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MBTA to bring countdown clock system to bus stations

Posted by Matt Rocheleau February 6, 2014 11:19 AM

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(MBTA)

By Matt Rocheleau, Boston.com Staff

The MBTA plans to soon install countdown clocks at a number of bus stations throughout its system to notify riders when the next bus on each route will leave that station, the agency announced today.

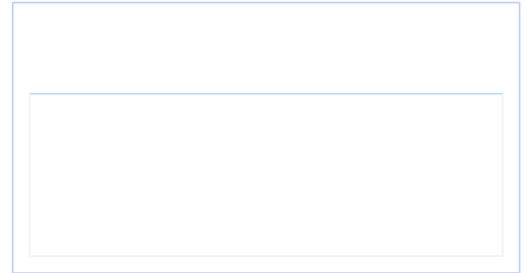
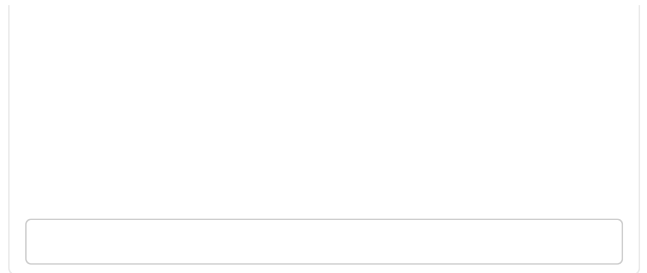
The bus way at Forest Hills Station in Jamaica Plain will be the first bus location to get the electronic message boards, according to T spokeswoman Kelly Smith.

Signs are also planned in bus ways at Dudley Square and Ruggles stations, she said. Eight other stations have been "tentatively" chosen to receive the signs: Harvard Square; Haymarket, Ashmont; Kenmore; Maverick, Wonderland, Jackson Square, and Central Square.

The signs should be operational by summer, Smith said.

The signs, using real-time bus tracking data, will provide information about when each route serving that station is next expected to depart. The signs will feature both visual and audio messages.

The project is funded through federal stimulus money, and each sign costs about \$50,000, a price tag that includes the display, hardware, software, installation,



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maintenance and a push-button activated sound system so that people with visual impairments can access the information on the sign, she said.

Most stations will have one sign each. Dudley, because of its size, will have two, she said.

"I've often said our buses are the work horses of our system, serving more than 375,000 people on a typical weekday," T general manager Beverly Scott said in a statement.

"The countdown signs at our busiest bus stops will provide customers with information that will make their public transit experience easier and more convenient."

Last week, the T completed an 18-month-long project to activate a total of 314 countdown clocks at all 53 subway stations on the Red, Orange and Blue lines, which officials said made the T one of the first transit agencies in the country to equip all heavy rail stations with train-arrival information.

Officials said the signs have been **popular and well-received** by riders, and since they were introduced in the **summer of 2012** the agency said it has made regular improvements based on rider feedback, including making the signs more accurate and easier to see.

The T said it expects to introduce the countdown clock system to the Green Line by the end of this year. The light rail line is undergoing work to upgrade its less-sophisticated train tracking system with GPS and sensor technology to allow for countdown clock capability.

The agency **has also said** technology upgrades on the Green Line will allow smartphone-carrying riders to be able to track in real-time the whereabouts and expected arrival of the line's trains by 2015.

Trains on the Red, Orange and Blue have been tracked by mobile applications since the fall of 2010, when the agency made real-time train location data on those lines available to private software developers, who have created numerous smartphone applications. The T made real-time data on bus locations available to software developers in fall of 2009.

E-mail Matt Rocheleau at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com.

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(MBTA)

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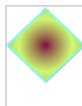
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JakeLNHide 02/06/14 12:35 PM

Make sure that there are enough digits to count days.

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HeavyJohnson 02/06/14 12:17 PM

Great idea, but how in the name of everything holy does a little LCD sign with Wifi and some basic software cost \$50,000?

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phonyuser 02/06/14 03:12 PM

They might want to concentrate on getting the trains and buses to be one time, rather than posting what will be meaningless statistics on the next fantasy driven departure.

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goldstar2 02/06/14 01:15 PM

Great idea, but the typical bus tracker app is still fairly accurate, even for depart times at various stations. The ability to track bus times and locations has been life changing.

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AbstractImp 02/07/14 05:52 AM

We have notices that "an MBTA Minute" *is much longer on the Blue Line...*

And on any line, "Now Arriving" can go on and on, extending the meaning of "now"...

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