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MBTA debuts Charlie mascot to promote fare pass system, new store

Posted by Matt Rocheleau August 21, 2012 08:19 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

The mythical man pictured on the front of the MBTA's fare passes is coming life.



The public transit system will debut its official mascot, Charlie, at sites around Boston on Wednesday.

Charlie's costume, which will be worn by a T employee, is paid for through a \$5,000 sponsorship by Mass Bay Credit Union,

spokesman Joe Pesaturo said.

The fictional character is the namesake for the T's CharlieCard electronic fare collection system. Charlie was invented in a 1949 folk song called "M.T.A." that

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was crafted by a Progressive Party candidate in Boston's mayoral election campaign that year.



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On Wednesday, Charlie will visit a host of famous Boston landmarks to thank commuters and visitors and to promote the newly-opened [CharlieCard Store](#) inside Downtown Crossing Station.

The mascot will also encourage the use of the T's plastic CharlieCard pass, which is cheaper for riders to use than cash.

"By making Charlie one of the most ubiquitous figures in Greater Boston, more and more people will experience the benefits of using a CharlieCard," MBTA General Manager Jonathan Davis said in a statement. "In addition to making public transportation easy to use, the CharlieCard offers customers the lowest bus and subway fares."

The Charlie mascot plans to debut at the steps to the State House on

The candidate, Walter A. O'Brien Jr., used the song to show his opposition to a recent fare increase that charged riders of the city's subway system, then called the Metropolitan Transit Authority, an extra nickel to exit trains at above ground stops.

The song's lyrics tell the tale of Charlie, a man destined to ride Boston's subway system for the rest of his life because he cannot afford to pay that extra exit fee.

O'Brien came last in the five-candidate mayoral race, but the song lived on. A decade later, it was popularized by the Kingston Trio, reaching No. 15 on the Billboard chart.

In 2004, the T announced that it planned to start rolling out a new fare pass system. The face of those passes, which were first issued in 2006, was Charlie.



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Wednesday morning followed by appearances at the Swan Boats and Fenway Park.

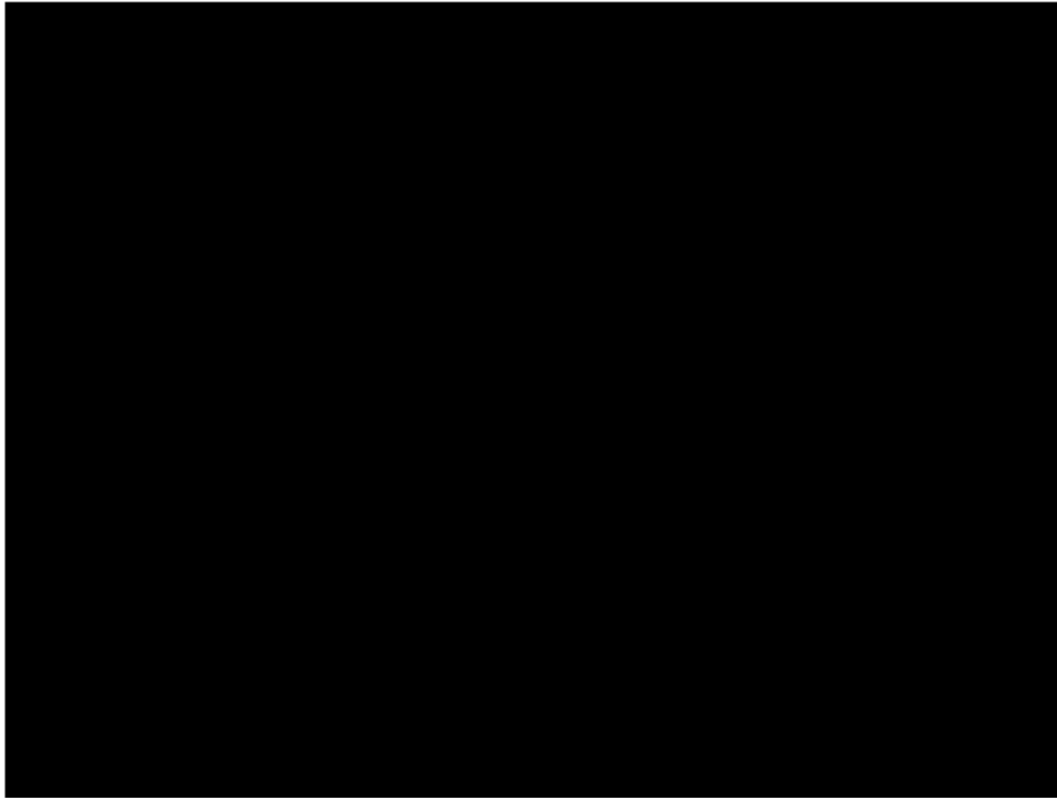
“We’ve always supported public transportation in the city and the hard working people of the MBTA,” [Mass Bay Credit Union](#) CEO John Thomas said in a statement. “We’re happy to help bring Charlie back to Boston to thank those who use the T. We think that Charlie will be a great asset to the transportation system.”

Charlie is also scheduled to ride the Green Line Wednesday afternoon. It remains to be seen whether anyone will be able to, as the song about him implores, “Get poor Charlie off that M[B]TA.”

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