Accessibili-T

Making Boston's Public Transit Easier on Those with Disabilities

Kit TeSelle, CAS '23

Contents

01

The project
in a nutshell
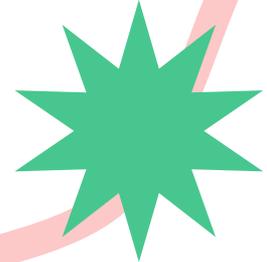
MBTA's current accessibility info available online

✳ Trip Planner

✳ Public transportation trainings

✳ "How-to" videos

All of which require extensive preparation, all just to ride the bus or train!
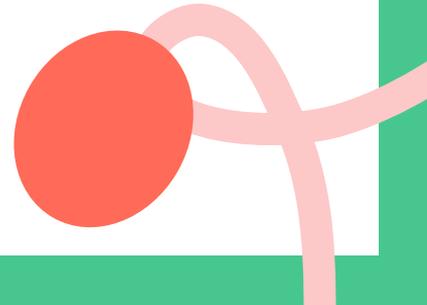
# You *cannot* use these resources to

01 Check station statuses on a whim

02 Get real-time updates about your local stops

03 See arrival times in the same place as accessibility resources
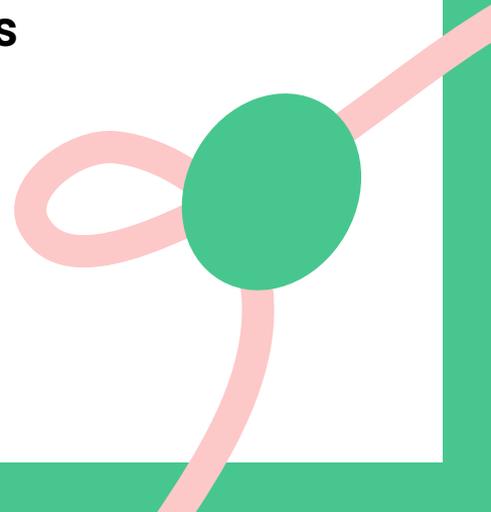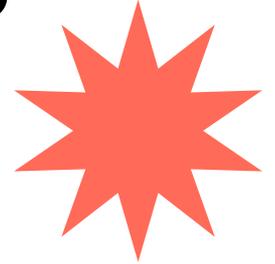
The aim of
Accessibili–T
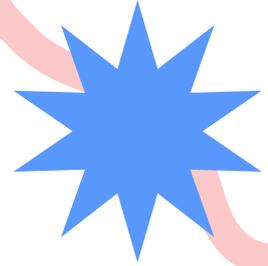
✴   Keep useful resources in one easily reachable place

✴   Receive feedback from riders that may be facing accessibility issues on their commute

✴   Assist out of town visitors in navigating stations and seamlessly utilizing Boston's public transit system

✴   One-step reporting that can be done right from a user's mobile device

✴   Promote quicker resolution of issues by the MBTA
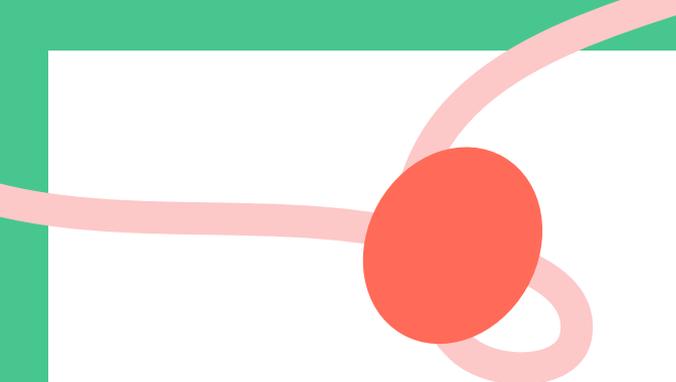
02

Why is a new app **necessary?**

People want to be in-the-loop
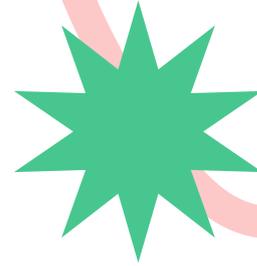
Sarah Jo @sarahjosmith · Mar 28
@MBTA how is it not an ADA violation to have both the escalator AND elevator out of service at Kendall?

3   2   8   471

BradyBeagle @BradyBeagle · Mar 29
@mbta day 2. NO elevator, NO escalator at Kendall outbound side. NO announcement, NO help from MBTA staff. Clearly ongoing, yet no alert on the website. 👏👏👏. Well done MBTA. Well done

1   1   3   311
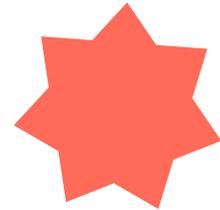
Michael Moxley @BostonMoxley · Feb 1, 2022

Annual shout out to the @MBTA for their abandoned and vandalized bench which I have to shovel around because they don't. #jamaicaplain

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LM @literalllily · Mar 20

This is ridiculous @MBTA 20+ minute waits at Oak Grove and not a single indoor seat at this brand new station. Pathetic.

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Disability is a spectrum
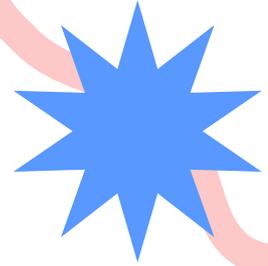
✴ Most of MBTA's accessibility efforts are geared towards those with wheelchairs or other mobility issues

✴ Even then, many stops do not have benches, escalators, or stair railings

✴ People with non-mobility-related disabilities (blind, HOH, elderly individuals) may have trouble determining if a stop is accessible to them

03
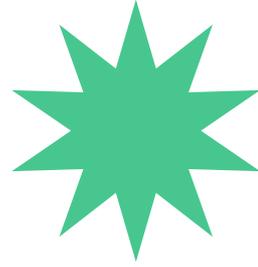
What are the features of the app?
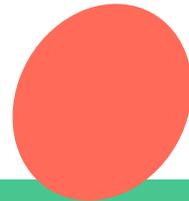
Primary Features
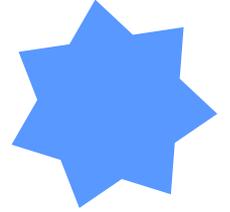
Self-reporting

Station features

Bus stop grading system

Customizable routes

Station maps

Self-Reporting on Accessibili-T

* Broken amenities (benches, auditory/visual signaling, elevators)

* Unplowed snow (bus stops)

* Slippery floors/stairs

* Noise levels (both speakers AND crowd noise)

* Users may contact 311 or MBTA Maintenance Control Center (MCC) with a form embedded in the app itself

Station features

✴ Users may choose which amenities they are interested in seeing for all stops (i.e. a user with hearing impairment may want to know which stops have visual signalling)

✴ Users may see self-reported updates (i.e. "14 hours ago: broken elevator reported by Accessibili-T user")

✴ Reports non-accessibility-related amenities such as shelter coverings and trash cans

Bus stop grading system
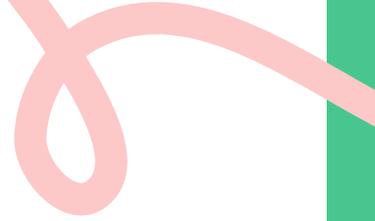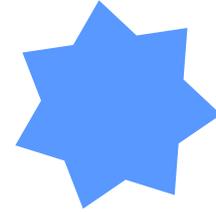
* Top graded stops (A) have benches, shelter, a map, and lighting

* Mid graded stops (B-D) may have one of two of the above amenities

* Low graded stops (F) only contain a sign indicating which buses pick-up at the given stop
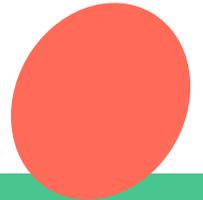
Customizable routes
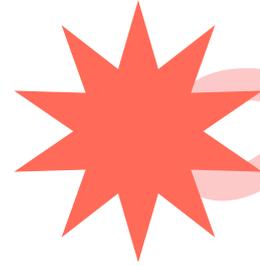
✳ Users may input their commute or other regular routes from one location to another

✳ Notifications alert the user at a chosen time if there are any station alerts or self-reports on their route

✳ The app may suggest different routes based on accessibility needs that may not be met by certain stops

Station Maps

✳ Station maps would provide out of town visitors with disabilities some assistance in getting around a new city

✳ It may be daunting for someone not familiar with the MBTA to get around using public transit, whether they are disabled or not

K.B @KB81676104 · Mar 29

The MBTA does not offer human to human assistance for helping disabled folks plan trips. Hi everyone, I'm a disabled out of state MBTA newbie planning my first trip to Boston – any advice or resources would be much appreciated! :)

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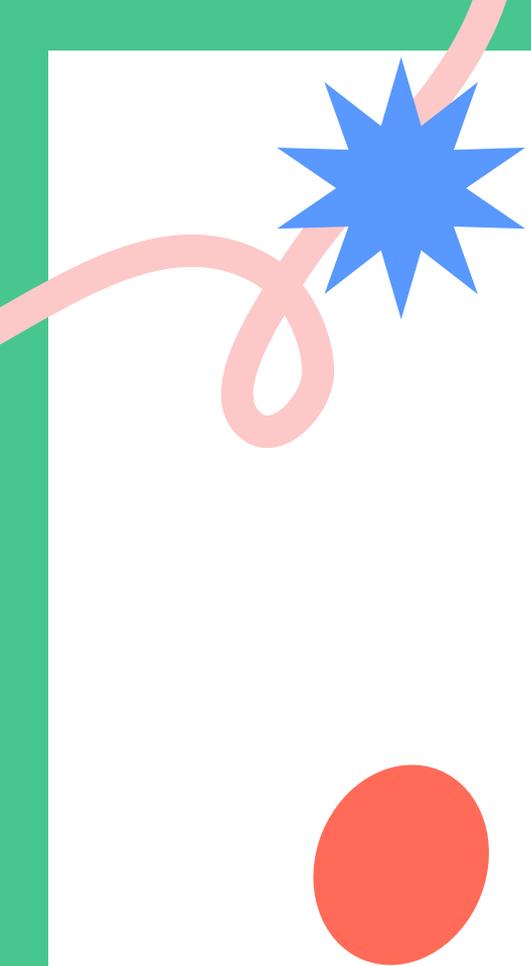
04

Feedback &
What's Next?

My meeting with MBTA System-Wide Accessibility
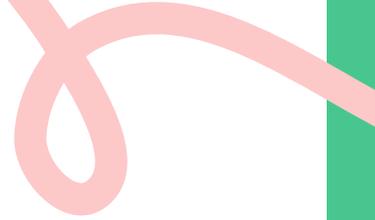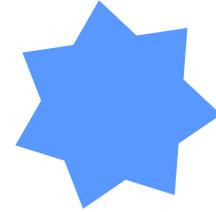
✷ On April 4, 2023, I met with three individuals that work with accessibility on the MBTA with my main contact being **Jennifer Ross, Deputy Director of Customer Engagement**

✷ Several suggestions regarding "self-reporting" feature

✷ Involvement of 311 and MBTA's Maintenance Control Center (MCC)

✷ Discussed the lack of an official MBTA app and endorsement of third-party apps

✷ Concerns surrounding user participation
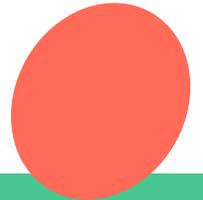
Response to Critique

✳ Self-reported issues would first be pushed to 311 or MBTA MCC and shown in the app as an issue that is pending repair

✳ Reporting kiosks at stations are a long term goal for solving user participation

✳ Users would receive an update when their reported issue is resolved

What's next?
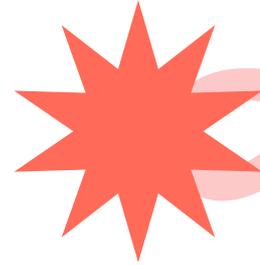
✳ I am unable to complete this project on my own since I am not an app developer nor do I have experience doing so

✳ EE538: Research for Environmental Agencies is taught every semester at BU

✳ Today, I leave this project unfinished, but with the hope that one day a future EE538 student may bring it to fruition

Thanks!

Do you have any questions?

kteselle@bu.edu
+1 714 322 6230
linkedin.com/in/kaileyteselle