

# **MBTA celebrates Autism Acceptance Month with inaugural participation in the Autism Transit Project**

“BOSTON – The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) is pleased to announce its first-ever involvement in the Autism Transit Project, an initiative that empowers children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to create public service announcements for transit systems across the country. In recognition of Autism Acceptance Month during April, starting today and through mid-May, the MBTA will play public announcements created by local children with ASD in stations across the system. The MBTA joins other transit agencies in this meaningful project organized by the Autism Transit Project, a 501c3 non-profit organization.

“Our transportation system should be accessible to all of our residents and visitors. The Autism Transit Project is an extension of that commitment and supports one of the MBTA’s key goals, which is to make sure every single traveler can navigate the system successfully,” said Transportation Secretary and CEO Monica Tibbits-Nutt. “This is a great way to spread the word about Autism Awareness Month and to help educate other people in their same situation.”

“We are honored to participate in the Autism Transit Project and celebrate Autism Acceptance Month with our community,” said MBTA General Manager and CEO Phillip Eng. “This initiative not only raises awareness about autism, but also provides a unique platform for children with ASD to showcase their talents and make a positive impact on our public transportation system and help us lift up our values and our commitment of fostering a public transit system where everyone

feels welcome, respected, and safe. Thank you to the children and families for being part of the T family with their participation today and recording these great public service announcements.”

“Children with autism sometimes fixate on feats of everyday mechanical engineering,” said Jonathan Trichter, founder of The Autism Transit Project. “This is especially true of trains and transit systems—something frontline MBTA workers see every day. In addition, children with autism may not come to language naturally. Instead, they grab onto phrases they hear in places they love and use them to communicate with the world around them. As a result, it is not unusual for the first full sentence a child with autism utters to be a transit service announcement. This is why this project is so special. And today, the MBTA is creating a space for these kids to participate in civic life and be heard.”

“From simply watching trains, to walking up and touching a train, to getting on and taking a ride on a train, to riding every line in the entire MBTA system, this program, while physically measurable in some ways, has an immeasurable impact on my son, Christopher. Thank you!” said Robin Long-Tarjan, whose son, Christopher (age 14), participated in the project this year.

The Autism Transit Project and the MBTA collaborated with families from greater Boston within the MBTA service area on announcement scripts and produced the recordings. Announcements by the children included tips on how to safely board and disembark trains, offering seats to others, and remembering to be kind while riding the T.

To further support the program and express gratitude to the participating children, the MBTA welcomed them for an exclusive tour of its Operations Control Center where they gained a behind-the-scenes look at the system and met bus and subway dispatchers. Additionally, the MBTA will feature the

Autism Transit Project on its in-station digital screens and social media channels.

The MBTA's participation in the Autism Transit Project follows another recent initiative supporting young transit enthusiasts with disabilities. On March 21, the MBTA hosted a field trip from Boston Public Schools's Horace Mann School for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing at its Emergency Training Center in South Boston. Staff from various departments led students through a hands-on experience with public transit in a controlled environment.

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### **About the Autism Transit Project**

*The Autism Transit Project is a 501c3 non-profit organization whose mission it is to spread acceptance and awareness that people with autism are worthy and valuable parts of their societies—different perhaps, but no less. The project relies on its ability to channel the connection many with autism spectrum disorder (“ASD”) have to mass transit systems in a positive way. It started with an idea when its founder, Jonathan Trichter, launched a widely praised initiative that allows autistic children who love trains to record subway service announcements that are then broadcast publicly throughout their local transit systems in conjunction with Autism Acceptance Months. Last year, in 2023, over 100 children and five major transit agencies across the country participated. This year, seven transit agencies participated with even more kiddos!*

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