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LYNN – The Lynn Business Partnership gathered with MBTA General Manager and CEO Phillip Eng on Wednesday to discuss the MBTA’s future in the city.

The meeting happened shortly before [Eng and other local and state leaders gathered for a press conference](#) at the future site of the interim Commuter Rail station platform, which will now open in December.

The meeting was attended by more than 25 local leaders including members of the state delegation, city officials, and local business owners who raised questions about the current state of the MBTA in Lynn and potential future development opportunities.

“It’s an important conversation today,” Lynn Business Partnership Chair Steven Antonakes said. “An important component of the ongoing economic revitalization efforts for the City of Lynn is a functioning transportation system.”

Eng took over the top job at the MBTA in March after previously serving as president of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Long Island Rail Road and interim president of New York City Transit, experiences he referenced often during the discussion.

"When you are responsible for such an important entity... you realize the impact that you have on the people you serve in the communities and the businesses," Eng said. "Service was not where it should be. Public faith had been lost."

According to Eng, one of the most important aspects of his new position is to make up for the MBTA's past mistakes.

"We are making great strides within the agency to put ourselves back where, pun intended, we're on the right track," Eng said. "There have been a lot of decisions made in the past that I think have gotten us to a point where we really need to reset, and that's what I've been doing with the organization."

Eng said the new approach has to be building for the future, which he said includes preparing for his goal of someday seeing a zero-emission transit system.

"The intent is not just to restore service for today, but how do we set this place up to prepare for our future, our children, and our children's children," Eng said. "The intent is to never do something that precludes it, gets in the way, or that you have to undo later."

Eng said the organization will continue to explore the idea of developing electric rail, like the proposed electrification of Commuter Rail service in the Environmental Justice Corridor that Mayor Jared Nicholson and state Sen. Brendan Crighton advocated for [in front of the MBTA Board of Directors in July](#).

Crighton, who serves as chair of the Joint Committee on Transportation, also spoke out in July, [calling the original September 2024 timeline](#) for the opening of the temporary Commuter Rail platform in Lynn "unacceptable."

In the meeting, Crighton praised Eng and Gov. Maura Healey and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll's administration for being receptive to Lynn's transportation needs.

"We've been arguing for years and fighting for years that once this service was closed, there needs to be a replacement there, whether it be temporary or permanent," Crighton said. "This is a new approach, this is a new administration, and I think one that's committed to transportation statewide, but also to making sure some of the wrongs in Lynn are righted after a long history of disinvestment."

According to Eng, when he visited the site of the current Lynn station and garage over the summer, he saw the urgent need for a solution in the city.

“I felt that the schedule and everything that we anticipated was not acceptable,” Eng said.

He added that despite the challenge an expedited timeline presented, the work exemplified the MBTA’s new direction.

“I think that shows that the T is keeping an open mind to things, that’s important,” Eng said.

Eng said another priority going forward is expanding the frequency of Commuter Rail service in Lynn, which he described as a similar challenge to one he faced when he worked at the Long Island Rail Road.

“If the frequency wasn’t there, people would drive or they would go to another branch,” Eng said. “That’s not what you want to do... Without a doubt, frequency makes a difference.”

Lynn landlord John Gilberg (a director of Essex Media Group, which publishes *The Item*), raised concerns with Eng about future upkeep and maintenance for any new developments the MBTA is involved with in the city.

“I’m hoping with all these capital improvements, there’s a place for massive upkeep and maintenance,” Gilberg said.

Eng said that one of his priorities early on in his tenure had been increased accountability for maintenance across the system. He touted increased efforts to hire new and well-equipped employees, including Chief of Stations Dennis Varley.

“One of the things that I noticed that I needed to ensure was that when we put people in positions of responsibility, they are accountable for what those positions are,” Eng said.

On the future of the deteriorating Lynn station parking garage, Eng did not give a timeline on any projects. However, he said there will be continuing conversations with the state delegation, as well as leaders from the city and the private sector, to find the best fit for the needs of the city down the line.

“I know when public agencies think they know better for a community, sometimes it’s not with all the right information,” Eng said “The last thing I want to do is invest

dollars that are invaluable to me and do something that is not consistent or even hinders what the Lynn community is looking to do.”

One of the recent projects in Lynn has been the MBTA ferry between Blossom Street Pier in Lynn and Long Warf in Boston, which had been championed for years by local leaders like Jim Cowdell, executive director of EDIC/Lynn.

Cowdell noted the success of the ferry service, which began in June and was [recently extended until November](#), and had nearly 20,000 riders in July and August combined.

“No matter what metric you use, it’s been a huge success,” Cowdell said. “We really want to expand and we hope you’ll consider that.”

State Rep. Jenny Armini, who is one of the ferry’s staunchest supporters, credited Eng’s openness to innovative approaches like water transportation.

Eng said the T is committed to building more robust water-transportation options in Lynn and other places. He added that the MBTA will also make it a priority to make the system more equitable by providing accessible, efficient, and affordable services across all modes of transportation.

State Rep. Peter Capano, who serves on the Joint Committee on Transportation, praised the new approach the Healey-Driscoll administration and MBTA leadership are taking.

“We’re meeting to see how we can move forward,” Capano said. “For a long time, we weren’t at that point, and I feel really good. I’m really happy, probably for the first time, with the direction we’re moving.”

Overall, Eng said that the MBTA is taking a top-down approach to make sure the system is working as well and efficiently as possible.

“You can’t tell people to take the system if the system is not reliable and frequent enough,” Eng said. “We still have challenges to work on, but we will fix those and restore public confidence.”



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