

Moving Together: Getting Around A-Town



Public Transit in Arlington

By Scott Smith

Where can I go?

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA, or the “T”) and private bus operators run more than a dozen routes in and near Arlington. They provide convenient connections to Cambridge and downtown Boston, plus service to Burlington, Lexington, Somerville and Waltham. The primary routes serving Arlington, with frequent service including evenings and weekends, are the MBTA Red Line and the #77 bus.

The Red Line provides subway service between Alewife Station (near East Arlington) and Somerville (Davis Square), Cambridge and Boston. Every bus route in Arlington, except for the #80, connects to the Red Line. The Minuteman Bikeway also provides convenient bike and pedestrian access from East Arlington to Alewife Station.

The #77 bus serves Mass Ave between Arlington Heights and Harvard Square, with connections to the Red Line at Porter and Harvard.

Other MBTA bus routes (see www.mbta.com for schedules) include

- #62 Alewife to Arlington Heights (via Park Avenue), then to Lexington and Bedford
- #67 Alewife to Turkey Hill via Pleasant Street and Arlington Center
- #76 Alewife to Hanscom Air Base, via the Route 2 service road and Lexington.
- #78 Harvard to Arlmont or Arlington Heights
- #79 Alewife to Arlington Heights via Mass Ave.
- #80 Lechmere to Arlington Center via Somerville and West Medford (Tufts University). Green Line connection at Lechmere.
- #84 Alewife to Arlmont
- #87 Lechmere to Arlington Center, via Broadway in Arlington. Red Line connection in Davis Square, Somerville.
- #350 Alewife to Burlington, via Mass Ave in East Arlington and Mystic Street. Serves Burlington Mall.
- #351 Express bus between Alewife and office parks along Mall Road and Middlesex Turnpike in Burlington.

Other services from Alewife include

- Alewife Shuttles: two routes run by the Route 128 Business Council (www.128bc.org), between Alewife and several office parks in Lexington and Waltham.
- World Wide Bus. Express bus between Alewife and New York City (www.worldwidebus.com)

Many MBTA buses have front-mounted bike racks, and the Red Line permits bikes at off-peak times. To use the Pedal & Park bike cages at Alewife, ask the station agent for a Bike Charlie Card.

To obtain real-time information on when your MBTA bus or train might arrive, check out the Apps Showcase on the MBTA website.

How do I pay?

The base MBTA fare is \$1.50 for a local bus, \$2.00 for the subway. There are three options for paying (For details, see http://www.mbta.com/fares_and_passes/):

1. Cash on the bus
2. Charlie ticket. Buy at a subway station vending machine. Use for single rides, or pay \$15 for a weekly pass.
3. Charlie card, for the bus or subway. This is a plastic reloadable card, usually available from station agents at subway stations and a few other locations. It offers a discounted base fare (\$1.25 bus / \$1.70 subway) plus free bus/subway transfers. You load it at a subway station vending machine. Use for single rides or pay \$59 for a monthly Link Pass (good on subway and local bus).

Here are two Charlie Card tips:

1. You can have both a Link Pass and cash on a Charlie Card. This is useful when you are traveling with a friend. When you board the bus, you tap the card twice: the first time uses your Link Pass, and the second time deducts the cash fare for your friend. You can also pay for occasional express bus use this way.
2. In a pinch, you can add value to your Charlie Card at a bus fare box. Have your card and some cash ready, and ask the driver what to do. The MBTA does not encourage this, because it can slow the boarding of the bus (please let the other passengers board first).

Why use transit?

It's good for your productivity and health, and can save you money. I have been able to review many a report while riding the bus or subway. The walk (or bike ride) to and from the T goes a long ways towards giving you the 30 minutes-plus of physical activity that we are advised to obtain each day. If you can become a one car, rather than two car, family by using public transit, you will save many thousands of dollars in insurance and depreciation.

Enjoy your ride.

Scott Smith is a member of the Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee and Arlington's Transportation Advisory Committee.