

Fall River Route 7 – Bay Street: Service Change Proposal

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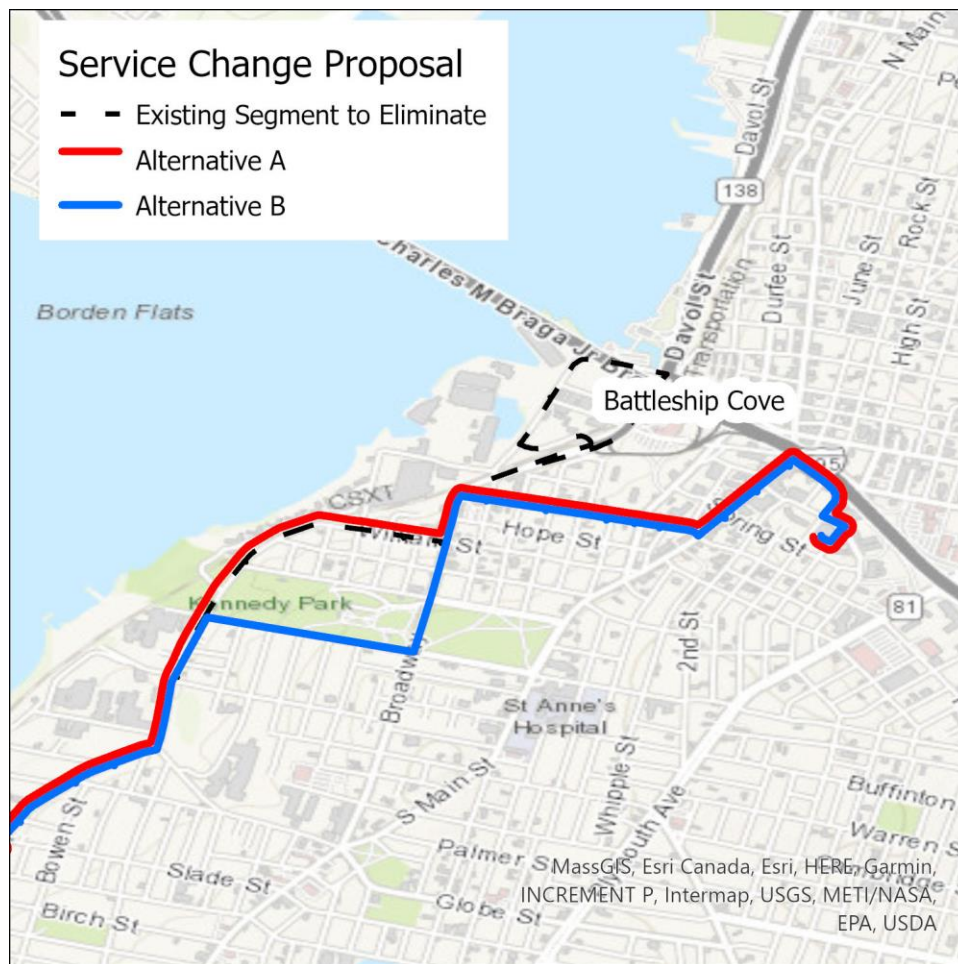
I. Description

The Fall River Route 7 – Bay Street (FR7) serves the southwestern neighborhoods of Fall River. The route originates at the SRTA Fall River Terminal and serves Battleship Cove, continues south to Broadway before continuing on Bay St. Battleship Cove generates very little ridership: in FY22 a total of 119 weekday boardings were recorded, which is approximately 1 passenger every 2 days; Saturday boardings were even lower with a total of 22, approximately 1 passenger every 3 Saturdays. The stop utilization, which measures the frequency of the bus stopping to board or exit a passenger, is also extraordinarily low at 4%. Essentially, there is a 4% likelihood that a passenger will need to use this stop. The Battleship Cove stop is a lengthy deviation that adds a significant amount of time and distance to the route.

In late 2022, a service analysis of the Fall River fixed route identified changes to several routes to improve the quality of service and eliminate service coverage by multiple routes. A suggestion for the FR7 realigns the route from Bay St between William St and Middle St. The suggested alignment keeps the FR7 on Broadway, turning onto Middle St, and returning to the existing alignment on Bay St. This change is related to a change on the Fall River Route 1 – South Main St (FR1) to shift service from Broadway to South Main. Shifting the FR7 maintains service coverage in an area with demand for service.

II. Proposed Changes

There are two alternatives under consideration: Alternative A eliminates service from Battleship Cove and retains the remaining route segments unchanged; Alternative B eliminates service from Battleship Cove and realigns the route from the segment of Bay St between Broadway and Middle St. The proposed alignment remains on Broadway, turns onto Middle St, and then returns to the existing alignment.



A. Alternative A

Alternative A shares much of the same alignment of the existing route. Service on Broadway north of William St, Central St, Water St, and Water Street Connector is eliminated. Two stops are affected by this change: Battleship Cove on Central St, and Water St and Anawan St. Both stops are served by the outbound and inbound routes. The existing outbound pattern is 5.01 miles, Alternative A outbound pattern is 3.29; the existing inbound pattern is 4.88 miles, the Alternative A pattern is 3.55 miles.

Alternative A is a 30% reduction in total route mileage which exceeds the threshold for the SRTA Major Service Change Policy. The policy requires that any service change in which proposed route mileage changes more than 25% of the existing route mileage undergo a Title VI equity analysis.

B. Alternative B

Alternative B is a variation of Alternative A. It also eliminates service on Broadway north of William St, Central St, Water St, and Water Street Connector similar to Alternative A, the difference is that Alternative B remains on Broadway and turns on Middle St and continues to the intersection with Bay St where it rejoins the existing route. Stops on William St south of Broadway and stops north of Middle St will no longer be served and will be removed. This change addresses very low demand on the eliminated segment of the route and realigns to an

area more likely to generate transit trips. Additionally, this change is part of a larger service change in the area to realign the FR1 off Broadway and remain on South Main St.

Alternative B is a 29% reduction in total route mileage which exceeds the threshold for the SRTA Major Service Change Policy. The policy requires that any service change in which proposed route mileage changes more than 25% of the existing route mileage undergo a Title VI equity analysis.

III. Title VI Equity Analysis

A Title VI Equity Analysis is required by the SRTA Title VI Program whenever a service change will result in a change of more than 25% of the revenue mileage for the route. Both alternatives exceed the 25% threshold and warrant an equity analysis. The parameters for a Title VI equity analysis is described in Chapter 8 to the 2022 SRTA Title VI Program and evaluates two factors: the effects of the change on racial minority groups and the effects of the change on low-income populations. In both measures, the effects are measured against the current conditions by establishing a baseline for racial minorities and low-income populations. If the affected population is more than 60% of the total, the change is determined to have an adverse impact.

Disparate Impact Analysis

A disparate impact is one that affects a racial minority population that is more than 60% of the total population for the affected area. The United State Census most recent data for race and population was from the 2020 census; data at the census block level is the smallest geographic representation for the data and is the dataset used to determine disparate impact. The table below shows the results of the analysis.

	Current Condition	% Racial Minority	Alternative A	% Racial Minority	% Affected	Alternative B	% Racial Minority	% Affected
Racial Minority	1,824		1,652		-10.41%	1,760		-3.64%
Racial Majority	4,196		3,678		-14.08%	4,032		-4.07%
Total	6,020	30.30%	5,330	30.99%	-12.95%	5,792	30.39%	-3.94%

The current route alignment serves 6,020 residents, 1,824 of which are identified as a racial minority; approximately 30% of the total population. Alternative A serves 5,330 residents, approximately 690 fewer than the current alignment; approximately 31% of the residents are racial minorities. Alternative B serves 5,792 residents, approximately 228 fewer residents than the current alignment and 462 more than Alternative A, approximately 30% are racial minorities.

In accordance with the Disparate Impact Policy of the SRTA Title VI Program neither Alternative A or Alternative B meet the definition of a disparate impact.

Disproportionate Burden Analysis

A disparate burden is one that affects low-income populations more so than non-low-income populations. Low income is defined by the US Department of Health and Human Services as any household with annual income less than \$26,500. Data on low-income is provided by the American Community Survey in table B17001; data for the 2021 5-year estimates. The smallest geographic area for the data is a Census tract, a much larger area than a Census block, and why the population numbers in the table below are larger than in the table for Disparate Impact Analysis.

	Current Condition	% Low Income	Alternative A	% Low Income	% Affected	Alternative B	% Low Income	% Affected
Poverty	6,715		5,752		-16.74%	5,752		-16.74%
Non-Poverty	21,509		19,355		-11.13%	19,355		-11.13%
Total	28,224	23.79%	25,107	22.91%	-12.41%	25,107	22.91%	-12.41%

The current route serves 28,224 residents, 6,715 (23.79%) are identified as low-income. Alternatives A and B serve the same tracts and share the same results: a total of 25,107 residents, 5,752 (22.91%) are low-income. In accordance with the Disparate Impact Policy of the SRTA Title VI Program neither Alternative A or Alternative B meet the definition of a disproportionate burden.

IV. Discussion

Alternative A was developed in response to low ridership at Battleship Cove, a popular tourist destination in Fall River. The service was added with an expectation that it would attract more riders than it has, however customer feedback as suggests that it lengthens trips times and has been detrimental to on-time performance reliability. Alternative A eliminates Battleship Cove, but leaves the remainder of the route alignment unchanged.

Alternative B builds on this change by also eliminating Battleship Cove but also realigns the route to remain on Broadway through Kennedy Park and turn on to Middle St where is rejoins the current alignment. The route segment on Bay St between Broadway and Middle St has very low ridership and is less direct path for the route. Realigning to Broadway will make the route more direct and should reduce travel time. Additionally, a route alignment is proposed for the FR1 which realigns service from Broadway to South Main St. Shifting the FR7 retains access to a bus route.

Both proposals are similar, however Alternative B does more to make the route alignment as direct as possible and as short as possible without affecting the route segments that experience regular ridership. The results of the Title VI equity analysis suggest that both alternatives are nearly similar in their effects, however Alternative B serves a larger population, including racial minorities, than Alternative A.

V. Recommendation

Alternative B is the preferred service alternative for implementing this change. It serves a larger population, it is more direct, and facilitates additional changes in the Fall River fixed route system. This service change will require a public comment period and a public hearing to garner input from the community.