CITIES CAN BE TOUGH places to get around—and Boston is among the toughest, but it’s also ripe for a solution. Call it HUBus.

Here’s the picture: As you linger over your morning coffee, your phone beeps to tell you the HUBus is two minutes away. But there’s another one in 10 minutes, and you decide to wait. Even once you’re aboard, you can use the bus’s Wi-Fi to finish that project for work.

It’s almost hard to remember the days before shiny blue-and-gold HUBuses crisscrossed the streets, when Boston’s only public transportation was run by the MBTA. Fortunately, the new mayor decided to do something, ordering his transportation commissioner to get the country’s most technologically advanced urban bus system up and running within a year.
The HUBus network doesn’t use any technology that didn’t exist in 2013—it just puts it together in ways that change commuting dramatically. And it doesn’t replace the MBTA, just supplements it with more flexible, responsive transit that pulls the city together.

Buses “talk” to traffic signals so that the green light lingers to let them through; most fares are collected via smartphone app. So the buses actually run on time! And the city’s new bus lanes are shared by any public transit, so the T buses are running better, too. Like the Circulator in Washington, D.C., the buses run every 10 minutes and cost only $1; as with Los Angeles’s DASH system, there are both downtown and neighborhood routes, quickly connecting residents to T stations.

Some start early, so workers can get to first-shift jobs in hospitals, hotels, and Logan Airport; many run late, to boost night life and get students home safely. And during the quiet midday hours, bus drivers can deviate from their routes to pick up seniors and the disabled, providing them with a better and less costly service than The Ride. Those low fares are subsidized in part by universities, hospitals, and businesses, which sponsor routes in return for advertising.

Your phone beeps again—10 minutes have passed. Here comes the HUBus, right on time.

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