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February 5, 2018

Mr. John R. Romano
MassDOT, Office of Outdoor Advertising
10 Park Plaza, Room 6141
Boston, MA 02116
Re: Digital Urban Panels in Historic Back Bay

Dear Mr. Romano,

The Boston Preservation Alliance is Boston's primary, non-profit advocacy organization that protects and promotes the use of historic buildings and landscapes in all of the city's neighborhoods. With 40 Organizational Members, 104 Corporate Members, and a reach of 35,000 friends and supporters we represent a diverse constituency advocating for the thoughtful evolution of the city and celebration of its unique character. We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on projects that impact the historic character of the city.

We wish to amplify the voice of several of individual and organizational members to express our opposition to the proposal to install Digital Urban Panels (DUPs) within one of the city's most successful historic districts, Back Bay. While we understand that the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has in the past been recognized for its ability to supersede local zoning codes and regulations, we urge the MBTA to consider the context of the historic Back Bay Architectural District and the iconic Public Garden in its planning. We strongly encourage the MBTA to demonstrate their understanding and appreciation for the qualities of Boston's neighborhoods that make our city unique and a world-wide destination for many of the tourists and travelers that use the subway. We believe that the proposed DUPs, which clearly violate the Back Bay Architectural District's guidelines, will unnecessarily and inappropriately detract from these historic settings.

All other enterprises within the Back Bay operate successfully within the guidelines, and with some creativity and community dialog the MBTA can as well. Other options should be explored, such as placing the DUPs inside the station, or design approaches that minimize their conflict with their surroundings such as placing them lower to the ground and limiting moving content. Acceptable alternatives should be sought not only at the Back Bay stations but at all stations that are within historic contexts.

We ask that the Office of Outdoor Advertising urge the MBTA, as long-standing stewards of Boston's historic character and neighbors to many historic sites, to cooperate with the Boston Landmarks Commission and the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay to find an alternative that satisfies the MBTA's need to inform riders as well as our mutual need to protect the unique character of the Back Bay that we have all worked arduously to preserve.

Sincerely,



Greg Galer
Executive Director

CC:

Even Rowe, Director of Revenue, MBTA
Trish Foley, Government and Public Affairs Liaison for MBTA
Councilor Josh Zakim, Boston City Council
Rosanne Foley, Boston Landmarks Commission
Liz Vizza, Friends of the Public Garden
Martyn Roetter, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay