SimpliGov Makes MBTA's Youth Pass Application Process a Smooth Ride

Integrated Digital Process Implemented Across 19 Cities in Less Than Three Months

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) operates the "T," an intricate network of subway, bus, commuter rail, and ferry lines in the Greater Boston area. The MBTA embarked on a digital modernization of its Youth Pass Program to allow low-income young adults to purchase half-price one-way fares or discounted monthly passes for unlimited rides on the T's bus and subway systems.

CHALLENGE

The MBTA wanted to digitize the Youth Pass application to make the process more operationally efficient and accessible for citizens. It was an ambitious project that had significant requirements, including:

- Program administrators in **19 participating municipalities**
- Numerous eligibility requirements around age, residency, and partner programs
- Alignment with MBTA technology, security, and accessibility standards
- Fulfillment center requirements related to shipping information and card type (i.e., new/replacement)

MBTA planned to go live with a fully tested and functioning program within 3–6 months—one that was easy for applicants, consistent across cities, and would have cards in the mail to approved riders within several days.

"**Our vision for the Youth Pass Program had many components**," said David Gerstle, Chief Digital Officer, MBTA. "**We needed flexible technology to accommodate several potential pathways an application could take based on age, residence, and partner program participation**."

SOLUTION

MBTA turned to SimpliGov's integrated form and workflow automation solution to create a secure, public-facing application,, seamlessly route back-end processes, and simplify city and nonprofit employees' tasks.

The fields in SimpliGov's digital form were tailored to MBTA's unique needs. The form assessed eligibility questions up front and notified those who didn't meet the program's eligibility criteria. With so many different requirements, MBTA developed customized error messages at each step of the application process to keep form completion orderly in and in compliance with eligibility guidelines.

In addition, the form was designed to be backward compatible using SimpliGov's intuitive form functionality. As a result, if users modified any field, the form's logic would trigger automatic adjustments throughout the application to reflect those changes. Finally, fonts and colors were made fully compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines.

SimpliGov's workflow automation met MBTA's highly complex processing and fulfillment specifications. Youth Pass applications automatically route to the correct municipality by zip code, which eliminated the need to build 19 separate point-to-point integrations. For security purposes, permission settings ensure that each municipality sees only the applications under their purview.

Staffers can easily review aggregated applicant information and documentation and correspond with them through the SimpliGov platform. Final applications are routed to the fulfillment center, which is automatically supplied with a report containing mailing addresses for approved riders.

"**Although there was a decent amount of technical complexity under the hood, we were still able to meet our goal of making the experience easy and seamless for citizens and employees alike**," said Gerstle.

RESULTS

- After completing employee training and security testing, MBTA launched the online Youth Pass application in just three months.

- The transit authority received **792 applications in the first week**, and its program administrators processed 142 on the first day alone.

- In the first 2.5 months of operation, **municipalities processed 4,076 applications with only a 3% denial rate**.

- Turnaround time from initial application submission to card mailing was **reduced to 5 days or less**—a huge benefit for riders.

- The process to days to get cards in the mail from the time applications are submitted has been reduced to **five days or less**.

- Improves the lives of citizens who rely on public transportation for their livelihoods , to get to appointments, and to connect with local friends and family.

 "**It is critical that public transportation be accessible for everyone in the Greater Boston area. Our Youth Pass Program is making it easy for younger residents to afford getting around town on the T.**"

David Gerstle
Chief Digital Officer, MBTA