

Customer Satisfaction Electronic Survey Results

- January /February 2010

The logo for the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad Company (MBCR) features the letters "MBCR" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A yellow diagonal bar, resembling a lightning bolt or a stylized train track, extends from the bottom left of the "M" towards the top right, passing behind the "C" and "R".

*Massachusetts Bay
Commuter Railroad Company*

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As before, the Customer Service Department created a series of surveys using the website known as 'Survey Monkey' for the week beginning the 25th of January 2010.

The purpose of these surveys is to gather information for analysis and evaluation of customer satisfaction on a number of topics in order to review MBCR's current performance. Furthermore, the rationale is also to be able to investigate any changes in MBCR's level of performance, from the perspective of commuters, by comparing the information with statistics from previously conducted. Through the surveys, public opinions concerning various factors of the railroad are gathered using a number of specific questions; these include:

- *Which train did you take INBOUND to/OUTBOUND from Boston?*
- *Was your ticket/pass checked or your fare collected?*
- *Were clear announcements made on your train at every station?*
- *Was the interior of your train coach free from litter?*
- *How was the overall appearance of your train coach? (Restrooms, seats, windows).*
- *Was your train crowded? (Were all seats including the middle seat occupied and were there standees.)*

In order to obtain an accurate view of system wide and singular line performance, as many potential customers as possible were persuaded to answer these six simple questions for both their morning and evening commute for 5 consecutive days. On the fifth day, customers also received the opportunity to make specific comments/recommendations for the survey and MBCR's service. As an incentive for participation continuously over the 5 days, customers also received a chance of winning one of four free monthly-rail passes on the final day, courtesy of the Customer Service Department.

Table 1 shows the number of surveys completed by line in the January/February 2010 survey compared with the quantity that were completed for the October/September 2009 Survey. It also displays the percentage change over this time period by line.

Table 1

Line	Surveys Completed – Oct/Sept 2009	Surveys Completed – Jan/Feb 2010	Percentage change
Providence / Stoughton Line	1016	974	-4.13%
Fitchburg Line	392	378	-3.57%
Haverhill Line	526	442	-15.97%
Worcester / Framingham Line	594	406	-31.65%
Plymouth / Kingston Line	292	336	+15.07%
Lowell Line	416	324	-22.12%
Middleborough / Lakeville Line	402	370	+7.96%
Franklin Line	500	504	+0.80%
Newburyport / Rockport Line	714	638	-10.64%
Needham Line	212	201	-5.19%
Greenbush Line	86	86	0.00%
Fairmount Line	52	22	-57.69
Total	5202	4681	-10.02%

According to **Table 1**, the total number of completed surveys was 10.02% lower compared with the quantity completed for the October/September 2009 investigation. This is disappointing, although not surprising, as recurring surveys experience a drop in participants and we have not marketed the survey recently to encourage an increase in the number of customers participating.

Now that we have gathered this data, we can use it in a number of ways. First, it will allow us to identify areas where we are underperforming so that these can be targeted for improvement. Second, when we compare this data with that gathered in any other survey, it will allow us to identify where we have already improved or where further effort is required.

In order to make it easier and quicker to compare lines and to achieve a perspective of the overall performance of our entire system, this report will employ the use of the 'Overall Performance Index'.

Note: Before beginning analysis, it is important to consider the fact that the statistics generated from this report are merely estimates of the actual figures. This is due to a number of factors. For example, the number of surveyed individuals is far smaller than the total number of MBCR customers and despite careful use of language, there remains an element of subjectivity in individual interpretations of the survey questions and the way in which they are answered.

The Overall Performance Index

The 'Overall Performance Index' is a weighted average of the positive percentages of the five factors inquired about in the survey. In essence, it is an index value that can be used to summarize the quality of fare collection and service provision, as well as being useful for comparison between lines. It can be calculated using the formula shown in **Equation 1**.

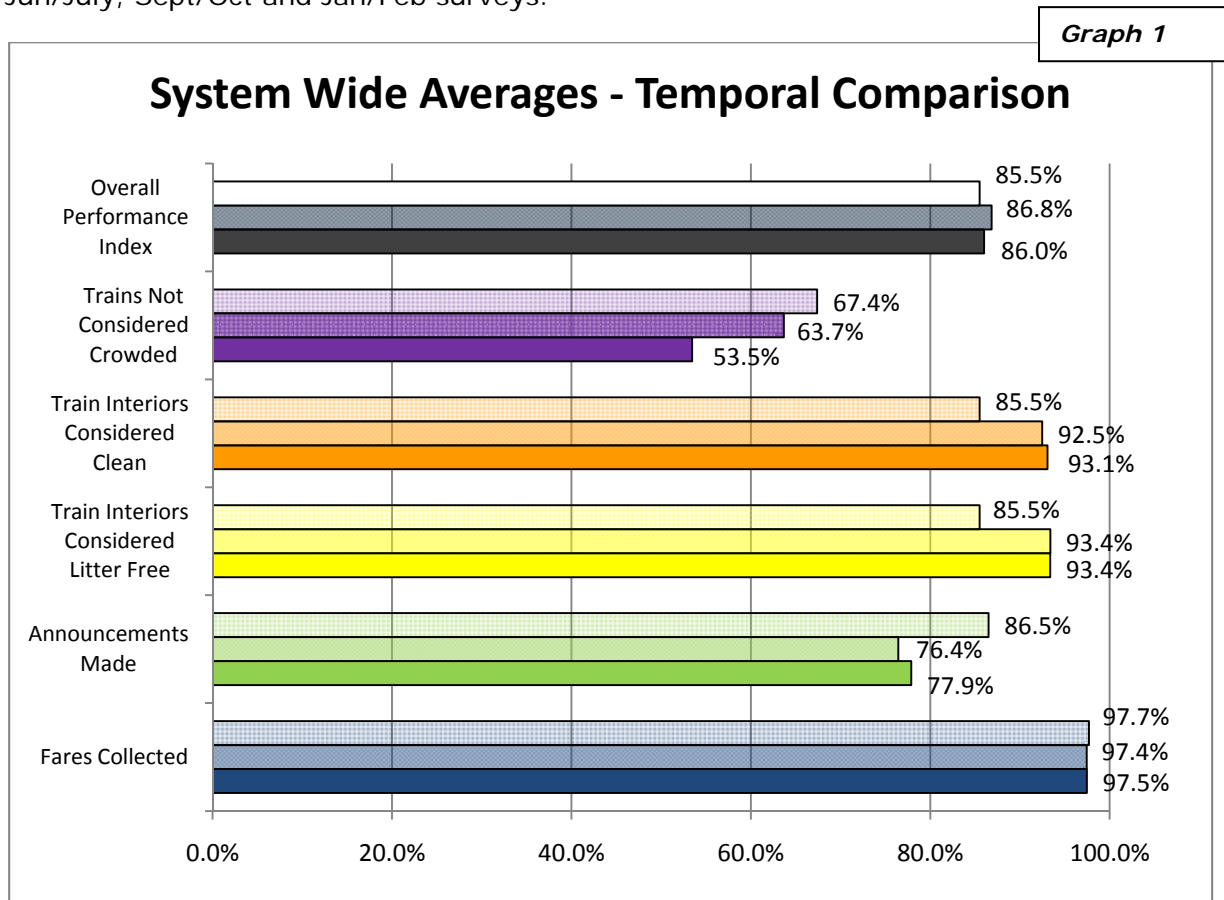
Equation 1

Overall Performance Index

$$= ((1.5 * \text{Fare Collection}) + \text{Announcements Made} + (0.5 * \text{Train Interiors Considered Litter Free}) + (0.5 * \text{Train Interiors Considered Clean}) + (0.5 * \text{Trains Not Considered Crowded})) / 4$$

System Wide Averages

Graph 1 shows the system wide averages for positive feedback on each of the five factors listed on page 1 and the 'Overall Performance Index' for the entire service for the Jun/July, Sept/Oct and Jan/Feb surveys.



According to **Graph 1**, the overall performance of MBCR has remained consistently high at around 86–87% for the last three quarters; however the graph does show that there has been a minor decrease of 0.8% in the overall quality of service. Also highlighted is a steadily increasing perception of overcrowding, there is a traditional increase in ridership during the winter months and this also reflects the shortage of cars in service during January.

Key	
09 Jun/July	– Top Layer
09 Sept/Oct	– Middle layer
10 Jan/Feb	– Bottom Layer

According to the graph, the percentage of train interiors considered clean and litter free have both remained equally high at approximately 93.1% clean and 93.4% litter free. This could reflect the efficiency of the steam cleaning system currently employed by the mechanical department to deal with years of built up grime and dirt.

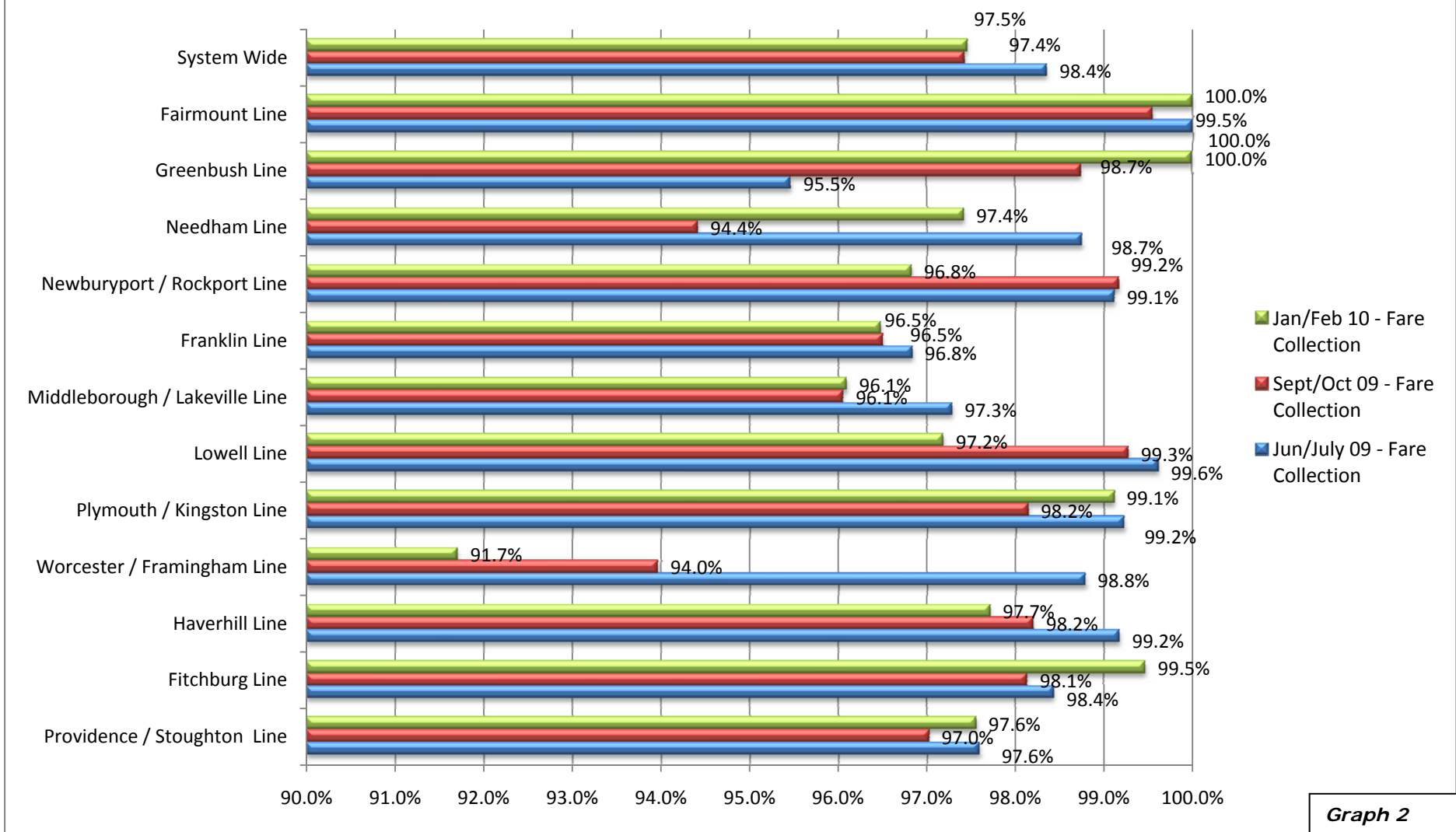
In contrast, **Graph 1** also indicates that the percentage of necessary audible announcements made has decreased by -8.6% a significant amount when compared with last summer. However, it does infer that there has been an effort to increase this statistic following the September/October survey as the percentage of announcements made has increased by 1.5%. Lastly, the percentage of fares collected system wide has remained relatively constant for last three consecutive seasons at around 97.5%. The Fairmount and Greenbush lines should be recognized for the 100% reached in this category in the latest survey.

Line Comparison (Graphs 2 – 7)

According to Graph 2,

- Total fare collection has remained high on all lines (between 91.7% - 100%).
- 100% of fares are being collected on the Greenbush and Fairmount lines.
- The Middleborough/Lakeville (96.1%) and Worcester/Framingham (91.7%) exhibit the lowest levels of fare collection.

Line Comparison - Fare Collection

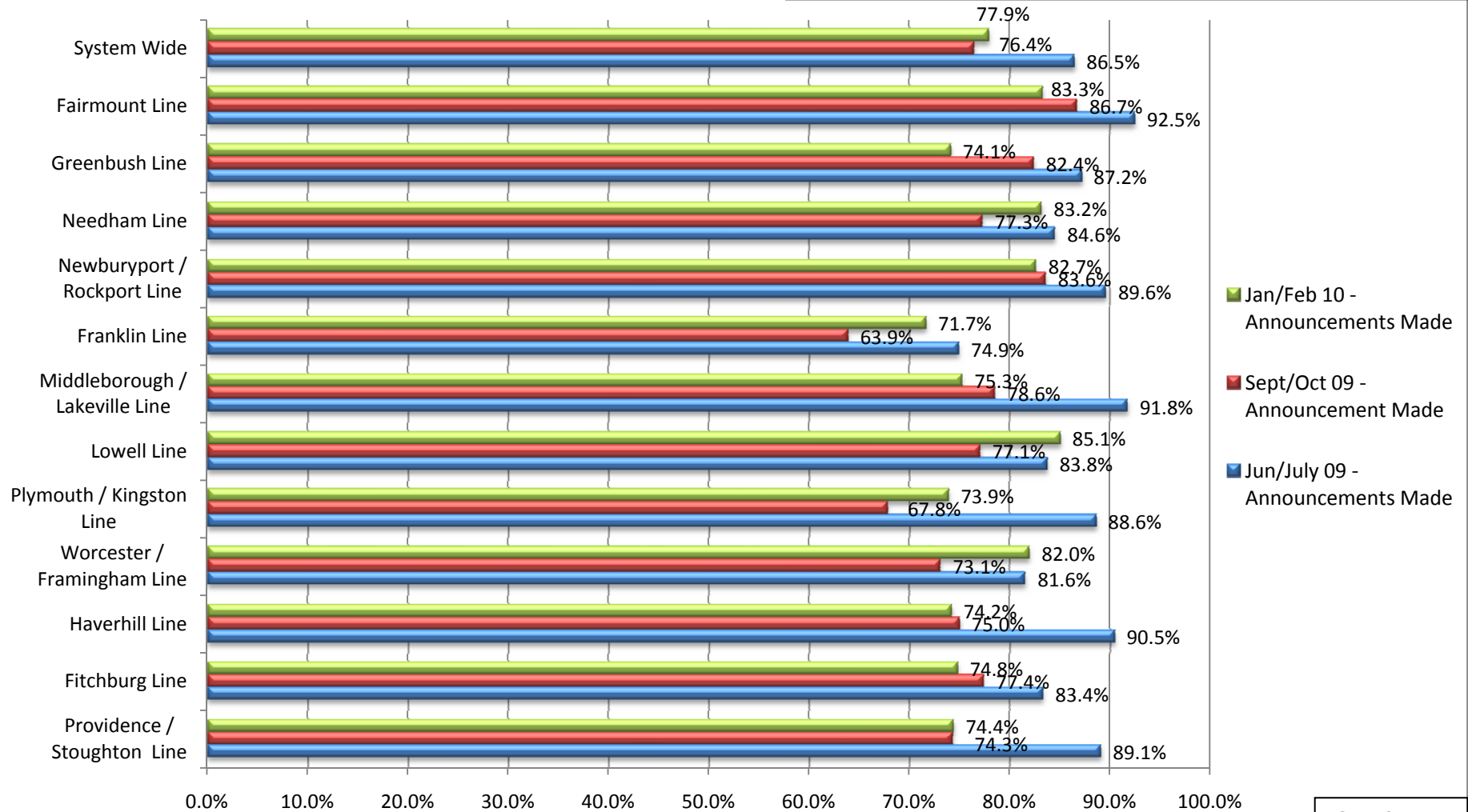


Graph 2

Line Comparison - Announcements Made

Analysis of Graph 3 indicates that:

- There has been an improvement in the number of clear announcements made on most lines.
- Announcements on the Worcester/Framingham (+8.9%), Lowell (+8.0%) and Franklin (+7.8%) lines have improved most.
- Announcements on the Greenbush (-8.3%), Fairmount (-3.4%) and Middleborough/Lakeville (-3.3%) have deteriorated principally.

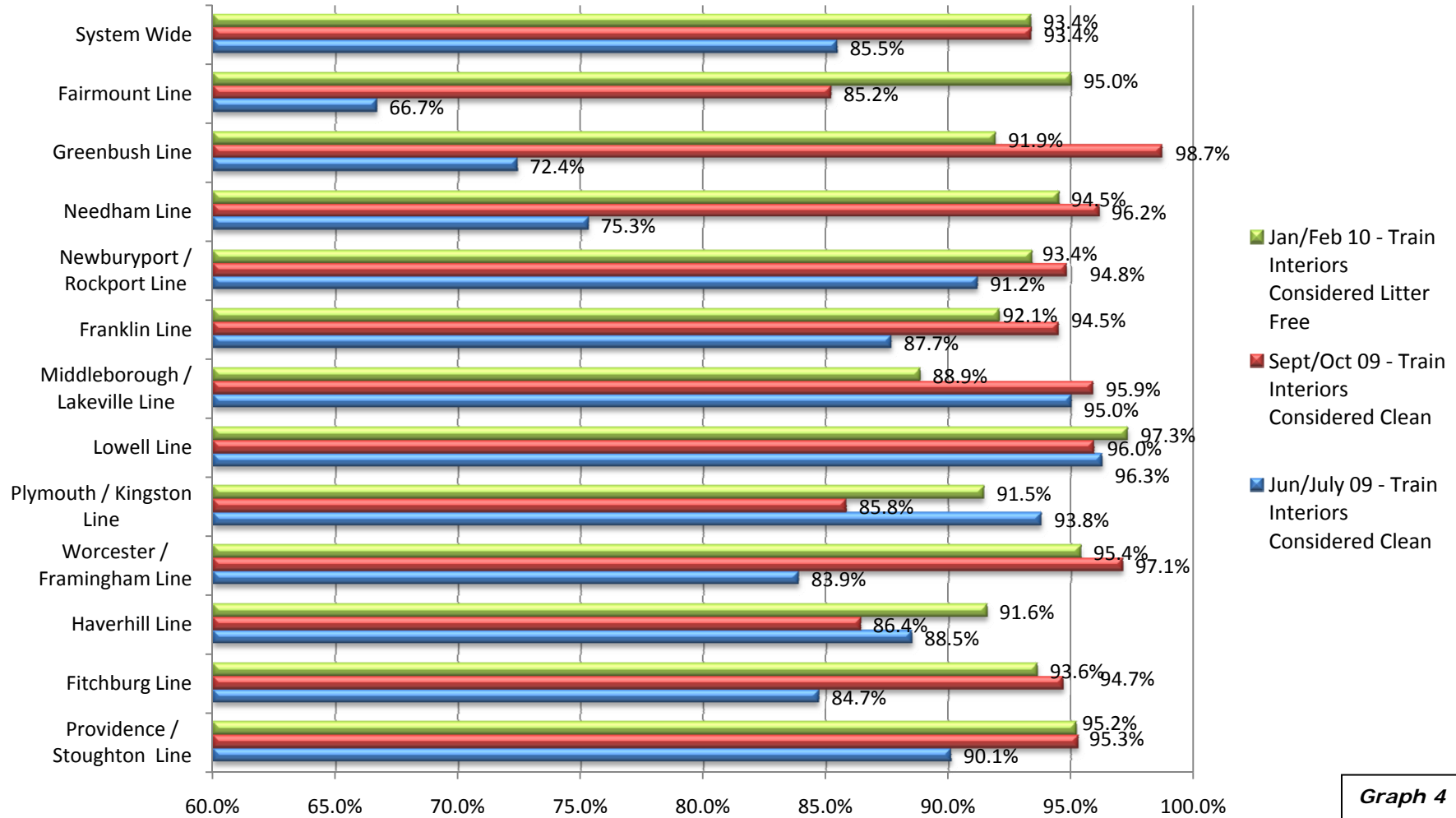


Graph 3

Line Comparison - Trains Considered Litter Free

Visibly, Graph 4 shows that:

- There has been a significant decrease in the presence of litter on the Fairmount (+9.8%), Plymouth/Kingston (+5.7%) and Haverhill (+5.2%) lines.
- Litter has become a more important issue on the Middleborough/Lakeville (-7.0%), Greenbush (-6.9%) and Franklin (-2.4%) Lines.

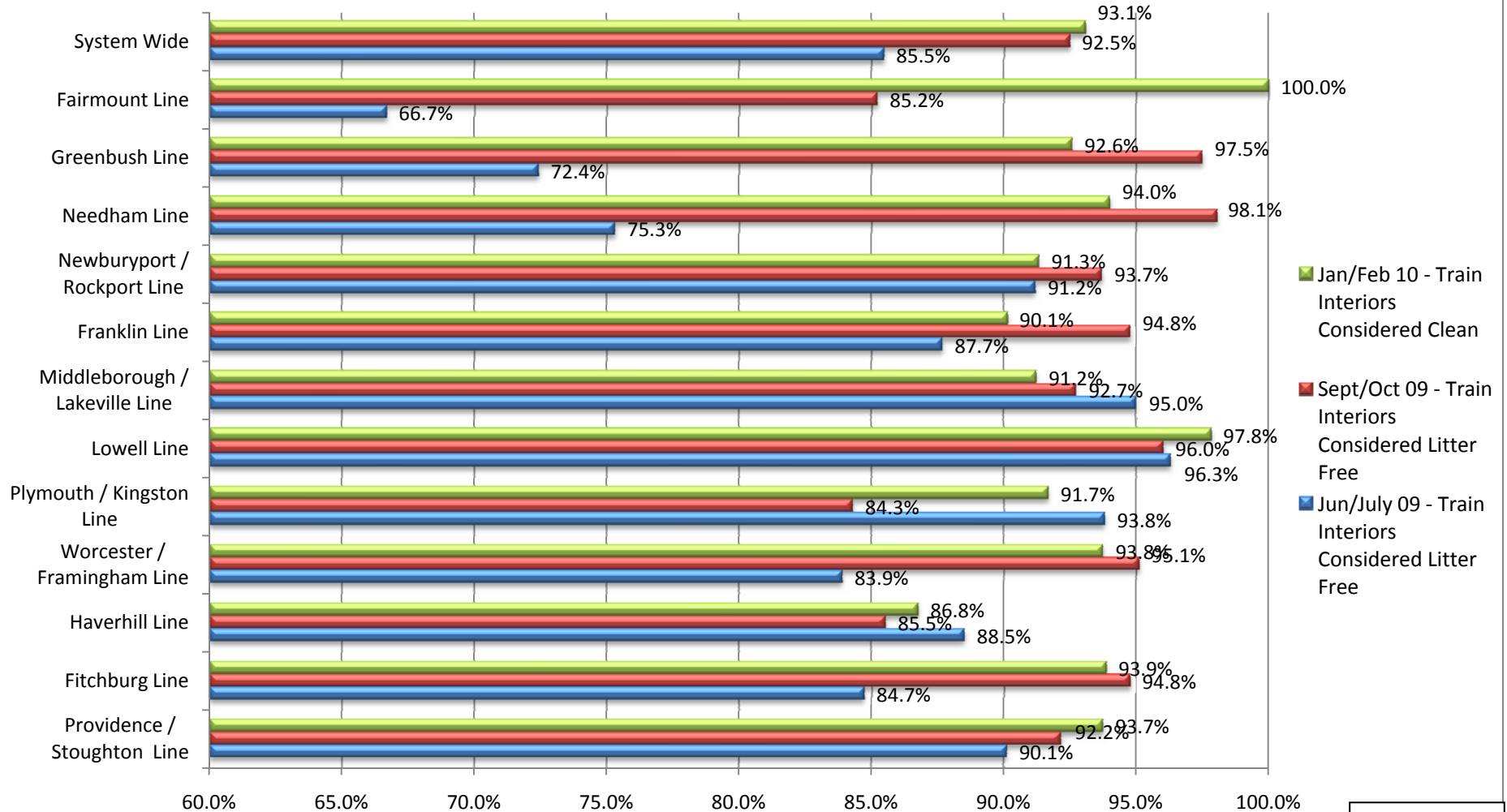


Graph 4

Line Comparison - Train Interiors Considered Clean

Analysis of Graph 5 point towards:

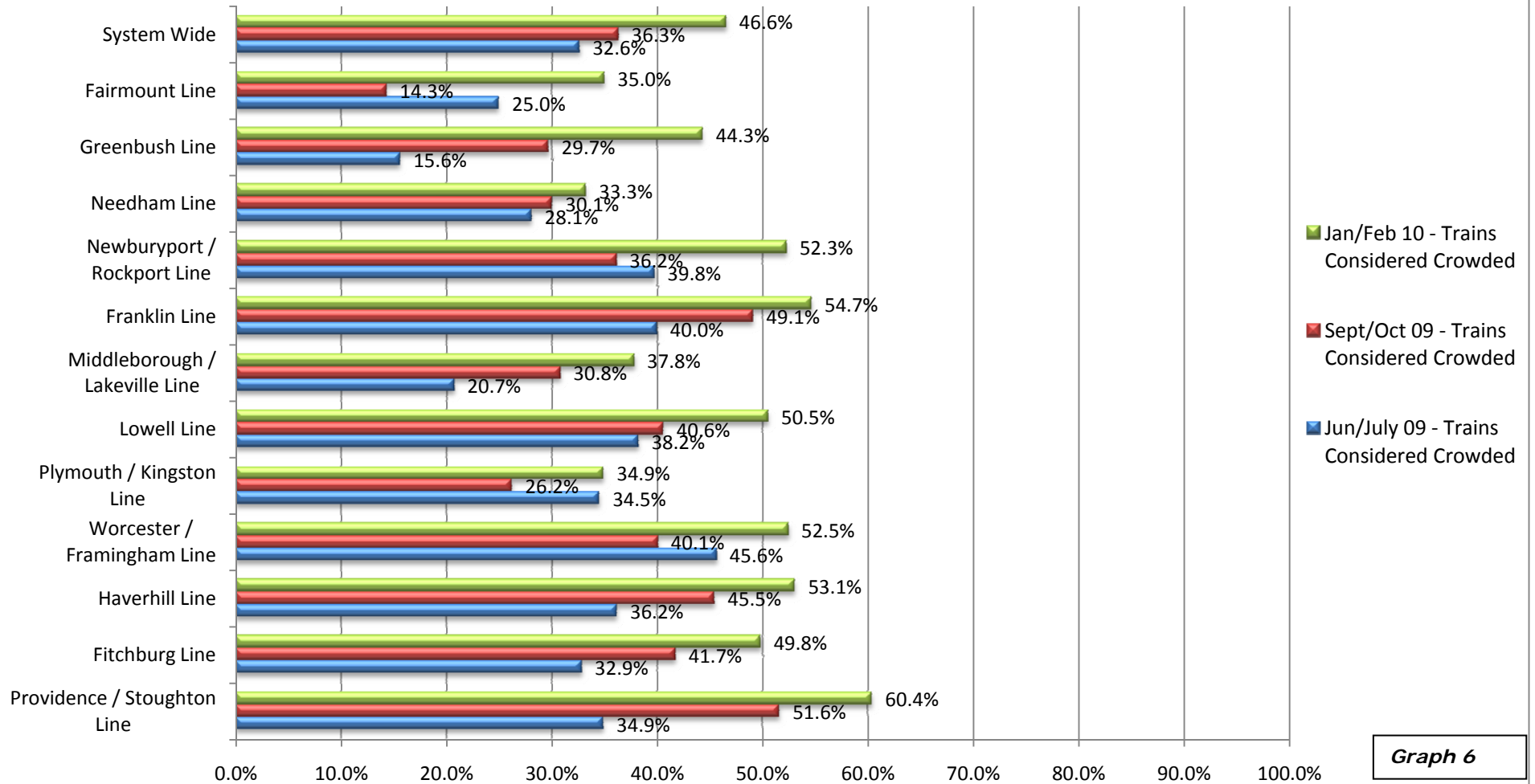
- Major increases in cleanliness on the Fairmount (+14.8%) and Plymouth/Kingston (+7.3%) lines.
- Major decreases in cleanliness on the Greenbush (-4.9%) and Franklin (-4.7%) lines.
- Perceived levels of cleanliness have remained relatively stable on all other lines.



Graph 5

Line Comparison - Trains Considered Crowded

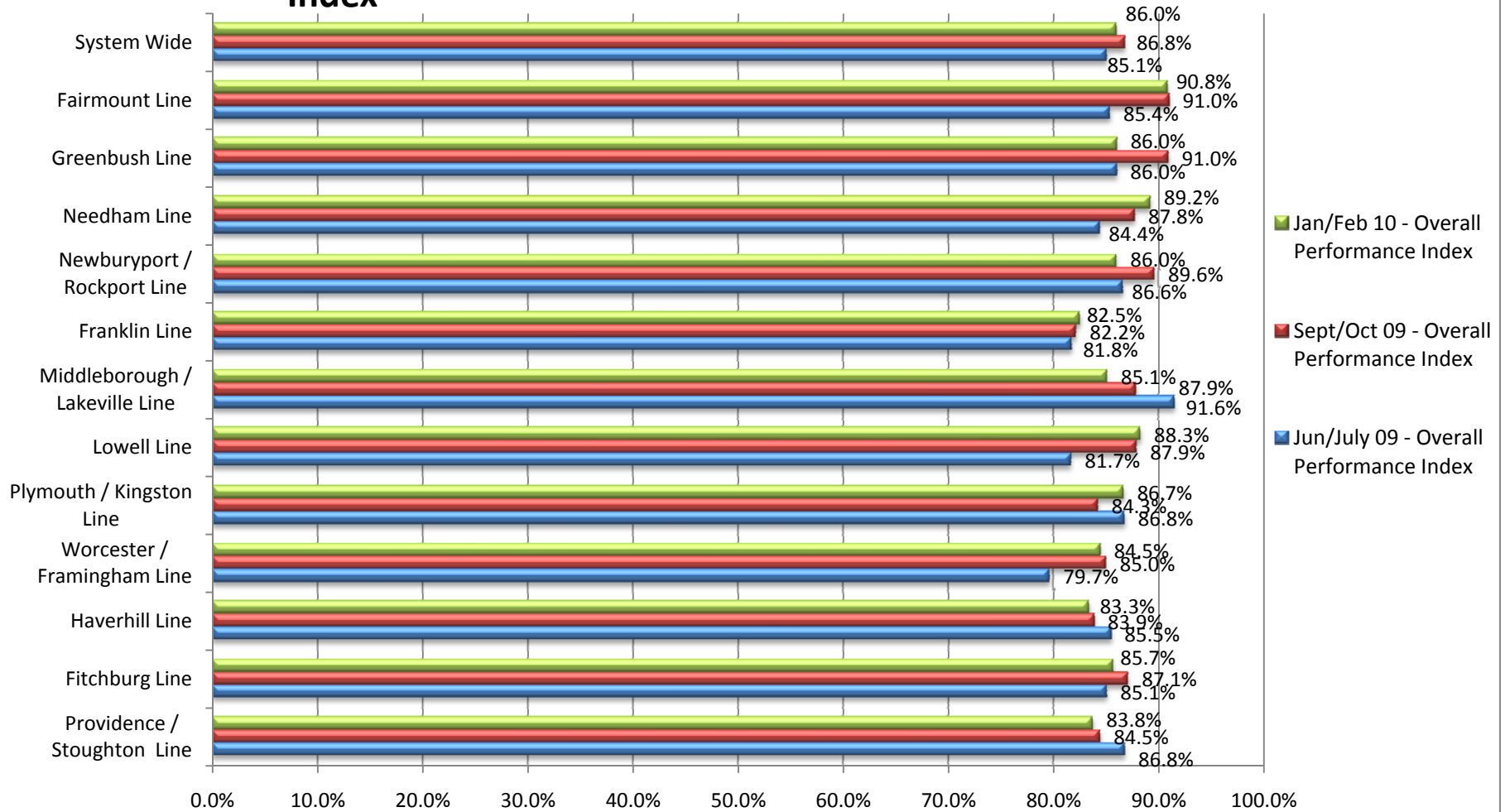
Before analysis of this data, it is important to acknowledge the subjective nature of this data, due to individual understanding of the concept of crowdedness. Despite this, according to the Graph 6, Perceived Crowdedness has increased on every line, most significantly on the Fairmount (+20.7%), Newburyport/Rockport (+16.1%) and Greenbush (+14.6%) lines. According to customers, the busiest lines in January were the Providence/Stoughton (60.4%), Franklin (54.7%) and Haverhill (53.1%) Lines.



Graph 6

According to the Graph 7, Overall Performance has remained relatively stable on the on all lines with the highest change in performance on the Greenbush Line (-5%). In addition, the graph indicates that the highest performing lines are the Fairmount (90.8%) and Needham (89.2%) lines. In comparison, the lowest performing line is the Franklin line (82.5%) consistent with this data.

Line Comparison - Overall Performance Index



Graph 7

Customer Perspectives of Importance

As an addendum to the Friday survey, every participant was asked to rank the factors which they considered to be the most important aspects of their daily commute. These factors included:

- Announcements
- Fare Collection
- On-Time Service
- Reliability
- Cleanliness
- Comfort (Heat/AC)

This ranking has a number of important purposes. First, it is useful for clarifying what exactly is considered most important by the average customer and thus what aspects of the daily service should be targeted for improvement. Second, it also helps to reinforce our understanding of customer values. Lastly, asking the customers about their opinion on this matter emphasizes MBCR's commitment to the riding public and to providing the best service possible. The average ranking of these six factors, which has been established by calculating both the mean and modal average rankings, is shown in Table 2.

Ranking	
Announcements	5 / 6
Fare Collection	5 / 6
On-Time Service	1
Reliability	2
Cleanliness	4
Comfort (Heat/AC)	3

Table 2

Visibly, on-time performance is viewed as the single most important factor for the majority of customers; this is closely followed by reliability of service. This shows that the average customer is more concerned with reaching their destination at a specific time than with the quality of the actual service. After these two factors, comfort is considered the third most-important feature of the service, while cleanliness is ranked fourth. Lastly, the quality and efficiency of announcements and fare collection are both considered to be least important by the customer.

Survey Comments from Jan/Feb Survey

A question regarding the condition/functionality of doors should be included.

The change to the boarding procedures was introduced at short notice, and after the survey was already created; this is an area we will consider adding to the survey in the spring.

Yes or no answers do nothing to address the real issues of riding the train. You can slant this survey to your advantage easily. Perhaps allowing room for comments at each question might be more helpful when trying to fix the problems.

Keep in mind that the survey is designed to be something that customers can complete in a short time frame encouraging greater participation. From the survey responses we are able to identify both the line and train number. For example, should you tell us there was no fare collected, we can address this with the specific crews, or if you tell us a train was dirty, we can identify that as well. We do ask for comments on the final day and read all of these and attempt to respond to as many of those as possible using this venue. We do provide another site where you can submit more detailed questions, comments and concerns where we can build reports based on the information and categories provided by you, our customer.

<http://www.commuterrailcs.net/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=2200>

A question should be included on Heat/AC and Comfort.

Please include a question regarding odors.

The following answer applies to both of these requests as follows: Many customers have asked us to add questions about maintenance and comfort levels on the coaches and we can certainly consider adding both of these questions to future surveys. Typically, however, these issues are ones that should be addressed more immediately so the above mentioned venue is used for that purpose; survey questions are not tabulated until the end of the survey period.

According to a number of customers, conductors on the Plymouth/Kingston Lines (and others) may need to be reminded that if the automated announcement system is working, they do not need to make any further announcements.

Thank you for this feedback. This is a new system, however, and after decades of making these announcements our crews now have to adapt to a new way of working. As they grow accustomed to the automation I am sure this reflex action will stop.

It may improve customer satisfaction and increase demand for monthly rail passes if, in exchange for a prolonged commitment to MBCR, a free monthly pass could be provided at regular intervals, perhaps on a yearly/biannual basis.

The monthly pass is already an excellent value without offering further discounts; it offers unlimited travel on Commuter Rail, Subway and bus throughout the month. Just by using the pass to commute into the city every day there is a discount. For example, a Zone 5 rider saves \$40 a month by purchasing a pass if they use it for 20 return trips in any one month. Also, simply by taking this survey you are entered into a drawing to win a free monthly pass, just for your participation.

I noticed that a lot of conductors are "being nice" and not charging \$1.00 for the first on-board ticket purchase. I like the MBTA and don't want to see you go bankrupt. Your fares are reasonable - charge them fully to stay in business!

While I understand your thoughts on this, a first time commuter may understandably be unaware of this fee. It may also be a matter of good customer service to some conductors that they give a new customer a "pass" on the surcharge the first time, to encourage their return.

Enforcement of the No Smoking policy on platforms and in waiting areas needs to be done.

We hear this one quite frequently and we have notified the MBTA Transit Police requesting that they monitor the "no smoking" policy in the stations for compliance.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM CUSTOMERS TAKING THIS SURVEY

On a good note - this winter, service (Plymouth/Kingston Line) has been better than last year! Morning service has improved since the schedule change and so far we are no longer 10 to 25 minutes late as we had been for months. Usually on time or close to so that is an improvement. Overall I think the Kingston/Plymouth train has been great...it hasn't been late a lot even with all this freezing weather.

I really like riding on your trains. Thank you for providing such wonderful service.

I believe your reliability has improved greatly and appreciate having the service available and believe that overall you are doing a good job.

I really like the fact that some trains are using the pre-recorded message system. It is wonderful - very understandable and pleasant voice.

Mark, Rich and Mike on the Providence line are always so professional and courteous.

I think the survey is very helpful. I have been commuting for almost ten years and I believe the service continually improves.