



Access Advisory Committee to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

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Wednesday, January 25, 2011

AACT Meeting Minutes

NOTABLES

- To join the discussion on the MBTA fare proposal log on to http://www.mbta.com/about_the_mbta/?id=23567.
- Comments and questions concerning AACT should be directed to Chairman Philip Beaulieu by contacting the AACT Coordinator, Ms. Janie Guion, at 617-973-7507 (voice); 617-973-7089 (TTY); 617-973-8855 (fax); or at AACT@ctps.org (e-mail).
- Chairman Beaulieu recommends that members needing service information or wanting to inquire about MBTA services do so through the MBTA Marketing and Communications Department at 617-222-3200 or 800-392-6100, TTY 617-222-5146, Monday through Friday 6:30 AM to 8:00 PM and Sat/Sun from 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM, or the MBTA website at www.mbta.com/customer_support/feedback/.
- AACT has a page on the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's website at www.bostonmpo.org, click on AACT. Links can be found there for the following items: agendas, upcoming meetings, past meeting minutes, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the MBTA and AACT, and the AACT bylaws, the AACT brochure, and ADA regulations. There are also links to the MPO's newsletter, TRANSREPORT, the MBTA's Office for Transportation Access, and the AACT Coordinator.

- The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meetings are conducted in accessible locations, and materials can be provided in accessible formats and in languages other than English. If you would like accessibility or language accommodation, please contact the MPO at 617-973-7100 (voice), 617-973-8855 (fax), 617-973-7089 (TTY), or publicinformation@bostonmpo.org (email).
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- Please sign in at all meetings.
- Announcements are always welcome. Please be prepared to give as many details as possible: date, time, location, contact person, and phone number. A written notice would be appreciated.

ATTENDANCE

Philip Beaulieu, James White, Ben Haynes, Lillian Haynes, Mary Ann Murray, Malvin & Gail Weinstein, Nancy Murray, Richard Mahoney, Ian Perrault, Paul Barresi, Merrian Williams, Reggie Clark, Tyler Terrasi, Viola Thacker, Mary Dennesen, Barbara Garlington, and Ellen Frith

***Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)/
Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)***

Janie Guion, Bill Kuttner, and Pam Wolfe

MassDOT - MBTA Representatives

Charles Planck, Michael Lambert, Frank Oglesby, Mike Hulak, Carol Joyce-Harrington, Kathy Cox, Larry Haile, Mike Festa, Phil Balcom, and Kim Dickerson,

Vendor Representatives

Kevin McDonald – Veterans Transportation, LLC
Ray Croteau and Martin Cortes – Greater Lynn Senior Services
Victor Herrera – The Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN Transportation, LLC

Other Representatives

John Cappuccio – T- Riders Union
Jonathan Gayle – Disability Law Center
Juanita Mincey - CPWD
Rick Morin - Bay State Council for the Blind

MEETING

Chairman Beaulieu called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm

Members, friends and guests introduced themselves

Approval of the AACT Meeting Minutes

The October and November 2011 meeting minutes were approved, each with one voice vote in opposition

Chairman's Report

He reported the following:

- The full AACT body did not meet in December
- On Dec 7th the Executive Board met in Executive Session to discuss the appointment of a new member
- He announced that the AACT Board is looking for a new member. Members are asked to submit their name to the AACT Coordinator with a brief 50-word statement of why he or she would like to be a member
- The AACT Executive Board will allow an open door meeting on a limited basis, with stipulations
- Members and friends were reminded that meetings are to be run in a friendly manner and that people are asked to refrain from using hostile or violent language or they will be asked to leave

He then asked for questions.

K. Piccard asked which Board member had left and why. She asked that the current Board members be named. She also stated that she believed that Marilyn MacNab was not aware that she was no longer a Board member.

Chairman Beaulieu proceeded to name each current member; Jim White, Mary Ann Murray, Beverly Rock, and Ben Haynes-Ex-Officio/Parliamentarian. He refused to elaborate on any of the events surrounding the departure. He asked that K. Piccard contact the Board member for any information regarding the issue.

R. Morin asked that he be given more information on the Board appointment.

Chairman Beaulieu provided him with the details of the appointment.

K. Piccard indicated that she too did not attend the November meeting and was not aware of any disruptions. She also said that language and actions are two different issues and that maybe the problem, the result of a person's disability.

Charles Planck, Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives and Performance, senior staff from the MBTA General Manager's office

Mr. Planck gave an overview of the MBTA proposed fare increase and service changes which significant effects for some users currently serviced by THE RIDE. He stated that Scenarios 1 and 2 do not have to be implemented exactly as they are written. He encouraged everyone to attend the public meetings and share their concerns and ideas. The MBTA will take all comments to help reshape what the final decision will be.

He then answered questions.

J. Gayle asked about scenarios one and two. Did the MBTA have any cost-effectiveness studies of fixed route or commuter rail which break down hours of the day people travel; or the economic impact by city or town?

C. Planck say that no, the MBTA did not look at service by time of day. The MBTA Service Planning staff does a full evaluation of bus routes and other services every two years looking at some of that analysis.

R. Morin asked if the MBTA had considered the impact on the size of the service area (for the base territory for THE RIDE service) due to cutbacks in fixed route bus service.

C. Planck explained that he did not have the figure in terms of square miles or acres for these areas, but that the analysis looked at

actual pickup and drop-off locations requested in 2011. Under Scenario 1, the MBTA protects 92 percent of those locations for the pickup and drop-off addresses in the base territory. Service to these locations would only see the fare increase, and not be in position of the premium fare. In Scenario 2, because there are smaller numbers of surviving fixed route bus services, the base territory is smaller, but 72 percent of 2011 drop-off and pick-up locations are still in the base territory.

K. Piccard stated that the ADA says that the maximum transit fare is twice the base fare of fixed route. Some people may be paying less than the base fare. Is there a method developed to calculate what that would be?

C. Planck stated that the federal government requires that the fare may be no more than two times the base fare. The MBTA is setting the proposed base fare at two times the new fare in the proposed scenarios.

M. Dennesen commented that the service is great, the drivers are wonderful, and that she supports the fare increase.

J. Canty commented that the proposed fare increase will diminish her income.

Consumer asked why the MBTA is imposing increases on cities and towns that are not part of the MBTA. She is also concerned that she may be in a premium service area.

C. Planck stated that the definition of ADA territories relates only to fixed route services and rapid transit, not to commuter rail. So far boundaries for premium service have not been finalized. No decision on premium service will be made until the MBTA ends its public discussion. Once the scenario is picked, a map will be produced of the area. When you call for THE RIDE service you will be given the price for your trip depending on whether it is inside or outside the base territory.

B. Haynes asked how the MBTA would compensate for the lack of THE RIDE service beyond the three quarter mile limit. What study was used to determine this? What are the qualifications of the in-person assessment personnel who will be hired to judge a person's abilities?

C. Planck explained where the boundaries for the premium service territory will be dependent on what bus routes survive in the final scenario. According to the federal policy the MBTA will continue to provide service within three quarters of a mile of fixed route services. The premium service system continues to let the MBTA to provide service to everyone reached in 2011. As for the in-house assessment personnel, the bid is out. The best people will be selected to help make the decision on who qualifies for THE RIDE service.

J. White suggested that the MBTA do an impact study on how the proposed fare increase will affect the health and well-being of senior citizens.

C. Planck stated he was sorry to say that type of assessment is a logical possibility but it is beyond the scope of the MBTA resources. He encouraged everyone to attend the public meetings and be a part of the discussion and bring their ideas.

P. Beaulieu was concerned with the amount of the MBTA payroll and fringe benefits awarded staff.

C. Planck stated that the MBTA has reduced staff since the transportation reform in 2009 and it is much lower than two years ago. At present the MBTA employs about six thousand people. For this fiscal year the MBTA has reduced its staff by two hundred. One way the MBTA is doing so is by adding single-person operated trains. MBTA healthcare cost is a big issue.

Consumer expressed concerns that the MBTA may not be keeping passengers safe according to federal laws when it comes to the environmental impact.

C. Planck stated that the report prepared by Central Transportation Planning Staff includes an analysis of air impacts and the equity impacts of both proposals.

Chairman Beaulieu thanked Mr. Planck for his presentation.

Larry Haile, Coordinator for the MBTA System-Wide Accessibility Department (SWA) (see attached)

Mr. Haile presented the SWA report and is submitting his written report with some additional noteworthy items.

He reported the following:

- The MBTA Charlie Card Office at Downtown Crossing has been closed as of Tuesday, January 24, to make way for construction of the new Charlie Card Store. The manager of the store will attend next month's meeting
- SWA audio reports are now on compact disk; anyone requesting this information at future meetings should see Mr. Haile at the end of the meeting

He then asked for questions.

R. Morin thanked Mr. Haile for making sure that the fare increase materials are in accessible format. He also asked how to request this information in Braille format.

L. Haile suggested he log on to www.mbta.com/jointhediscussion.

C.J. Harrington suggested that alternative format can be obtained by telephoning 617-222-3200.

B. Haynes was concerned with how the MBTA and the cities and towns will work together to make the Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) safe for persons with visual impairments crossing streets (along with the audio announcements from the bus and train).

L. Haile responded by telling everyone that the APS is a talking signal which helps the visually impaired cross streets safely.

Chairman Beaulieu thanked Mr. Haile for his report.

Frank Oglesby, MBTA Deputy Director of Paratransit Operations – The Office of Transportation Access (OTA), THE RIDE (reports attached)

Mr. Oglesby distributed the December 2011/January 2012 reports for THE RIDE. He also introduced their new staff member, Kim Dickerson.

He then asked for questions.

R. Morin asked that the request for proposal (RFP) process be explained.

F. Oglesby explained that on January 13 the RFP was released and mailed to interested parties and publicized in various journals and newspapers. The pre-bid meeting will be on February 1. The process will close on March 16, at which time all bids are due to the MBTA.

Chairman Beaulieu thanked Mr. Oglesby for his report.

Vendor Presentations:

Kevin MacDonald, Senior Project Manager, Veterans Transportation, LLC, Victor Herrera, General Manager, Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN Transportation, LLC (JV); and Ray Croteau, Operations Manager, Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS).

Each representative gave an overview of THE RIDE's daily operations citing the following: dispatch, scheduling, time change request, bookings, and vehicle positioning, delays, cancelations, final scheduling, testing, modification, balancing, call-back process, and schedule adjustments, review of schedules, manual grouping of trips.

All representatives responded to questions.

Veterans Transportation, LLC (VT)

R. Morin asked GLSS personnel to describe the peak period in relation to other parts of the day. He wondered if it would be more efficient to spread the loads into the off-peak.

K. MacDonald explained that schedule adjustments work better in the middle of the day.

J. Gayle asked whether all vendors use the same methodology when scheduling trips.

K. MacDonald stated that they have different abilities, different systems and different work plans. He has the privilege of using a taxi company which improves flexibility dramatically.

J. Gayle asked how you determine the best time source for drop-off and pickup.

K. MacDonald stated that this is done electronically using scheduling software.

The Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN Transportation, LLC (JV)

B. Garlington asked whether THE RIDE vendors are giving input on the proposed fare increase, and whether ridership would decrease.

V. Herrera: He said that they are not providing input and that yes ridership will probably decrease.

R. Morin stated he was very pleased with the service given by Joint Venture. He asked about the process for having a higher authority review recorded messages if someone has a problem.

M. Hulak stated that if a customer requested, his office would assist in reviewing the recording. The customer would need to contact the administration.

J. White asked about the number of vehicles owned by the MBTA and the number owned by JV.

V. Herrera says he would need to do research.

B. Haynes voiced concern that vendors are not following the contract signed with the MBTA when customers are told to call back to check on trip status.

V. Herrera explained that they are required to call the customer to let them know if they can transport them or not.

G. Weinstein is concerned about information that may be solely for customers of THE RIDE.

V. Herrera said no, there is no other information.

K. Devin said that response for same-day trip requests is very different for all vendors.

M. Hulak stated that the customer should always be advised whether the vendor can fulfill their request or not.

K. Piccard asked if vendors are required to take requests for same-day trips after 5 pm. She states that the staff must not be aware of the policy.

M. Hulak stated that all vendors are required to take a same-day trip request.

V. Herrera stated that JV may not be able to grant a trip, but they should take your request.

K. MacDonald suggested that staff must give priority to trips currently being served; he asked as a cooperative measure that same-day trip requests be made after 7 pm.

K. Piccard stated that maybe more staff are needed.

Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS)

K. Piccard asked for an explanation of the high amount of missed trips in December (59); missed trips by JV (13) and VT (43) were not as high. GLSS also had a large number of complaints, many more than JV and VT.

Ray Choteau stated that the complaints were probably driver-related. He stated that he will need to do research on both.

P. Barresi asked what could be done to alert your vendor when you have an unexpected trip change while at your destination. Usually during this time it is after hours for the Office for Transportation Access (OTA). A call to your vendor goes unanswered. You are stranded until your regular pick-up time. He wondered whether there is a way to simplify the process.

Ray Choteau stated that the GLSS offices are staffed with two dispatchers until 10 p.m.; up to 1 a.m. there is one supervisor on duty and calls should be answered within two minutes. If consumers are having issues they should contact the office. The staff is monitored closely to make sure they are answering the phone. The company is also monitored by OTA for compliance.

Chairman Beaulieu thanked Mr. Haile for his report

Open Discussion

J. Gayle wondered whether the Governors Executive Order 530 trumped the proposed fare increase.

CJ Harrington: These are two separate issues.

M. Weinstein asked whether personal care attendants (PCA) would be charged with the new fare increase.

M. Hulak: PCA's will not be charged. We don't know what the future holds.

J. Gayle asked if AACT would be submitting comments on the proposed fare increase.

Chairman Beaulieu stated that they would be looking into the issue.

B. Haynes would like to have the MBTA police help passengers who are stranded by THE RIDE.

R. Clark concerned that operators on the Red Line are closing doors quickly.

L. Haile says that operators are trained to look to make sure no one is caught in the door.

K. Cox announced that the Red Line single-person operated car will start March 31.

K. Piccard asked that the AACT Board keep members informed on their comments on the fare and service changes.

E. Frith asked that AACT send letters to Cambridge, Somerville, and Medford to ask that they do more to discourage vehicle operators from parking illegally.

B. Haynes stated that AACT is a committee and cannot impose on cities and towns.

Old Business: None was presented.

New Business: None was presented.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 P.M.