INVEST NOW

A NEWSLETTER FOR RIDERS AND WORKERS

April 2017

WHO WE ARE:

INVEST NOW is dedicated to ensuring investments in Massachusetts public transit. INVEST NOW includes riders, workers, community groups, non-profit organizations, businesses, elected leaders and municipalities that support public transit.

WHAT WE STAND FOR:

Massachusetts workers and riders agree that the time to invest in public transit is now. The MBTA should continue to make improvements to its current operations, but that cannot distract from the greater need to invest in public transit for riders, workers, and our communities.

The long term costs of sweeping privatization are often higher than expected – as has been demonstrated in cities across the nation as well as internationally. Let's keep public transportation public – and invest in a stronger future for riders, workers, and the Massachusetts economy.

CONTACT US

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Despite repeated outsourcing failures, MBTA eyes privatization of core services

The **MBTA**, the right wing **Pioneer Institute**, and a cadre of lobbyists are continuing their expensive and controversial push to outsource and privatize our public transit. It's time to ask what the outcomes have been of such efforts so far in the **Bay State**.

The answer is that recent attempts to outsource MBTA services have been disastrous and costly. For-profit **Keolis** running the commuter rail system has been an expensive, scandalous nightmare. Massive protests and filthy platforms finally forced the administration to yield on its failed janitorial outsourcing gambit. And now, the **Maine Military Authority** has drastically underbid and delayed a key bus repair contract outsourced to them for work that could have been done in **Massachusetts**.

The privatizers have whiffed on three big pitches. Now, they're spending taxpayer dollars campaigning for a fourth, fifth, and sixth crack at it. What happened to three strikes and you're out? The results show it's time to bench the privatization shills.

In an effort to whitewash their failures, the privatizers recently spent $1 million in taxpayer funds on a "report" from Florida-based **TransPro** and the notorious outsourcing advocates at **McKinsey & Company**. The report leans heavily on unsubstantiated numbers. It calls for outsourcing and downgrading transit jobs that provide a key pathway to the middle class for working parents, women, and people of color.

(cont'd.)

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Both sides of the aisle have recognized that outsourcing core services with Keolis was a catastrophe, so much so that the MBTA did not renew Keolis' contract. And the **FMCB** has already moved to replace **S.J. Services**, who failed to provide adequate resources to employees under clearly unsustainable working conditions.

The privatizers and their hired guns are pushing an ideological agenda that says outsourcing always works out better, even though the evidence shows that's just not the case. It's bad policy that jeopardizes the retention of vital skills and expertise within the MBTA workforce.

As the **Boston Globe** reported, it was the ingenuity and hard work of the union machinists that has made the biggest difference in recent poor weather operations. The privatizers want to steal and denigrate the jobs of the union mechanics who invented the very machines that have saved the MBTA (so far) from experiencing another "Snowpocalyspe."

Meanwhile, the privatizers have tried to take credit for the improved MBTA performance during recent snowstorms. The opposite is true. The dedication, sweat, and brains of frontline union mechanics have made the difference.

The privatizers have also tried to rationalize outsourcing bus maintenance by citing poor on-time performance. First off, it's important to differentiate "on-time service" problems from maintenance problems. On-time service is driven by adequate operator staffing and service hours—unless buses are not making it to riders because they're breaking down.

Do buses break down? Yes. That's because the MBTA has the oldest bus fleet in the country among large city systems. Even so, public data clearly shows that breakdowns are not the problem causing sporadic MBTA bus service. In fact, when it comes to the quality and reliability of work being done in the bus maintenance division, data clearly shows that the MBTA far outperforms other transit agencies on key vehicle maintenance benchmarks.

The most important of these measures is "Mean Miles Between Breakdowns"—the average miles a bus will travel before it's likely to break down. As presented in the Authority's own Bus Maintenance Efficiency Study, MBTA buses average 12,946 miles between breakdowns. That's the best record in the country, despite an aged fleet. Compare that to **New York** where buses were likely to breakdown after only 5,696 miles, or to **Chicago**, where breakdowns occur after an average of 3,008 miles.

The second-place system isn't even close—**New Jersey** Transit with an average of 6,821 miles, a whopping 48 percent below the work of MBTA union members. Despite a less standardized and aging fleet, the MBTA's maintenance division keeps buses running at a rate that sets the national standard.

When reliability is what riders want most, why would Gov. **Charlie Baker** and MBTA General Manager **Brian Shortsleeve** gamble on outsourcing or pushing out the mechanics who make these result possible? They promised a business-like approach, but instead they are favoring an ideological approach driven by the same kind of right-wing, libertarian think tanks favored and often funded by the **Koch brothers**.

In a recent panel on privatization held at **Harvard**, **Northeastern University** professor **Neenah Estrella** painted the picture clearly, "Privatization can only reduce costs to government by limiting access to the service, lowering the quality of the service, or impoverishing the workers. Privatization removes any real public accountability for the provision of those services."

What's being proposed by Transpro and McKinsey in their $1 million propaganda report is an effort to keep the workforce, but to just pay them less. These calls to outsource middle-class jobs at the MBTA stands in stark contrast to a study released last year by **The Brookings Institution** which found that Boston already has the greatest income inequality of any large city in the **United States**.

Just last year, the **Center for an Urban Future** released a study that highlighted how the booming transit sector in New York has led to more middle-class jobs. They argue that transportation jobs can be "catalytic" for low-income populations to find more upward mobility, since they are one of the few job sectors that pay good wages and are accessible without a college degree.

Outsourcing does not have the support of most American voters either. In a national survey commissioned by the **National Employment Law Project**, voters see "contracting out" as serious problem for workers and for our economy. Five to one voters saw the increase in contracting out work that has happened over the past 10 years as a "bad change."

Voters, riders, and workers agree that it's time to push back on the privatization fairy tales, and to invest directly in public transportation. It's an approach that doesn't fit the philosophy of the administration's hired gun consultants, but it's what's right for Massachusetts.

OP-ED originally published in Dig Boston, 3/21/17

By Craig Hughes, Special Representative with IAM Local 264, which includes mechanics, machinists, fuelers, and other frontline MBTA bus maintenance and repair workers. Craig has twenty years of professional experience repairing and maintaining MBTA buses.

Statement On MBTA Privatization From Lee Matsueda of the T Riders Union And Invest Now Coalition

In response to the announcement of a rally by MBTA mechanics on Monday and in anticipation of the FMCB's discussion of FY18 budgeting, Lee Matsueda released the following statement on behalf of the Invest Now coalition and the T Riders Union.

"Gambling with privatization is no substitute for a real conversation about making statewide investments in strong, equitable, environmentally conscious transportation. Riders, workers, and many businesses agree that Massachusetts should be investing in public transit to expand access and to grow our economy.

In Massachusetts and beyond, privatization of public transit has carried hidden and often disastrous consequences for riders, workers, and taxpayers. We've already seen those negative privatization consequences with Keolis and the commuter rail. Massachusetts residents cannot trust these overseas and out-of-state companies to do anything except maximize their profits. After all of the underbidding, waived fines, and failed privatization efforts, the MBTA should know there will be community opposition to any further privatization of core services.

The MBTA cannot afford more backdoor cuts to services and its workforce through unreliable, underbid contracts that cede control of core services to a for-profit company. The FMCB should maintain its operations budget so it can provide the services that riders need and deserve. The FMCB should also reject efforts to privatize and destabilize the core MBTA service of maintaining public busses."

– Lee Matsueda on behalf of the T Riders Union and the INVEST NOW Coalition

Lee Matsueda is the political director of Roxbury-based Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE) and spokesperson for the T Riders Union program at ACE.

MBTA Mechanics And Allies Rally To Protect Taxpayers, Workers, Riders From Further Transit Privatization

A large crowd descended on MBTA headquarters in downtown Boston today as transit mechanics rallied with allies to defend taxpayers, workers, and riders against the latest MBTA privatization scheme. The MBTA mechanics were joined by community allies and elected leaders, including State Senator Marc Pacheco and State Representatives Mike Connolly and Michelle DuBois (each of whom spoke), and multiple rider coalitions. All in attendance were united in opposing new for-profit privatization aimed at outsourcing core MBTA bus maintenance services.

Since the MBTA allowed for-profit Keolis to take control of public commuter rail services, the results for riders and taxpayers have been disastrous. Millions have been spent to bail out the for-profit company after they underbid their contract. Meanwhile, other key outsourcing contracts including with S.J. Services, ABM Industries, and the Maine Military Authority have also been dramatically underbid. Results of the underbidding have included major repair delays to key MBTA fleet vehicles and attempts by janitorial contractors to rip health insurance coverage away from workers.

WE MUST INVEST NOW TO ACHIEVE:

MODERN, RELIABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION that supports Boston's dynamic economy, growing workforce, and role as a world-class city.

SAFE TRANSPORTATION that riders and our communities can trust every time they step aboard without exceptions.

EQUITABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ACCESS to ensure that service expansions bring opportunity and economic development to under-served communties.

QUALITY JOBS that can sustain a family, contribute to our local economy, and help reduce the extreme levels of income inequality in our state.

DEVELOPMENT of MBTA land and property that benefit our communities, not just developers, by creating good jobs and affordable housing.

TRANSPARENCY for MBTA bidding and contracting, including restored taxpayer and worker protections under the Pacheco law to prevent wasteful privatization schemes and insider dealing.

TAKE ACTION

1. CONTACT THE FISCAL & MANAGEMENT CONTROL BOARD

Visit **investnowma.org/take-action/#letter** to send a letter to the MBTA Fiscal and Management Control Board, who are considering privatizing core services telling them you support investing in public transit, not private companies.

2. SHARE A TESTIMONIAL

Visit **investnowma.org/take-action/#story** to share your story, how public transit impacts your life and why you support investing in public transit.

3. ENDORSE US!

If you are part of a faith-based, business, or civic group that would like to become an endorsing partner, visit **investnowma.org/take-action/#endorse**

Visit **InvestNowMA.org** to learn more!