

Transportation for MIT Grad Students

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MIT and the Boston area offer a wide variety of transportation options, so you have no excuse to stay in the lab all the time!

COVID-19 Updates

We aren't certain about transportation safety; consult with MIT Medical or a health-care professional to determine what's safe for you. Walking and cycling, with a mask and adequate distance from others, are believed safer than transit at this time.

Available transportation changes near-daily; check with relevant agencies before you go.

[MBTA COVID-19 Updates](#) (as of January 2022): buses and trains are running with more-or-less normal frequency. Face masks are required, and fares are being collected.

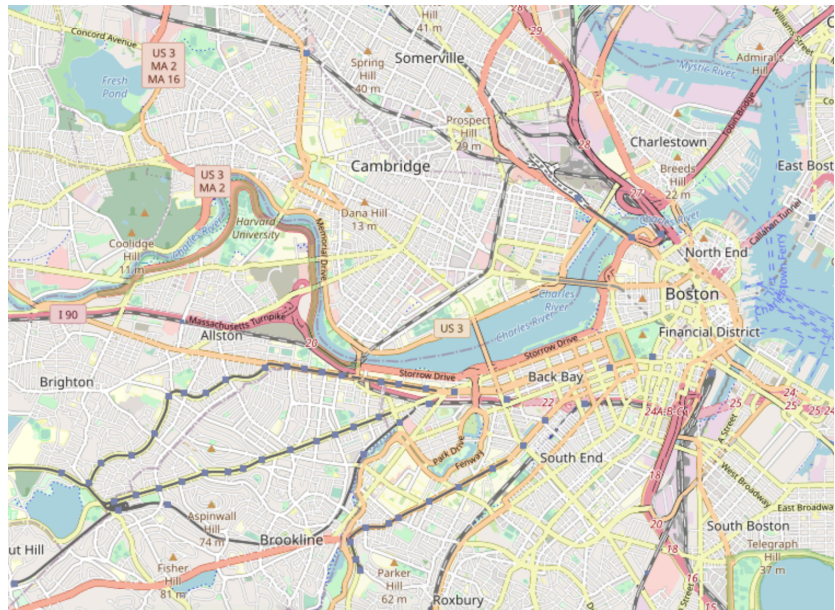
MIT shuttles are running on [normal schedules](#).

The Area

MIT is in the Kendall Square area of Cambridge (image courtesy [OpenStreetMap](#)). As a rule of thumb, graduate dorms are a moderate walk (up to 15 minutes) from most of campus.

Graduate students tend to live in dorms or in Cambridge (including Inman Square and Cambridgeport) and Somerville (to the north and west). Some live in Boston or Brookline. It's worth thinking about your commute when choosing where to live!

Boston and the surrounding area have a lot to offer: parks, museums, hiking, shopping, live music, restaurants, and sports. As you'll see, it's easy to get to all of these and more.



Getting Around the Area

Walking

Healthy, free, and no equipment required. Walking is going to be your default for many short trips: there's a lot of great food, shops, bars, and things to do within 15–30 minutes of MIT. But if you're up for a stroll, it turns out that you can get shockingly far in just over an hour.

Time (min)	City	Reachable Places
15	Cambridge	Kendall Square, Cambridgeport, Central Square
30	Cambridge	Harvard Square, Inman Square
	Boston	Fenway, Back Bay, South End
45	Somerville	Union Square
	Boston	Boston Common, Lower Roxbury, Longwood, Bunker Hill

	Brookline	Coolidge Corner
60–75	Somerville	Magoun Square, Assembly Square.
	Cambridge	Almost all of Cambridge
	Brookline	Beacon St., Brookline Village
	Boston	Allston, Mission Hill, Nubian Square, Southie, Charlestown, Jamaica Plain, Brighton, all of downtown

Boston drivers are aggressive. Be careful, and don't assume that a driver will stop because they have a stop sign, no turn on red sign, red light, or they're about to hit you. Make eye contact and be assertive; stay alert.

If you can manage 10,000 steps per day, MIT getfit runs an annual [step challenge](#) with prizes.

Bicycle

Lots of grad students bike. 30% consider it their primary commute method,¹ and plenty more do it occasionally. It's a great way to get exercise, and you can get pretty much anywhere in the area in about 30 minutes.

The Boston area has great bike facilities: bike lanes (many protected and/or off-street); the Minuteman Bikeway, Boston's Charles River, Emerald Necklace, and Southeast Corridor bike paths. Groups like [Cambridge Bicycle Safety](#), [MassBike](#), and the [Boston Cyclists Union](#) push for even more, and the [Cambridge Bicycle Plan](#) outlines what you can expect in the next few years.

Bicycling is safe, provided riders are alert and take caution. If you haven't ridden in cities before, look out for a GSC bicycle safety orientation every fall, where MIT police representatives share tips about safety and local laws. Boston's [Boston by Bike](#) guide covers the basics, too, and the BCU has a [Learn to Bike](#) guide: helmets are not required, though highly recommended; if riding at night, make sure to have a red rear and white front light. Riding on the sidewalk is discouraged in most places, and disallowed in many parts of Cambridge.

Get a bike. [Bluebikes](#) is Boston's bike-share program; they have hundreds of stations in the area. MIT offers a [\\$35 annual membership](#).

If you're ready for a long-term commitment, the MIT police sell abandoned bikes every year in a [bike auction](#) (around September/October; the link is out of date but they held one in 2019). There are some great deals here. Otherwise, [Craigslist](#) has used bicycles (though watch out for

¹Per MIT's [2018 Transportation Survey](#).

scams or stolen bikes), and many MIT affiliates get rid of their old steeds on department/lab email lists.

If you're ready for something brand-new, there are many excellent bike shops in the area: [Cambridge Bicycle](#) (a short walk from campus), [Landry's](#), [Bikes Not Bombs](#) (Jamaica Plain), [Wheelworks](#) (Belmont/Somerville), [Ride Studio Cafe](#) (Lexington, high-end/weird bikes but a great place to stop for coffee), [REI](#) (Fenway). These will all do repairs too; [Broadway Bicycle School](#) will teach you how to do basic maintenance. MIT also has fix-it stations for maintenance, with pumps and hand tools ([map](#)).

Bike theft is common. Make sure to get a *strong* U-lock if you park your bike outside. Once you get a bike, [register it](#) with the Parking and Transportation office so that in the event of theft it can be more easily recovered. Parking on campus is mostly safe, but make sure to lock your bike. Some labs have enough space indoors to park, which is convenient and safe.

Ride for fun. If you want to go on some fun recreational rides with a great group, join the [MIT Cycling Club](#) on their road, cyclocross, or mountain bike rides. They're a nationally competitive D2 team, but have friendly rides where you don't have to worry about going fast.

Subway ("the T")

The Boston subway (map, courtesy [Michael Kvrivishvili](#)), operated by the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA), contains the oldest active line in the United States.² MIT is located conveniently on the Kendall Square stop on the Red Line, which offers frequent service. Two stops away, Park Street station offers transfers to the Green Line, and Downtown Crossing (three stops away) connects to the Silver and Orange Lines.

Using the subway is easy. Each ride costs \$2.40, and your [MIT ID](#) works as a "CharlieCard" (MBTA subway and bus pass) which can be loaded with credit in any subway station. For frequent riders, [MIT offers](#) a monthly unlimited pass for \$45. The subway refers to trains in the



² A section of the Green Line. It goes at about the speed you'd expect for something first operated in 1897.

“inbound” (towards Boston Common) and “outbound” (away from Boston Common) directions; every station has maps to help you plan your trip. Trains run 5am–1am every day.

Bus

The MBTA also runs an extensive bus network, useful for 24/7 travel (some lines), getting between subway lines, and getting to places the subway doesn’t go. Like the subway, you use a tap card (such as your MIT ID), but most bus stops *do not* have machines to load them; a local trip is \$1.70. You can also pay cash (*no change given*). MIT offers a [bus pass](#) for \$27 monthly: a great deal if you’re commuting on the bus. MASCO operates the [M2](#) shuttle into Longwood Medical Area; it requires tickets, but if you have an affiliation with Harvard (e.g., a [visitor library card](#)) you can ride free.

Buses can be quite fast even with traffic, as they have dedicated lanes on many roads. The network also includes “express buses” which go to some further-out towns (Burlington, Watertown).

MIT Shuttles

MIT’s Transportation and Parking office runs several [shuttles](#) on a regular basis; bring your ID:

- Tech and Northwest shuttles, around campus (free)
- [EZ Ride](#): to Galleria Mall, North Station
- Lincoln Lab shuttle (free)
- [Grocery Shuttle](#): on weekends to Trader Joe’s/Whole Foods, Costco/Target (free)
- At night: SafeRide fixed route, on-demand service [SafeRide zone](#) using TransLoc (free)
- Around heavy travel periods (Thanksgiving, beginning/end of term): [airport shuttle](#) to/from Logan (paid)

If the shuttles go where you need to go, they’re usually quite convenient.

Rideshare

Uber and Lyft are common in the area, especially among students for a night on the town. Expect \$10–\$30 fares, depending on demand and distance (fares have been steadily rising since 2019).

Car

You probably shouldn’t commute via car; it may make sense to own one. Relatively few graduate students own cars, and almost none drive to campus on a daily basis. Parking around campus is very expensive (on weekdays, commercial garages run [\\$30–40/day](#); MIT’s [subsidized lots](#) run \$10.50). Plus, cars are dangerous, a pain to park, and they pollute.

However, those students who do have cars enjoy access to otherwise-inaccessible shopping and some pleasant New England day trips.

ZipCar (by-the-hour car rental) memberships for MIT are [\\$35 annually](#); you can rent ZipCars from four parking lots on campus. Other rental agencies (Hertz, Enterprise, Budget, National) operate in the area.

Getting out of Town

You have lots of options for leaving the Boston area, too:

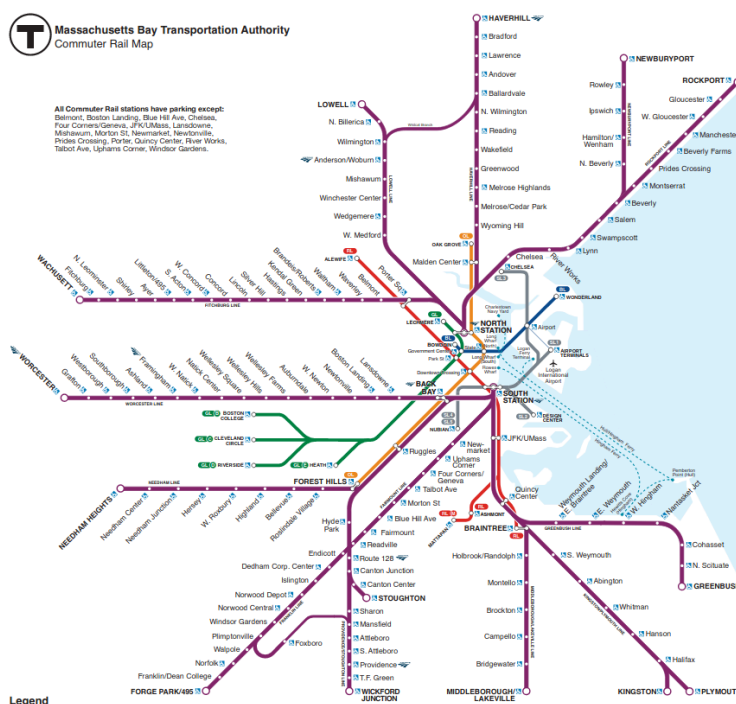
Take commuter rail for vacations, day trips, and visiting nearby universities. It's run by the MBTA and extends from Rhode Island to within 5 miles of the New Hampshire border, and west to Worcester. The [CapeFLYER](#) runs to Cape Cod on summer weekends.

In the "Northeast Corridor," [Amtrak](#) trains run between **Boston and Washington, DC**, and in many cases is faster/more pleasant than flying; the [Amtrak Downeaster](#) offers service to Maine (with frequent sales).

Private bus operators run from Boston to most of the state and region (and beyond). Operators include [Greyhound](#), [Peter Pan](#), [Bolt](#), [Megabus](#), and many more. Most buses leave from South Station or Logan Airport.

Cars are useful for hiking and day/overnight trips (see above).

And if you really need to get away, **you can fly: Logan Airport is about 40 minutes away** on transit (Red Line to South Station; SL1 to Logan). In rare cases, it may make sense to fly out of T.F. Green Airport (Providence, RI). MIT offers an [airport shuttle](#) during peak travel periods (Thanksgiving, spring break, start/end of semester).



Learn More

If you're interested in transportation, you should get involved with the GSC transportation subcommittee (email gsc-hca-transportation@mit.edu)!

Many local organizations advocate for better transit, walkability, and safety; explained in their own words:

- [Cambridge Bicycle Safety](#): “working to make streets safer and more enjoyable for people of all ages and abilities”
- [Boston Cyclists Union](#): “making streets safe for every body”
- [Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition \(MassBike\)](#): “promotes a bicycle-friendly environment and encourages bicycling for fun, fitness and transportation”
- [LivableStreets Alliance](#): “envision[s] a world where streets are safe, vibrant public spaces that connect people to the places where they live, work, and play”
- [WalkBoston](#): “making Massachusetts more walkable”
- [TransitMatters](#): “dedicated to improving transit in and around Boston by offering new perspectives, uniting transit advocates, and informing the public”