



GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL CALENDAR OF BUSINESS
TUESDAY, August 23, 2022
6:00 PM
REMOTE MEETING
COUNCIL MEETING #2022-016

Consistent with chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022, this meeting will be conducted by remote participation. The public may not physically attend this meeting but every effort will be made to allow the public to view and listen to the meeting in real-time and participate when necessary.

Join from Computer, Smart Device: <https://gloucester-ma-gov.zoom.us/j/88140356457>

Join via Phone: 1-646-931-3860 or 1-929-205-6099

Meeting ID: 881 4035 6457

Please visit <http://gloucester-ma.gov/remote-public-meetings> for instructions and guidance on how to join a remote meeting

UNANIMOUS CONSENT CALENDAR

ACTION

• ***INFORMATION ONLY***

1. MBTA questions submitted to Mayor Verga on 7/29/2022 re: MBTA update on Washington Street train crossing gates (Info Only)



Joanne Senos <jsenos@gloucester-ma.gov>

MBTA QUESTIONS

Joanne Senos <jsenos@gloucester-ma.gov>

Fri, Jul 29, 2022 at 9:22 AM

To: Greg Verga <gverga@gloucester-ma.gov>

Cc: Valerie Gilman <vgilman@gloucester-ma.gov>, Howard.Costall@masebate.gov

Good morning Mayor Verga,

As requested at our 7/26/22 City Council meeting, attached are the collection of MBTA/Keolis questions that were submitted by Councilors to my office by the close of business on 7/28/22.

Thank you in advance for sharing these with Senator Tarr, Ted Costa, and Representative Ferrante.

Council President Gilman, as mentioned at the 7/26/22 meeting, hopes that these questions can be answered by MBTA officials and communicated back to our City Administration and City Council.

Also attached are two additional enclosures for the benefit of Senator Tarr, Representative Ferrante and MBTA officials.

First, please find the summary of various train crossing incidents brought forward by residents to At Large City Councilor, Jeff Worthley.

Second, please find the completed report submitted by retired GFD firefighter Steve Aiello after his wife and son were in an accident involving this Washington Street train crossing gate. The questions on his report were reported in this document.

Regards,

--

Joanne

Joanne M. Senos, CMC
City Clerk
Records Access Officer
9 Dale Avenue
Gloucester, MA 01930
978-281-9720 #4

3 attachments

 **MBTA Questions submitted to Mayor Verga - July 29, 2022.docx**
14K

 **Summary of comments regarding train crossing in Gloucester (1).pdf**
36K

 **Stephen Aiello.docx**
16K

MBTA questions submitted to Mayor Verga on 7/29/22

1. Questions submitted by former GFD member Steve Aiello on behalf of his findings after his wife and son reported a safety incident of the crossing gate.

How many complaints or reported issues have you and/or Keolis received about that crossing in the previous 5 year period?

Have you and/or Keolis received complaints or reported issues at any other Gloucester train crossings since May 1, 2022?

Are the gates at the Washington St crossing supposed to go down as the inbound train arrives from Rockport, and are they supposed to remain down as the train idles at the Gloucester station?

Are the gates supposed to go up as the inbound train leaves Gloucester station headed for Boston, but prior to that train crossing over Washington St?

Are the gates supposed to go down over the Washington St. crossing as the outbound train leaves Gloucester station headed for Rockport?

How often and for how long does an MBTA and/or Keolis employee personally monitor gate crossings for proper operation?

How often does the MBTA and/or Keolis check the "black boxes" at train crossings for proper operation?

Is the MBTA and/or Keolis aware of other alleged issues with sensors and/or timing issues at other crossings in the area, such as in Beverly?

Is the MBTA and/or Keolis aware that the Washington St Gloucester crossing is a quiet zone, and trains previously stopped and did not blow horns prior to crossing Washington St?

Would the MBTA and/or Keolis be willing to assign a person to a work group of Gloucester residents and public officials to monitor and make changes to the operation of the crossings in Gloucester?

2. Questions submitted by City Council President Valerie Gilman

If a gate problem is called into the MBTA phone number at a particular crossing, does the MBTA contact the municipalities Fire and Police Department to ask for assistance to secure the crossing? If not, how does the municipality know that there could be an alleged recurring problem with a train gate?

Would the MBTA be willing to consider more signage with the federal government at the crossing to remind vehicles not to stop on tracks or any other safety signage that would assist vehicles to pass safely?

Can Keolis provide our City and its residents with the various safety procedures and protocol that are built into the train gate's safety manual?

Because the oncoming train is only going 2 MPH through the crossing, could the gate closure be slowed down so they don't come down as quickly? What is the standard operation procedure and speed of the gates closing after the lights start blinking?

3. Question submitted to City Council by Traffic Commissioner Bob Ryan.

Could the City of Gloucester's Traffic Commission be asked to re-evaluate the current location of the crosswalk at this Washington Street crossing which is 10 feet away from the crossing? Does the MBTA have crosswalks in other municipalities that are within 10 feet of a crossing?

Summary of feedback on Facebook Post about Train Crossing

Posted at 8 am on Monday, July 18, 2022

Seeking input from other people who have experienced hazardous conditions at or around the Gloucester train crossings

10 Shares

M

51 Facebook Reactions

20 Comments

Sarah: Notes that the train is speeding by her in West Gloucester

Joe: States that timing issues and sensor problems happen all the time in Beverly where he works

Maria: Horn needs to blow ten minutes away from the gate to warn people

Josie: Train is constantly late

Margaret: Gates came back down after they went up

Nick: Bars go up for 20 seconds allowing 1-3 cars through and then come down again with seconds to spare before the train comes by

Joseph: 7 years ago gates were up the whole time, he was driving through and the train came within inches of hitting him

Kellie: 3rd car back when gates were down. Gates went up, 2 cars drove forward gates came down fast nearly hitting second car

Phil: there's no way they only go 2 mph now

Striperking: First car behind gates. Gates went up, lights stopped, started to move forward, gate came down on top of car as he tried to back up to narrowly miss getting hit by train

Jennifer: In long line, inbound train. Gates go up for 20 seconds, then back down unexpectedly.

Same Posting shared on Gloucester Things FB page

68 Reactions

70 Comments

Pete: Seen gates stuck in down position long after train has left and cars weaving between the gates

KT: knew it was going to come back down right after went up and rescued a teen on a bike before the gate would have hit him

Karen: I've seen it happen 3 times

Skye: Seen it 4-5 times, train comes by, gates go up, train continues down track, gates come down very quickly hitting cars

Kristen, gates went up, drove through, gates came down, had to swerve quickly

Rikki: this happened to my mom too

Lorretta: Gates came down, no train. Happened during the horribles parade

Ruth: Same thing happened during the parade and the gate came down on a float and hit a retiree

Melissa: Gates came down at cleveland street, no lights, train came flying through instantly

Donna: witnessed gates going up after train has passed and then coming back down quickly

David: west Gloucester station. no mishaps, but gates go down and stay down with no train coming then go back up

Monica: gates go down, no train, gates go up, cars go through, gate comes down narrowly missing cars

Zoe: i've seen two cars get hit by gates on two occasions

Stephen Aiello
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Questions for the MBTA/Keolis relative to Gloucester train crossings

Earlier this month my wife was involved in a motor vehicle accident when the gates at the Washington St. MBTA crossing in Gloucester suddenly dropped on to her car. This occurred after she had been sitting in traffic for approximately 2 minutes with the gates in the down position. Subsequently we learned that the gates dropped to the down position when the inbound train arrived at Gloucester station from Rockport. As the train left Gloucester station the gates went up. My wife was the first in line at the crossing and after the gates went up and the lights/bells stopped, she proceeded to drive across the tracks when the gates dropped on to her car without warning. When she stopped her vehicle, she observed the train was approximately 20' and approaching, so she made the decision to back her vehicle out from under the crossing. That is when she was struck from the vehicle behind her.

After my wife informed me of what happened, I called the MBTA to report what appeared to be malfunctioning gates. I informed the person that I spoke with that I have heard the Gloucester police respond to that crossing on several occasions in the weeks prior to my wife's accident which led me to believe that there was at least an intermittent problem at that crossing. I was informed that a person would be dispatched immediately to address the problem.

Fearing a possible issue at that crossing, I made a Facebook post informing others of a possible issue at this crossing. The responses I received on Facebook were unbelievable. Dozens of people reported similar incidents at that crossing in the weeks prior to my wife's incident. Several people informed me that they too had notified the MBTA of issues at this crossing. Even more people informed me of similar issues at the Cleveland St and Stanwood Ave crossings. My immediate thoughts were something has changed since the trains began running again in May as there were few if any incidents at these crossings prior to the trains being idled.

Fox 25 reached out to us and wanted to do a story on what happened to us as the MBTA was under scrutiny for other safety issues. We thought that maybe the media attention would motivate the MBTA to take corrective actions. What we found was that according to Massachusetts lawmakers the MBTA has a "blame and retaliation" culture that has led to these safety issues. An MBTA spokesperson informed the media that drivers were "confused" and as a matter of fact NBC 10 Boston chose not to do a story about it because of the MBTA's allegation. Frankly we found the MBTA's response to be obnoxious and grotesque, especially after 2 people have been killed on their tracks this year.

City Councilor Jeff Worthley reached out to us after reading the Facebook post and hearing what the MBTA said and I believe he too was surprised by the amount of reported incidents on my post. He and I agreed to attempt to document as many of the reported incidents as possible, knowing that many people would not see my post as they are not on social media, but feeling as though the MBTA might take some corrective action if provided with some raw data.

Since my wife's accident, I have personally witnessed several "close calls" as well as a malfunction that left the gates down on Washington St for approximately 45 minutes and required the Gloucester police to assign 2 cruisers to direct traffic there. The evening prior to that the gates had to be repaired after they landed on a car and were broken. The gates are not operating as designed in spite of the MBTA's assertions that they are. The gates are designed to prevent accidents, and their operation is actually causing accidents. Since my wife's accident a train caught fire on a bridge over the Mystic River and there was a runaway train on the Red Line. Not a stellar track record, no pun intended.

I have several questions for the MBTA:

How many complaints or reported issues have you and/or Keolis received regarding the Washington St. Gloucester crossing since May 1, 2022?

How many complaints or reported issues have you and/or Keolis received about that crossing in the previous 5 year period?

Have you and/or Keolis received complaints or reported issues at any other Gloucester train crossings since May 1, 2022?

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Would the MBTA and/or Keolis be willing to assign a person to a work group of Gloucester residents and public officials to monitor and make changes to the operation of the crossings in Gloucester?

I look forward to responses from the MBTA and/or Keolis, and I look forward to the day that people crossing the train tracks in Gloucester can feel safe doing so again.

Respectfully,

Stephen Aiello



Joanne Senos <jsenos@gloucester-ma.gov>

MBTA QUESTIONS

Greg Verga <gverga@gloucester-ma.gov>
To: Joanne Senos <jsenos@gloucester-ma.gov>

Mon, Aug 22, 2022 at 8:54 AM

Greg Verga
Mayor
City of Gloucester, Massachusetts
978.281.9700



----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Greg Verga** <gverga@gloucester-ma.gov>
Date: Fri, Jul 29, 2022 at 9:45 AM
Subject: Fwd: MBTA QUESTIONS
To: Tarr, Bruce E. (SEN) <Bruce.Tarr@masenate.gov>, Ferrante, Ann-Margaret - Rep. (HOU) <Ann-Margaret.Ferrante@mahouse.gov>
Cc: Costa, Howard, III (SEN) <Howard.Costall@masenate.gov>, councilors <councilors@gloucester-ma.gov>

Sen Tarr and Rep Ferrante,

Per the discussion at the 7/26 City Council meeting please see the attached questions and other information regarding the MBTA crossings in Gloucester.

Greg Verga
Mayor
City of Gloucester, Massachusetts
978.281.9700



[Quoted text hidden]

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