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MBTA urged to reconsider scheduled cuts to station janitors

By Matt Rocheleau

Boston.com Staff

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Workers who clean MBTA stations are urging the T to reconsider a cost-saving plan that calls for reducing the number of subcontracted

janitors by nearly one-third and cutting about one quarter of the total hours they spend cleaning.

The janitors say the proposed cuts coupled with the public transit system's newly-implemented late-night weekend service will lead to dirtier stations and overtaxed cleaning staff.

"If implemented, this is going to be a mess for the MBTA," said Eugenio H. Villasante, a spokesman for 32BJ Service Employees International Union District 615, the union that represents the T's contracted cleaners. "There's already a lot of work for the workers who are cleaning. They're already overworked."



But T officials said that riders should not expect to see stations become dirtier.

The T has deals with two contractors, ABM Industries Inc. and S.J. Services Inc., to clean its stations, and those companies “have pledged that they can provide equal or better service at reduced staffing levels,” MBTA spokesman Joe Pesaturo said.

And, the transit agency “reserves the right to require that contractors make changes to their staffing schedules or cleaning plans if the MBTA, in its sole discretion, determines that such changes are necessary to achieve

performance standards at no additional cost to the T.”

The two cleaning companies began new contracts [last fall](#). Both contracts – three-year deals with two one-year options – allow the cleaning companies to reduce staffing after the first anniversary of the agreements.

The T said the contracts, which cost the agency a combined \$61.8 million, would allow it to save an estimated \$15.1 million over five years, assuming the two option years are exercised.

But, Villasante said the deals also mean that at least 90 of the 315 contracted janitors are expected to lose their jobs after Sept. 1.

“This will not only affect nearly 100 people who will lose their jobs, but the many customers who use the stations every day,” he said.

He said about 40 janitors and their supporters plan to protest the scheduled cuts at the Massachusetts Department of Transportation’s board meeting Wednesday afternoon in Boston.

Villasante said there is particular concern that the new late-night service – which was announced about six months after [state transportation officials](#)

agreed to the new cleaning contracts – will leave stations in unsanitary conditions.

“In an environment in which workers are routinely called upon to clean not only soil and trash, but urine, vomit and feces, this has significant quality and public health ramifications,” he said.

But, the T’s spokesman said the agency does not share the worry that late-night service will negatively impact station cleanliness.

“The contractors’ crews are working overnight now, and they will continue to do so,” said Pesaturo. “Just as they are during the day, cleaners will be in stations during the hours of extended subway service. The MBTA will closely monitor the cleaners’ work to ensure that contractual obligations are being met. If corrective measures need to be taken, the MBTA will order such action.”

He also said the T conducts regular quality inspections to monitor the contractors’ performance. The agency can penalize the companies for poor results and can force them to develop a “corrective action plan.” The T can also terminate either a portion of each contract, or the whole thing, he said.

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Harvard University professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s side gig as a consultant to New York University has apparently won him some enviable New York City housing benefits.

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Three people were shot at KC's Pub on River Street in Fitchburg after midnight Saturday, NECN reports.

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Looking for something to do this weekend? Check out some events that include plenty of wine, a chance to meet some Red Sox players, a burger bash, and more. Watch BDC Weekend with Jenny Johnson.

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US Ordered Not to Force Feed Guantanamo Prisoner



A federal judge in Washington ordered the U.S. military on Friday to at least temporarily stop force-feeding a hunger striking prisoner at the Guantanamo Bay naval base.

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Genetically Modified Foods Confuse Consumers

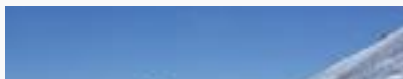
Genetically modified foods have been around for years, but most people in the United States have no idea if they are eating them.

Food and dining  2 hours ago  Share

Vt. Sex Offender Faces Sentencing in Niece's Killing

A convicted sex offender who killed his 12-year-old niece after luring her to his house with a ruse about a pool party is due to be formally sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.



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Hike with Caution at White Mountains





Campgrounds in New Hampshire's White Mountain National Forest are open, but the Forest Service is warning people that some areas still have snow, and spring melt-off can lead to some slippery footing.

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Will Connecticut Schools Ban Chocolate Milk?


Connecticut lawmakers moved forward this week on a new nutrition bill that could remove chocolate milk from public schools.

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Lacrosse Team Honors Fallen Officer and Coach



The girls lacrosse team at Exeter High School is honoring their late coach Stephen Arkell, a New Hampshire police officer who was killed in the line of duty.

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Celebrating 10 Years of Gay Marriage

On May 17, 2004, Massachusetts offered the first marriage licenses to same-sex couples. We asked five couples to talk about what they've learned about themselves and their relationships over the past decade.

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10 Parting Shots at SNL Heading Into The Season Finale

Here are "10 Parting Shots at SNL" as the show's 39th season comes to a close Saturday night with Andy Samberg as host.

Obnoxious Boston Fan  3 hours ago  Share

Environmentalists in Portland Oppose Tar Sands Oil

Environmentalists will rally at the Deering Oaks Park bandshell in Portland to oppose the Keystone XL oil pipeline and the shipping of tar sands oil through Maine.

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Broke Beats: F.Stokes – ‘Liquor Sto’ Diaries’



Broke Beats is BDCwire’s open-source hip-hop column. Every Saturday, we showcase the best new albums, EPs, and mixtapes available for free stream or download. The Midwest has long been a stronghold for spirited rappers and producers who haven’t quite pierced the East Coast market. F.Stokes is among the most fearless of of these artists, and the... [Read more »](#)

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Oprah’s Network Postpones Sam Documentary



The planned documentary by the Oprah Winfrey Network on Michael Sam, the NFL's first openly gay player, has been postponed.

Sports  4 hours ago  Share



Woman Falls Down Elevator Shaft at Fenway Park

A 22-year-old woman is hospitalized after falling down an elevator shaft at Fenway Park Friday during a Red Sox game, according to the Boston Fire Department.

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Obama, Congress Move to Address Veterans Affairs Firestorm



The Obama administration and Congress are moving quickly to respond to a growing political firestorm over allegations of treatment delays and falsified records at veterans hospitals nationwide.

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Conn. Exhibit Looks at Benedict Arnold as Hero

A new exhibit on display at the Slater Memorial Museum is the latest effort to bring heightened visibility to a subject Norwich has deliberately ignored for centuries.

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Testing Inconclusive, Suspected Bobcat Returned

A judge has returned a 38-pound feline to a New Jersey woman after DNA testing couldn't conclusively say whether it was a purebred bobcat.

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Clearing This Afternoon with Sunshine for Sunday

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Nissan's Taxi of Tomorrow Hoping for a Fare Future



Members of the New England Motor Press Association had the dual experiences of driving and riding in this Taxi of Tomorrow when Nissan brought a pair of the hackney versions of its NV200 van to town.

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Teen's Arm Reattached After Pasta Accident

Four surgeries later, 17-year-old Brett Bouchard can move his arm after it was severed below the elbow.



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Red Sox Fall to Tigers, 1-0, Back Under .500





The loss drops the Sox back below .500, at 20-21, and 10-12 at home.

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North Reading Man Busted Allegedly Selling Drugs Out of Restaurant

Richard "Ricky" Ward faces a number of drug charges following a six-month investigation by police.

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Feds Deny Tsarnaev Lawyers' Complaint About Leaks

Federal prosecutors say there's no need for a hearing on what defense attorneys have called leaks and improper comments in the case of Boston Marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.

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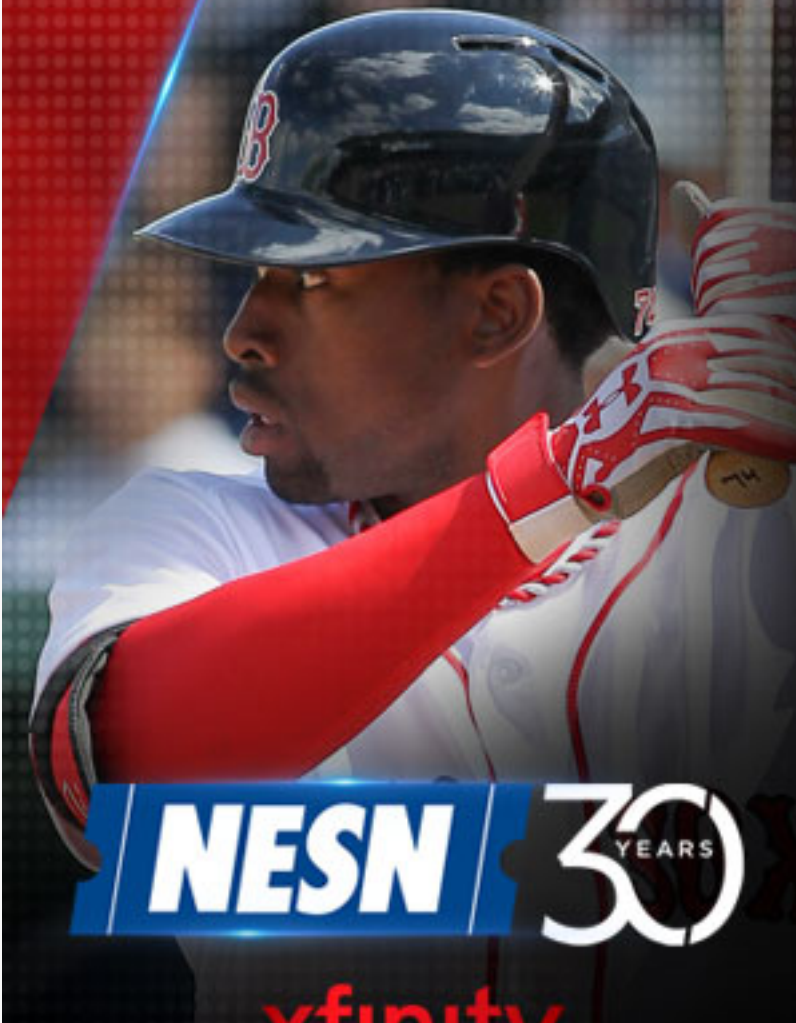


Celebrating 10 Year Marriage

Life Share

TIGERS AT RED SOX

TONIGHT 6^P_{ET}



NESN 30 YEARS

