



A quarter of MBTA workers earned more than \$100,000 last year

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KIERAN KESNER FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Triders exit the train at the Red Line Park Street Station.

By [Nicole Dungca](#) and [Matt Rocheleau](#)

GLOBE STAFF MARCH 03, 2017

More than a quarter of Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority workers were paid more than

\$100,000 last year, newly released state figures show.

The number who passed the \$100,000 mark — about 1,800 of 7,000-plus workers — marked a decline from the previous year, when a record-breaking winter drastically drove up overtime costs.

In 2015, about 1,975 of over 7,200 workers earned that much, according to data from the state’s budget website, Open Checkbook.

In 2016, the MBTA’s total payroll dropped to about \$563 million from \$576 million a year earlier. But last year, the agency also shed jobs by offering buyouts.



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A sizable amount also appeared to come from lower overtime costs as an incredibly mild winter followed a historic, catastrophic one.

Table: The 100 highest-paid MBTA workers in 2016

The highest-paid worker last year made \$227,022.

Charts: MBTA payroll, 2013-2016

Joe Pesaturo, the MBTA's spokesman, said that new overtime practices helped lower payroll costs from 2015 to 2016. He pointed to a nearly \$20 million decrease in overtime spending.

"The MBTA will continue to identify more areas where the T can operate more efficiently, improve performance, and deliver the reliable service that riders expect and deserve," he wrote in an e-mail.

Nonetheless, a mild winter appeared to significantly help the MBTA's finances last year.

Because the authority needed to shovel out from under more than nine feet of snow in 2015, some workers stayed overnight for weeks — many of them collecting significant overtime pay — even as others were clocking in absent.

But during the first quarter of 2016, the T spent \$8 million less on overtime — a nearly 40 percent decrease — than in the same period in 2015.

In 2015, winter overtime and retroactive pay helped bump up many workers' salaries. MBTA officials under Governor Charlie Baker's administration have railed against what they call outdated overtime and absenteeism rules that allow workers to take advantage of the system.

Last year's highest-paid worker was Perry Yee, a foreman in the wire department. He earned about \$227,022, significantly more than his base pay of about \$112,600. The MBTA did not break out how much was related to overtime or to any other types of pay he may have gotten.

The analysis using Open Checkbook, which launched in 2011 to increase government transparency, presents a fuller picture of the MBTA's payroll expenses than in past years, since the T has frequently released annual salary data to reporters that excludes employees who left before the end of the year or those paid through the budget intended for large-scale construction and maintenance projects.

But even though the overall amount paid out to workers declined in 2016, the MBTA is still spending significantly more on workers than it did three years ago.

From 2013 to 2014, payroll costs increased from \$481 million to \$570 million, an 18 percent jump.



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That means that even as the MBTA tries to dramatically cut costs with buyouts and privatization, it's still paying 17 percent more to workers than in 2013.

The T said an arbitration award involving its largest union led to a big increase in the number of people it had to pay in 2014. The MBTA paid about 7,400 workers in 2014, a nearly 13 percent increase from 6,600 workers it paid in 2013.

In 2015, the T paid about 7,200 workers, according to the data, which did not clarify which workers simply received the retroactive pay raises and did not work during the year.

The MBTA said it expects costs to decrease further next year, as it implements more privatization plans. For example, in the already privatized cash-collection department, the T expects expenses to fall from \$11.8 million to \$3.6 million.

A new contract with the Boston Carmen's Union, the largest labor group at the T, will also reduce costs. In that agreement, the MBTA agreed to protect several hundred jobs from privatization if the union gave up raises for a year and agreed to a lower pay scale for new employees.

Though the MBTA has started hiring more administrative workers at higher pay rates, it has done so while encouraging higher-paid workers to leave.

During the current fiscal year, the average salary of the nearly 500 who left the MBTA was \$77,250, Pesaturo said. For the 240 who have been hired, the average salary is \$59,900.

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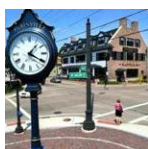
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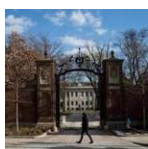
Dick Albert, former Channel 5 weatherman, dies

"It's a huge loss," said Harvey Leonard. "It's truly like losing a brother, that's what I considered him to be." [MORE...](#)



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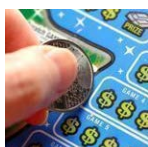
Thousands of cyclists are pedaling during the 38th Pan-Mass Challenge

More than 5,300 cyclists took off Saturday morning in the 2017 Pan-Mass Challenge, raising money for patient care and cancer research. [MORE...](#)



He thought he was dying, but highway chief paved his own road to salvation

Tom Tinlin needed a lot of things to go his way when a blood vessel in his brain burst in April. Fittingly, one of them was traffic. [MORE...](#)



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Some people redeem so many winning tickets that they raise questions about the integrity and oversight of the \$5 billion state lottery. [MORE...](#)

Police disperse hundreds of youths in the North End

State Police spokesman David Procopio said Boston police requested Massachusetts State Police assistance with dispersing between 500 and 1,000 youths. [MORE...](#)



A cross-country bicycle trip of a lifetime — delayed 40 years

John Sweeney averaged 65 miles a day, mostly along Route 20, a 3,365-mile ribbon of asphalt that is the longest road in the United States. [MORE...](#)



State Police investigate video of youths fighting on pier in Quincy

A video of youths being punched and kicked is making the rounds on social media. [MORE...](#)



Cambridge city councilor to leave politics

Cambridge city councilor Leland Cheung, the first Asian-American on the council, announced this week that he intends to leave politics. [MORE...](#)



This weekend, bus shuttles replace rail service on five lines

You might want to just stay home this weekend. [MORE...](#)



Michelle Carter receives 15 months in jail; will remain free pending appeal

A judge sentenced Michelle Carter to two and a half years, with 15 months to serve and 15 months probation, for goading her boyfriend to kill himself in a high-profile texting suicide case. However, he allowed Carter to remain free while awaiting appeal. [MORE...](#)



'Dukes of Hazzard' actor arrested in Waltham

Tom Wopat was arraigned on a charge of groping a woman who was to share the stage with him in a local production of "42nd Street." [MORE...](#)

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