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MBTA challenges public to design better maps of its transit system; but T can't afford to update any maps

Posted by Matt Rocheleau April 10, 2013 03:31 PM

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T MASSACHUSETTS BAY
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
RAPID TRANSIT/
KEY BUS ROUTES MAP



(MBTA)

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

The MBTA launched a contest this week challenging the public to design better maps of the transit system. But, the T says it has no plans to update any maps it posts around stations, buses, trains or boats because the debt-plagued agency cannot afford to.

“Replacing all of the maps in the MBTA system would represent a significant expense and not one the MBTA is contemplating at this time,” said an e-mail Wednesday from Kelly Smith, a spokeswoman for the state transportation department. “The T does not have any current plans to redesign the map.”

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“However, there have been many independent attempts to redesign the map over the years, and the MBTA is interested in providing an ‘official’ forum for these designers and cartographers to exhibit their ideas,” she added.

“While it is possible that contest entries may include new elements or strategies for visually portraying the system that the MBTA may consider incorporating into official maps in the future, the intent of the contest is first and foremost to provide an opportunity for those in the mapping and design communities in Boston to share their ideas,” Smith said.

The [contest](#), dubbed “New Perspectives,” has two categories – an open tier and a classic tier, according to contest rules posted on the T’s website.

The open tier category “encourages the broadest range of creativity” under the following guidelines: the entry can be of any map of the T system or an aspect of the system “as inclusive as the entire system map, or as limited as one bus line;” and inactive, interactive or web-based maps can be submitted.

The classic tier category aims to improve the existing “spider” map and requires that maps: are of the T’s full rapid transit system, including at least the Red, Orange, Blue, Green and Silver lines; conform to the T’s [current map standards](#); and are printable.

The [existing “spider” map](#) focuses primarily on Boston and its immediate suburbs, showing all of the T’s subway stops, some of its key bus routes and parts of the commuter rail and ferry lines.

A committee of “transportation and cartography experts” will judge the entries based on “creativity, aesthetic quality, readability, and informative quality” and then select a winner in each category along with as many as five honorable mentions, according to the contest rules.

Winning entries will be showcased on the T’s website, displayed at the State Transportation Building at 10 Park Plaza and will be announced publicly at an MBTA-hosted event during National Transportation Week, which runs from May 12 to 18.

Entries are free to submit, the contest rules say. There is no limit on the number of entries.

Submissions are due by 5 pm on April 30. Winners will be notified by e-mail in early May.

All submissions become sole property of the T and can be reused or reproduced in any way, according to the contest rules. Entries will not be returned.

Entries should be e-mailed to DOT.GISServices@dot.state.ma.us.

For more information about the contest, including additional entry requirements, [click here](#).

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