

John Guilfoil Public Relations, working with their clients, the Towns of Cohasset, Hingham, Hull and Scituate

“Ride the Ferry Day” Highlights the Need For Preserving Public Transportation on the South Shore



Situation Analysis

- The Towns of Cohasset, Hingham, Hull and Scituate became clients of ours last fall as part of a six-week campaign to raise awareness over major service cuts to public transportation proposed by the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority.
- The cuts threatened to eliminate the Hingham-Hull Commuter Ferry that traveled from the two towns to Boston Harbor. Also included in MBTA's plan were cuts to commuter rail and bus service throughout the South Shore, and there was immediate need to draw attention to the issue in the media, among residents, and with local elected officials.
- As the campaign progressed, we realized that the cutting the Ferry was of particular concern for many in the communities, as it was an essential service that was necessary to the riders who had no other method of public transportation at their disposal. Many of the comments made by MBTA officials during public hearings indicated that the Ferry was not at the forefront of their needs, nor did they seem to acknowledge the diverse and dedicated ridership that would be lost should the Ferry be eliminated.
- JGPR held several rallies and press conferences throughout the overall campaign. Realizing that we should hold an event on one of the public transportation vehicles that was on the chopping block, we knew it would give the campaign a much more personal and relatable element that would be hard for MBTA officials to ignore.



Statement of Objectives

“Ride the Ferry Day” was an idea that came out of one of the many meetings JGPR held with the leadership teams of our four client towns. JGPR immediately began to do outreach via our campaign Facebook page, and started to formulate the event around four main objectives:

- **Tell the stories** of the many different groups of people who ride the Hingham-Hull Ferry every day.
- **Invite the media** to see firsthand what commuting on the Ferry looks like and allow for interviews with Ferry riders of all ages and backgrounds.
- **Produce a video** that would illustrate the Ferry’s importance to public transportation infrastructure throughout the region.
- Use the day to **educate riders** on the proposed cuts and our campaign, in order to encourage them to voice their concerns to the MBTA through emails, letter writing and attending an upcoming South Shore-specific public hearing with the MBTA.



Program Planning and Strategy

JGPR analyzed ridership data to determine the routes we should encourage people to ride. We decided on one route from Hull, and one route from Hingham. Based on their geography, scheduling and service functions these routes generally attract two different types of riders.

Once we had the routes picked, we designed and promoted fliers on our campaign Facebook page and through social media feeds from several community groups. We asked people to make signs, share photos and spread the word about the event using the hashtag #savetheboat.

We interviewed and photographed several riders during the trip. These interviews were turned into a series of infographics that we shared on social media to illustrate the different groups of people who rely on Ferry service every day.

Several media outlets were invited to the event. For the ones that could not attend the Ferry ride, we arraigned for riders and elected officials on board to be available for a press conference at the dock once the Ferry arrived in Boston Harbor. Multiple press releases were also written and disseminated by JGPR before and after the event.

During the trip, our staff videographer interviewed commuters, Ferry workers and elected officials and produced a two-and-a-half-minute video of the day.

We also made brochures, handouts and fact sheets listing ways residents could contact the MBTA and make their voice heard about the massive impact cutting Ferry service would have. We handed these materials out to riders and those gathered at the dock in Boston Harbor, and we worked with elected officials to make sure this information was made widely available.



RIDE THE FERRY DAY!

Save the Greenbush-Save the Boat and Save the Ferry are teaming up to organize a Ride the Ferry Day on Thursday, Nov. 19. To participate, please ride one of the following:

- The 7:30 a.m. Ferry out of Hull
- The 7:45 a.m. Ferry out of Hingham

Please share your photos on social media!



A grid of 12 infographics, each featuring a photo of a person and a quote. Each infographic has the heading "MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!" and a small logo at the bottom.

- PHIL:** "HELLO, I'M PHIL. ELIMINATING THE FERRY WOULD IMPACT SO MANY ON THE SOUTH SHORE, FROM THOSE WHO RIDE IT TO GET TO WORK, TO THOSE WHO RELY ON IT TO ACCESS VITAL MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS, AND SO MANY MORE."
- PATRICK AND MEGHAN:** "HELLO, WE'RE PATRICK AND MEGHAN, HAVING ONLY ONE CAR, THE FERRY IS CRITICAL FOR US. THE LACK OF EASY ACCESS INTO BOSTON WOULD BE A MAJOR PROBLEM, AND WE DON'T KNOW HOW WE WOULD NAVIGATE THAT."
- KATE:** "HELLO, I'M KATE. AS A RESIDENT OF HULL, I RELY ON THE FERRY EACH AND EVERY DAY TO GET INTO BOSTON. I WOULD BE SO UPSET IF THE MBTA WERE TO TAKE THE SERVICE AWAY."
- JOAN:** "HELLO, I'M JOAN. AS A STATE REPRESENTATIVE, I HAVE SEEN FIRSTHAND JUST HOW CRUCIAL THE FERRY IS TO THE ECONOMIC VITALITY OF MY ENTIRE DISTRICT."
- JOE:** "HELLO, I'M JOE. THESE CUTS REPRESENT A SHORT-SIGHTED RESPONSE TO THE COVID CRISIS. THE MBTA WOULD BE ELIMINATING THE ONLY MODE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION THAT ALLOWS FOR OUTDOOR HEATING AND PURSUIT OF FRESH AIR. THAT IS ABSOLUTELY UNACCEPTABLE FROM A PUBLIC HEALTH PERSPECTIVE."
- JAMES:** "HELLO, I'M JAMES. AS A STATE REPRESENTATIVE, I KNOW HOW VALUABLE THE FERRY IS TO THE COMMERCIAL INVESTMENTS WE'VE MADE THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE SOUTH SHORE REGION."
- JENNIFER:** "HELLO, I'M JENNIFER. I CAN'T OVERESTIMATE JUST HOW CRITICAL THE FERRY IS TO THE TOWN OF HULL. THE TOWN WOULD ESSENTIALLY BE CUT OFF FROM ALL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS IF THESE PROPOSED CUTS GO THROUGH."
- CHRIS:** "HELLO, I'M CHRIS. THE FERRY IS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS I MOVED TO HULL IN THE FIRST PLACE. IF THE MBTA ELIMINATED IT, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD DO."
- GARY:** "HELLO, I'M GARY. FOR ME THE WHOLE ISSUE IS QUITE SIMPLE. I'M CONSIDERED AN ESSENTIAL WORKER, AND THAT MEANS TAKING THE FERRY INTO BOSTON IS ESSENTIAL FOR ME."

Results Documentation

In total, television coverage related to the event had an audience of more than 138,000 viewers that was worth roughly \$32,000 of PR publicity. Online and print news audience reached nearly 3 million readers, many of whom read of the event via larger publications such as Politico and the Boston Globe. (See supporting documents for a further breakdown of media coverage)

Our series of infographics were viewed by approximately 8,200 people on our campaign Facebook page. This does not include views that were shared on the pages of community groups within our client towns.

The Patriot Ledger and Hull Times newspapers rode the Ferry and interviewed riders. Both covered the event from multiple angles and had coverage posted that same day. Three TV news crews (Boston 25, NBC-10 and WCVB-5) had crews waiting on the dock to interview riders and elected officials as they arrived in Boston Harbor. Each had coverage on their nightly newscasts.

The exposure generated from the event, both from our internal promotion and the ensuing media coverage, drew the attention of many in the community. We heard from several residents who learned of the campaign through coverage of this event, and who as a result attended a South Shore-specific public hearing on the proposed cuts. The hearing was viewed online by more than 400 people, and an MBTA commissioner later said the public hearing was the “most well-attended forum she had ever been a part of” and that it brought the needs of South Shore residents “to the forefront” of the MBTA’s decision making.



Results Documentation, cont.

Ultimately, the final cuts to South Shore transit service were greatly scaled back from the MBTA's original proposal. Most noticeably, one of the two Ferry lines was saved from being cut. The leaders of our four client towns said the result was "in large part due to the efforts of the campaign," and that "Ride the Ferry Day" was among the most successful and impactful events we held over the course of the six weeks. MBTA officials admitted to the state politicians that they had seen the campaign and it got their attention.

Media coverage of "Ride the Ferry Day" was featured in the following...

POLITICO

The Patriot Ledger

The Enterprise

Patch

**BOSTON
25 NEWS**

WHDH 7

