

Research Dossier

Experience Design 1

Tia Thomson

Rob Cattell

Lydia Hauser

Personal Biases

Each of us had our own prior experience and existing perceptions of Ruggles Station before beginning our research.

Tia

I lived in IV my freshman year and I am living on Columbus this year. So, for both years I have been here, I have always had to pass through Ruggles in order to get to main campus. I have enjoyed how convenient it is to live so close to the station and I definitely stopped by Dunkin' many times if I needed a quick snack. I took the T very regularly my freshman year to get to my internship in Downtown Crossing and to many other locations in Boston, so I came into this project with a strong familiarity of the T system and the orange line specifically. I had heard a lot of negative things about the orange line from other Northeastern students who called it sketchy and dirty, but it was so convenient for me that my opinion of it was never quite as pessimistic. I had never taken the bus from Ruggles because I presumed that it was too complicated and I worried that I would get lost. I was also pretty unfamiliar with the commuter rail, only taking it once before and following the guidance of my friend on how to purchase tickets, which train to get on, and how to get down to the commuter rail platform. I have walked through Ruggles hundreds of times, and many of these times have been during the later hours of the night. Although I did feel like Ruggles was a less safe during these hours, it never kept me from passing through.

Lydia

Freshman year many of my friends live in IV and during summer one that year I lived in IV, so I have passed through Ruggles many times. I use the orange line from there to get to many places around Boston, but other than the t, I hardly use any of the amenities that Ruggles has. I have never been to Dunkin Donuts or Noble Roman's Pizza. I have never taken the bus, mostly because I have no use for it but also because it is quite confusing to figure out which bus line to take. I also have never taken the commuter rail because I have no use for it. There has always been a negative connotation for me when talking about Ruggles. Even when I first visited Northeastern, Ruggles was not a place you wanted to be for any long period of time. Overall, Ruggles is a convenient location on campus but has some disadvantages that need to be improved.

Rob

During my first few years at Northeastern I was an on-campus student, meaning that I lived in the residence halls owned by the University. This was my home, and I tried to explore as many spaces of Northeastern as possible, as well as the entirety of the city of Boston. In my opinion, using the T has always been the most readily accessible and beneficial means of public transportation throughout Boston and its surrounding areas.

I am currently no longer living on campus and am commuting to Northeastern from the North Shore of Massachusetts. My daily route consists of using the MBTA commuter rail from Beverly to travel to North Station, and then using the North Station T stop to travel to Northeastern's campus. With that being said, there are two method of travelling to Northeastern from North Station; either the Orange line or the Green line. Prior to moving to the North Shore, I would have never considered using the Orange Line. I had placed a negative stigma onto Ruggles, and therefore perceived the entirety of the Orange Line to negative. Ruggles looks like a barricade from Roxbury, and due to feeling ostracized from their community, I felt more welcome using the Northeastern Green line stop. It felt as though Northeastern owned that T-Stop and that our student body was "supposed" to use it.

I also perceived the Green Line to be the "College" Line. Seeing that Boston College, Boston University, and Northeastern all have their own T-Stops (as well as many other stops that take you to other Universities within Boston), I felt a sense of belonging amongst other commuters who were my age and are presumably classmates or simply other Bostonian students.

Seeing that I am now commuting from the North Shore everyday, I try to shorten the length of my commute as much as possible. After having used both the Green and Orange line to get to Northeastern's campus, I now realize that using the Orange line is the significantly quicker option. At first, I felt semi-uncomfortable using the Orange line. The train cars are always filthy, and the economic diversity of crowds has an incredibly broad spectrum of people, ranging from Account Executives on State street, to homeless people to who lay across multiple seats.

Although I didn't use Ruggles as a means of transportation, I still chose to pass through the station on a semi-regular basis for two reasons.

- 1) To go to Dunkin Donuts
- 2) To get to International Village

But never, to get to and from different areas of Roxbury or the heart of the city.

Background Research

We found existing material about Ruggles station through secondary sources, including its history, usage data, upcoming construction proposals, and more.

General Information

Ruggles was opened on October 5, 1987. It is known for being a main transfer point for suburban commuters working at the hospitals, colleges, and museums in the Longwood Medical Area and Back Bay because it provides access to the orange line T, bus, and commuter rail. The commuter rail from Ruggles serves the Needham line, Franklin line, and Providence/Stoughton lines. It is the fourth busiest destination station on the commuter rail network. However, Ruggles is limited in its commuter rail operations today because the existing platforms are served by only two of the three tracks. More than 30 percent of the inbound trains bypass Ruggles Station, requiring inbound passengers to transfer from the commuter rail to the Orange Line at Back Bay to travel back to Ruggles Station.

This is the list of bus lines that serve Ruggles:

- **8** Harbor Point/Umass -- Kenmore Station Via B.U. Medical Center & Dudley Station
- **15** Kane Sq. Or Fields Corner Sta. -- Ruggles Sta. Via Uphams Corner
- **19** Fields Corner Sta. -- Kenmore Or Ruggles Sta. Via Grove Hall & Dudley Station
- **22** Ashmont Sta. -- Ruggles Sta. Via Talbot Ave. & Jackson Sq.
- **23** Ashmont Sta. -- Ruggles Sta. Via Washington St.
- **28** Mattapan Sta. -- Ruggles Sta. Via Dudley Sta.
- **42** Forest Hills Sta. -- Dudley Sta. Via Washington St.
- **43** Ruggles Station -- Park & Tremont Sts. Via Tremont St.
- **44** Jackson Sq. Sta. -- Ruggles Sta. Via Seaver St. & Humboldt Ave.
- **45** Franklin Park Zoo -- Ruggles Sta. Via Blue Hill Ave.
- **47** Central Sq., Cambridge -- Broadway Station Via B.U. Medical Center, Dudley Station & Longwood Medical Center
- **CT2** Sullivan Station -- Ruggles Station Via Kendall/MIT
- **CT3** Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center -- Andrew Station Via B.U. Medical Center

Ruggles Station is also a stop for the MASCO (Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization) shuttle services. The buses depart every 6-8 minutes from Forsyth Circle, right outside the Northeastern campus entrance to Ruggles Station. They take passengers to the Longwood Medical Area.

There is no MBTA parking available, but street or private parking may exist (such as Northeastern-owned parking garages).

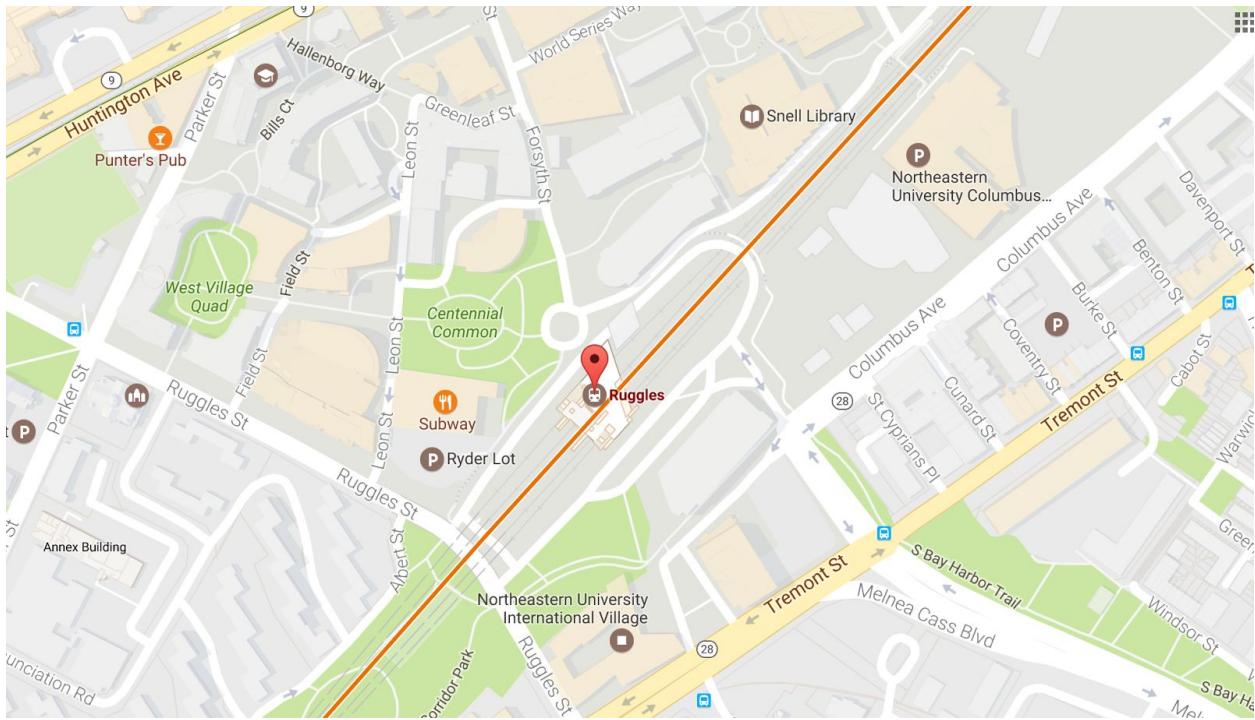
In terms of accessibility, there are elevators and escalators to bus, T, and commuter rail platforms. The station also has public restrooms (one men's, one women's, and one gender neutral), but these are not very easy to find and many people are unaware of their existence. In terms of businesses, there is a small Dunkin' Donuts without any seating, as well as a Noble Roman's Pizza / Tuscano's Subs which offers a few bar seats. There are also two Bank of America ATMs.

Northeastern University

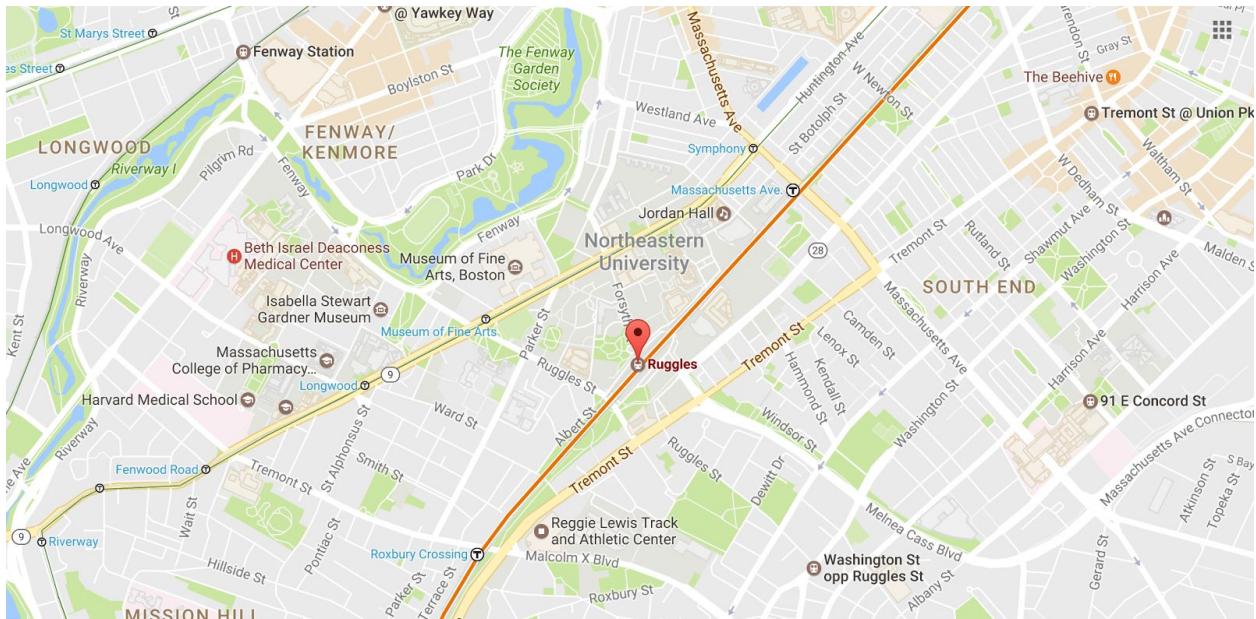
In the past 20 years NEU has invested more than \$485 million in residence halls, academic and research facilities, and athletic centers. One of these projects is the newly opened ISEC (Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering Complex) building on Columbus Avenue, a 220,000 sq.ft and \$225 million building project that clearly shows Northeastern's push towards Roxbury. In the plan's words, "What was once seen as the backdoor of Northeastern's campus is becoming an important gateway to the university." Northeastern is trying to shift the focus of their presence toward Roxbury. The recently opened Northeastern Crossing serves as another example of Northeastern's shift in focus toward the Roxbury neighborhood. Northeastern Crossing has the goal to bring together Northeastern students and members of other Boston neighborhoods, including Roxbury. Northeastern is also planning on funding \$226 million for a massive renovation of the William E. Carter Playground on Columbus avenue.

However, in Roxbury, residents and political leaders have complained they are overwhelmed by students, and underwhelmed by the university's consideration for its neighbors. A main issue of this is Northeastern's lack of on-campus housing. Since Northeastern's last master plan, they had reduced the number of dorm rooms that they had originally planned to add. As of 2013, 60.6% of students were living on campus, but for Roxbury City Councilor Tito Jackson, this was not enough. Jackson wants to see Northeastern push to get more students back in on-campus housing. He also stated, "What I would like to see is a plan that mirrors what the University of Pennsylvania did, really looking at, as an anchor institution, how Northeastern can have a double- and triple-fold bottom line to their investment with local minority- and women-owned businesses in Boston." He was referring to the real estate investments University of Pennsylvania made to stabilize its Philadelphia neighborhood. There are plans for a new student residence hall on Burke Street (on the Roxbury side of campus) for about 800 students, which is a means of addressing the lack of on-campus student housing. This residence hall will join the few other student residence halls on Columbus Avenue, including 780 Columbus, 768 Columbus, Davenport A and B, 10 Coventry, and International Village. With all these developments, there are worries that rent will be rising in Roxbury.

Ruggles station spans a lot of space on Northeastern's campus. The architecture studio, NUPD station, and STRIVE (a training and educational center for adults looking to get employed) are all underneath the station and right beside the campus-side entrance to Ruggles.



In this more zoomed-in version, you can see Ruggles' proximity to "main campus," Tremont St., and Columbus Ave.

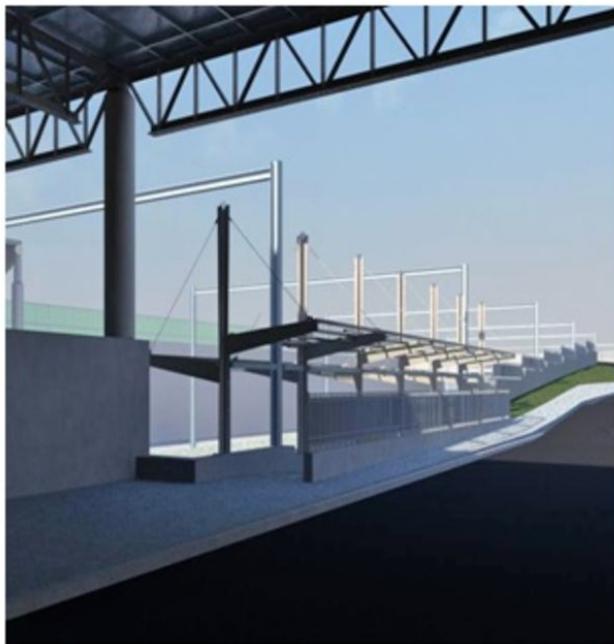


When the map is zoomed out, its proximity to so many neighborhoods is immediately clear--besides Roxbury, it is pretty close to Mission Hill, Fenway, Longwood, and the South End.

Transportation Project Overview

Only six years after it opened, in 1993, the MBTA began consideration of a second platform. However, it was not until 2012 that public meetings about this project actually begin. The MBTA has worked closely with Northeastern University in order to make the project beneficial for all parties. They were awarded a total of 30 million dollars in federal grant money. As of 2016, the proposal includes: layout and design of new commuter rail platform, additional station entrances, improved station accessibility, complete reconstruction of the lower busway, replacement of the four elevators, additional paths of travel and enhanced pedestrian safety and security measures. Construction is expected to last from 2017 to 2019, and the first phase will be the Commuter Rail platform project to service Track 2.

Area map



Key Insights

Categorizing our background research on Ruggles by finding specific key insights is particularly interesting due the different objective or subjective angles that our group had taken while conducting research. Seeing that Ruggles is on the 'line' between Roxbury and Northeastern, both communities seem to clash when considering 'which community Ruggles is a bigger part of.' A vast majority of our reasoning stems from the funding that Northeastern has been investing into the Roxbury community, specifically on Columbus Ave (the border between Northeastern and Roxbury). Aoun's desire to invest into the Roxbury community is (according to him and other Northeastern officials) an attempt to shift the focus towards Roxbury, but may prevent any inclusion of the Roxbury community due to the disparities of socioeconomic growth within the two demographics. As we progress throughout the duration of our research, it is imperative that's Roxbury's community does not become trivial matter when designing improvements to Ruggles station. Creating an establishment of an overarching networked community between Roxbury and Northeastern is arguably the backbone of our project and will continue to provide our group guidance for the rest of our project.

It is also interesting to learn about the upcoming construction project because it addresses many of the issues that we have become more aware of in the course of our research (such as the inconvenience of Ruggles only serving % of the Commuter Rail system). However, there are many issues that the construction project still does not address, and there remains a lot of potential for improvement beyond the transportation project.

Observations

Documentation

Security/Safety:

- No one at transit police station (but it is a sunday)
- The police booth is empty a lot

Pathways:

- Most walk in a linear path on one side or other, mostly on the dunkin side
- Most people are just walking straight through
- They have a purpose/destination, not just wandering
- Most people walk on the right side
- Flow of people is not well-designed, people are always trying to avoid running into each other
- Most people are only passing through
- The elevator down to the bus stop is definitely utilized

Aesthetics:

- Wire fence around walls is harsh
- "No loitering" sign
- The commuter rail is extremely loud when you get off.

Crowds/People:

- Lots of people run to the bus when they see it pulling in
- Exiting the very left door facing Northeastern can often be a large clash of people because when you exit you are most often either turning left or turning right, so it can be hard to not run into people
- People will only go through doors that are already open (Northeastern entrance)
- Crossing the street (taking the bus shortcut) involves a lot of "jay-walking" because there aren't convenient designated crossing spots
- When people are waiting for the MASCO shuttle they block the sidewalk and make it more difficult for people to walk in and out of ryder
- Walking into Ruggles from campus entrance includes a lot of 90 degree turns because people are walking over from Ryder side or from the architecture building side
 - The only way to walk in and not have to make an abrupt turn is to walk through the road on Forsyth circle
- There are lots of high school/ middle school students who use the station
 - They tend to be the only ones who really "hang out" here, although it seems that they hang out with their friends while they are waiting for their bus to arrive
- Turnstiles can get backed up by people trying to exit/enter the same turnstile at the same time. This is common at all T stations, though, not just exclusively Ruggles.
- Left side stairs (by the escalator) get clogged up when I try to go down them whenever the station gets busy

- Stairs down to bus are at an awkward angle, to the flow of people traffic. Typically, you have to make a sharp turn to go down the stairs and you don't see the people coming up the stairs, so it's easy to run into people.
- Most people aren't going down to buses, the people that are are mostly older
- Majority are young people, most likely Northeastern students

Uninviting/Ambient:

- Gates on columbus ave end haven't been in use in a long time (to my knowledge)
- More inviting at columbus ave end where roof is partially glass, allows for more natural light

Info/Confusion:

- From where I'm sitting there was no way to know when the next train or bus was coming
- I am not sure how to buy physical tickets for the commuter rail, only how to buy them on my phone.
- People do look at the bus information screen right outside the turnstiles. However, it is only convenient and useful for people who are exiting the T and looking to transfer to the bus stops. Otherwise, there is no indication about bus arrival times down by the bus platforms.
- Some stop to look at the T map by the Columbus Ave entrance
- No one stopped at historical facts signs

Furniture:

- Benches are under-utilized
- Seems odd to people that I'm sitting on this bench
- Inside the tunnels are not a good place for people watching (no seating even if you're actively looking for it)

Weather:

- Very cold and windy
- The girl next to me is talking to somebody on her cellphone, complaining about how cold it is. She says, "In Ruggles, there is no indoors, there's a ceiling but no real windows or walls."
- The covering over the bus stops doesn't work very well for keeping rain out
- Exiting Ruggles towards IV always has a massive wind tunnel
- Crossing through the bus station can also have a massive wind tunnel

Maintenance:

- Electronic signs on commuter station are broken

Amenities:

- Most of the people who eat at the pizza place are non-NU students (middle/high school)
- Pizza place was closed (Jan 15)
- Most people only stop at Dunkin Donuts or go down to the T
- No one looked at the pamphlets. The large pamphlet holder is always overlooked.

Discussion

Since we had all used and been through Ruggles, setting aside time to very actively and consciously observe gave us a chance to catch the details that we may have overlooked before starting our research. We used these observations to inform our interviews and surveys.

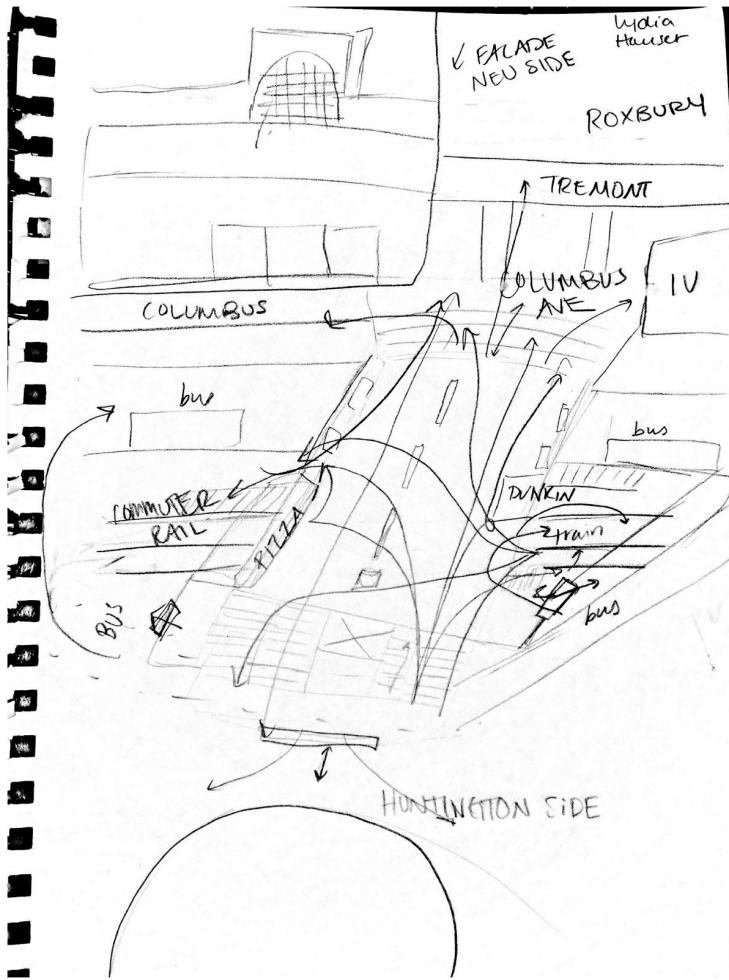
The layout and pathways were one of the main focuses in our observations. We all found that the foot traffic patterns in Ruggles can become very messy, especially at busy hours. When the station is more empty, most people tend to walk in a very linear fashion down the main corridor of Ruggles, staying on their right sides. The only big exception to this is the people who have to cut across to take the stairs or elevator down to the lower-level bus platforms. People crossing over does not pose significant problems until around rush hour when the station gets very crowded. Another issue we observed was the often crowded entrance/exit on Forsyth Circle, where people will gather to wait for the MASCO shuttle and many people have to make a sharp turn to exit or enter the station.

Another main observation made had to do with the confusion of information and where to find it. The signage is very difficult to find and read. One critical observation we made was about the weather. We researched during cold weather, so the weather was definitely more extreme than other months, but we definitely noted that Ruggles was not a safe haven from the outside weather; often times, it could make the cold wind even worse, especially when walking through the bus stops from Columbus Ave. and exiting towards International Village. With this in mind, it makes more sense that the heavy majority of people use Ruggles only to pass through.

Maps

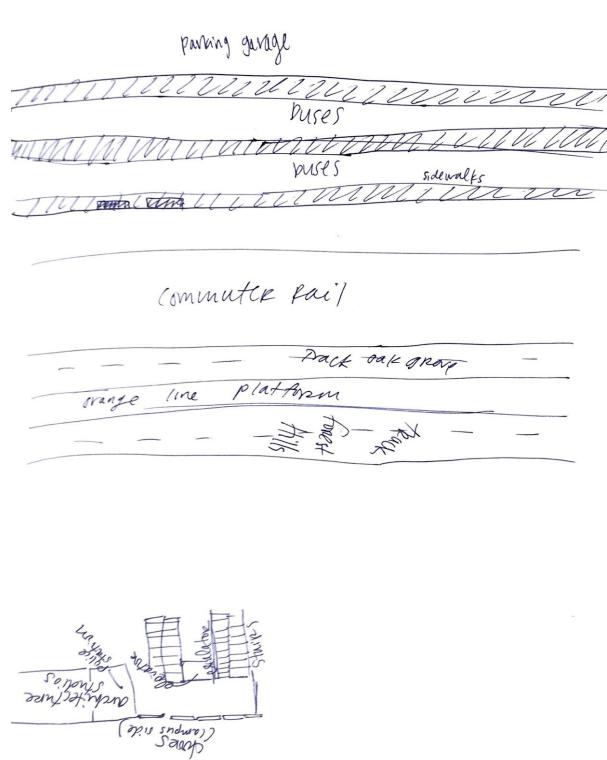
Site Maps

Lydia's Site Map



Before doing this I had obviously been in Ruggles many times for other reasons but when I was forced to focus on certain aspects I learned a lot more than I expected. After I made a general sketch of the station, I noticed how complicated the traffic patterns and pedestrian pathways are. So I decided to focus on this aspect of Ruggles. This ended up being one of the main things found in our observations and overall research.

Tia's Site Map



I split my maps into upper and lower levels because one of the main things I noticed while drawing these was the Ruggles' complexity due to the many transportation systems that run through this station. I also realized how long the corridor really was, and how much of it was left unused as opposed to the Northeastern entrance side, which had so many parts to it.

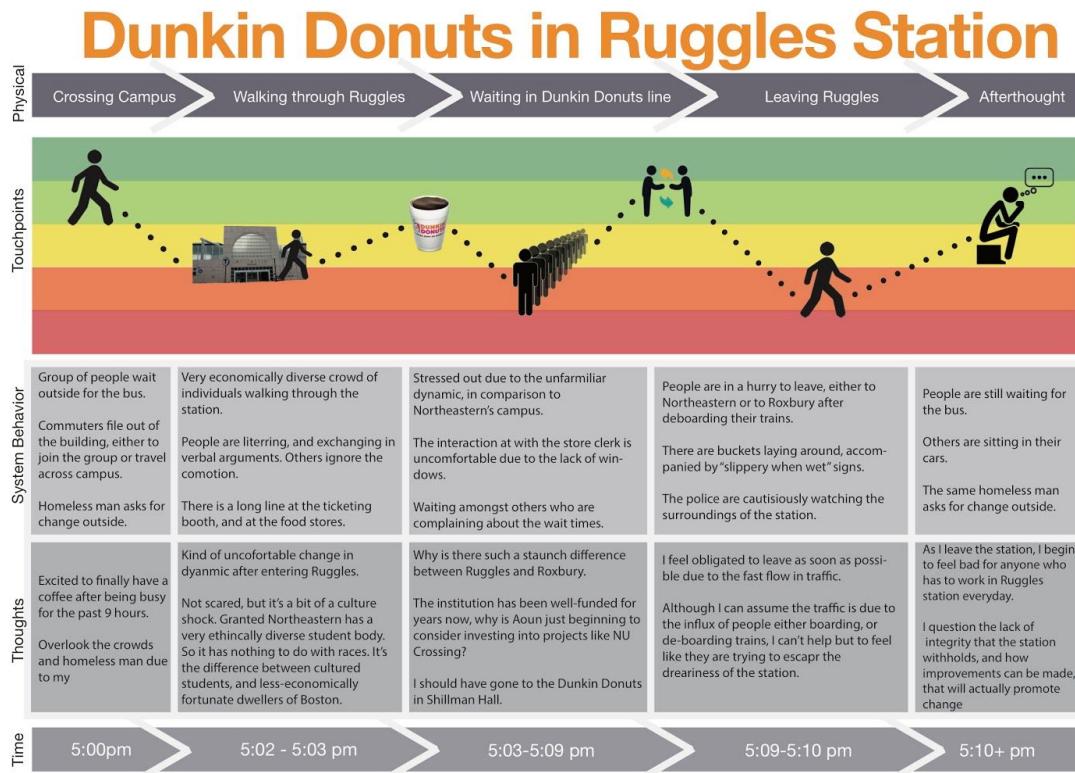
Experience Maps

Lydia's Experience Map

RUGGLES STATION EXPERIENCE MAP					
	Leaving Ryder after class → Entering Ruggles		→ Crossing through → Ruggles		Leaving Ruggles → Afterthought
OVERVIEW					
SYSTEM BEHAVIOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not a great view of Ruggles as you walk by - Somewhat dirty and closed off - Homeless man outside asking for change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mass of people trying to exit Ruggles - Coming from Ryder is a bad angle of entry - Traffic going upstairs or escalator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many people just passing through - Some going down to use the t or bus system - Cross over traffic to bus or food vendors - So many people going in various directions that causes frustration - Very dark and changes the mood - Do I have time to stop at Dunkin? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The windiest part of Ruggles - More welcoming than other side - Angled steps cause caution when exiting - It is so cold - Just want to get to IV to the warmth - Why is this wind tunnel a thing? - Running to get out of cold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traffic slows as people get to destination - Class change is busiest time - Not my favorite part of the day - Having to walk fast to get to class on time - Not very convenient or inviting
THOUGHTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thinking about last class and making sure to remember assignments - Checking time to be sure not to be late to next class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annoyed at mass of people and not being able to get through - Stairs and escalator are slippery from the rain - People can be very inconsiderate when they have somewhere to be 			
TIME	11:35 AM	11:38-11:40 AM	11:40-11:45	11:46	11:50

Above is an Experience Map that I, Lydia, created to explain the experience one has when they are just passing through Ruggles from Ryder Hall to International Village. I have made this commute many times and have found the experience to be very stagnant because at this time of day Ruggles isn't all that busy. However, on this particular occasion, I noticed many more things than I normally would have. The traffic patterns were confusing and the weather was quite awful. I noticed many of the negative things within Ruggles as I passed through that I may not have noticed otherwise.

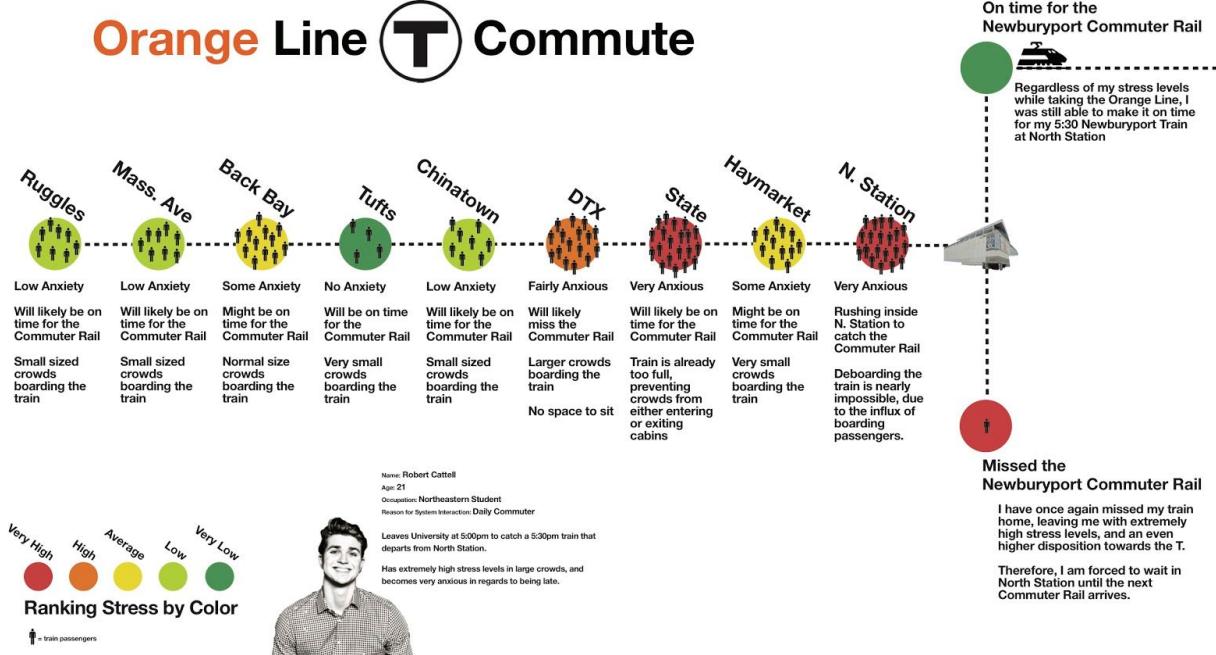
Rob's First Experience Map:



Seen above is an Experience Map that Rob had created in regards to an experience he had while going to the Dunkin Donuts within Ruggles Station. Although he uses the station daily as a means of transportation, and has already established a negative bias towards the station, he tried to flush his thought patterns and be open minded to the new experience. Unfortunately, by the end of the experience, his negative opinion was reaffirmed due to the lack of respect that people have for the space. Witnessed within the station was the destruction of public property as well as hostility amongst random passerbys.

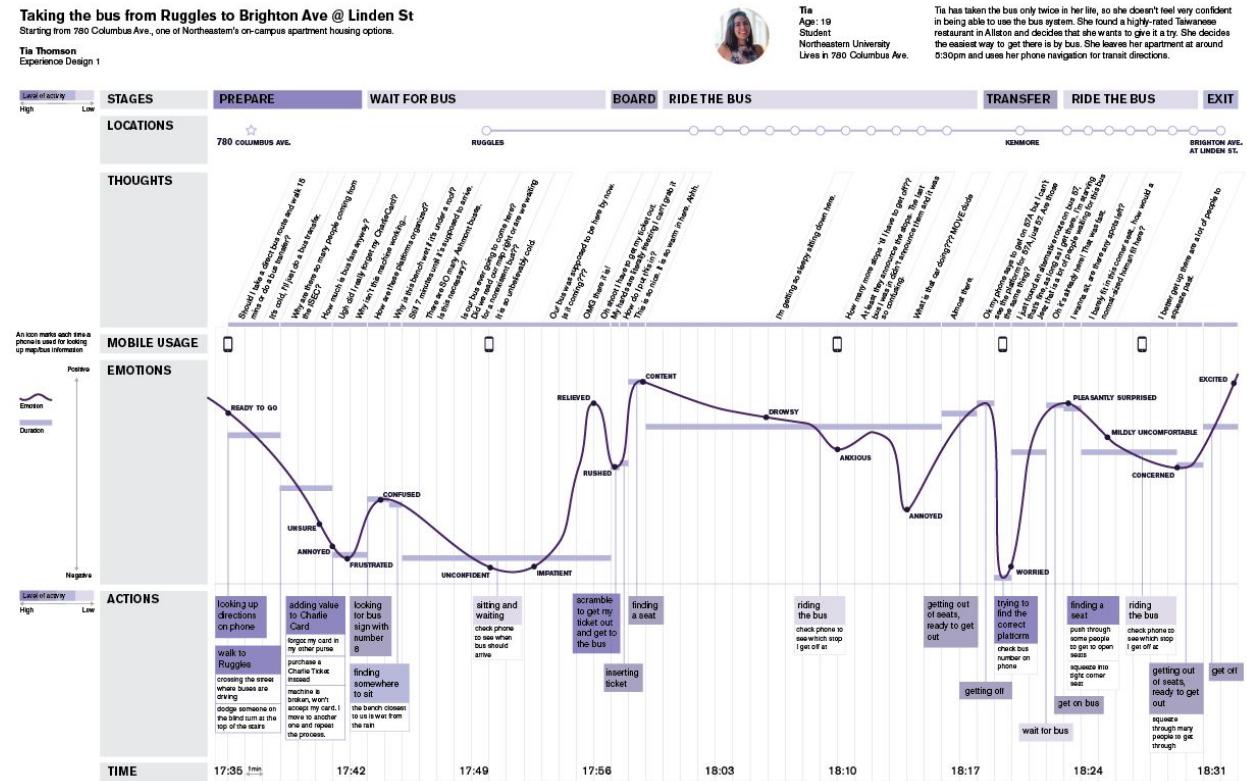
Rob's Second Experience Map:

Rob's Stressful Rush Hour Orange Line T Commute



Seen above is an Experience Map that Rob had created in regards to an experience with his daily Orange Line commute. His experience was critiqued based upon his stress levels while trying to get to North Station to catch a 5:30 pm train. His experience began when he left Ruggles station at 5:00 pm, and his stress levels were continually being noted at each train stop in between Ruggles and North Station. In conclusion, he summarized his experience as being challenging and stressful due to the poorly maintained train cars, the large influx of passengers, and lack of space for passengers.

Tia's Experience Map:

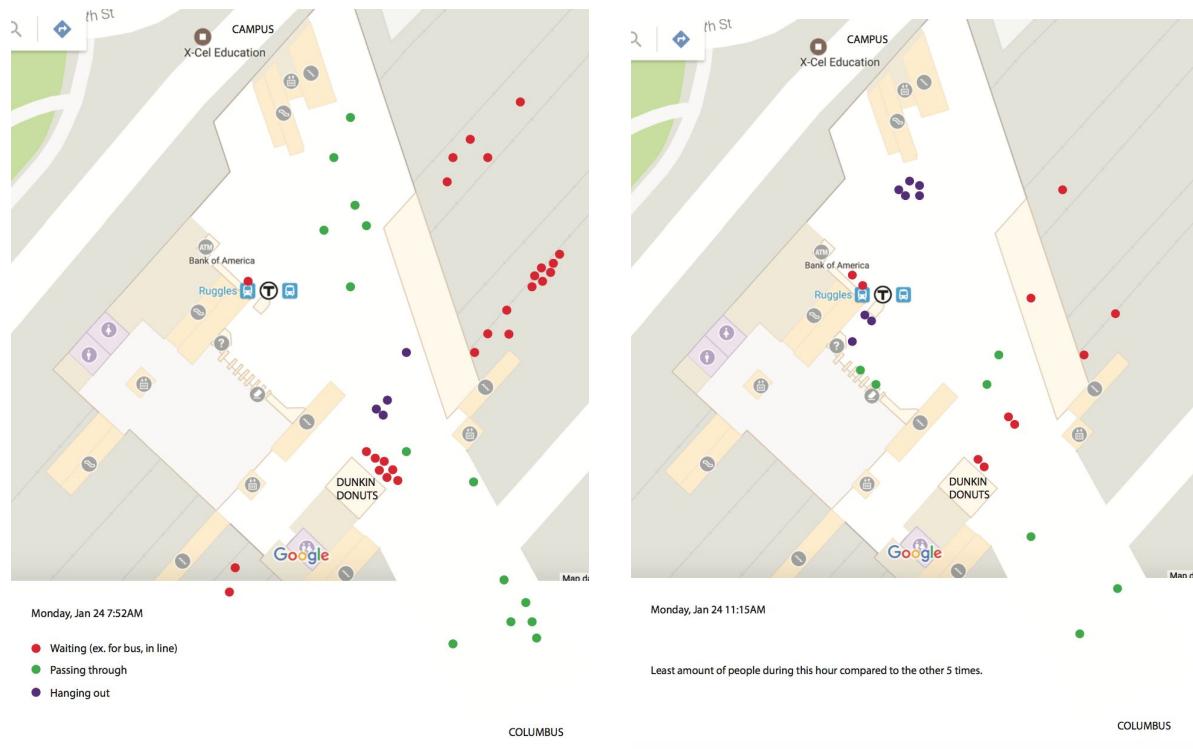


My experience map was very detailed and complex. The main takeaways from my experience of riding the bus from Ruggles included my dependency on checking directions and bus routes on my phone, the cold weather while I was waiting for the bus, and my nervousness when the bus came later than it said it would be coming on my phone. I was extremely unfamiliar with the bus system and was a little intimidated by it because it seemed complicated. However, after using the bus and going to Allston for the first time, I was pleased that the bus was able to take me to this new place, and it wasn't as difficult as I had thought it was going to be.

Diagrams

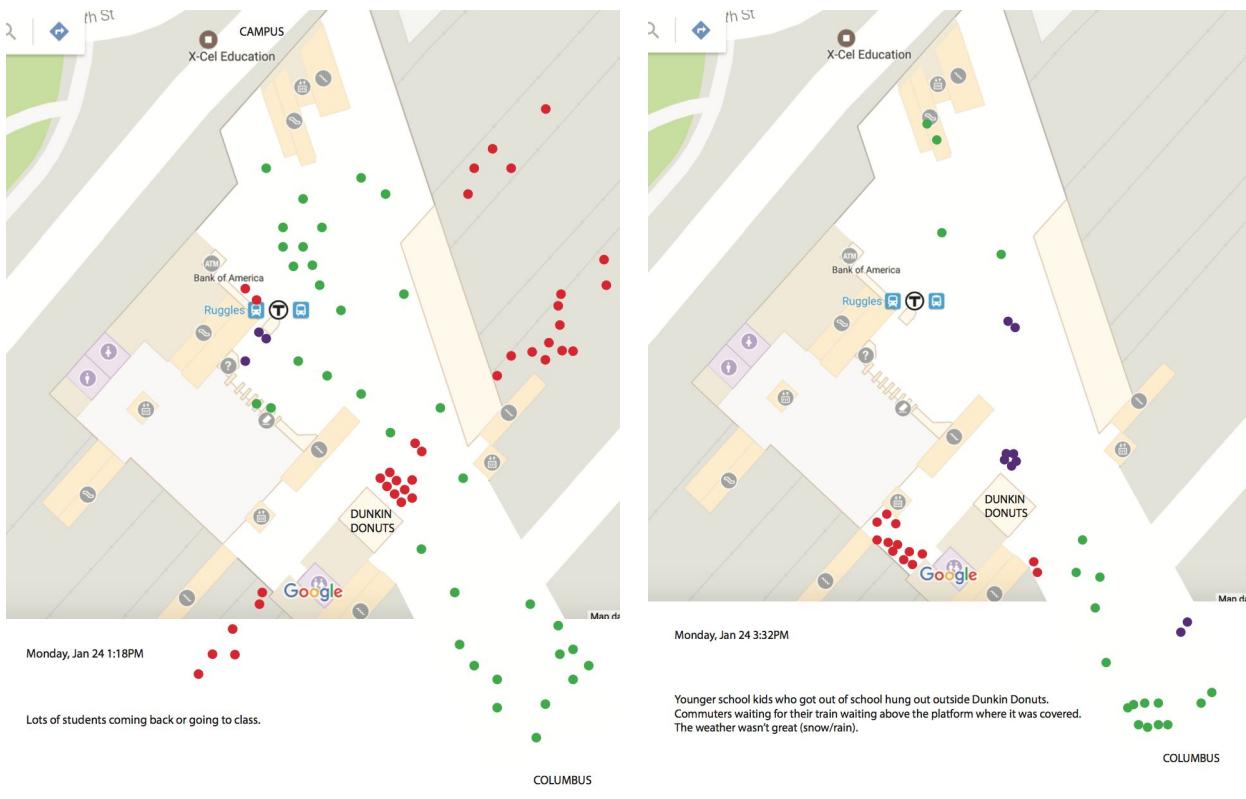
Density maps

Throughout the course of the day on January 24, I noted down where people were waiting, hanging out, and passing through in Ruggles station.



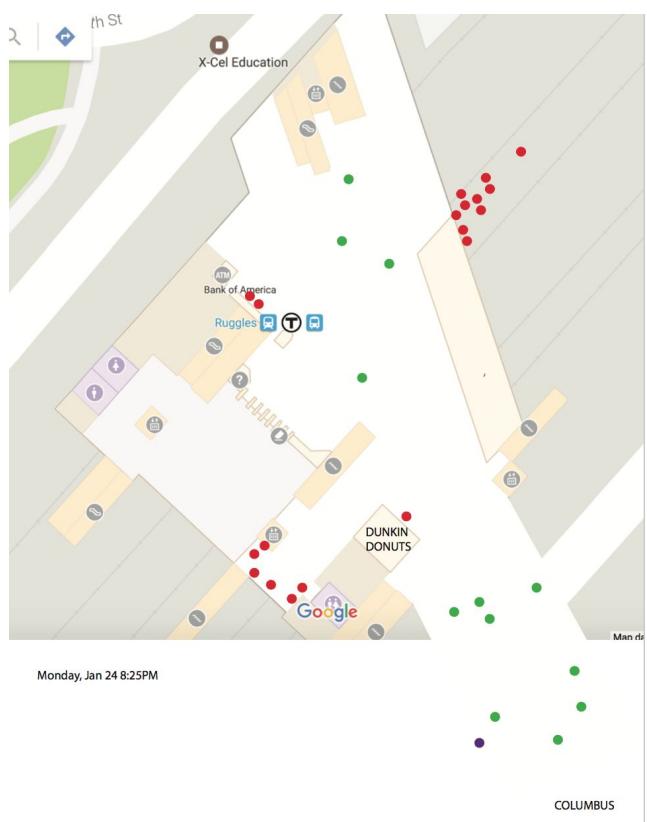
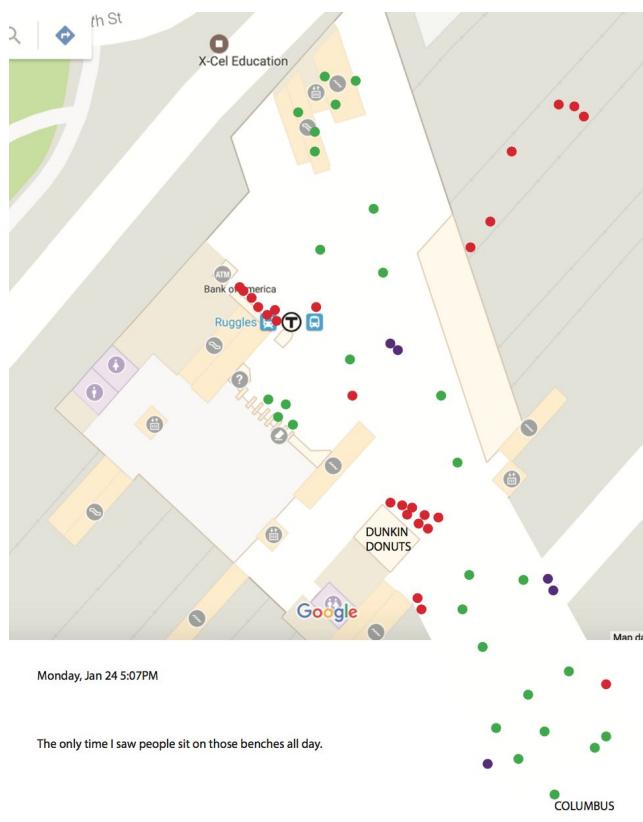
7:52 AM (ABOVE LEFT): The bus station and Dunkin' lines were pretty crowded. There were a good number of people passing through, mostly students getting to their 8AM classes. There was a group of three students chatting in the middle of the corridor. Another man was standing outside of the pizza place.

11:15AM (ABOVE RIGHT): It was pretty empty during this time. There was a group of young students standing by the elevator talking and a few people waiting by the commuter rail entrance.



1:18PM (ABOVE LEFT): This was one of the most busy times, but it was largely students walking to or from campus since 1:30 is a pretty popular class time. Dunkin was crowded, and so were the buses.

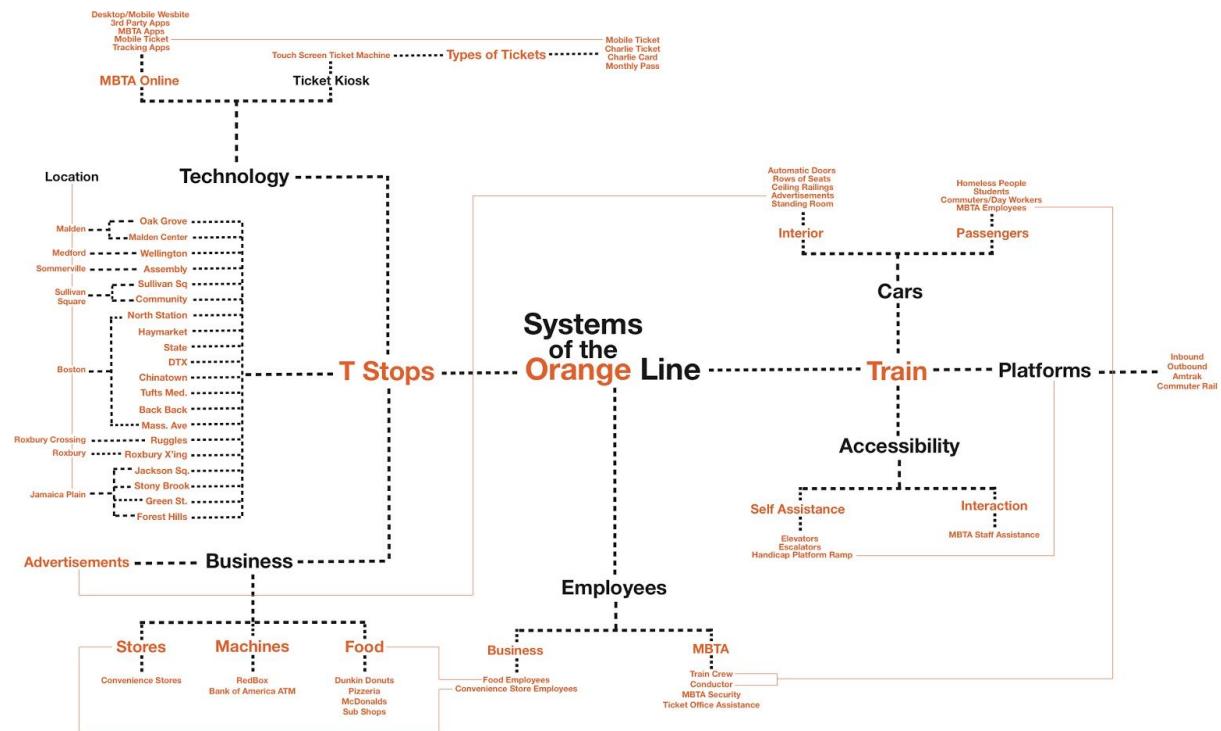
3:32PM (ABOVE RIGHT): There was a large group of people waiting for the commuter rail in the nook outside the entrance. It was cold and rainy, so they were probably seeking protection from the rain. There was a group of younger school kids who had just gotten out of school hanging outside Dunkin' Donuts.



5:07PM (ABOVE LEFT): This was during rush hour, so there were a lot of people walking through, using the T, refilling their Charlie cards, and waiting in line at Dunkin' Donuts. It was also the first time I had seen people sitting on the benches all day, but throughout my other direct observations, I have noticed that many people wait on the benches if their bus is not coming for a while.

8:25PM (ABOVE RIGHT): It was not very crowded at this time. There was the biggest group of people waiting for the buses, and there were a few waiting for the commuter rail in the nook by the entrance stairs. Some people were passing through- a mix of students and Roxbury residents.

System Map:

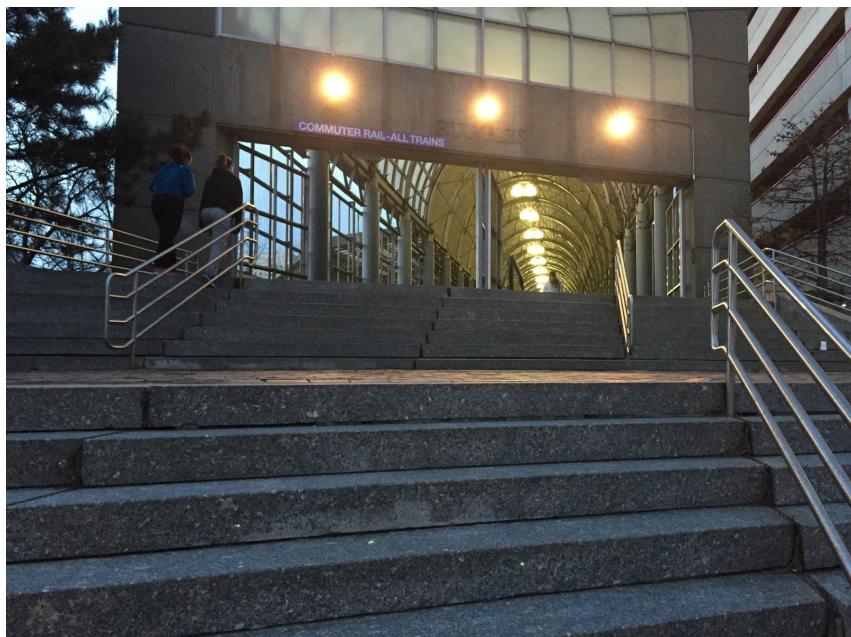


Seen above is a systems map Rob had created for the entirety of the Orange Line. As one would expect, the two largest components within this system are the Orange Line T-Stop and the Orange Line trains. Within both of the systems are corresponding attributes that build the system to its entirety. After extensive observations, it was clear that 'Business' and 'Technology' had pertained to the T-Stops, while 'Cars,' 'Platforms,' and 'Accessibility' pertained to the Trains. 'Employees' overlapped and pertained to both categories.

Photos



Signage is not at eye level and hard to find. Bus numbers are hard to read or even notice.



This is the side of Ruggles Station where the “wind tunnel” which is mentioned in many circumstances exists.



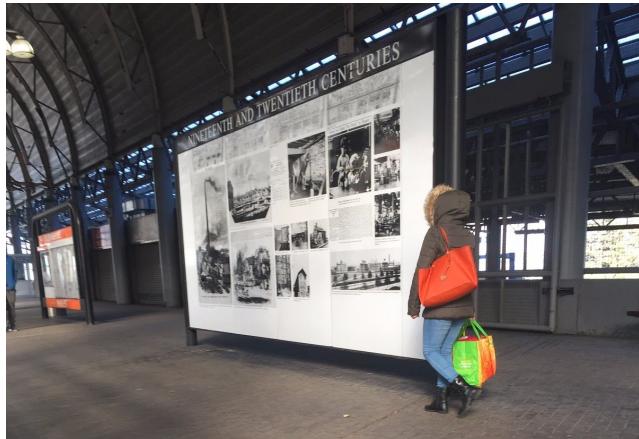
This is the upper bus stop. It is very hard to know what buses actually stop here. However it does show when the T is coming.



This is an old door that is no longer in use because the security gates that are supposed to close never do.



The police booth always seems to be empty.



These historical signs are never really given a second glance.



There is a door here, but it is blocked.



Pay phones here are never in use.

Interviews

Prior to conducting our interviews, our group thoroughly thought out the best method of questioning passerbys in order to receive a varied yet full bodied set of responses. Seeing that we were not entirely sure of the complaints that interviewees would have when discussing Ruggles, we decided it was best to have extremely open ended questions about their overall experiences with Ruggles without implying our own biases. We knew that some people would be very open to discussing while others may be more introverted and quiet, so we decided to set up a few generic high level questions, with the intentions of potentially discussing more if they seemed willing. We mainly would first ask them, "Why are you here today?" and use that question to guide the rest of the conversation. We got a total of 14 official interviews.

Age: 21-25 years old

Gender: Female

Non-Student

This young woman was waiting by the turnstiles for her boyfriend who was riding the T. She used to be a student in the area, but she still lives close by. The station is the **most easily accessible** for her and she **uses the train frequently**, but she said **she would not hang out in Ruggles** or spend more time than she needed to there.

Age: 45-50 years old

Gender: Male

Occupation: Professor at Northeastern

This professor was leaning against one of the historical sign dividers while **waiting to meet someone**. Although he was waiting, he **seemed in a hurry** and let us know that the second the person he was meeting arrived, he would have to leave. He told us that he uses the orange line T, Dunkin' Donuts, and the ATMs, and he felt pretty indifferently about the station, calling it **"fine."** When we floated the idea of more businesses, he still answered pretty indifferently, saying he "wouldn't mind."

Age: 25-35 years old

Gender: Male

Non-student

This man was with a woman. The woman was sitting on the bench and he was leaning against the wall behind the bench. When asked what he was doing in Ruggles, he said that he was just **"cruisin' around"** while **waiting for his bus**. He said that he **never goes to Dunkin' or the pizza place**-- it just never really crosses his mind. He also said that he might consider getting something to eat or drink in Ruggles if there were different places. He uses both the subway and the bus, and Ruggles is the **most convenient station** for where he needs to go.

Age: 18-22

Gender: Male

Northeastern Student

Before we approached him, this young man was leaning against the pole outside the pizza place and he was just scrolling through his phone. He had been waiting for a while for his community service group, who had agreed to **meet in Ruggles** to take the T to the place they were volunteering at. He usually uses the Roxbury Crossing orange line T stop (around twice a week) since he lives in Mission Hill, so he doesn't spend much time in Ruggles. He says that he goes to the Ruggles Dunkin' Donuts maybe twice a semester, but **never the pizza place**. He laughed a bit about the idea of going there, so it definitely seemed that it really never crossed his mind. If he's on campus, he says he will sometimes go into Ruggles just to **use the ATMs**, and his overall opinion of Ruggles is that it's "fine" but it has an overall **"sketchy vibe."** He said that he's personally seen drug deal take place here, and even though he doesn't feel like that's such a big deal, **he wouldn't want to be here late at night.**

Age: 35-40

Gender: Female

Non-student

This woman was with her children standing outside of the pizza place and eating. When we asked her if we could ask her a few questions about Ruggles, she seemed hesitant because she didn't come here very often and felt that she wouldn't be a good person to interview. On this specific occasion, she was passing through from the bus to the T, and she **grabbed something for her and her kids to eat at Roman's pizza** after getting off the bus. It was around 5:30pm at this point, so they were hungry and **wanted to get something to eat before continuing travelling on the T.**

Age: 45-55

Gender: Female

Non-student

This woman was standing by the history signs, and she said that she didn't come to Ruggles very often. She usually uses the commuter rail from Back Bay, but she was wearing a FitBit and felt motivated to walk the extra mile to use the Commuter Rail from Ruggles to reach her steps goal for the day. She has never gone to the pizza place because it's not really the type of food she likes to eat, and said she's only occasionally goes to Dunkin' Donuts. When we asked about her opinion of Ruggles station, she said that the **Commuter Rail platform is unwelcoming**, then added, **"But it's the T, what would you expect?"** From this comment, it seems that her perception of the MBTA in general is pretty negative. As someone who enjoys walking, she brought up that in her own experience of walking to the station, the **street signage** from Columbus to Ruggles or from the MFA to Ruggles could be more efficient or laid out differently.

Age: 15-18
Gender: Male
High School Student

One teenager who appeared to be a high-school student spoke for both himself and another teenager of the same age who was much more shy and reserved. After asking him if he was a student within the area, he told us that he lived in Roxbury and used the T as method of transportation to-and-from school. During this instance, he was taking the train back home. He then told us that Ruggles, in his opinion, is not somewhere where he would like to hang out with friends or grab something quick to eat. It was simply used as a passthrough to get to the T. He concluded the conversation by saying that he would sometimes meet friends within the station before going to school, or before going to hangout with them.

Age: 15-18
Gender: Female
High School Student

Near the two teenage boys who we had last interviewed were two teenage girls who looked around the same age as the teenage boys. Similar to the teenage boys, one of the two girls was extremely shy, so the other girl spoke on both of their behalves. Ruggles Station is used by the one of two girls every single day as a method of transportation to get to-and-from O'Bryant High School, which is located in Lower Roxbury near the Roxbury Crossing T Stop. O'Bryant is an exam school, meaning that students are required to take an exam before being accepted. Because of this more exclusive nature, students who go to this school will often come from further away compared to regular public schools. She stated that usually used the commuter rail, but was not today because they were meeting a friend. They had mentioned that although there are other train lines throughout the city of Boston, the only one in which they will take is the Orange Line. When we had asked them whether or not they eat at either of the food businesses within Ruggles, they immediately said no. "We would rather walk to any of the places at Northeastern because they are much cleaner than the pizza shop or Dunkins." After being asked if either of the girls spent anytime hanging out in Ruggles, they told us that they perceived the station as only a means of transportation. They also stated that they have noticed the Bank of America ATMs within the station, but did not ever utilize them.

Age: 23-30
Gender: Female
Beth Israel Hospital Employee

Amongst all of the interviews that our group had conducted, this one was of the most intricate and noteworthy. This young woman lived south of Boston within the South Shore area, near Plymouth. She told us that she works at Beth Israel hospital, so the most beneficial means of commuting into the city is by using the commuter rail. Although she sometimes uses the Bus or T, it is not a part of her regular commute. If she does use the bus or T, it is because she has

missed her commuter rail train to the South Shore. After some confusion she explained, in detail, the two variations of her commute. On a normal day, she takes the commuter rail to Ruggles from the South Shore, and then walks to Beth Israel hospital. In the evening, she will take the Beth Israel shuttle to Ruggles, and then take the Commuter Rail from Ruggles back to the South Shore. On some days where she has to stay late, she is forced to take the commuter rail from Back Bay, simply because Ruggles doesn't offer as many commuter rail train times as Back Bay does. In this situation, she is required to take the Beth Israel shuttle to Ruggles station, and then either take the T or bus to get to Back Bay. She then proceeds to take the commuter rail from Back Bay to get home in the South Shore. After stressing the frustration of her intricate commute, she stated the worst part of it all is the temperature of waiting at Ruggles after a long day at work. She said it was freezing on the commuter rail platform.

Age: 18-22

Gender: Male

Northeastern Student

This freshman student of Northeastern has lived in International Village for almost two semesters and uses Ruggles daily as a means of passageway to get to and from Northeastern's campus. Although he walks through Ruggles everyday, he still claimed that he didn't utilize the Station enough to say that he 'hated' it. This comment gave our group the notion that he had already formed negative opinions about the station. He stated that he never goes to the Dunkin Donuts because it is too busy, and Pizza shop is simply not appealing enough to ever want to eat there. When considering the means of transportation that Ruggles offers, he says that he only takes the T once a month. He also stated that he never takes the bus because the T takes him everywhere that he needs to go. If worst comes to worst, he will take an Uber.

Age: 18-22

Gender: Female

Northeastern Student

Another student from the University who sees Ruggles Station primarily as a means of transportation. Amongst the three offered transportation systems, she usually prefers taking the bus. She had claimed that she was a frequent user of the Dunkin Donuts within Ruggles, but doesn't like the idea of eating at Roman's Pizza. Currently, she does not like the idea of eating at a restaurant within the train station but would consider it if there were more businesses.

KEY INFORMANT

Age: 40-50

Gender: Male

MBTA Bus Driver

This gentleman stated that he has been working within the MBTA system for many years, and is very passionate about his field of work. He stated that he works on the bus, and he loves it due

to the various different people that he is able to meet every day. While waiting for shifts, he said that he likes to sit on the benches within Ruggles and pass the time by reading books. Amongst the food options within Ruggles, he stated that he eats at Dunkin Donuts often but not Roman's pizza. Overall, he believed that the station was considered "nice" when comparing Ruggles to other stations within the MBTA, but he hadn't ever really given much thought to what makes it "nice" other than it simply being a good fit for the surrounding demographic. He concluded his interview by recommending for our group to read the histories of Ruggles and Roxbury amongst the various signage placed within the station.

Age: 18-22

Gender: Female

Northeastern Student

This Northeastern student was found waiting for her friend before using the T as a method of transportation to travel to Somerville. She stated that she lives in International Village and travel through Ruggles everyday to get to campus. All three means of transportation are used on a semi-regular basis by this student; The T is used every other week, the bus is taken to Cambridge on occasion, and the commuter rail is used to travel to Duxbury in the South Shore. Unfortunately, Ruggles' commuter rail doesn't travel to the South Shore, meaning that she must take the T to Back Bay and then use the commuter rail from there. She mentioned that she never eats at Ruggles because she is usually in a rush to get to campus and never has the time to stop. Overall, she perceived the station to be fine, but but is fearful of the area and the station when walking through late at night. Part of this fear is due to being female.

Age: 50-60

Gender: Female

Northeastern Professor

Amongst all of the interviews, this one specifically was the longest and provided our group the most insight from a daily commuter's perspective. As a Northeastern University employee who lives outside of the city, she has either the option of driving or taking the commuter rail to travel to and from Boston. Due to the heavy traffic during the morning/evening, she opts out of driving and prefers taking the train. She claimed that it was not only faster, but also much more eco-friendly. Although she uses the Dunkin Donuts within Ruggles, she chooses to not eat at Roman's Pizza because she "doesn't need to be eating fast food." Overall, she believes that there is "NOTHING GOOD about Ruggles." The station is poorly maintained, for various reasons ranging from the broken electronic signage to the crumbling steps down to the commuter rail platform. In general, she perceives the MBTA to be bad and that Ruggles is simply another victim of the MBTA. When considering ways to improve Ruggles, she stated the MBTA should consider viewing Europe's train station. "Europe is much better at maintaining their public transportation system, and Boston should look to them for structure or design." One of the positive attributes of Ruggles is the convenience of speaker announcements for incoming trains/train-times. Although she primarily uses the commuter rail, she stated that there were

times where she would use the Orange line but never the bus. In our opinions, one interesting attribute that this woman had noted was the **lack of aesthetic appeal** throughout Ruggles. She has noticed the public art within the station that hangs from the ceilings, yet she wishes that there was a rotating cycle of changing art/new pieces. "It is important to integrate aesthetic appeal whether it is functional or not." She suggested simply adding fresh paint or color to the station because of **color's ability to change the dynamic of a space.**

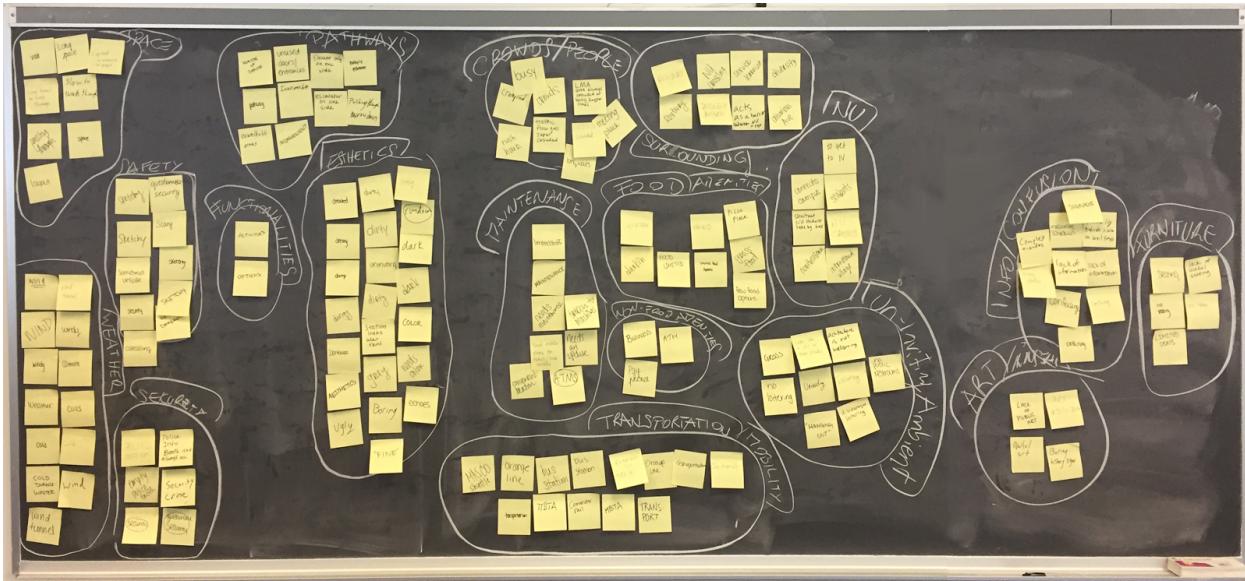
Limitations

We only interviewed people who seemed to be waiting around, so we did not get information from people who were walking through quickly.

Key Insights

Conducting the interviews was particularly one of the most interesting parts of our research, seeing that it was the first instance when our group was able to retrieve various conflicting opinions on Ruggles Station other than our own. Similar to the Affinity Mapping exercise that our class conducted at a later date, our group was able to recognize several overarching categories that embodied the strengths and weaknesses of Ruggles Station. To start, Ruggles was primarily recognized and used as a means of transportation. Although many usage amounts varied from bus, T, and commuter rail depending on the specific individual, it became clear that most frequently used method was the T. It was evident that more individuals would use the bus if it was more clear how to use it, and that the commuter rail would be used more if it allowed commuters to reach the same amount of destinations as the Back Bay commuter rail stop. Ruggles' second most commonly used function was the Dunkin' Donuts that is centered in the middle of the station. Our inquiries lead us to believe that there is a disparity of students who choose to use the Ruggles Dunkin Donuts instead of the other coffee options on campus. Unlike the students, nearly every adult over the age of 22 who uses Ruggles as a means of transportation recognized the Dunkin Donuts as a viable option for buying a daily cup of coffee. Although Roman's Pizza offers commuters and passersby fresh pizza, many individuals refuse to believe that the pizza is actually "fresh" and not dirty like the rest of the station. In addition to the station, as well as the businesses being perceived as dirty, many individuals claimed that they didn't think Ruggles station was safe, especially late at night. Another component that an interviewee had noted was the temperature of the station: she believed that station was extremely cold, especially outside on the commuter rail platform. Lastly, our group found the aesthetics of the station to be an overarching issue that wasn't perfectly articulated by many. We believed that if the station was more aesthetically pleasing, or simply had more business to seem modernized, people would form a more positive opinion regarding Ruggles Station.

Affinity mapping



Takeaways

After creating this affinity map in class, we looked closely at each of the groupings that our class had come up with and used these to develop questions for our survey. Some things we were curious about were what people did (and didn't do) in Ruggles, which methods of transportation they utilized, how easy each mode of transportation was to them, and how safe they felt while in Ruggles. By this point, we each had a lot of assumptions regarding the issues within Ruggles, and we wanted to use a survey to validate these assumptions, or perhaps show that particular issues that we thought were important were actually not as pressing.

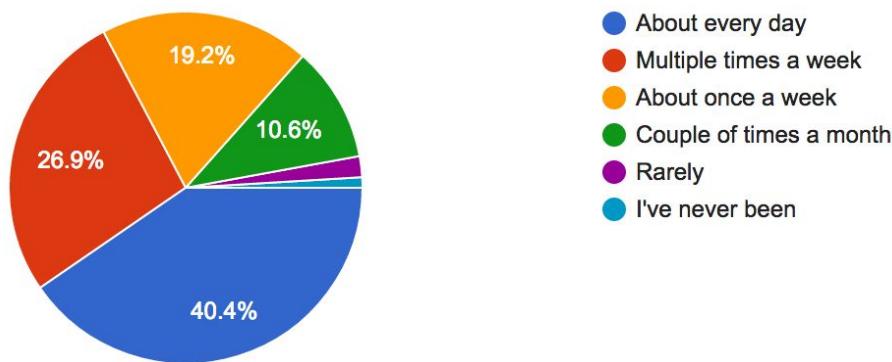
Surveys

We worked to create a short survey that would provide us the information that we were most curious about. We focused on maintaining neutrality in each of the questions and offered an optional free response question at the end of the survey if anybody else had further details they wanted to share. We shared this survey over through our own social media circles, so it mainly reached Northeastern Students.

Results

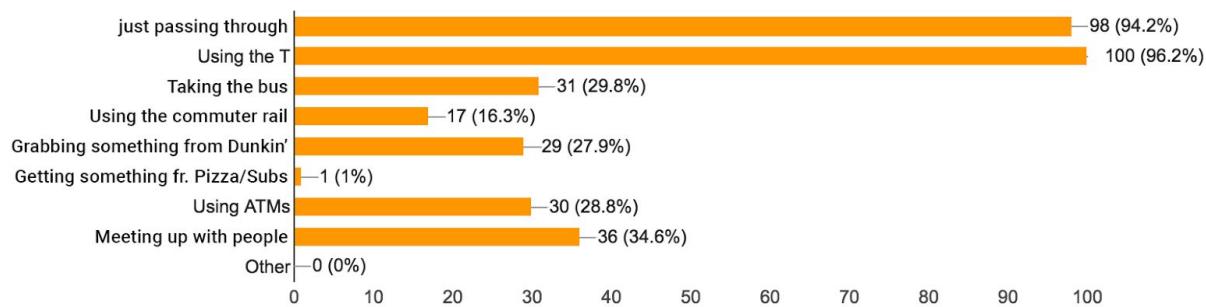
Respondents: 98.1% Northeastern Students (the other 1.9% is Northeastern faculty).

How frequently are you in Ruggles, for any reason at all (including just passing through)?
Most participants find themselves in Ruggles at *least* multiple times a week (67.3%).



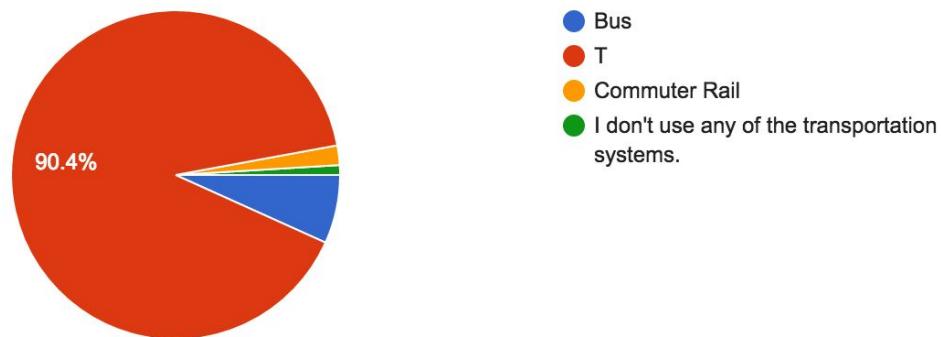
Why do you use Ruggles?

Almost all (94.2% and 96.2%, respectively) use it to pass through or to use the T.



What means of transportation do you use most frequently?

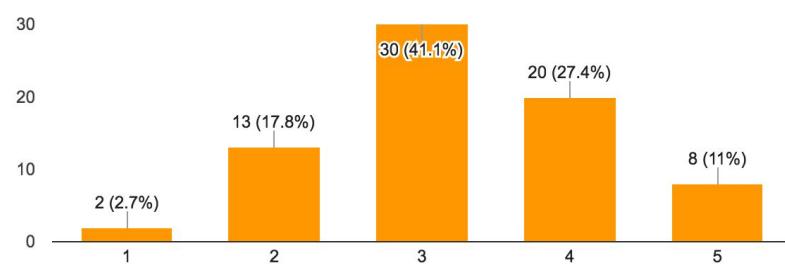
Dominant majority (90.4%): T



Rate the bus system's ease of use (Skip the question if you've never used it).

Average Rating: 3.26 / 5

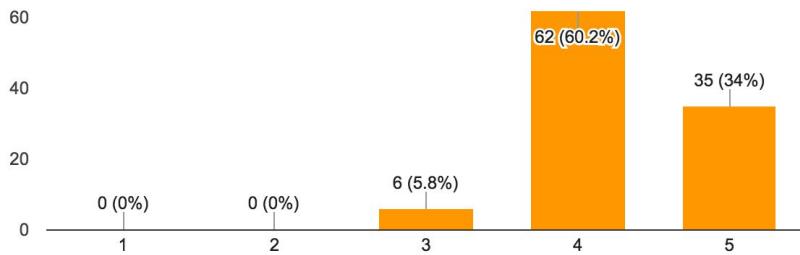
31 (29.8%) Never used



Rate the subway system's ease of use. (Skip the question if you've never used it).

Average rating: 4.28 / 5

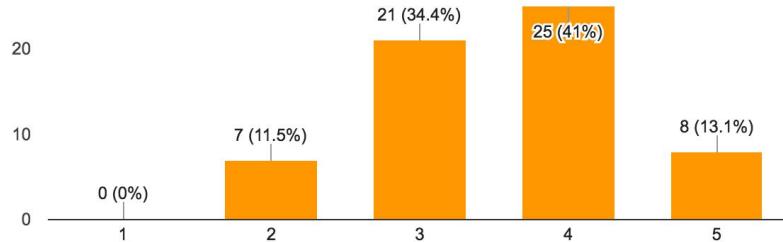
1 (.01%) Never used



Rate the commuter rail system's ease of use. (Skip the question if you've never used it).

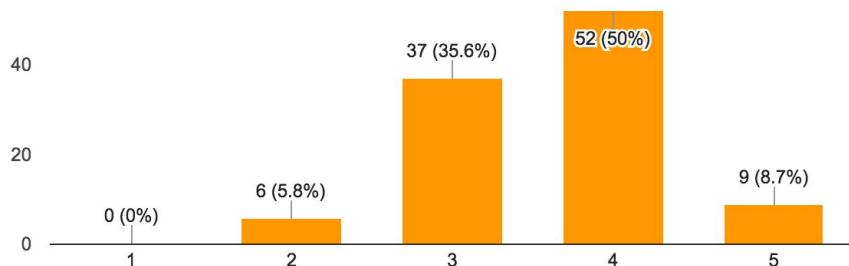
Average rating: 3.56 / 5

43 (41.3%) Never used



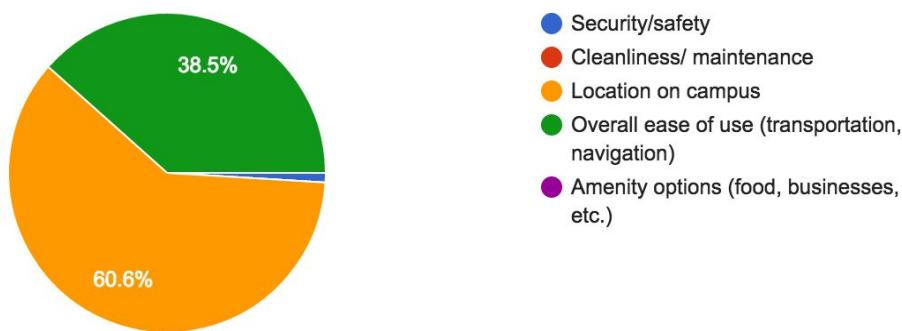
In general, how safe do you feel in Ruggles station?

Average rating: 3.62 / 5



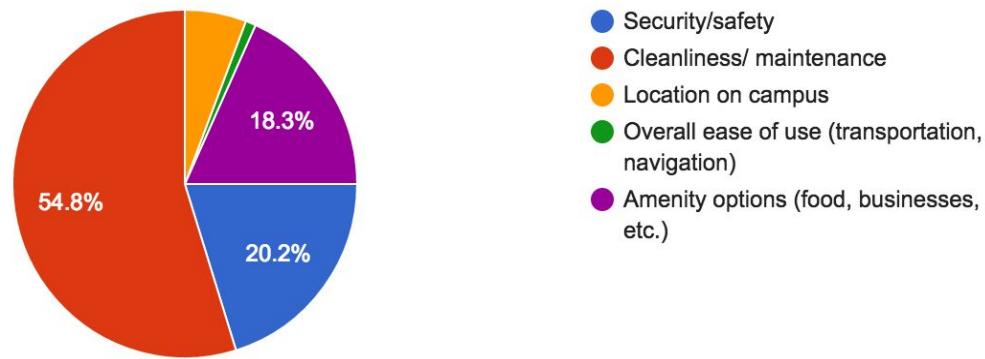
What is the best attribute of Ruggles station?

Majority (60.6%): Location on campus



What is the worst attribute of Ruggles station?

Majority (54.8%): Cleanliness/ maintenance



Any other thoughts? (Free response)

Weather:

- The wind tunnel gets me a lot too
- The wind tunnel is the worst attribute.
- Another reason I sometimes use alternatives to Ruggles when taking the T is because it is very cold in the winter (especially if you have to wait 10 minutes for the T)

Safety/Security:

- Ruggles is sketchy af at night sometimes. I also feel like the police booth is ALWAYS empty
- I personally have never experienced a safety issue in Ruggles, even when walking through it at odd/late hours, but hearing reports that crimes happened there or near there made me a little anxious to go through it alone at night.
- safety definitely varies - at night I don't feel comfortable walking through alone, in the daytime I'm usually comfortable.
- I am a white-passing cis-male which explains why I feel so safe in Ruggles.
- It's only really shady late at night

Confusion:

- I don't know when to get off on the buses :(
- Ruggles overall is good but I think that the way you buy tickets for the commuter rail can be a bit confusing at first

Maintenance:

- The Charlie card machines can be finicky if you're using a debit card.

Food:

- Never felt compelled to get food there besides coffee.

Positive comments:

- I love living so close to the orange line!
- I live on Columbus and walk through every time I go to main campus. Ruggles is like home in a way for me.
- Northeastern has a pretty insular atmosphere. At times, it doesn't even feel like I'm in Boston. However, when I pass through Ruggles or use the T, it's a brief submersion in the real city. Sometimes, I purposely pass through Ruggles to experience this change of pace, to get away from the monotony of student life, and to be reminded that this is in fact a living city filled with countless stories other than my own. And sometimes I just pass through to grab a donut.

Limitations

We were limited by the fact that we reached out mainly to Northeastern students. So, the results are not representative of the entire population that uses Ruggles each day. Additionally, the survey was posted in the University Scholars Program Facebook page, and all of the freshmen in this scholarship program live in International Village, so that is also something to keep in mind while considering the data.

Takeaways

Overall, our participants seemed very familiar with the station, with most of them passing through or using Ruggles multiple times a week or every day. Amongst the three various forms of transportation, the survey indicated that the T was the easiest method of transportation, followed by the commuter rail, and then the bus. This statistic was unsurprising after discovering that the T was the primary reason that students were using Ruggles station. Ruggles received a safety rating of 3.62, which wasn't horrible but should be much higher. Despite people's admiration for the station's location on campus, the general consensus was that the station's lack of maintenance and cleanliness was a major issue. It was also very obvious that most Northeastern students don't eat at the pizza place. Only a single person answered that they eat there. At the end of our survey, we gave respondents the option to state any other general feelings. We found that many of the responses that we received were so similar to one another. Many had stated the it is hard to escape from the cold weather within Ruggles, especially because it is a wind tunnel. Many others also perceived Ruggles to be extremely 'shady' or 'sketchy' late at night.

Conclusion

Concluding our current research is extremely difficult, due to the limitless possibilities that our results and findings can take us. We were fortunate enough to have created a large body of findings that pertained to our own experiences and analyses after spending a fairly robust amount of time within the station. Following our own observations, we were able to summarize a general consensus an outlook of the station that reaffirmed many of our prior beliefs. It is clear that there is an overall negative stigma that encompasses Ruggles Station as well as the entirety of the MBTA. The lack of clean areas and maintenance is a leading conversation topics, that deters people from wanting to use the station, or spend as little time in the station as possible. Although respondents were reluctant to speak on behalf of what improvements can be made to alter people's negative opinions, we were fortunate to receive some suggestions that could be taken into further consideration as we each conduct our individual portion's of this experience design project. Similar to our class' affinity grouping, it is clear that our respondents had similar beliefs or thoughts regarding Ruggles station; topics that include Aesthetics, Weather, Transportation. The results of our research has embraced Ruggles as mainly being a means of transportation, but it is clear the building's 'atmosphere' and layout of the building that prevents users from establishing a positive relationship with the station. Evidence has shown us that amenities are not required, but their convenience can potentially enhance a user's overall experience with a transportation system. It is also important that the station is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also generally clean and welcoming. If it were possible to modernize the station with visible/legible signage, 'welcoming' businesses/restaurants, and the potentiality of public works (e.g. public art, events, history), Ruggles could potentially become one of the most unique and well-respected stations in the city of Boston. One of our interviewees has suggested that the MBTA considers remodeling the station to look like a European subway, so it would be interesting to further explore the positive attributes of foreign stations, as well as the reasons that explain why people have a such strong admiration towards European transportation system.

Sources

<http://www.bizjournals.com/boston/print-edition/2013/09/06/northeastern-universitys-roxbury-push.html?page=all>

http://www.bizjournals.com/boston/real_estate/2014/02/NE-broke-ground-on-225m-science-project.html

<http://www.northeastern.edu/news/2016/01/northeastern-announces-latest-plans-for-new-residence-hall/>

<http://www.northeastern.edu/camd/blog/2014/08/northeastern-takes-new-program-bring-public-art-campus-culture/>

<http://www.northeastern.edu/news/2015/05/northeastern-will-invest-26-million-to-transform-city-park/>

http://www.mbta.com/uploadedfiles/About_the_T/T_Projects/T_Projects_List/Ruggles_Legis_Brief_20120919.pdf

https://web.archive.org/web/20161220153958/http://www.mbta.com/business_center/bidding_solicitations/future_solicitations/

http://www.mbta.com/about_the_mbta/t_projects/default.asp?id=25059