

***Access Advisory Committee to the Massachusetts Bay
Transportation Authority***

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Membership Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 16, 2015

Board of Directors:

Chairman - James F. White

Vice Chairman - Rick E. Morin

Executive Board

Mary Ann Murray

Ian Perrault

Beverly Ann Rock

Lisa Weber

Meeting opened at 1:05 PM

Reading of the Agenda

Introductions

Attendees: Beverly A. Rock, Dee Whittle, Lisa Weber, James White, Rick Morin, Mary A. Murray, Bob Hachey, Theadora Fisher, Ester Minor, Nancy Martin, Thomas Gilbert, Christine Daniels, Nancy Miller, Linda S. Salzer

Also Rhoda Gibson, Ellen Frith, Angela Manerson, Bill Corcoran, Bernell Stuart, Rob Dias, David Viera, Jennifer Nelson, Lydia Gralla, Debbie Weathers, and Nadine Jones

MBTA Staff:

Mike Hulak, Carol Joyce-Harrington, Mike Lambert, Rob Sampson, and Wysam Ummand

Vendor Staff:

Rita Hardiman, Raymond Croteau, Kevin MacDonald, Victor Herrera

MPO Staff:

Jennifer Rowe, Janie Guion, Alicia Wilson, and Matt Archer

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 28, 2015 was made by Bob Hachey and seconded by Rick Morin. The minutes were passed unanimously.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman stated the following:

- On December 14 he attended the MassDOT and Fiscal Management and Control Board (FMCB) meetings.
 - THE RIDE Premium Service was up for discussion.
 - THE RIDE is being asked to help reduce the deficit at the MBTA.
 - He provided information to the FMCB about two pilot programs for limited users of THE RIDE. He noted that this discussion may be premature since the programs were instituted recently. He noted that talks about THE RIDE were tabled during the session.
- He explained that Vice Chairman Rick Morin will write a letter to the FMCB to express the concerns of AACT. He will also contact the Boston Center for Independent Living, the Bay State Council for the Blind, the Disability Policy Consortium, and the Massachusetts Senior Action Council to have the letter represent their interest also.

He asked for comments or questions.

Michael Lambert, MassDOT Deputy Administrator-Transit

Mr. Lambert gave an update at AACT's December meeting that included a discussion of potential reforms and cost saving measures that the MBTA is considering for its paratransit service, THE RIDE. The MBTA began reforming THE RIDE program in 2012, resulting in changes to the process for determining eligibility for the service; higher fares for trips to premium-service areas (beyond the federally mandated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-service area); the deployment of hybrid vehicles; the launch of a travel-training program; and improved coordination with other human-service transportation providers. Currently, the MBTA is conducting pilot programs to test the efficacy of a subsidized taxi program as an alternative for RIDE customers, and a means-tested fee structure.

Depending on the results of the taxi pilot, the MBTA could hope to achieve \$16 million in cost savings on THE RIDE's \$108 million FY 2017 budget by providing customers with taxi and ride-sharing options. Other cost-savings could be achieved through travel training to help RIDE customers make use of the accessible fixed route system; increasing fares to the ADA-allowable limit (from \$3 to \$4.20); and reducing the service area to the federally mandated area (within three-quarters of a mile of the MBTA's fixed-route service). Savings beyond FY 2017 could be expected from consolidating THE RIDE's multiple

call centers into a centralized location for handling reservations, scheduling rides, and dispatching. Everything is on the table at this point.

He then asked for questions.

B. Hachey commented that the media has reported that the MBTA could save by cutting THE RIDE Premium service by five to ten million dollars. *M. Lambert* stated that there are two types of premium services one is for trips to or from an address outside the service area required by the ADA; the other is for trips booked the same-day. He noted that if both premium services were eliminated the MBTA would save about \$11 Million.

D. Vieira asked if his City of Boston taxi voucher could be used to cover what is MBTA voucher cannot. *M. Lambert* stated yes if that is an acceptable payment to the taxi firm.

R. Dias asked about the MBTA making vehicles available to taxi companies as they do for vendors. *M. Lambert* noted that they are looking into options.

N. Martin is concerned that she doesn't have "smart" phone service. *M. Lambert* stated that the MBTA will provide a range of options to meet the needs of the user.

T. Gilbert asked if Somerville was included in the taxi program. *M. Lambert* stated yes.

A. Manerson asked what types of payment options are being addressed.

M. Lambert stated that customers in the program received a Bank of Boston debit card. The card is swiped as a credit card for the trip fare, which does not include tip, and the operator will not know that the passenger is a RIDE customer. If the fare exceeds \$15 the customer is responsible for any fare beyond the \$15 on the meter as well as the tip if one is being offered.

E. Frith asked if a notice could be sent to Uber operators telling them to cease parking in MBTA bus stops. *M. Lambert* noted that Transit Police should be notified if that is the case now.. Discussions with Uber as we go forward with any pilot will include such conversations.

Dee W. is concerned that THE RIDE does not extend further out of Boston.

M. Lambert noted that many cities and towns not covered by THE RIDE have programs offered by Councils on Aging. *T. Fisher* of the Human Service Transportation Office announced to members that she has information concerning other transportation resources. She asked that people see her after the meeting.

D. Vieira asked that the MBTA consider charging a higher fare for people going on social outings to increase revenue. *M. Lambert* noted that it was discussed by the MBTA's Fiscal Management and Control Board as a possible option but not allowable if an ADA trip. *Chairman White* commented that this would not be legal according to the ADA.

MBTA Reports

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

Rob Sampson, Manager for System-Wide Accessibility distributed his report and noted that a summary of Judge King's semi-annual meeting on December 17 is included. (See the attached report.

He then asked for questions.

R. Morin gave kudos to Laura Brelsford, SWA, Assistant General Manager, and her staff for conducting a spectacular meeting in terms of the format.

Mr. Sampson noted that it is a very exciting time for SWA and that the Department of Design and Construction has to be commended also for doing a wonderful job of bringing projects forward and going after funding to get the work done. He also mentioned the progress of the Plan for Accessible Transit Infrastructure (PATI) project. Progress on this plan will really help move the system forward, he said. He explained that SWA has hired a consultant that will report on barriers to the system. The consultant will survey the system – from stations to vehicles – and identify any barriers to public access. The consultant will document a plan for all the work that needs to be executed.

E. Frith commented that her rolling walker is not being recognized as a mobility device and that she is not receiving any assistance to get on the bus. *R. Sampson* stated that operators are trained to help anyone with an

apparent or hidden disability. He noted the MBTA will have an upgrade to the recertification training program and as that takes place all equipment/devices will be inspected and reviewed and to evaluate if other types may need to be purchased. He encouraged her to file an ADA complaint with the MBTA at 617-222-3200.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Sampson for his report.

Keolis Commuter Services

Rita Hardiman, Director of Equal Employer Opportunity, Diversity and DBE Management in for Selena Walckner of Keolis shared the following:

- Reminded members that Keolis's General Manager, Gerald Francis; and members of his staff Kenneth Foster, Director of Quality; and Roane C., Director of Customer Service presented the Winter Snow Plan which was developed in conjunction with the MBTA to avoid the disaster that happened last year.
 - As a result of the plan 16-passenger assistance were hired for locations in Boston at Back Bay, at North, and at South stations. The assistances will have the ability to move around to work in areas where there is disruptions with service, crowd control, or problems that may be weather related and where they are needed the most. The assistance

have been given ADA training with an emphasize on accommodating persons with disabilities.

- She also noted that they have more resources for snow removal and will be prepared for future storms.

She then asked for questions.

B. Hachey commented that he would like to have more audio announcements the visually impaired cannot see when there is a change in operation and cannot see or read the information of any operation change.

T. Gilbert noted that that lack of audio announcements is a chronic problem on commuter rail trains. *R. Hardiman* noted that Keolis is aware of the problem and that they too are not happy. She noted that more needs to be done with conductors filing reports of equipment failure. She also stated that the conductors on the trains have a responsibility to announce the stops when the equipment malfunctions. *R. Sampson* asked that people report all ADA complaints ASAP to the MBTA at 617-222-3200.

D. Vieira asked that conductors announce station stops before trains depart from the station.

B. Hachey asked if the commuter rail trains have a standard checklist the same as RIDE drivers before leaving the garage. *Chairman White* stated yes.

Chairman White thanked Ms. Hardiman for her report and extended his holiday greetings.

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

Mike Hulak, Manager Paratransit Operations, in for Frank Oglesby, Deputy Director, submitted the OTA report and shared the following:

He then asked for questions.

- He announced that the Means Pilot Testing Program is ending on December 31st
 - A post pilot survey was sent to 579 RIDE customers who were eligible to participate in the program
 - All ADA trips scheduled for 1/1/16 will revert back to the three dollar and five dollar for non-ADA trips
- He announced that for holiday service schedules on all modes customers should check the MBTA website at www.mbta.com, print and news media reports, or call Customer Service at 617-222-3200, or TTY 617-222-5146 for updated information.
- The MBTA announced that there will be no late night service on Christmas Day and New Year's Day for THE RIDE and fixed route services.

A consumer commented that she has severe back pain and would like to be assigned to a sedan only. *M. Hulak* stated that ADA does not allow for vehicle preference. He noted, however, that there is a notation in her file that states that she should be assigned a sedan whenever one is available. A sedan cannot be guaranteed. *Chairman White* informed her that she cannot be assigned a sedan only.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Hulak for his report.

Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS)

R. Croteau distributed his report announced that he is no longer the Fleet Manager but the new Assistant Director.

He then asked for questions.

B. Hachey asked about the no-show policy. *M. Hulak* stated that policy was implemented about a year ago and that there has been some improvement.

R. Gibson asked about “where is my ride?” She stated that when contacting this line the passenger is put on hold for 30 to 45 minutes. She wanted to know if there is a way to make sure passengers are picked up in a timely manner. *R. Croteau* stated that they are working on a new program where the system will call by phone to alert you that THE RIDE is approaching your area. *M. Hulak* stated that this program has been in the works for about two years and will be implemented by all three vendors. He also noted that

this program will help assist the customers, dispatchers, reservationist, win, win for all.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Croteau for his report.

National Express Transit (NEXT)

Victor Herrera, General Manager, distributed his report and had no further updates.

He then asked for questions. There were none.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Herrera for his report.

Veterans Transportation (VT)

Kevin MacDonald distributed his report and announced upcoming trainings.

He then asked for questions.

B. Hachey suggested that a separate phone line be added for those wanting to know “where’s my RIDE?” *K. MacDonald* stated that customers were given that option two years ago but it did not work out. Consumers used both lines to book trips.

Chairman White thanked Mr. MacDonald for his report.

Announcements

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.

Notables

The AACT Executive Board 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.

Notices of AACT meetings are posted on the website of the MBTA at http://www.mbta.com/about_the_mbta/public_meetings/. Visit the MPO's calendar page at <http://www.bostonmpo.org/calendar/month> to find AACT agendas, meeting minutes, and past meeting minutes. For more on AACT, see the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the MBTA and AACT, the AACT Bylaws, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations at <http://www.mbta.com/aact> .

Also, find articles about topics discussed at AACT meetings in the MPO's newsletter, *TRANSREPORT*, at <http://www.bostonmpo.org/transreport>. For more information on accessibility at the MBTA, please visit www.mbta.com/accessibility.

Comments and questions concerning AACT should be directed to the 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 at c/o CTPS, 10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150, Boston, MA 02116 (mail).

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 contact the MPO staff at 857.702.3700 (voice), 617.570. 9193 (TTY), 617.570.9192 (fax), or publicinformation@ctps.org.

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 (see above) 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/.

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 is always appreciated.