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MBTA had high rate of breakdowns in 2014

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KEITH BEDFORD/GLOBE STAFF

A Green Line train made its way through Waban Station.

By Matt Rocheleau

GLOBE STAFF JANUARY 20, 2016

The MBTA's trolley, subway, and commuter rail systems experienced more major mechanical breakdowns per train mile traveled than most other transit systems in the country in 2014, according

to newly-released federal data.

The T's light rail lines — the Green Line and Mattapan-Ashmont trolley — ranked third worst in terms of major mechanical system failures per train mile traveled among 23 light rail systems nationally, according to the 2014 National Transit Database, which is maintained by the Federal Transit Administration.

The T's heavy rail lines — the Red, Orange, and Blue — ranked as the sixth worst among 15 heavy rail systems nationally, the figures show.

The commuter rail system ranked sixth worst among 24 commuter rail systems nationally in 2014, the latest year for which data was available.

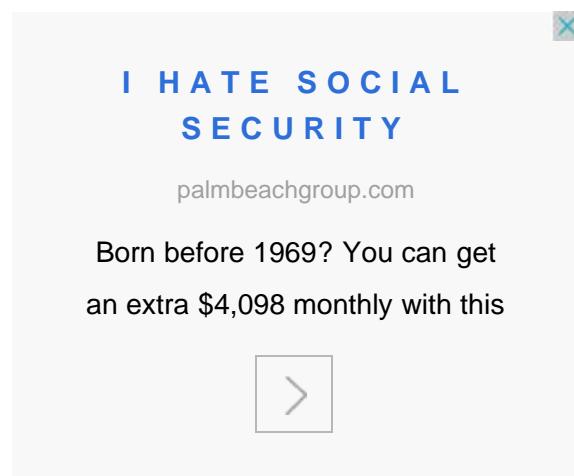
Mechanical failures can cause frustrating delays for passengers.

MBTA spokesman Joe Pesaturo questioned the national figures, saying that “there is no uniform practice for reporting mechanical failures” to the National Transit Database. “What one rail service provider considers a failure, another one may not,” he said.

He also said the agency would continue efforts to keep old trains and equipment from failing by either repairing or replacing them.

The commuter rail fleet has added 75 new bi-level coaches in the last three years, he said in an e-mail. Over the past 14 months, the T “retired the oldest and most unreliable locomotives in the commuter rail fleet,” and put 40 new locomotives in service.

Last month, “the commuter rail system had its highest on-time performance rate in all of 2015,” Pesaturo said. “The T and Keolis are completely focused on continuing to



improve service reliability.”

As for the heavy and light rail systems, the “ages and conditions” of those fleets “are well documented,” he said, pointing out how the Red Line features “the oldest heavy rail cars in the nation.”

“MBTA machinists and repairers will continue to work very hard to keep the aging fleets operating,” he said.

Pesaturo said that hundreds of new Orange and Red Line cars as well as dozens of new Green Line trolleys are “on their way,” and the agency is rehabilitating a hundred existing trolleys.

The data did not include 2015, which began terribly for the MBTA as the aging system was hammered by recordbreaking snow and cold.

The T’s light rail fleet recorded 983 failures in 2014, which translated into one breakdown for every 6,050 miles traveled.

The T’s heavy rail fleet experienced 472 failures, which translated into one breakdown for every 50,328 miles traveled.

The commuter rail system had 219 such failures, or about one failure for every 109,193 miles traveled.

MBTA has high rate of breakdowns compared to other US transit systems

Light rail systems

System name/owner	Miles traveled per major mechanical system failure	Major mechanical system failures	miles
San Francisco Municipal Railway	3,061	1,539	4,710,732
Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads	5,484	68	372,914
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority	6,050	983	5,947,628
Charlotte Area Transit System	8,525	111	946,240
New Jersey Transit Corporation	8,783	59	518,174
Port Authority of Allegheny County	13,270	156	2,070,100

Maryland Transit Administration	13,914	223	3,102,717
Sacramento Regional Transit District	18,310	215	3,936,754
Bi-State Development Agency of the Missouri-Illinois Metropolitan District, d.b.a.(St. Louis) Metro	20,951	298	6,243,285
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority dba: Metro	24,152	574	13,863,381
Metro Transit	28,818	139	4,005,704
Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon	35,593	217	7,723,744
Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority	35,967	75	2,697,552
Valley Metro Rail, Inc.	36,830	67	2,467,628
New Jersey Transit Corporation	38,561	51	1,966,622
Denver Regional Transportation District	40,139	278	11,158,766
The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority	41,501	20	830,016
Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas	56,343	28	1,577,592
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority	57,478	59	3,391,181
Dallas Area Rapid Transit	87,683	105	9,206,750
Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority	303,138	3	909,413
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System	473,123	18	8,516,212
Utah Transit Authority	803,667	8	6,429,332

Heavy rail systems

System name/owner	Miles traveled per major mechanical system failure	Major mechanical system failures	Miles
Port Authority Transit Corporation	20,762	209	4,339,204
Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority	22,814	822	18,752,983
Maryland Transit Administration	24,330	217	5,279,621
Miami-Dade Transit	37,587	224	8,419,487
Alternativa de Transporte Integrado -ATI	48,349	41	1,982,316
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority	50,328	472	23,754,603
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority	54,209	1,406	76,217,650

Staten Island Rapid Transit Operating Authority, dba: MTA Staten Island Railway	78,206	35	2,737,221
Port Authority Trans-Hudson Corporation	84,536	164	13,863,846
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority dba: Metro	97,446	75	7,308,484
MTA New York City Transit	145,681	2,443	355,897,509
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority	153,419	112	17,182,928
The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority	188,344	13	2,448,468
Chicago Transit Authority	214,176	334	71,534,943
San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District	365,222	182	66,470,479

Commuter rail systems

System name/owner	Miles traveled per major mechanical system failure	Major mechanical system failures	Miles traveled
Regional Transportation Authority	66,623	3	199,870
Connecticut Department of Transportation	69,267	27	1,870,204
Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority	89,100	18	1,603,802
Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board dba: Caltrain	94,105	72	6,775,525
South Florida Regional Transportation Authority	106,964	32	3,422,858
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority	109,193	219	23,913,160
Maryland Transit Administration	136,361	43	5,863,504
Southern California Regional Rail Authority dba: Metrolink	151,889	87	13,214,358
Rio Metro Regional Transit District	153,741	9	1,383,665
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation	160,299	23	3,686,878
North County Transit District	174,369	8	1,394,955
Dallas Area Rapid Transit	192,005	6	1,152,028
Utah Transit Authority	242,400	22	5,332,805
New Jersey Transit Corporation	295,186	213	62,874,564

Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District	335,872	11	3,694,590
Northeast Illinois Regional Commuter Railroad Corporation dba: Metra Rail	382,182	113	43,186,609
Metro-North Commuter Railroad Company, dba: MTA Metro-North Railroad	402,713	169	68,058,540
Altamont Corridor Express	475,192	2	950,383
Metro Transit	528,744	1	528,744
MTA Long Island Rail Road	748,495	89	66,616,031
Virginia Railway Express	1,045,042	2	2,090,084
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority	1,269,859	15	19,047,891
Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority	2,139,537	1	2,139,537
Central Florida Commuter Rail	at least 99,456	0	99,456

SOURCE: National Transit Database

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