



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late September 2023, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) announced that it would eliminate a set of “express” regional rail trains that ran to and from Worcester’s Union Station. Then, on April 27, 2024, the MBTA announced it would reintroduce an express train from Worcester to South Station by May 20, 2024. Instead of leaving at 6:30 AM, this new train departed at 7:40 AM (now 7:35) and ran express between Worcester and Framingham and then to Lansdowne. It arrives at South Station at 8:45 AM. There is no equivalent train returning to Worcester in the afternoon.

The Worcester/Framingham line is one of the most popular among the MBTA’s 13 regional rail lines. This report looks at ridership data since 2020 to piece together an understanding of **who** is riding the line, **when**, and **where** they might be coming from.

Although the COVID pandemic years **led to a precipitous drop-off in users of the regional rail, ridership has largely recovered across the entire system** (pages 4-5), and much of this recovery **has been driven by weekend ridership** (pages 6-7). More frequent trains, and especially a concerted switch to a more **regular clockface schedule** (page 6), has led weekend ridership to a much larger percentage of total ridership.

On the Worcester Line, total and average monthly weekday ridership has been steadily increasing since June 2020, with **nearly every month since July 2021 having a**

**larger number of riders than the same month the year before** (page 8). **Weekend ridership as a percentage of total ridership on the line has often been higher than the Providence/Stoughton Line** (the number one line for ridership) and the system as a whole (page 9).

Reliability, measured as Worcester Line trains arriving at their final destination within five minutes of their scheduled time, has seen improvements since before the pandemic (pages 10 and 11). **Between June 2020 and December 2024, only 16 months have had below 90% reliability, and four below 85%. Between January 2016 and January 2020, 43 were below 90%, of which 23 were below 85%.**

Fall 2024 station boarding data found that nearly **16% of inbound weekday passengers boarded at Worcester Union Station, despite only seeing 21 of 27 trains** during the day; only Framingham and Boston Landing came close. **About 46% of inbound riders boarded at Worcester, Grafton, Westborough, Southborough, Ashland, or Framingham.** Twelve other stops made up the rest of the onboardings (pages 12-15).

Inbound Stop	Onboardings	Pct of Total
Worcester	1139	15.55%
Grafton	337	4.60%
Westborough	370	5.05%
Southborough	404	5.52%
Ashland	380	5.19%
Framingham	780	10.65%
West Natick	503	6.87%
Natick Center	368	5.02%
Wellesley Square	431	5.88%
Wellesley Hills	272	3.71%
Wellesley Farms	239	3.26%
Auburndale	153	2.09%
West Newton	213	2.91%
Newtonville	357	4.87%
Boston Landing	870	11.88%
Lansdowne	337	4.60%
Back Bay	172	2.35%

According to the 2023 MBTA passenger survey (15-16), about **29% of Worcester/Framingham Line riders take the train five days a week, and 56.5% of riders make less than 80% of the Area Median Income** (across the entire Worcester Line area).

Finally, between 2018 and 2022, the **number of working residents living within a half-mile of Worcester’s Union Station has grown by 37%** (pages 17-20). See the appendix for a list of commonly used terms in this report.

**Weekend Ridership as a Pct of Total Ridership, July 2021 through December 2024**

