



Renewable Communities 2020

Massachusetts cities and towns
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Chelsea: Silver Line 3–Chelsea

In April 2018, the MBTA began offering service on the new Silver Line 3–Chelsea route (SL3–Chelsea), connecting Chelsea to East Boston, the Seaport, and South Station. The \$56.7 million SL3–Chelsea project, begun in 2015, was funded by the MBTA and MassDOT.¹

Almost 40,000 people live in Chelsea, and many of them travel to school or work on public transportation. Chelsea has less access to transit than many other communities bordering Boston, with no subway stops and bus lines that are crowded and frequently stuck in traffic.²

The SL3 route includes four new stops in Chelsea with service every 10 minutes during peak hours and every 12–15 minutes during off-peak times.³ SL3–Chelsea travels along a separate right-of-way in Chelsea as well as dedicated bus lanes in part of East Boston.⁴

Some civic leaders have criticized SL3–Chelsea and other Silver Line routes for falling short of the highest standard of bus rapid transit lines. Silver Line buses travel in mixed traffic for a significant part of their routes, making them subject to delays, and they lack other features like raised platforms and off-board fare payment that would speed trips.⁵ Nevertheless, SL3–Chelsea offers much faster trips than the bus lines that previously served Chelsea, and provides direct service to many locations that previously could be reached only with transfers.⁶

SL3–Chelsea is part of a series of transportation infrastructure improvements intended to benefit Chelsea residents and those who travel through Chelsea on their way to other destinations.⁷ A new commuter rail station,

adjacent to one of the SL3 stops, will provide improved access to downtown Boston and other locations on the Newburyport/Rockport Line.⁸

Leaders in Everett and Somerville have proposed extending the Silver Line from its current terminus in Chelsea into their communities, a project that is expected to attract 36,000 daily transit riders.⁹

1. “New Silver Line 3–Chelsea Service between Chelsea and South Station,” Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, 12 March 2018, <<https://www.mbta.com/news/2018-03-12/new-silver-line-3-chelsea-service-between-chelsea-and-south-station>>.

2. “Chelsea Regional Transportation Improvements,” Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, <<https://www.mbta.com/projects/chelsea-regional-transportation-improvements>>.

3. “SL3 Chelsea: Going Your Way: Starting 04.21.18,” Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, <<https://cdn.mbta.com/sites/default/files/projects/silverline3/sl3-presentation-v11-english.pdf>>.

4. “Silver Line Gateway helps Chelsea to become more connected,” Tom Nally, A Better City, 26 April 2018, <<https://www.abettercity.org/news-and-events/blog/silver-line-gateway-helps-chelsea-to-become-more-connected>>.

5. “While Not Quite Gold Standard, Chelsea Welcomes New Silver Line Bus,” Robin Washington, WGBH, 23 April 2018, <<https://www.wgbh.org/news/2018/04/23/how-we-live/while-not-quite-gold-standard-chelsea-welcomes-new-silver-line-bus>>.

6. Faster service: “Silver Line Gateway helps Chelsea to become more connected,” Tom Nally, A Better City, 26 April 2018, <<https://www.abettercity.org/news-and-events/blog/silver-line-gateway-helps-chelsea-to-become-more-connected>>. Direct service: “New Silver Line 3–Chelsea Service between Chelsea and South Station,” Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, 12 March 2018, <<https://www.mbta.com/news/2018-03-12/new-silver-line-3-chelsea-service-between-chelsea-and-south-station>>.

7. “Chelsea Regional Transportation Improvements,” Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, <<https://www.mbta.com/projects/chelsea-regional-transportation-improvements>>.

8. “Chelsea Commuter Rail Station,” Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, <<https://www.mbta.com/projects/chelsea-commuter-rail-station>>.

9. “Everett, Somerville Advance Silver Line Extension Project,” Christian MilNeil, StreetsblogMASS, 13 February 2020, <<https://mass.streetsblog.org/2020/02/13/everett-somerville-advance-silver-line-extension-project/>>.