

Access Advisory Committee to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (AACT)

AACT Membership Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 27, 2015

Meeting opened at 1:05 PM

Reading of the Agenda

Introductions

Attendees:

Rob Dias, Reggie Clark, Bob Hachey, Nancy Miller, Betsaida Guthiererz, Cheryl Ravalli, Debbie Weathers, Iasi Abdol, Linda Salzer, James White, Rick Morin, Mary Ann Murray, Ian Perrault, Rev. E. Frith, and Esther Minor

MBTA Staff:

Brian Francis, Mike Hulak, Carol Joyce-Harrington, Frank Oglesby, Rob Sampson, Kevin Morrissey-Intern, Jim Nihan, and Vitya Romanov-Intern

Vendor Staff:

Selena Walckner, Steven Epps, Kevin MacDonald, and Victor Herrera

MPO Staff:

Janie Guion and Matt Archer

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Ms. Murray moved to accept the April 22, 2015 meeting minutes and Mr. Clark seconded the motion. The motion carried with no one opposed.

Chairman's Report

The Chair stated the following:

- Today, at the request of Vice Chair Morin and the Guide Dogs of America (GDUM), he observed the differences in containment space available for service animals when being transported in both a Crown Victoria and Fusion sedan. The demonstration was at the Charles Street entrance of this building. This exercise was meant to show the significant difference in space in the vehicles, as the roomy Crown Victoria sedan is being phased out. They were also joined by employees of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and AACT members.
- He accepted an invitation to attend the White House Conference on Aging Forum held at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute in Boston. He was selected to introduce the Acting Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration, Therese McMillan. He noted that it is truly a privilege and that he did not hesitate to take on the task. He thanked all those who made the occasion an eventful one: Pam Wolfe, MPO staff and AACT advisor, the Editorial staff from the Central Transportation Planning Staff, and Carol Joyce-Harrington from the OTA.
- He attended the Massachusetts Annual Statewide Transportation Coordination meeting on May 5 in Marlborough, MA. MassDOT Secretary Stephanie Pollack was the guest speaker. He noted that the Secretary is very knowledgeable about issues concerning transportation for persons with disabilities, and that she is committed to working with the disability community on such issues.

- He attended a passenger assistance training class at National Express Transit.
- He attended the ADA Recertification Program at the MBTA's Charlestown garage.
- He attended Keolis Commuter Services ADA training with staff from Department of System-Wide Accessibility.
- He attended the Massachusetts Annual Statewide Transportation Coordination meeting on May 5 in Marlborough, MA. MassDOT Secretary Stephanie Pollack was the guest speaker. He noted that the Secretary is very knowledgeable about issues concerning transportation for persons with disabilities, and that she is committed to working with the disability community on such issues.
- He attended MBTA Service Policy and Vehicle Accessibility Advisory Committee meetings.

Treasury Report

Chairman White stated that a donation from a former member was made payable to AACT. Since AACT is not a registered charter or non-profit the \$1280 donation and letter will be returned to Ms. Woodman with a request to have her reissue it as a cashier's check in his name. As of now, AACT has no funds. If and when the donation is returned he will inform the members.

Interim MBTA General Manager Frank DePaola

Mr. DePaola was introduced by Michael Lambert, Deputy Administrator of Transit he stated that Mr. DePaola is no stranger to the MBTA since his career path began in the Design and Construction Department. He also noted that Mr. DePaola has worked at educational institutions and has had a long illustrious career in state government. He was recently appointed Interim General Manager of the MBTA after the horrible winter that was experienced by all.

Mr. DePaola recognizes that the MBTA has its challenges; he is more than willing to work with groups such as AACT and he looks forward to the challenge. He noted that the MBTA will publicly put out its draft Capital Investment Plan this June for public comment. He noted that going forward there will be a focus on investment and standard repair and upgrade of facilities, which will help work toward better quality of accessibility and better accessibility. He also gave an update on MBTA projects. He stated that the MBTA has accepted proposals for the Hynes Auditorium Station. He stated that the MBTA is not looking for money but to have the developer invest cash to upgrade the station, which will be a better deal for the State and MBTA. The plans are to make the station fully accessible. He noted that these are some of the innovative ways to stretch dollars and find ways to invest in the system while not forgetting about the obligation to all customers.

Mr. DePaola recalled his time at the Highway Department by explaining how he initiated a program that cataloged every single accessible curb ramp on each state roadway creating a database. Now each district is prioritizing the ramps that are not in compliance for accessibility improvements. Due to a prior commitment Mr. DePaola was unable to take questions.

****Mike Lambert informed the members that if they have any general questions for Mr. DePaola that is more than happy to forward them along.****

MBTA Centralized Call and Control Center (CCCC)

Michael Lambert, Deputy Administrator-Transit, explained the MBTA CCCC. He expressed that the CCCC project involves considering whether to create a centralized call center for THE RIDE service. He noted that at present there are three separate call and control centers that are each associated with a specific RIDE vendor. They provide scheduling, dispatch, and the transportation service. He explained that the system has served the MBTA very well over the years. He noted that

this project is to simply determine whether it makes sense to consolidate the three call centers into one. The call center would be directly administered by the MBTA. The CCCC would take over the core functions of THE RIDE service by handling reservations, trip bookings, advanced cancellations, change orders, scheduling and dispatch. The service provider would have dispatchers on duty to handle their drivers. He explained that the MBTA identified this need in 2010. This would mean significant benefits, to name a few: cost reductions; making it easier to combine trips; allowing the system to run better; taking pressure off drivers; reducing the likelihood of running empty vehicles from the suburbs; almost eliminating transfers; and allowing for non-dedicated vehicles to service THE RIDE.

He noted that the MBTA will be releasing a Request for Proposal in the next few weeks. Anyone with ideas and comments should contact his office.

The CCCC contract will be for four years with an option to extend for two years. AACT will play an important role in choosing the vendor. The contract will be phased in 2017 assuming the bids received reflect cost benefits worthy of implementing it.

He then asked for questions or comments.

Chairman White asked whether they would research case studies of other Authorities who went from multiple CCCCs to one. M. Lambert indicated that they would.

B. Hachey commented that he hopes there would be better phone service. M. Lambert noted that they do monitor phone service. He explained that they are working on phone technology.

N. Miller asked if drivers of non-dedicated vehicles would have the same training as RIDE drivers. M. Lambert noted the safety of the customer comes first and that driver training and vehicle inspection will be the same as THE RIDE service.

A consumer asked how many people will be staffing the call center. M. Lambert explained that the MBTA will be providing data on the number of calls received and the number of trips that are booked. He said that the MBTA will provide the data to the company so that they can evaluate their own staffing needs. He noted that he would not interfere with how an experienced company runs its CCCC.

A consumer asked if the CCCC will be properly staffed for persons with English as a second language. M. Lambert noted that her concern is addressed in the Request for Proposal.

Taxi Subsidy Program

Jim Nihan, Office for Transportation Access provided a brief overview regarding the Taxi Subsidy Program (TSP). There was a select group of people in the transportation industry and from the disability community who participated in the final design of the program including members of the AACT Board. Eligibly determined customers in THE RIDE Program were selected to participate in the TSP. An informational meeting took place on May 29 in conference rooms 1, 2, and 3, for those customers. He noted that the MBTA has partnered with Bank of America, which will be handling the prepaid debit card transactions. He noted that for each ride there will be a subsidy of \$15 per ride, the MBTA will pay \$13 and the customer will pay \$2. Should the meter exceed \$15 the customer is responsible for any additional fare. The program is a being funded by a matching 80/20 grant through the federal government.

Election of AACT Officers for Terms 2015-2017

The election was held with assistance of the Boston Region of Mmetropolitan Planning Organization staff. Each candidate made a brief two minute introduction.

The following officers were elected and announced to the membership. The official term is from July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2017.

Elected Board Members:

Chairman James F. White***

Vice-Chairman Richard (Rick) Morin

Mary Ann Murray

Ian Perrault

Beverly Ann Rock

Lisa Weber

******This will be the final term as chairman due to term limits.***

MBTA Reports

MBTA Transit Police Department

Chief Kenneth Green stated the following:

- Transit Police issued seventy-three parking tickets for bus stop violations during the month of April.

He then asked for questions.

E. Frith noted that when she arrived at the 10 Park Plaza she noticed a Boston Fire Department vehicle blocking the bus stop. She noted that police from several municipalities have been invited to address the lack of enforcement of vehicles parked at bus stops. The city of Cambridge was the only participant. She also noted that the Eastern Bus Company vehicles block bus stops in Cambridge, specifically at Ringe and Latin School. Chief Green responded by saying he can speak to the police in the municipalities but the MBTA Police cannot enforce in municipal jurisdictions.

E. Minor stated that today at West Newton and Tremont Streets a school bus was parked at her stop making it impossible to board the Route 43 bus.

Chief Green responded by saying he would deploy units to observe the location. Chairman White suggested reviewing the monthly Block Bus Stop log.

MBTA System-Wide Accessibility Department (SWA)/Fixed Route Services

Rob Sampson, Manager for System-Wide Accessibility distributed his report and noted that on June 22nd Judge Patrick King will be holding his semi-annual public hearing on the settlement agreement between the MBTA and Boston Center for Independent Living Center.

He then asked for questions.

R. Clark stated that he has observed that on Green Line vehicles the front door service entrance policy is not being enforced. R. Sampson noted that he had not received any complaints but will do research. He also noted that if you need to board the Green Line trains from the rear accessible door during off-peak hours, you have every right to request that accessible service and it will be granted.

E. Frith stated that there should be more ADA training of Green Line operators; she noted that she has been overlooked many times. Some Green Line operators have not let her board first. She noted that operators have been very hostile toward her. She feels disrespected and discriminated against. R. Sampson stated that operators have two levels of training. Phase-One training is an eight hour course given when operators begin their initial training. Also, operators who violate the rules are required to attend a refresher course. Then there is the Phase-Two certification training class. He also noted that during all trainings ADA is highlighted.

E. Minor noted that the lighting in Back Bay Station is very dim. She noted that the further you travel from the city the brighter the lighting is in stations such as Harvard or Davis Squares. R. Sampson asked her about the stations where she had problems. She noted that Downtown Crossing-Red Line and Park Street were very dim.

E. Frith stated that there is no MBTA representative to guide customers at Downtown Crossing so she has to pay twice. R. Sampson told her to use the callbox for service at the station. He noted that the staff looking at the video feed is aware of what is happening and can activate the gates for the customer's continued travel.

A consumer stated that MBTA stations never look clean and wondered if someone was assigned to clean stations. R. Sampson stated yes that cleaners are assigned to stations and that stations should be cleaned properly about every four hours.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Sampson for his report.

Keolis Commuter Services (KCS)

Selena Walckner, Equal Employer Opportunity and Title VI Manager, stated the following:

- KCS is moving forward with the development of their ADA training
- KCS training will begin the second week in June
- KCS will have additional training for their call center customer service staff on the following topics:
 - How to identify an ADA complaint
 - How to gather additional information appropriately
 - Making the research less difficult

She then asked for questions. There were none.

Chairman White thanked Ms. Walckner for her report.

MBTA Office for Transportation Access (OTA) - THE RIDE Program

Frank Oglesby, Deputy Director, submitted the OTA report and noted that there were no further updates to his report.

He then asked for questions.

Chairman White asked about why there were 23,000 trips that took over sixty minutes between July 2014 and February 2015 and whether there was a solution to the problem. **M. Hulak** stated that it may be due to the new contract. He stated that in order to improve their productivity they increased their travel time. He noted that they went above and beyond what was necessary and now they are where they should be.

R. Dias asked about THE RIDE eligibility referral for system orientation training. **C.J. Harrington** stated that the people who are referred for training are those who can use fixed route services some or all of the time and were found conditionally eligible or those who have been found non-eligible for THE RIDE. She stated that people are given the opportunity for other resources to assist them in their travel options.

L. Salzer stated that anyone is welcome to attend the systems orientation training whether or not they are eligible for THE RIDE.

B. Hachey asked for an update on THE RIDE pilot program for reduced fares **F. Oglesby** stated that he would have more information in about two months. **Mr. Hachey** stated that drivers have told him that they are not obligated to wait with you if you arrive at a building that has not yet opened or if there is inclement weather. **M. Hulak** stated that consumers should try and be schedule appointments when the building is open.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Oglesby for his report.

Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS)

Steven Epps announced that he is now the new Director of Transportation at GLSS. He then distributed his report and noted that his Braille copies were missing. He noted that he will coordinate with Chairman White to get a copy of his report in Braille.

He then asked for questions.

M.A. Murray noted that on her trip history from GLSS her trip was listed as a taxi trip. S. Epps stated that GLSS would do research.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Epps for his report.

Veterans Transportation (VT)

Kevin MacDonald distributed his report and announced upcoming passenger assistance trainings.

He then asked for questions.

G. Russo noted that her meeting ran late. She phoned dispatch for a later pickup. She noted that she was told to leave immediately or she would not get home. She asked if there was a policy change regarding calling for a later pick up. **Mr. MacDonald** stated that Veterans Transportation will not abandon a customer; you can call for the extra time.

A consumer stated that she was not given any assistance getting off the van. **Mr. MacDonald** stated that should not have happened and spoke with her privately.

Chairman White thanked Mr. MacDonald for his report.

National Express Transit (NEXT)

Victor Herrera, General Manager, distributed his report and announced the NEXT passenger assistance training classes.

No questions were asked.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Herrera for his report.

Open Discussion

E. Frith commented that when she is on the new bus seated in the priority area she is unable to view the LED board. She noted that she gets very annoyed when that happens. **Chairman White** stated that he would report her concerns to Bus Operations.

Chairman White informed OTA that vehicles do not have identifying numbers inside of vehicle. **M. Hulak** stated that the work is in progress and that the vehicle numbers have been ordered from the print shop.

Announcements

Matt Archer, MPO staff and the teller for the election, announced the results of the vote for the Board of Directors for the term July 1, 2015 thru June 30, 2017: serving his final term as chairman due to term limits James F. White, Chairman; Richard (Rick) Morin, Vice Chairman; Beverly Ann Rock, Ian Perrault, and Mary Ann Murray.

Notables

AACT Board of Directors will meet from 10:00 AM to noon and the Membership meeting will be conducted from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM on the fourth Wednesday of the month, except when noted.

AACT can be found at on the MBTA website at www.mbta.com/aact. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the MBTA and AACT; the AACT Bylaws; ADA Regulations, as well as agendas, calendar items, upcoming meetings, and past meeting minutes can be obtained by accessing those highlighted links on AACT's web page.

The AACT meeting location is accessible to people with disabilities and is near public transportation. Upon request (preferably two weeks in advance of the meeting), every effort will be made to provide accommodations, such as assistive listening devices, materials in accessible formats and in languages other than English, and interpreters in American Sign Language and other languages. Please see contact information below.

Comments and questions concerning AACT should be directed to Chairman James White by contacting the AACT Coordinator, Ms. Janie Guion, at 857.702.3658 (voice); 617.570.9193 (TTY); 617.570.9192 (fax); AACT@ctps.org (email); or c/o CTPS, 10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150, Boston, MA 02116 (mail).

The MPO complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other federal and state non-discrimination statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. The MPO does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, English proficiency, income, religious creed, ancestry, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or military service. Any person who believes herself/himself or any specific class of persons has been subjected to discrimination prohibited by Title VI, ADA, or other non-discrimination statute or regulation may, herself/himself or via a representative, file a written complaint with the MPO. A complaint must be filed no later than 180 calendar days after the date on which the person believes the discrimination occurred. A complaint form and additional information can be obtained by contacting the MPO at 857.702.3700 or at www.bostonmpo.org.

Members needing service information or wanting to inquire about MBTA services should 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 Saturday/Sunday from 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM, or the MBTA website at www.mbta.com/customer_support/feedback/.

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 is always appreciated.

Please sign in at all meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 2:59 PM.