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THE END OF AN ERA

Riding Off Into The Sunset

Davis Says Good Bye After More Than 20 Years With The MBTA

By [William Lyons](#) | Nov 8, 2015

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Late last month, I attended the retirement party of Jon Davis. Jon is retiring as the chief financial officer (CFO) of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). His retirement party was a testimony to Jon's hard work over more than 20 years at the MBTA. The number of people in attendance reflected just how much his service has been appreciated by those who worked with him during his time at the MBTA. In contrast to what you normally hear about the MBTA, this column is intended to highlight that which is good about the MBTA – especially Jon.

In the recent past, much of what we have tended to hear about the MBTA involves failing transit systems and a challenging financial picture. Because of this steady drumbeat of bad news, our collective psyche often

feels traumatized when we hear the MBTA. Today, I am shedding some light on the positive aspects of the MBTA, starting with Jon and his commitment to the authority.

To be honest, I hadn't met Jon previous to the night of his retirement party. But I had heard that he was an incredible leader, mentor and friend. More importantly, he was known as the man behind 10 general managers who made the finances of the MBTA work, day in and day out. As we all know, this is no easy task – and by all accounts Jon did this often thankless job with integrity, character and with an unrivaled dedication to the taxpayer.

For starters, those who did attend Jon's retirement party included two former secretaries of transportation (Patrick Moynihan, also a former MBTA general manager, and Jeff Mullan), as well current MBTA general manager Frank DePaolo. Their presence at Jon's retirement party demonstrated just how important Jon has been over the course of his tenure. The fact that they took the time to attend speaks volumes about Jon and his work ethic.

However, the true measure of how successful Jon has been over the course of two decades is how many colleagues, coworkers, subordinates and former legislators were in attendance. The number of people who rose to speak glowingly about Jon was impressive. He was toasted by a former secretary of transportation, employees and even the union leaders with whom he was often at odds. It is a challenge to earn the respect of any one of those groups; to have earned the respect of *all* of those groups is very telling about the MBTA's outgoing CFO.

The People Behind The Policies

The sendoff Jon received has greater meaning than simply wishing him well in retirement. It is symbolic of a deep appreciation for the hard work that many MBTA employees perform every day to make a challenged agency work as well as it can. While there is always room for improvement, much of what ails the MBTA has nothing to do with its employees. It has more to do with an agency structured and funded for failure. To that end, we must not forget the dedication and commitment of the MBTA's employees who make it all work every day.

The MBTA is on a path to recovery. The governor's structural reforms have put the agency on the right track. As a city, and as ratepayers and taxpayers, we must be diligent and acknowledge the hard work of these unsung heroes. It will be their commitment that ensures the success of the MBTA moving forward.

Thursday evening, the unsung hero-in-chief was Jon Davis. A man who served 10 general managers over a period of 20 years. A man who served as acting general manager twice when he was called upon to do so. A selfless, hardworking man who was lauded by management and labor, friends and colleagues, employees and coworkers. A man whose integrity was beyond reproach and whose exceptional knowledge of the agency will be sorely missed.

Thank you, Jon. Best wishes in retirement.

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