

Transportation – Regional Transit Authorities

Statutory Reference: [MGL Ch 161B](#)

Summary – Allows for the creation of regional transit authorities in communities not served fully by the MBTA.

Creation – A regional transit authority may be formed by any city or town, or group of cities and towns, except that cities and towns that are part of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority where fixed bus service is offered may not participate. Approval of the city manager in a Plan E form of government, the mayor and city council in all other cities and the selectmen in a town, along with notice to the Governor, is required to establish the authority. Communities may join a contiguous regional transit authority, provided they are not an MBTA community with fixed bus service, with the approval of the selectmen, city manager (Plan E) and the mayor and city council in all other cities, and with the consent of the advisory board of the authority.

Governance – There is an advisory board to each transit authority consisting of the city manager in Plan D and E forms of government, the mayor in all other cities and the chair of the board of selectmen of each town. Each may appoint a designee to act in their absence. Each community has one vote, plus additional votes weighted in proportion to the community's assessment as a percentage of the total authority assessments. The advisory board appoints an administrator who manages the authority and serves as its chief financial officer. Powers of the authority include: to establish an office; manage transportation facilities and equipment; provide mass transit service on an exclusive basis; construct, extend, modify or improve transit facilities and equipment; appoint and employ staff under the administrator; establish parking facilities near stations; accept gifts, grants and loans from other governments; buy and sell real property; issue bonds or notes; and establish a reserve account for extraordinary expenses.

Finances – The authority administrator prepares the annual budget and submits it to the advisory board by April 1st of each year. The advisory board approves or amends the budget prior to June 1st. Authority operating revenues include fares, advertising and parking revenues, as well as any gifts or grants for operating purposes. Authority revenues are subtracted from the total authority budget to yield a "net cost of service." State contract assistance covers at least half of this net cost of service, with assessments to the member communities covering the remainder. In the aggregate, assessments to member communities can increase no more than 2.5 percent each year, unless the members agree to expand services.

Limitations on authority borrowing are established such that, in the aggregate, total regional transit authority principal outstanding is no more than twenty million dollars. All bond issuances must also be approved by the secretary of the executive office of transportation. Other than their representatives on the advisory board, member communities have no role in approving authority debt issuances. Authorities may issue debt for up to forty years.

Employee Rights – As these transportation services were not previously provided by individual municipalities prior to regional transit authorities, there are no issues related to the succession of employees and employee rights.