

Auditors found \$12.3 million in Massachusetts public benefits fraud in 2023

By Alison Kuznitz

State House News Service

Investigators in Auditor Diana DiZoglio's office discovered nearly \$2.9 million worth of public benefits fraud from October through December, with the vast majority of money linked to MassHealth.

The Bureau of Special Investigations detected fraud in 96 out of the 1,451 cases it examined in the second quarter of fiscal year 2024, according to a report recently filed with the Legislature.

Investigators found \$2,083,270.85 in MassHealth fraud; \$692,581.50 in SNAP fraud; \$74,195.05 in fraud tied to the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children program; \$7,909.33 in fraud connected to the Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children program; and \$796.95 in fraud linked to the Personal Care Attendant Program.

The bureau also recovered \$228,185.97 through restitution settlements, DiZoglio's office said.

"The work of BSI fraud examiners ensures taxpayer dollars used to fund Massachusetts' public benefits programs are managed effectively so that programs are available to residents who truly need them," the report stated. "As a result of BSI's investigations, public assistance fraud cases are referred to agencies for administrative action, fraudulent overpayments are recovered through civil agreements, individuals are disqualified from programs for specified periods of time, and cases are prosecuted in state and federal courts."

In fiscal year 2023, investigators identified more than \$12.3 million in public benefits fraud.

Southcoast Health Heart & Vascular performs Novel Atrial Fibrillation Treatment, first in New England

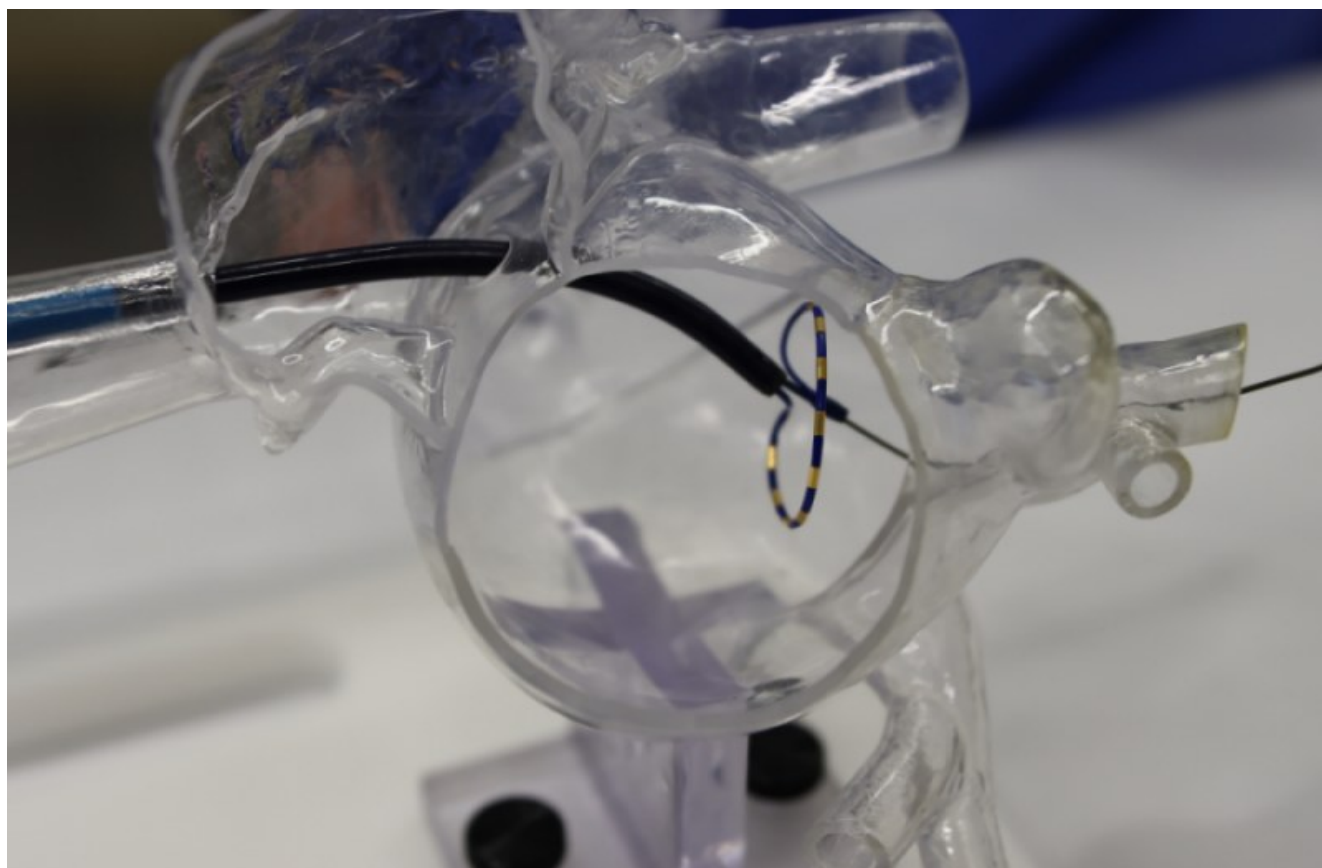
“Southcoast Health is pleased to announce the Heart and Vascular program at Charlton Memorial Hospital is the first practice in New England to perform an innovative procedure treating atrial fibrillation (AFib) with the PulseSelect Pulsed Field Ablation (PFA) system.

“This accomplishment is a credit to Southcoast Health, our providers and our patients,” said Nitesh Sood, MD, Director of the Atrial Fibrillation Wellness Program at Southcoast Health Heart and Vascular. “Going from participating in the study for this device three years ago, to performing the first case in New England is a big achievement. This technology offers us the ability to ablate cardiac tissue in areas where, in the past, we were limited with regard to the amount of energy we could deliver. This may help us in treating certain cases.”

Southcoast Health was the first in New England, 12th in the United States and 16th in the world to complete this procedure, which was led by Dr. Sood.

This new technique features breakthrough ablation technology,

pulsed field ablation (PFA) that directs pulsed electric fields to efficiently isolate the pulmonary veins for the treatment of atrial fibrillation.



Southcoast Health photo.

“It is our goal to be at the forefront of technology and increase the repertoire of what we can offer our patients,” said Ramin Davoudi, MD, Medical Director of Electrophysiology at Southcoast Health Heart and Vascular. “Our expert team at Charlton Memorial is dedicated to staying up to date with new techniques and technology to ensure we offer our patients a full spectrum of care.”

Atrial fibrillation is an abnormal heart rhythm characterized by a rapid and irregular heartbeat, called an arrhythmia. AFib occurs when the heart’s electrical system is not working correctly, potentially causing serious health problems, including stroke.

According to the CDC, a person experiencing AFib is five times more likely to experience a stroke than someone with a regular

heart rhythm. It is believed that this condition causes one in seven strokes (CDC).

“We’re really proud that we were the first in New England to offer this new technology, and this procedure exemplifies that we are a regional leader in all of cardiovascular care,” said Peter Cohn, MD, Physician-in-Chief of Southcoast Health Heart and Vascular. “We are committed to being on the forefront of cardiovascular services, bringing advanced treatment options you would normally only find in large cities to the people in our community.”

To learn more about Southcoast Health Heart and Vascular click [here](#).



Southcoast Health photo.

About Southcoast Health

Founded in 1996, Southcoast Health serves communities across southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island as the largest provider of primary and specialty care in the region. The not-for-profit, charitable system includes three acute care hospitals – Charlton Memorial in Fall River, St. Luke's in New Bedford (a Level II Trauma Center), and Tobey in Wareham, Massachusetts with a physician network of more than 675 providers.

The system has established more than 55 service locations across the South Coast of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, including six urgent care locations, a Visiting Nurse Association, the Southcoast Health Cancer Center, the region's only Level II Adult Trauma Center and numerous ancillary facilities.

Southcoast Health has been recognized consecutively for six years in a row as a Newsweek's World's Best Hospital from 2019-2024 and named a Maternity Care Access Hospital for 2023-2024 by U.S. News & World Report. The organization was recognized as the best place to work for the sixth consecutive year by Southcoast Media Group's community choice awards.

With upward of 7,500 employees, Southcoast Health is the largest employer in southeastern Massachusetts, and one of the largest employers in the Commonwealth, according to the Boston Business Journal. More information is available online at www.southcoast.org.”

[VIDEO] Shocking video

captures knife fight leading to stabbing in Fall River

Surveillance footage captured a harrowing altercation that culminated in a stabbing in Fall River on Friday afternoon. The incident unfolded outside the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA) Bus Terminal, located at 118 Fourth St., just after 3:00 p.m.

Law enforcement swiftly responded to the scene, and the victim was promptly transported to St. Luke's Hospital in New Bedford. As of the latest report, the victim is in stable condition.

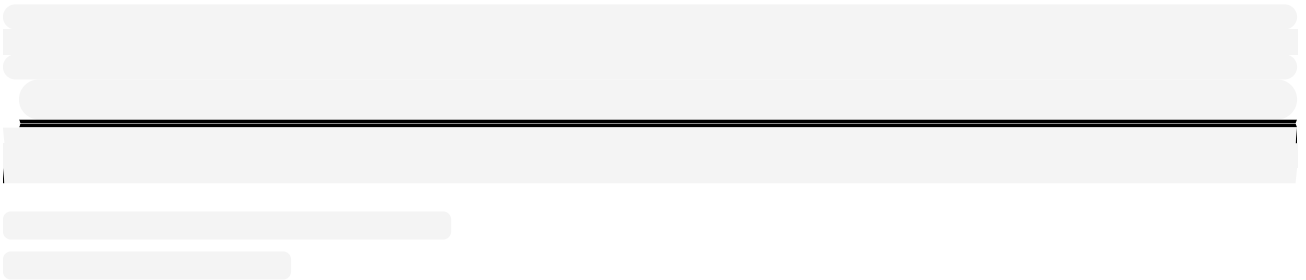
Following the incident, 28-year-old Rama Burch was arrested in connection with the stabbing. Deputy Chief Barden Castro of the Fall River Police Department confirmed that officers were alerted to a violent altercation involving a knife, prompting their rapid intervention.

The swift action by law enforcement led to the apprehension of the suspect and the provision of urgent medical care to the victim.





[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by New Bedford Guide (@newbedfordguide)

New Bedford to unveil new

Exercise Tiger exhibit, mural, during 80th Anniversary Memorial Service

"On April 28, 2024, at 1:00 PM there will be a Memorial Service of the 80th Anniversary of Exercise Tiger by the City of New Bedford. The Fort Taber~Fort Rodman Military Museum is a Co-Sponsor with the City. As President of the FT~FR Military Museum I am inviting everyone to attend.

The City of New Bedford Veterans' Advisory Board will honor the 749 United States sailors and soldiers who lost their lives during the devastating April 28, 1944 attack on the United States military training operation, Exercise Tiger.

Exercise Tiger was a D-Day dry run that was ambushed by a German E-boat flotilla and resulted in America's costliest incident of World War II, second only to Pearl Harbor. The surprise attack sank two American vessels and severely damaged a third. This year marks the 80th anniversary of Exercise Tiger.

The location is across the street from the FT~FR Military Museum, at 1000C Rodney French Blvd. New Bedford.

The Museum will be opening at 10:00 AM. After the service, the FT~FR Military Museum is inviting everyone to attend. The unveiling of the new Exercise Tiger exhibit and the 212th Field Artillery Mural at the FT~FR Military Museum.

Thank you,

Bill Niedzwiedz

President

Fort Taber~Fort Rodman Historical Assoc. Inc."



Fort Taber~Fort Rodman Historical Assoc. Inc. photo.

Massachusetts IRS revenue agent indicted for filing false tax returns

“BOSTON – A Revenue Agent for the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) was indicted yesterday by a federal grand jury in Boston for allegedly filing false personal tax returns for three years.

Ndeye Amy Thioub, 67, of Swampscott, was indicted on three counts of filing false tax returns and three counts of filing false tax returns as an employee of the United States. Thioub was previously arrested and charged by criminal complaint in March 2024.

According to the charging documents, Thioub was hired in 2006

as an Internal Revenue Agent in the IRS Large Business and International Division. As a Revenue Agent, Thioub planned and conducted examinations of tax returns using extensive and specialized knowledge of accounting techniques, practices and investigative audit techniques to examine and resolve various tax issues of individuals and business organizations. As a result of her education, training and experience, Thioub was highly knowledgeable about tax law. In addition, Thioub received yearly training in IRS Employee Tax Compliance, which instructs that IRS employees must comply with their tax obligations, including timely filing accurate tax returns and payment of taxes due.

It is alleged that Thioub filed false personal tax returns for tax years 2017, 2018 and 2019. It is further alleged that, for each year, Thioub filed a false Schedule C claiming a business loss from a purported "import and export" business she claimed to have. As a result, the claimed net loss was carried over to her personal IRS Form 1040s and used to reduce Thioub's adjusted gross income and ultimate tax liability.

The charge of filing a false tax return provides for a sentence of up to three years in prison, followed by one year of supervised release and a \$100,000 fine. The charge of filing a false tax return by an employee of the United States provides for discharge from employment and a sentence of up to five years in prison, followed by one year of supervised release and a \$10,000 fine. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Harry Chavis, Jr., Special Agent in Charge of the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, Boston Field Office; and Christopher J. Gust, Acting Special Agent in charge of the U.S. Department of Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, Northeast Field Division made the announcement today.

Assistant U.S. Kristina E. Barclay of the Public Corruption & Special Prosecutions Unit is prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.”-Massachusetts Department of Justice.

Empire Ford of New Bedford's “Veteran of the Month”: Walter Goulart, K.I.A. in WWI

“During the month of April, the 55th Lights for Peace flag to fly at the Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum honors the memory PVT Walter Goulart of New Bedford who was Killed in Action on October 17, 1918, during the opening of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, just one month before the end of the war.

Goulart was born in New Bedford to Azorean immigrants Antone and Frances (Perry) Goulart on February 1, 1895. He lived at 142 Fair Street and attended local New Bedford schools, later working in the New Bedford mills.

Some sources say that Goulart was inducted into the Army while others say he enlisted on September 20, 1917 at the age of 22. Goulart was first stationed at Fort Devens, MA and went on to receive his infantry training at Fort Gordon, GA. He was initially assigned to Company D of the 302nd Infantry, 76th Division until November 12, 1917 and was then transferred to the Machine Gun Company of the 327th Infantry, 82nd Division.



Empire Ford photo.

On April 29, 1918, PVT Goulart was sent overseas to France. He served in a series of battles with the Allied Forces including the following engagements: St. Mihiel; Marbache Defensive Sector (Lorraine) Aug. 6 – Aug. 17; Lucey Defensive Sector (Lorraine) Aug. 28 to Sept. 11, Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

According to a story published in the SouthCoastToday.com, "A German sniper shot and killed Goulart on Oct. 7, 1918 near Châtel Chéhéry. He died in an important battle in the opening phase of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, one of World War I's final campaigns. The 327th Infantry was trying to retake the initiative after having slowed down in the face of strong German resistance. It took over the entire sector two days after he died." Sadly, Goulart died only a month before the end of the war.

According to Archives.gov, "The Meuse-Argonne Offensive was the largest operation of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in World War I, with over a million American soldiers participating. It was also the deadliest campaign in American history, resulting in over 26,000 soldiers being killed in action (KIA) and over 120,000 total casualties."

Walter Goulart became the first New Bedford serviceman of Portuguese descent to be killed in action during World War I. The article stated that other soldiers of Azorean descent had died earlier than he did, but they had died of disease while still in training camps.

Following Goulart's death, the Portuguese-American community in New Bedford built a memorial in his honor named Goulart Square, located at Rivet and Bolton Streets. The memorial was dedicated on Memorial Day on May 30, 1923 and then re-dedicated on May 26, 1997.

PVT Goulart was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart for his sacrifice to his country.

Linda Ferreira, of Empire Ford, researches the life histories of area residents. American flags are provided by Empire Ford. Flags are raised by the staff at Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum. Those who would like to honor a local veteran in the future can contact Ferreira at lferreira@empirefordinc.com."

Marion Police Chief announces launch of body-worn cameras for officers

“Chief Richard Nighelli is pleased to announce that the Marion Police Department launched its body-worn camera program last week.

As of Friday, April 12, approximately 75% of Marion Police officers have undergone the requisite training to be able to wear and operate the cameras. All officers who have undergone the training are now wearing the body-worn cameras while on duty. The Department has set a deadline of May 1 for all sworn officers to be trained and wearing the cameras.

As part of the program, all sworn officers will be outfitted with a V700 LTE Body Camera, which will be affixed to the officer’s uniform to prevent it from detaching.



Marion Police Department photo.

All full-time Marion Police officers will be assigned a body-

worn camera. Additional body-worn cameras will be available to part-time officers at the start of each shift. Officers will activate their body-worn cameras during routine calls for service, investigatory stops, traffic stops, foot and vehicle pursuits, emergency driving situations, situations that would gather evidence to enhance in prosecution, and in situations that the officer – through training and experience – believes it's necessary and/or beneficial.

The Marion Police Department's body-worn camera policy establishes guidelines for the proper use, management, storage and retrieval of video and audio data recorded by a body-worn camera during the program.

The purpose of the program is to continue to foster trust and positive community relationships by providing greater transparency. Along with greater transparency, body cameras can promote de-escalation, resolve citizen complaints and provide a valuable training tool.

Marion Police received two grants to support the program. The department was awarded \$42,530 from the Healey-Driscoll Administration as part of the Fiscal Year 2024 Body-Worn Cameras (BWC) Grant Program. The state awarded \$3.6 million in grant funds to 52 local police departments to implement or expand body-worn camera programs across Massachusetts.

Additionally, the Marion Police Department requested 22 cameras and received a \$38,063.50 grant from the Small, Rural, and Tribal Body-Worn Camera Program, a body-worn camera program designed by the Bureau of Justice Assistance and Justice & Security Strategies. The program has awarded \$7.1 million in grant funding to 265 small, rural and tribal law enforcement agencies to support body-worn camera programs in the U.S.

"We want to notify the Marion community that we have launched this program and soon all of our officers will be equipped

with body-worn cameras,” Chief Nighelli said. “Our hope is to promote transparency and further strengthen our relationship with our community members.”

President Barack Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing placed a priority on body camera research and camera programs. The Task Force’s final report indicated that officers wearing body cameras had “87.5 percent fewer incidents of use of force and 59 percent fewer complaints than the officers not wearing the cameras.”-Marion Police Department.

Massachusetts Gang Member who posed on Snapchat with guns sentenced to prison

At the time of the offenses, defendant was on release for four separate state firearm charges.

“BOSTON – A Boston man was sentenced today to illegally possessing a firearm and ammunition while under house arrest for four state firearm charges.

Dumari Shakur Scarlett-Dixon, 22, was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Chief Judge F. Dennis Saylor IV to 27 months in prison and three years of supervised release. In October 2023, Scarlett-Dixon pleaded guilty to being an unlawful drug user in possession of a firearm and ammunition.

In 2021, as part of an investigation into violent crime in Boston, a Snapchat account was intercepted through a court order. Among the communications intercepted was a group “chat” comprised of members of rival gangs who regularly displayed

images and videos of themselves in possession of firearms. Scarlett-Dixon, a member of Heath Street, a violent Boston gang, participated in the group chat.

At the time he was intercepted, Scarlett-Dixon was on pre-trial release for four separate unlawful possession of a firearm cases in state court. As a condition of his release for those offenses, Scarlett-Dixon had been placed on home confinement with GPS monitoring at his grandmother's residence in Weymouth. Scarlett-Dixon displayed images of himself on Snapchat in possession of firearms at his grandmother's residence:

During a September 2021 search of Scarlett-Dixon's grandmother's residence, a Bersa 9-millimeter semi-automatic pistol, 59 rounds of 9 millimeter and .380 caliber ammunition, and blunts of marijuana were seized from Scarlett-Dixon's bedroom.

As a condition of his supervised release, Scarlett-Dixon was ordered to stay away from Heath Street gang members and the Bromley Heath housing development.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; James M. Ferguson, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Boston Division; and Stephen Belleau, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, New England Division made the announcement. Special assistance in the investigation was provided by the Boston, Quincy and Lynn Police Departments and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher Pohl of the Narcotics & Money Laundering Unit prosecuted the case.

The operation was conducted is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) Strike Force Initiative, which provides for the establishment of permanent multi-agency task force teams that work side-by-side in the same location.

This co-located model enables agents from different agencies to collaborate on intelligence-driven, multi-jurisdictional operations to disrupt and dismantle the most significant drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations. More information on the OCDETF program is available here: <https://www.justice.gov/ocdetf/about-ocdetf>.”-Massachusetts Department of Justice.

63-year-old Provincetown man charged for possessing and distributing child pornography

“BOSTON – A Provincetown man was arrested today for child pornography offenses. The defendant allegedly possessed several thousand image and video files containing child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

Lawrence Pagnoni, 63, was charged with one count of possession of child pornography and one count of distribution of child pornography. Following an initial appearance in federal court in Boston this afternoon before U.S. District Court Magistrate Judge Jennifer C. Boal, Pagnoni was released on conditions, including home detention with electronic monitoring.

According to the charging documents, an individual arrested in a child exploitation sting reported to law enforcement that, in March of 2023, Pagnoni allegedly distributed CSAM to him via the online cloud storage platform Mega. It was determined that Pagnoni had allegedly sent thousands of CSAM files to

this individual. During a search of Pagnoni's home in Provincetown in May of 2023 a number of items, including Pagnoni's cellphone, were seized. During a subsequent search of Pagnoni's cellphone, it is alleged that several thousand image files and video files containing CSAM, including at least 51 known series of CSAM as identified by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, were discovered.

Members of the public who have questions, concerns or information regarding this case should call 617-748-3274.

The charge of distribution of child pornography provides for a mandatory minimum sentence of five years and up to 20 years in prison, at least three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of possession of child pornography provides for a of up to 20 years in prison, at least three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Jodi Cohen, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division; and Boston Police Commissioner Michael Cox made the announcement today. Valuable assistance was provided by the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office. Assistant U.S. Attorney Luke A. Goldworm of the Major Crimes Unit is prosecuting the case.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse, launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by the U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the DOJ's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more

information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/psc>.

The details contained in the charging document are allegations. The defendant is presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in the court of law.”-Massachusetts Department of Justice.

MBTA celebrates Autism Acceptance Month with inaugural participation in the Autism Transit Project

“BOSTON – The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) is pleased to announce its first-ever involvement in the Autism Transit Project, an initiative that empowers children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to create public service announcements for transit systems across the country. In recognition of Autism Acceptance Month during April, starting today and through mid-May, the MBTA will play public announcements created by local children with ASD in stations across the system. The MBTA joins other transit agencies in this meaningful project organized by the Autism Transit Project, a 501c3 non-profit organization.

“Our transportation system should be accessible to all of our residents and visitors. The Autism Transit Project is an extension of that commitment and supports one of the MBTA’s key goals, which is to make sure every single traveler can navigate the system successfully,” said Transportation Secretary and CEO Monica Tibbits-Nutt. “This is a great way to

spread the word about Autism Awareness Month and to help educate other people in their same situation.”

“We are honored to participate in the Autism Transit Project and celebrate Autism Acceptance Month with our community,” said MBTA General Manager and CEO Phillip Eng. “This initiative not only raises awareness about autism, but also provides a unique platform for children with ASD to showcase their talents and make a positive impact on our public transportation system and help us lift up our values and our commitment of fostering a public transit system where everyone feels welcome, respected, and safe. Thank you to the children and families for being part of the T family with their participation today and recording these great public service announcements.”

“Children with autism sometimes fixate on feats of everyday mechanical engineering,” said Jonathan Trichter, founder of The Autism Transit Project. “This is especially true of trains and transit systems—something frontline MBTA workers see every day. In addition, children with autism may not come to language naturally. Instead, they grab onto phrases they hear in places they love and use them to communicate with the world around them. As a result, it is not unusual for the first full sentence a child with autism utters to be a transit service announcement. This is why this project is so special. And today, the MBTA is creating a space for these kids to participate in civic life and be heard.”

“From simply watching trains, to walking up and touching a train, to getting on and taking a ride on a train, to riding every line in the entire MBTA system, this program, while physically measurable in some ways, has an immeasurable impact on my son, Christopher. Thank you!” said Robin Long-Tarjan, whose son, Christopher (age 14), participated in the project this year.

The Autism Transit Project and the MBTA collaborated with

families from greater Boston within the MBTA service area on announcement scripts and produced the recordings. Announcements by the children included tips on how to safely board and disembark trains, offering seats to others, and remembering to be kind while riding the T.

To further support the program and express gratitude to the participating children, the MBTA welcomed them for an exclusive tour of its Operations Control Center where they gained a behind-the-scenes look at the system and met bus and subway dispatchers. Additionally, the MBTA will feature the Autism Transit Project on its in-station digital screens and social media channels.

The MBTA's participation in the Autism Transit Project follows another recent initiative supporting young transit enthusiasts with disabilities. On March 21, the MBTA hosted a field trip from Boston Public Schools's Horace Mann School for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing at its Emergency Training Center in South Boston. Staff from various departments led students through a hands-on experience with public transit in a controlled environment.

About the Autism Transit Project

The Autism Transit Project is a 501c3 non-profit organization whose mission it is to spread acceptance and awareness that people with autism are worthy and valuable parts of their societies—different perhaps, but no less. The project relies on its ability to channel the connection many with autism spectrum disorder ("ASD") have to mass transit systems in a positive way. It started with an idea when its founder, Jonathan Trichter, launched a widely praised initiative that allows autistic children who love trains to record subway service announcements that are then broadcast publicly

throughout their local transit systems in conjunction with Autism Acceptance Months. Last year, in 2023, over 100 children and five major transit agencies across the country participated. This year, seven transit agencies participated with even more kiddos!

For more information, visit mbta.com or connect with the T on X (the site formerly known as Twitter) @MBTA and @MBTA_CR, Facebook /TheMBTA, Instagram @theMBTA, Threads @thembta, or TikTok @thembta. “