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T proposes consolidating 1 in 5 stops on 2nd-busiest bus line, Route 39

Posted by Matt Rocheleau June 14, 2012 01:33 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

One in every five stops along the MBTA's second-busiest bus route – the 39 – would be consolidated under a proposal the transit agency unveiled this week.

Aiming to provide faster, safer and better overall service along the route, the T's plan also calls for speeding up boarding, increasing on-time reliability, relocating some stops, improving traffic signals and markings, adding sidewalk curb extensions, shelters, benches and waste baskets and upgrading accessibility for seniors and people with disabilities.

The stimulus-funded proposal, presented at a final design meeting Tuesday evening, is the result of a study process that began four years ago in an effort to find ways to improve the bus route.

The project would include some construction that the T hopes to start this fall and finish by next spring, according to a copy of the presentation made this

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and finish by next spring, according to a copy of the presentation made this week. Service will run during the work, but some stops and sidewalks may be closed temporarily along the path of Route 39.

The dog-leg bus route runs for more than five miles between Forest Hills and the Back Bay passing through the cores of Jamaica Plain, Mission Hill and Fenway along the way.

The 39 ventures up and down Centre and South streets, South Huntington and Huntington avenues and along a stretch of Boylston Street, wrapping around Copley Square. The route is boarded more than 14,000 times per day, officials said.

The T plans to consolidate 20 percent of the route's stops and adjust the location of nine stops. The proposal calls for installing 11 benches, 29 trash cans, new pavement markings at 31 stops and up to 10 new bus shelters along the route.

The transit agency proposes taking several steps to speed up time it takes for passengers to get on and off the routes buses, including by doing more to keep stops clear of illegally parked vehicles and other obstructions.

Officials also hope to ensure all stops are the required length of at least 60 feet so buses can pull all the way to the curb. The T says currently about half of the stops along the route are less than 60 feet long. Sidewalks will also be extended further into the street in some areas as a way to allow buses to snugly reach the curb's edge.

To help improve the reliability of the 39's schedule, the MBTA plans to better monitor and control buses to prevent bus "bunching" and overcrowding.

The proposal to amend aspects of the route is part of a larger initiative, funded through a \$10-million federal stimulus fund grant, to improve 15 "key" T bus routes.

The T plans to next focus on a similar study aimed at improving service on the Back Bay and downtown portion of Route 39.

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