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MBTA sales dipped during snowy February, but more riders stuck with monthly passes

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By **Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF MARCH 20, 2015

Sales and fare revenue figures were down for the T last month compared to a year ago in all but one category: monthly passes, meaning that more T riders paid to ride throughout February only to be met with a series of snow-related postponements and cancellations across the system.

The T sold nearly 262,000 monthly passes during February, or 1.6 percent more than the same month last year, according to figures provided by the transit agency. And, due to a 5 percent fare increase implemented in July, revenue generated from those monthly passes climbed by an even greater margin, bringing in \$25.5 million, or 8.3 percent more than last February.

In an effort to make up for the time and money that some monthly passholders and other riders lost last month, the T plans to offer a day of free rides on all of its services on April 26 and it will give a 15 percent discount on monthly and weekly passes in May. Officials have projected the two measures will cost the agency about \$5 million.

Overall, fare revenue dropped year-over-year during February by about 3.9 percent, to \$43.2 million, MBTA data show. It was the first time since at least 2010 that systemwide fare revenue did not increase year-over-year during February. Revenue figures were down last month for each type of travel the T offers: subway, trolley, bus, commuter rail, commuter boat, and paratransit.

MBTA fare revenue during February 2010-2015

Figures dropped in most categories this year

— PASSES REVENUE
 — TICKET REVENUE
 — POINT OF SALE/STORED VALUE REVENUE
 — OVERALL FARE REVENUE

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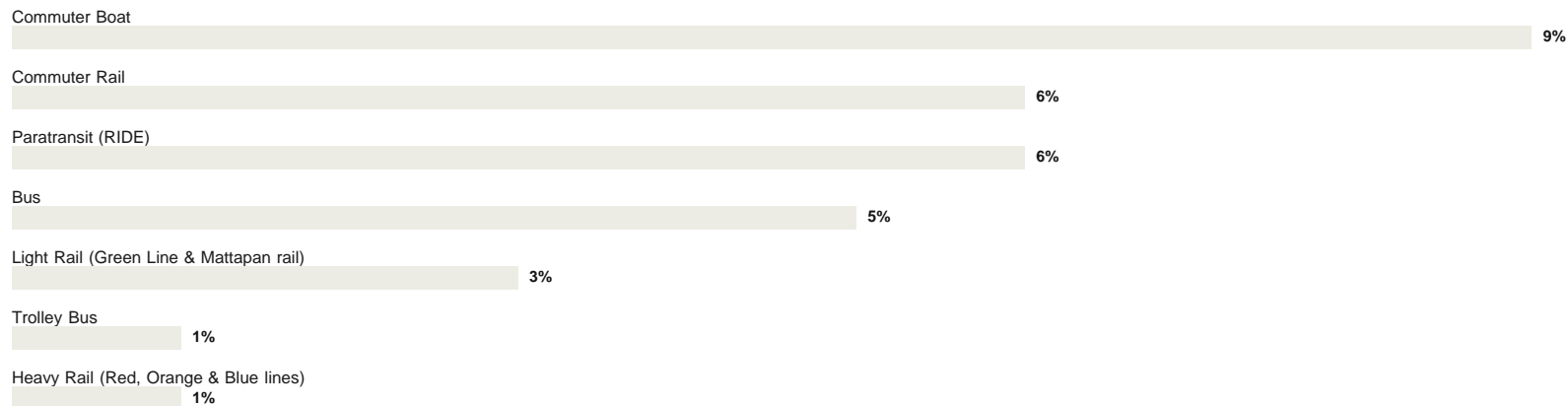


DATA: Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

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Loss in revenue by MBTA travel type

Percentage revenue decline by service type between Feb. 2014 & Feb. 2015



DATA: Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
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Monthly T passes, valid only for calendar months, can be purchased about two weeks before the month begins and must be bought no later than the 15th of the month in which they will be used. Riders can also have monthly passes automatically loaded onto CharlieCards before each month begins.

A record month online

Despite the drop in fares and sales, the MBTA saw soaring demand in one area: its website. MBTA.com saw an all-time high for traffic in a single month, crushing previous monthly records. Meanwhile, the site did not experience any crashes or other technical glitches, officials said, unlike [several winters ago](#), when the site became overwhelmed and failed during spikes in visits around snowstorms.

Mobile pageviews on the site reached nearly 9.6 million last month, and nonmobile pageviews surpassed 17.2 million last month.

The site had averaged about 2 million mobile pageviews per month dating back to the start of 2012, and about 8 million pageviews per month dating back to the start of 2011. The site had never seen more than 2.76 million mobile, or 9.5 million non-mobile, pageviews during that span, according to data provided by the agency.

MBTA.com sells advertisement space on its site and generates revenue, though it has never brought in enough cash to make a profit on the site.

For example, during the last fiscal year the site sold \$122,000 worth of Web ads, but running and maintaining the site cost about \$327,000. For this fiscal year, which will conclude at the end of June, the site had brought in about \$58,000 in advertisement revenue as of mid-February, and annual expenses are expected to be about the same as the previous fiscal year.

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