



Traffic congestion exacerbates economic woes. But shuttle participants are already part of the solution.

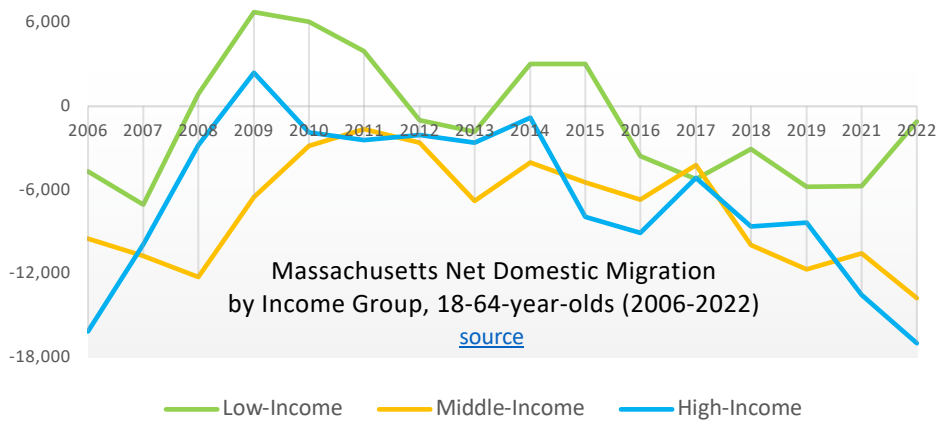
128 Business Council
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Massachusetts businesses are currently facing a historically unusual number of challenges.

If employee hiring and retention have become major sources of concern for your company over the last several years, you are not alone.

The labor force is, in point of fact, shrinking. Between 2018 and 2023, the Commonwealth’s labor force shrunk by 2.4%—a trend which not only limits the pool of available talent for businesses looking to hire, but also poses a threat to overall economic growth. Looking to the future, by 2030 the number of jobs in Massachusetts will grow 21%, but the number of workers will only expand by 1.5%, according to the Massachusetts Department of Economic Research.

These hiring and retention challenges have been exacerbated by the continued net outmigration of workers from Massachusetts. Again this April, Massachusetts is “seeing the highest outmigration numbers in the last 30 years,” and the majority of this outmigration is among college-



educated, working adults aged 25-44. This outmigration shrinks the pool of qualified workers available to businesses and increases the competition for talent—which can disproportionately strain suburban and semi-suburban zones like the Route 128 West Corridor. And this outmigration is not sector-neutral: The workers who are leaving are often those with the highest education levels, which is bad news for innovation-driven fields.



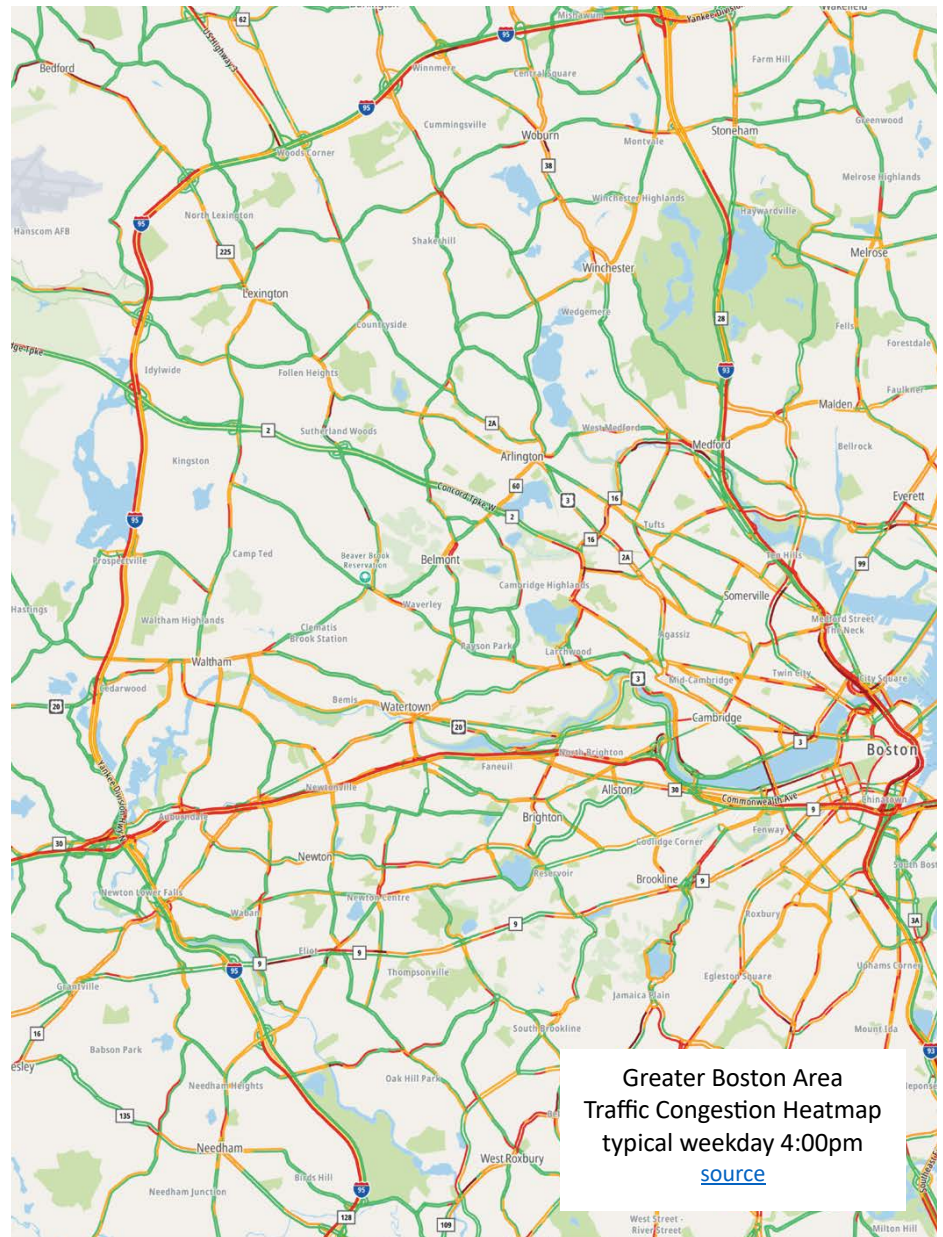
Why are so many more current and potential employees moving *out* of the Commonwealth than moving *in*? The [Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation](#) has identified rising housing costs, MBTA unreliability, **and long commutes on ultra-congested roadways** as the top reasons for this loss.

That’s right: Outmigration is directly connected to high congestion and long commute times. Commutes all across the country [are getting longer](#)—but this is [especially](#) true in the

Greater Boston area. For the past several years, Boston has been ranked among the top 5 most congested cities in the United States. The average driver in Boston lost 88 hours to congestion in [2023](#), compared to 78 hours in 2021. This increased time spent on the road, stuck in traffic isn’t just an inconvenience. It has real economic costs, including lost productivity, increased

transportation expenses, and an increased perception among workers that the state is a frustrating place to live and work.

Just as commutes are getting longer, workers are reporting less tolerance for time lost to driving. Congested commutes have, of course, long been a workplace gripe. However, [“\[b\]efore the Covid-19](#)



[outbreak, Americans resigned themselves to long, brutal, painful, and soul-sucking commutes.](#)” All of the lost time, elevated stress, and driving-related expenses were loudly lamented, yes. But they also seemed inevitable. *Then, suddenly, many workers were able to suspend the grueling haul between office and home.*



That reprieve—temporary for some, ongoing for others—has caused a mentality shift for many workers. With their commute no longer inevitable, they are more aware of the health, time, and financial costs associated with it. (Commutes of 45 minutes or more [are](#)

[linked to](#) worse daily mood and overall health, and even commutes of just 30 minutes are linked to higher stress and anger.) **In fact, [an increasing number of employees believe that they should be reimbursed—or even paid—for their commutes.](#)**

Thus, while many employers are anticipating the cessation of remote work, workers’ own perceptions of productivity have been permanently altered.

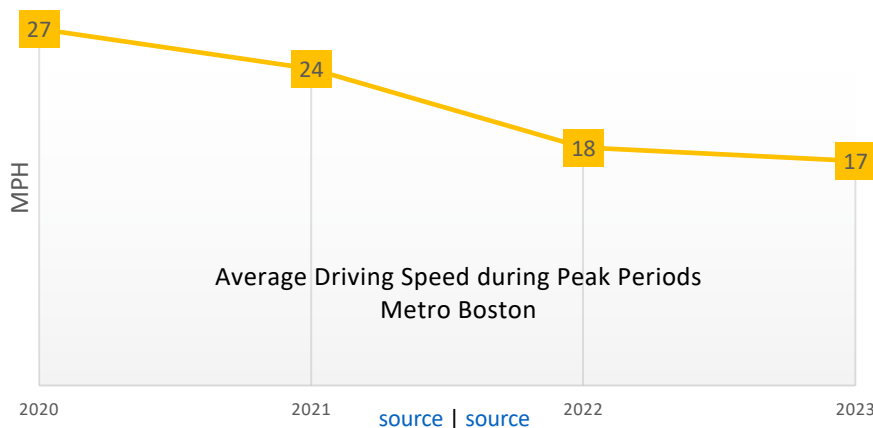
The persistence of remote work and increased travel times both contribute to commercial real estate vacancies. As of early 2024, the overall office vacancy rate in Greater Boston had surpassed 20%, a level not seen in two decades, and suburban sublease availability [reached 5.9 million square feet](#)—actually exceeding the amount available in the city’s central

business district. When spaces *are* leased, [they are often being leased in smaller increments](#), with many companies looking to downsize their office footprints.



For our members who are in the business of developing and managing properties, increasing vacancy rates over the past two years have created an ethos of uncertainty. They face a challenging market characterized by ongoing uncertainty about future space needs. In response, some developers have shifted to focus on office-to-residential conversions, although these conversions are logistically complex.

In the face of all these challenges, it is more imperative than ever to reduce congestion and cut travel times by expanding the availability of transportation alternatives. Workers want convenient and affordable commuting options—including easy access to public transit and meaningful support for other car-free travel options.



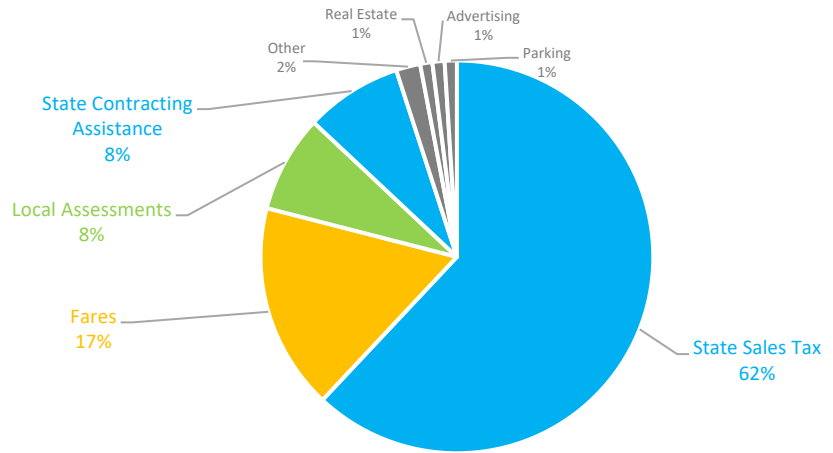
You are already part of the solution to all these challenges.

128 Business Council has been in the (non-profit) business of connecting employers and employees for 35 years, and there has never been a more critical time for that mission.

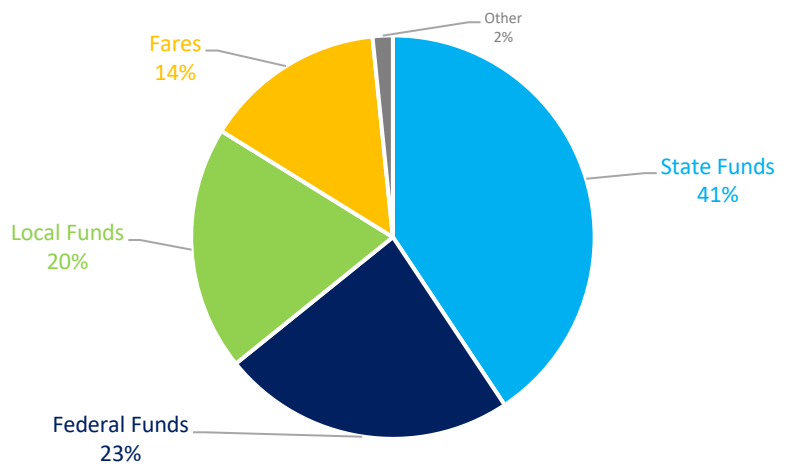
We provide innovative transportation solutions that foster more sustainable workplaces and more sustainable communities. Our mission is to create a more connected future for all our members—a future where company and employer, landlord and tenant, town and resident all have efficient access to one another as we travel through healthier, less congested communities. And we serve as a trusted partner for both businesses and municipalities in their efforts to meet their sustainability goals.

We depend upon your collaboration and investment to actualize this mission. Unlike the MBTA or the Commonwealth’s Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs), 128 Business Council is *not* built upon a funding model relying on state or federal sources.

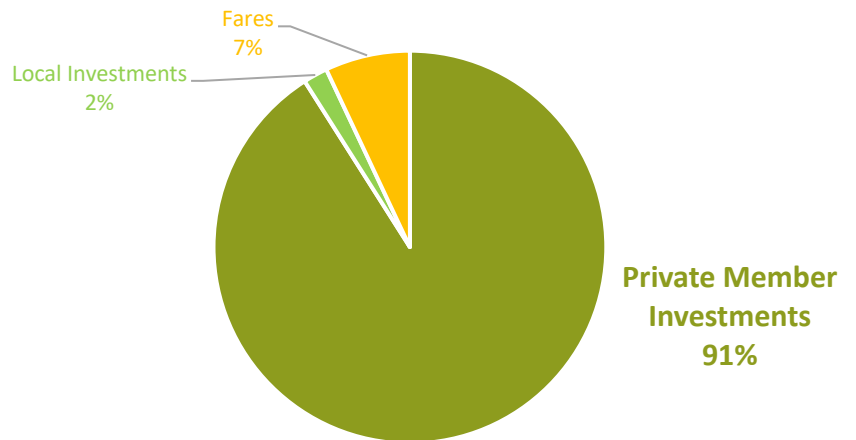
MBTA Total Revenue by Source (2023)



Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) Operating Revenue by Source (2014-2022)



128 Business Council’s Total Revenue by Source (2023)



[source](#) | [source](#) | [source](#)

Instead, each and every member company's investment in our services contributes directly and cooperatively to building up the region's transportation network.

As a result, every member has a positive influence on the economic competitiveness of the entire region.

Through your membership in 128 Business Council, you are already helping to address the critical issues of employee (and tenant) recruitment and retention by providing alternative transportation options that make commuting more manageable and more appealing. This is particularly important as job growth outpaces workforce expansion and workers are moving out of Massachusetts due to factors like long commutes and high housing costs.

Thanks for making public transportation possible to our car-dependent mega corps!

-Grid rider comment

Not only do ["businesses risk limiting their talent pools if their workplaces are accessible only by driving,"](#) but the very

nature of being isolated transportation-wise means employers and landlords are unlikely to be fully aware of *whom* car-dependence might be deterring. For an employee who does not already own a personal vehicle, a car-dependent worksite will be inherently less appealing than one accessible by transit or shuttle.

Furthermore, car-free employees and tenants often prove more stable: The additional burden of having to buy a car can make employees less likely to switch jobs.

The shuttle service is great! It let me stop owning a car in the city and was a huge selling point for taking my current job.

-Grid rider comment

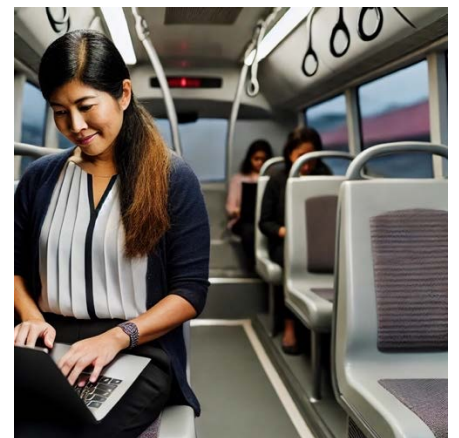
And this is even more true in a hybrid work environment. After all, if you didn't want to buy a car for a 5-day/week commute, why would you want to buy one for a thrice-, twice-, or even once-weekly one?

In a labor market where hiring and retention are increasingly difficult, the shuttles you help support offer a vital solution.

I am very thankful that the shuttle exists... It is faster for me to take the shuttle home than to drive, as I can bypass all of the traffic.

-Grid rider comment

As discussed above, employees are increasingly unwilling to endure long, stressful commutes. In fact, a growing number of employees [now view commuting time](#) as *part of* their workday, considering themselves to be "on the clock" the moment they settle into their seat. If that seat is in a single-occupancy vehicle (SOV), then those minutes or hours are simply lost and the workday shrinks by an hour or two. *But if that seat is on one of our shuttles, employees and employers alike can reclaim hours of productivity.*



Reclaiming that SOV commuting time for increased productivity isn't just a win for employers. By helping the work get done faster and reducing

the stress associated with being behind the wheel, employees achieve a better balance between work and personal life. This is particularly important in a hybrid work environment, where **commuting may be less frequent, but its effects are more noticeable because of that infrequency.**



Shuttles also have an important role to play in repopulating office space. [According to Gallup](#), the top reason employees give for not wanting to return full-time to the office is that they don't like their commutes, and if employees don't want to return to the office, their employers can't feel confident with maintaining or newly renting sizeable footprints. Many of the employers who have been most successful in convincing existing employees to stay with their current jobs *and* return to the office, on either a full-time or hybrid schedule, have taken 2024 as a year of opportunity for [reducing drive-alone rates](#).

Your existing employees and tenants don't want to return to their old commute, so offer them something better!



Shuttles are important to repopulating office space because they provide a convenient commuting option that can help offset the cost and stress of driving alone. By offering shuttle services, employers and landlords can make their workplaces more appealing to potential tenants and employees, particularly in suburban and semi-suburban areas like the Route 128 West Corridor that are heavily reliant on car travel.

There are signs of recovery on the horizon when it comes to the commercial real estate market. Resume Builder found that [90% of surveyed companies intend to have return-to-work mandated by the end of 2024](#). Moreover, the Greater Boston development pipeline is strong, with millions of square feet already under construction and more deals expected.

A robust non-SOV transportation network will be a major contributor to this leasing recovery, ensuring that new and existing space throughout the Route 128 West Corridor is prepared to compete with space closer to the urban core.





The benefits of shuttle investment go beyond recruitment and retention.

There will always be workers for whom the shuttle is not an option, thanks to geographic or scheduling limitations. By reducing the number of SOVs on the road, we ease traffic congestion and shorten commutes for everyone—including those commuters who must rely on personal vehicles. The more drivers we can get out of SOVs and onto the shuttle, the clearer the roadways will be for those who truly *must* drive their car.

128 Business Council's transportation solutions also help companies lower their carbon footprint, meet internal

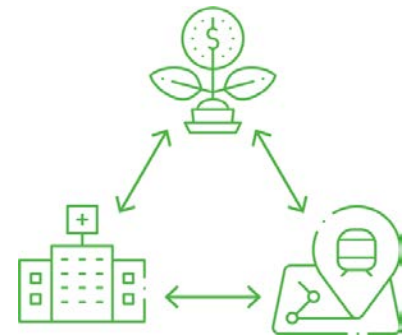
sustainability goals, and better align with corporate social responsibility initiatives.

In fact, the impact of cooperative shuttle services goes well beyond transportation. **Your shuttle investment improves the overall quality of life in the region by protecting public health and bolstering the local economy.**

Fewer cars on the road mean less air pollution, which directly benefits public health by reducing the incidence of respiratory issues and other pollution-related illnesses. Furthermore, commuters who use public transit (including shuttles), walk, or bike [have been found to be happier](#) compared to those who commute by car.

As for the local economy, functional and efficient public transit systems bring people to the region, [growing the potential labor pool](#), and attract businesses looking to relocate or expand.

Plus, congestion is expensive: [INRIX](#) estimates that congestion cost drivers and companies in the U.S. more than \$81 billion dollars in 2022. When fewer cars are on the road due to more individuals taking public transit, less company time is wasted, and goods and services can be transported more efficiently.



In other words: Quality public transportation, improved community health outcomes, and local economic growth are inextricably linked.

128 Business Council is not simply a service provider. We strive to be a catalyst for positive change, making the Greater Boston area a better place to live, work, and thrive. Through your investment in our cooperative shuttle systems, you stand beside us in that mission. ■ ■ ■