THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR DOMENIC J. SARNO

HOME OF THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

June 4, 2026

Sandra Sheehan, Administrator
PVTA
2808 Main Street
Springfield, MA 01107

Dear Administrator Sheehan:

I am writing as a follow up to our ongoing discussions regarding the unfortunate trend of concerning youth disturbances at Union Station, specifically and most recently steaming from an incident on Monday, June 1st where over 50 youth were loitering and trespassing causing a disturbance with profane language and rude behavior, including fighting, that negatively impacted visitors, workers and those traveling by bus or train. This incident resulted in a 911 call for service where officers responded to de-escalate the situation and disperse the crowd. Unfortunately, there are always a few bad actors that refuse to behave and look to escalate the situation to a dangerous level.

During a window of 48 hours, 8 arrests were made, including a young female juvenile who threated my brave and dedicated Springfield Police Officers yelling that if she had a gun, she would and I quote, "shoot all you cops". This rude, disrespectful and unlawful behavior is causing disruptions at our major transit hub and is impacting our visitors, travelers and tenants at Union Station – including the PVTA, and will not be tolerated.

On Tuesday, June 2nd, Police Superintendent Larry Akers, Chief Development Officer Tim Sheehan and I held a press conference at Union Station to call out these disturbances and the need to crack down and implement safety measures to stop this negative trend of youth and young adults engaging in dangerous and anti-social behavior so that the thousands of visitors and riders passing through Union Station can go about their day without interruption or harassment.

I want to be clear, I fully support a structured ridership program, including fare-free busing so that individuals of all ages including seniors, working adults, students, mothers with young children, etc., can take advantage of this resource and service and get to their medical appointments, jobs and classes.

However, there needs to be a structured system in place to better implement this fare-free ridership program so that, when necessary, we can identify the few bad actors that are just there to start trouble and are the source of these disruptions and disturbances. If we can hold them accountable for their actions and remove them from the situation, I am confident that we can provide a very beneficial service to the vast majority of our riders, including seniors, working adults and good young students, so that they can safely go about their day.

It is important to note that along with security at Union Station, our Springfield Police Department continues to have a dedicated presence at Union Station and our downtown Metro Unit routinely patrols both inside and outside of this major transportation hub which we worked so hard collectively, along with Congressman Richard Neal, to redevelop into what it is today – a beautiful and strategic public transportation hub for bus and rail for the region.

As you know, the City of Springfield has 13.12 votes out of the 62 votes on the PVTA Advisory Board or (21%), and maintains a strong/weighted voice on the Board. As such and through my appointed designee, Chief Development Officer (CDO) Tim Sheehan, I am asking the PVTA to review and look into implementing a structured system to better track and monitor ridership for the fare-free busing service so that when incidents such as last Monday, June 1st happen, we can identify the alleged culprits and revoke their ridership privileges so that the vast majority of riders can safely travel and utilize this tremendous service.

This can be a fare-free voucher system where a Fare Engagement Representative is tasked and trained in youth engagement, de-escalation, and customer service assistance to help enhance boarding and transit while also eliminating or reducing rider altercations both on and off the bus.

Thank you for all that you and your team do for the City of Springfield and the region which the PVTA serves. My administration looks forward to continue to work together with you and all of our community partners to address this concern. The safety of our citizens and riders is our top priority and we must do what we can to make sure we can provide them with a safe experience and service.

Respectfully,

"Good health & God Bless!"

Domenic J. Sarno
Mayor

Cc: Tim Sheehan, CDO, City of Springfield
J.M. Sorrell, Chair, PVTA Advisory Board
Springfield State Delegation
Governor Maura Healey