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JAMAICA PLAIN, ROXBURY

R.I.P. Bus Route 48 ('J.P. Loop') – March 1973 to June 30, 2012

Posted by Matt Rocheleau July 2, 2012 12:14 PM

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(Brian Feulner for the Boston Globe)

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On Saturday, June 30, 2012, at about 4:57 p.m., the Route 48 bus of the MBTA, commonly known as the “J.P. Loop,” died as expected. The route was 39 years old.

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A lifelong Jamaica Plain resident, the bus line infinitely enjoyed repetitive patterns. The route was known as an avid, though infrequent collector of fares.

Except for when it vacationed each Sunday, the bus was a common face around the neighborhood.

Like clockwork, it awoke at 9 a.m. and made about a dozen laps around the neighborhood before calling it quits at about 5 p.m. During its work shifts, it stopped constantly, affably waving its doors at passersby. The bus also spoke candidly about street junctions and frequently reminded others of public transit safety tips.

Still, the 48 only kept close ties with a select few. It ranked 175th out of all 196 routes in ridership.

The route also earned notoriety for achieving a markedly above average cost per passenger. It cost the T about \$6.34 per weekday passenger to employ the route, or four-and-a-half times the system-wide average of \$1.42 per weekday passenger.

The bus line was born in March of 1973 under the name Route 595. Two months before its 9th birthday, it changed its name to Route 48.

The bus leaves behind about 85 weekday and about 50 Saturday passengers, many of whom were elderly and relied on the bus to be able to run errands.

The route is also survived by its drivers, its 30 stops, its beloved start and end

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point, Monument Square, its streets: Centre, Paul Gore, Lamartine, Amory, Boylston, and Minton, its avenue, Columbus, and its station, Jackson Square of the Orange Line.

For months, the route had bravely battled a common, but chronic case of the budget blues.

That disease led to the recent deaths of other members of the T family. In a statement, acting MBTA General Manager Jonathan Davis said the agency is desperate for a “permanent,” “long-term” cure to prevent further spread and potential outbreak.

In late March, it was announced the bus line would likely not survive the summer.

Mourners said their goodbyes this week.

Jamaica Plain resident Lanandra Russell, 27, carried her calm, smiling 6-month-old daughter, Lana, near the front of the bus on Friday. She said the route had help foster connectivity in the neighborhood.

“I feel like losing it is going to cut a lot of the neighborhood off from each other,” she said.

Russell recalled how the 48 weathered wintry weather and dicey road conditions to help her get to the grocery store.

During her recent pregnancy and the first several months of motherhood, she said she has taken the route more frequently than at any other point in her seven years living in JP.

Once the bus line is gone, “I’ll just have to tough it out,” Russell said. “But, what about the people who can’t? What are they going to do?”

Over the past two summers, 14-year-old Amber Carvajal had taken the 48 during her her weekday commute. She journeys for 45 minutes to and from her Dorchester home and her job as a teacher's aide at the Eliot School of Fine and Applied Arts in Jamaica Plain.

On Friday, she took one last ride. At Jackson Square Station, she parted ways

with the bus line who'd become a reliable companion of hers.

About 24 hours later, releasing a final gasp of air from its pressurized brakes, the 48 succumbed outside the route's final stop: 775 Centre St. The bus was rolled back to the Arborway Yard garage.

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