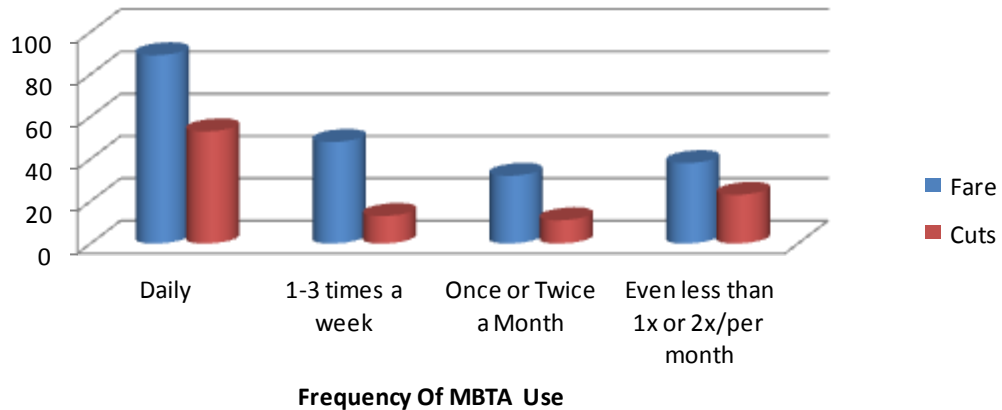
46% of all participants use MBTA service daily, making it an essential part of their day.

Fare or Cuts



Most of the participants favored a full fare approach to the budget gap with no service cuts.

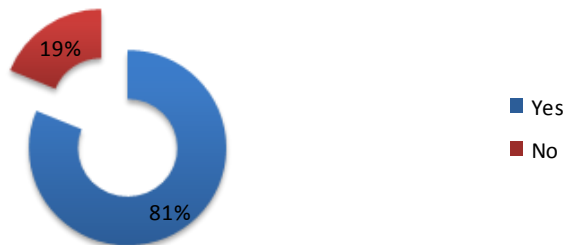
Preference of Raising Fares Only vs. Combination of Fare Raises and Service Cuts Based On Frequency of Use



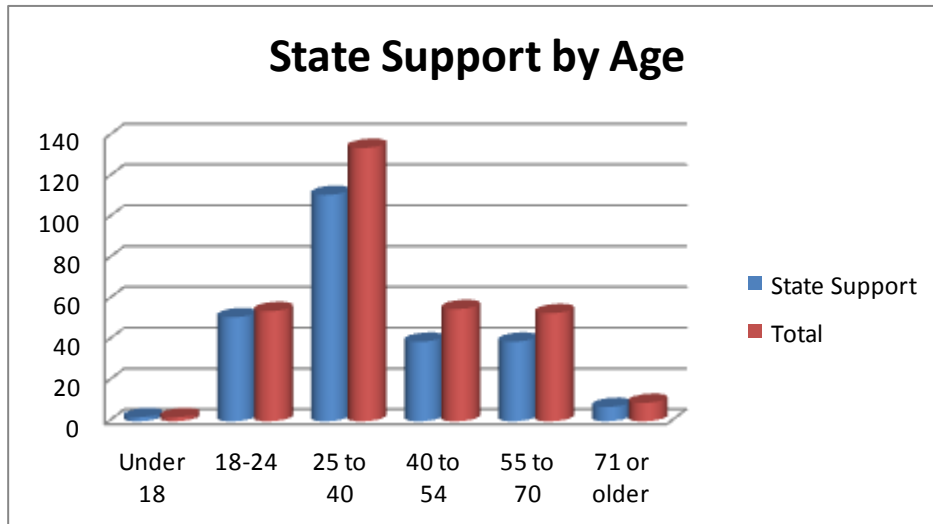
Even when broken down by frequency of MBTA use, all categories preferred not to have any cuts in service. The greater part of daily users supported an increase in fares.

State Support

Should the state help support the MBTA by creating a significant and sustainable financial solution?



The majority of total participants believe that the state has an obligation to create a more viable public transportation system.



The chart above shows the amount of state support broken up by age. The red bars represent the total number of participants in that age group.

Conclusion

Raising fares two years in a row can only have a negative impact on ridership, yet most respondents preferred that to service cuts. People have made significant choices regarding where they work and where they live based on the transportation choices available to them. Service cuts undermine those choices. While the MBTA Advisory Board prefers neither option, and has advocated for years on reforming the revenue streams of the MBTA to actually support the organizational needs of the system, we must recognize that a significant change in service hours of routes will disenfranchise thousands of people.

With the majority of our survey preferring an all-fare approach to closing the gap, it is imperative for the MBTA to begin the process for increasing fares. This process can take three months and involves a public commentary period. We hope that this process will not be necessary but the MBTA Advisory Board believes that it is better to start and to drop the fare-raise before it can be implemented rather than start this process in three months. If the MBTA delays on beginning fare-raise procedures, the fare increase must be that much larger.