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10 Boston subway rides you should really consider skipping

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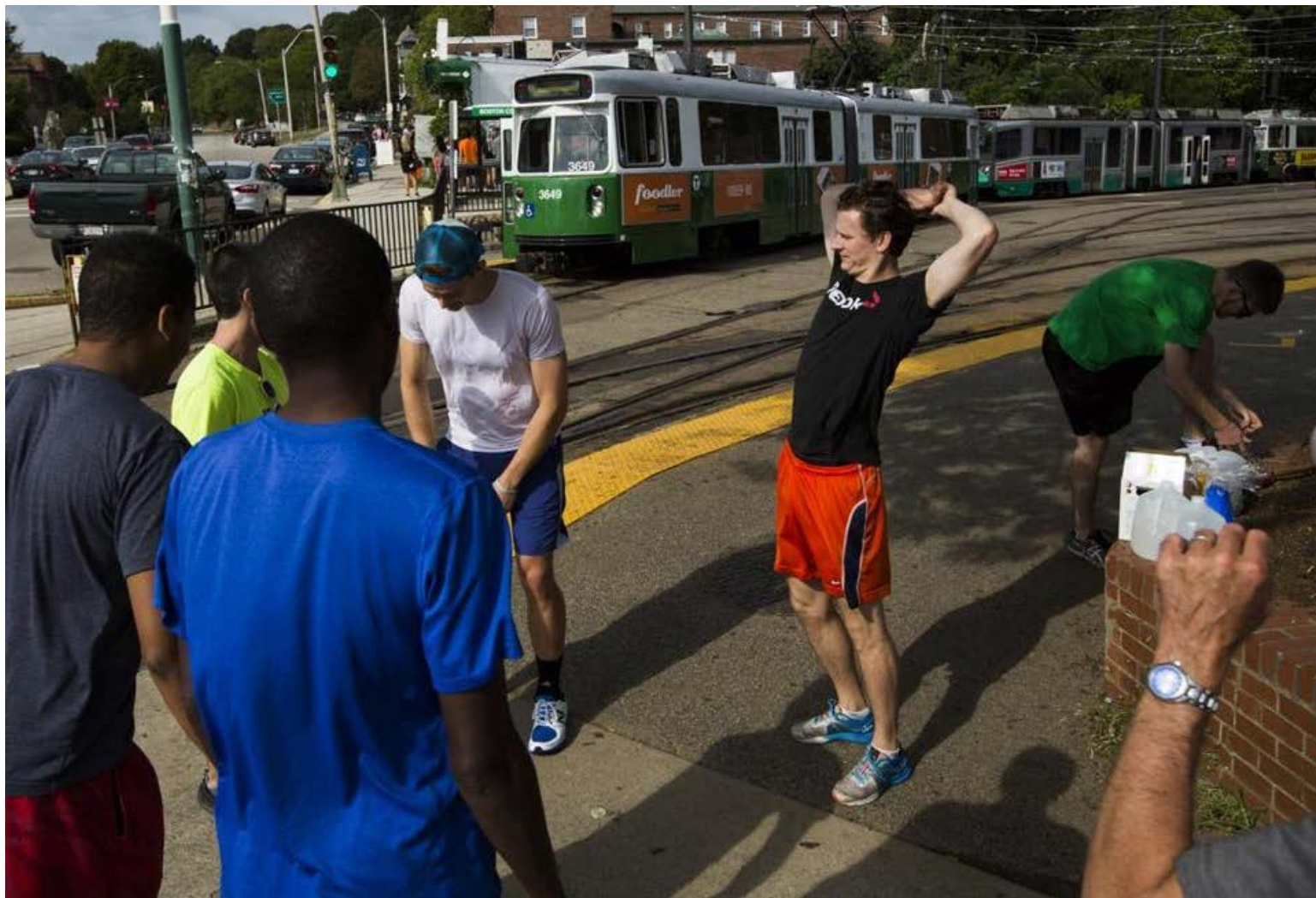
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A group of runners who race against the Green Line trains stretched before taking off along Commonwealth Avenue.

By Matt Rocheleau

GLOBE STAFF OCTOBER 04, 2016

A [recent article](#) about the group of wacky young runners who race the trolley along the B branch of the Green Line brought to mind the question of whether sometimes it's just better to walk (or run) than take the T.

The Globe suggested 10 subway rides you could consider skipping in [a Starts and Stops guest column in 2009](#).

One thing that has changed since the article was published is the rise and growing sophistication of navigation software on computers and smartphones.

So what does Google Maps think of the 10 subway rides you should consider skipping?



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Well, that depends.

Google says that it factors in real-time transit data when it gives its navigation recommendations in Boston. It makes different suggestions based on the time of day, how far from arriving the next train or bus is, and if there are delays.

But here is what Google said on a recent Friday afternoon for each of the 10 trips we suggested you skip:

■ **Park Street to Downtown Crossing: a short walk down**

Winter Street, and you're there. Google agrees it is faster to walk, saying it's just a two-minute stroll. The site doesn't offer a subway ride as an option, even when you tell it you prefer to use public transit.

- **Park Street to Government Center:** a short walk down Tremont Street. Google suggested the subway, but it was a close call: a 7-minute walk versus a 3-minute ride on trains that come about every 3 minutes.

- **Park Street to Boylston:** a short walk along the edge of the Common. Google suggested the subway, a 3-minute ride on trains that come about every two minutes, but again, it's really a close call. Walking is just five minutes.

- **Boylston to Arlington:** another short walk along the edge of the Common and Public Garden. According to Google, the subway would be the better choice: a 2-minute ride on trains that arrive every two minutes. The walk is still a speedy option, just 6 minutes.

- **Park Street to Boylston to Arlington** — a longer walk but a beautiful one in the right weather. Cut through the Common and then through the Public Garden. Google says you can save a few minutes by hopping on trains that come every two minutes and take about four minutes to complete the journey. Walking takes 11 minutes.

- **Arlington to Copley:** a pleasant walk through a bustling city street. Google recommends to take the subway if you're in a hurry. Trains come about every two minutes and it's just a two-minute ride. Walking takes 7 minutes.

- **Boylston to Park Street to Downtown Crossing to Chinatown:** The Boylston station is actually only a block from the Chinatown station. Google agrees that you should walk in this scenario. Doing so takes just two minutes. The site doesn't offer a subway ride as an option.

- **Charles to Park Street to Government Center to Bowdoin:** It's hard to argue that this trip, which uses the Red, Green, and Blue Lines, would be quicker than a brief walk up Cambridge Street to



Bowdoin. Google agrees. It's just a 9-minute walk compared with a subway ride that would take 16 minutes on trains that come every 7 minutes.

■ **Copley to Park Street to Downtown Crossing to Back Bay: Copley is a quick walk, but a long and involved subway ride, from Back Bay. Google agrees strongly here, too. Just a 5-minute stroll. The quickest public transit option was a 5-minute ride on a bus that comes every 12 minutes. By subway, it would be a 27-minute ordeal on trains that come every seven minutes.**

■ **Any one-stop — and even some two-stop rides — on the B branch of the Green Line near Boston University (just ask those runners): Google agrees on some occasions, depending on the stops.**

Remember, this is what Google said on a calm, quiet weekday afternoon in September. Things could be different during rush hour or before events like Red Sox, Celtics, or Bruins games. Or, for that matter, during a February snowstorm.

To savvy inhabitants of the city, some of these “trips to skip” might be obvious. But a newcomer consulting one of those spiderlike, out-of-scale T maps might be tempted.

Of course, there are reasons people might want to take short subway rides: to avoid the blazing heat of summer, pouring rain, or the biting cold, snow, and slippery ice of winter; they might have packages; or they might have an injury or some other mobility problem. At night, some commuters may feel safer in the subway system.

Still others may opt to take the subway because they've already invested hard-earned cash into buying a pass.

But there are unique benefits to walking, too: It's free, it's healthy, you're not crammed in with a crowd, and you don't run the risk of unexpected delays —unless one of your shoes is untied.

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