

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

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Members Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 22, 2017

Board of Directors:

Chairman – James F. White

Vice Chairman – Lisa Weber

Executive Board

James Tozza

Nadine Jones

Mary Ann Murray

Beverly Ann Rock

Lisa Weber

Meeting opened at 1:03 PM.

Reading of the Agenda

Introductions

Attendees:

Jim White, Nadine Jones, Joyce Kilgore, Debbie Weathers, Jim Tozza, Lisa Weber, Nancy J. Martin, Dee Whittlesy, Kevin Wilson, Elizabeth Crocker, Reggie Clark, Angela Manerson, and Richard Mahoney

MBTA Staff:

Carol Joyce-Harrington, Mike Hulak, and Rob Sampson

Vendor Staff:

Elizabeth Hickey, Victor Herrera, Kevin MacDonald, and Steve Epps

Other:

Patricia Mendez, David Chia, Linda S. Salazar, and Jennifer S. Workman

Chairman White's Report

He stated the following:

- On February 21st he visited The RIDE Access Center (TRAC) in Medford spending time in each department and meeting with each department head. He commented that TRAC had a difficult start due to a system failure, and there were numerous complaints of long hold times. He stated that current operations are improved, though he noted that much of the staff is not experienced.

During his visit, he raised a concern that an accelerated mobilization plan of two months for each vendor may be inadequate if TRAC does not see improvements; he stated he will raise this issue with Michael Lambert.

He stated the Office of Transportation Access (OTA) has not yet assigned a permanent liaison to TRAC. He noted that the National Express contract administrator was not present during his visit.

- On Feb 4th he noted that National Express Transit (NEXT) was the first vendor to transition to TRAC for customer service, reservations, scheduling, and dispatch.

No questions were asked.

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Amendment to the MPO's Public Participation Plan (PPP)

Jennifer Rowe, Public Participation Manager, gave a brief overview presentation on a proposed amendment to shorten the public comment periods of three important transportation-planning documents.

- The Boston Region MPO is considering shortening its public comment periods from 30 days to 21 days.
- She commented that a brief survey is online for your comments at www.mpo.org, hardcopy on request, or contact her at 857-702-3687.

She then asked for questions:

L. Weber asked if MassDOT would be open to the idea of online updates, such as blogs or online summaries, noting that full documents can be too lengthy to read in one sitting. *J. Rowe* stated that the MPO has converted its *TransReport* newsletter into a blog, and is working to distill large documents into smaller articles.

Chairman White asked if Ms. Rowe could distribute paper copies of the MPO's contact information. *J. Rowe* stated she would provide copies.

N. Jones asked how the amendments apply to the disability community. *J. Rowe* stated that all documents are provided in accessible format.

Chairman White asked what the original timeline was. *J. Rowe* stated that the current timeline is 30 days. She was also asked when the document would be finalized. *J. Rowe* stated that the document would be finalized on March 31, 2017.

Chairman White thanked Ms. Rowe for her presentation.

MBTA and Vendor Reports

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

Rob Sampson, Manager for System-Wide Accessibility, reported the following:

- Construction to Mansfield Station will occur in March. The construction includes an accessible path of travel connecting both inbound and outbound platforms, and the reconstruction of mini-high platforms. The project is anticipated to take approximately 18 months.

He then asked for questions.

Chairman White asked when the mock design of the new Orange Line cars would be available for inspection. *R. Sampson* stated he look into his inquiry.

Chairman White asked if the new Silver Line busses were hybrid busses. *R. Sampson* stated they were hybrid, articulated busses. He noted these new busses were part of the recent bus procurement, adding that the MBTA plans to roll out all new busses by the end of the summer.

Chairman White stated there has been positive feedback regarding the new busses along the 32 Route. He suggested that MBTA do outreach about the advantages of the new busses. *R. Sampson* stated they will take it into consideration.

N. Martin stated that her mobility device has difficulty crossing the gap between the platform and Red Line cars, particularly at Charles/MGH Station. *R. Sampson* stated this is due to the construction of the platform. There had been discussion that this could be rectified as part of Longfellow Bridge project, though he added he had not heard this discussed recently.

N. Martin stated that the elevator between the Red Line and Green Line platforms at Park Street are difficult to use due to her mobility device's turning radius. *R. Sampson* stated the elevator meets all ADA standards. *Chairman White* noted that the elevator was designed for wheelchairs, not scooters.

R. Clark stated that as the new buses are rolled out, the MBTA should not get rid of the old buses, as there are frequently bus shortages. He also raised a concern that some drivers are not properly trained with the new buses. *R. Sampson* stated all operators are trained before using the new buses. He added that old buses are at the end of their life cycle and must be removed from service.

A. Manerson stressed the importance of stop announcements on the Green Line. *R. Sampson* stated this is major concern for SWA. He asked that MBTA customers should note the time of their train and report lack of stop announcements to Customer Service at 617-222-3200.

Chairman White discussed unplowed bus stops and how they affect seniors and persons with disabilities. *R. Clark* expressed support for Chairman White's statement. *R. Sampson* stated that all stops on key

bus routes should be cleared within 48 hours. He made a note of the information and that he would pass on this information to the proper officials.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Sampson for his report.

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

Mike Hulak, Manager of Paratransit Contract Operations, submitted the OTA report and shared the following:

- He expressed appreciation to MBTA and Global Contact Services (GCS) staff for their work in transitioning to THE RIDE Access Center (TRAC). He stated that problems that occurred during the transition are being addressed, and asked for continued feedback from RIDE users.

He then asked for questions.

Chairman White noted that the mobilization timeline had been changed from nine to six months; he asked if the timeline could be reverted to nine months if problems continue. *M. Hulak* stated they would not implement something if they did not think they were capable, but noted that the first phase of the transition will be the most difficult. He expects fewer problems during other phases.

L. Weber asked how AACT can support the transition. *M. Hulak* stated the AACT coordinator assisted with the seat drop, and the adjustment affects customers, drivers, and personnel. *CJ Harrington* stated that

the transition is a paradigm shift from how they have been operating for twenty years, and asked for the customers' patience.

K. Wilson expressed difficulty with using video relay interpreters to speak with dispatchers, noting calls have been disconnected. *C. Woznac* noted that there were some difficulties, though they had been improved by the week of February 19th. *M. Hulak* asked that Mr. Wilson provide details to Ms. Woznac.

D. Weathers stated that dispatchers have given her incorrect information about pick-up times when she has called to complain. *M. Hulak* asked that she provide information to Ms. Woznac during the break, and she would research the issue.

N. Martin complimented TRAC operations and asked when all vendors will transition. *M. Hulak* stated the transition should be complete by July.

P. Mendez stated that the office of Boston Mayor's Commission for Persons with Disabilities receives lots of complaints from RIDE users. She asked that her office be given updates on investigations. *M. Hulak* explained that due to privacy concerns of the user, they need to have the consent of that person to disclose their findings.

J. Kilgore asked if TRAC has changed the same-day policy. *M. Hulak* stated THE RIDE same-day policy remains unchanged.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Hulak for his report.

MBTA Transit Police Department

Dana Nye had no special updates but asked for questions:

A. Manerson complimented the efforts of the Transit Police during the Patriots championship parade. *L. Weber* added her appreciation for

their work. *D. Nye* stated she would pass their compliments along to Chief Kenneth Green.

Keolis Commuter Services (KCS), LLC

Elizabeth Hickey, Manager and Title VI/ADA Enforcer, stated the following:

- Selena Walckner has left Keolis Commuter Services to return home to work near home in CT. It was noted that she was appreciative of working with AACT.

A. Manerson noted that she attended a meeting on concerns for the Natick Station commuter rail station. *E. Hickey* stated that Keolis is trying very hard to correct the situation.

Vice Chair Weber expressed appreciation for the on-time performance of the commuter rail service during recent snow storms.

R. Clark expressed appreciation of the Wachusett Commuter Rail Extension Project. *E. Hickey* stated the schedule should accommodate commuters departing North Station.

Vice Chair Weber asked about progress on the Boston Landing/New Balance Station. *E. Hickey* stated that construction is estimated to conclude in April.

Chairman White thanked Ms. Hickey for her update.

National Express Transit (NEXT)

Victor Herrera, Operations Manager, stated the following:

- NEXT is the first RIDE vendor to transition to TRAC. He explained that there were some unexpected issues, but said they are being addressed.
- NEXT will offer a PAT class on March 1st.

He then asked for questions.

J. S.-Workman asked about training of schedulers, reservationists, and dispatchers, specifically asking about schedulers' experience with the Boston area. *V. Herrera* acknowledged that due to the transition staffing is limited. He commented that TRAC is currently hiring new staff to handle operations. *M. Hulak* stated that some of the schedulers at TRAC are originally from NEXT, adding that scheduling software handles the majority of schedules.

N. Martin stated that a scheduler could not provide an address of a MBTA station. *M. Hulak* stated that all key MBTA stations should be in the landmarks database, though GCS staff may not be familiar with the landmarks database. He asked that Ms. Woznac mention the database to her staff.

A. Manerson stated she has had difficulty scheduling trips to parks, due to a lack of address. *M. Hulak* suggested giving a nearby cross street.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Herrera for his report.

Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS)

Steve Epps, Director of Transportation, submitted his report and stated the following:

- GLSS is currently hiring drivers.
- GLSS is preparing to transition to TRAC at the beginning of April.
- He announced a PAT class offered on February 24th.

He then asked for questions. There were none.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Epps for his report.

Veterans Transportation (VT)

Kevin MacDonald, Project Manager distributed his report and announced that a PAT class will be offered on March 23rd.

He then asked for questions.

N. Martin stated she has experienced difficulties arranging trips to the Charlestown Navy Yard with both THE RIDE and taxi services. *K. MacDonald* stated persons scheduling trips to the Navy Yard should specify specific addresses, noting there are internal streets within the facility.

J. S.-Workman stated that some drivers wear overpowering colognes and perfumes. *K. MacDonald* stated that policy prohibits drivers from wearing fragrances, and stated customers should report offences. He added that some drivers may use a particularly fragrant product.

Chairman White thanked Mr. McDonald for his report.

Global Contact Services, LLC

Christine Woznac, General Manager of THE RIDE Access Center (TRAC), stated the following:

- TRAC operations began on February 4th.
- In response to an earlier question regarding training, she noted that TRAC employs several individuals who previously worked at NEXT. She added that reservationists, schedulers, and dispatchers go through several weeks of training. Training includes how to treat customers respectfully.
- TRAC is currently hiring.

She then asked for questions.

L. Weber asked for the best method to relay information about preferred drop-off spots for events. *M. Hulak* stated she should speak to OTA staff with her concerns.

A. Manerson commented that some RIDE passengers will ask drivers to change the scheduled route, directing them to different drop-off locations. *C. Woznac* stated that if passengers are dropped off at a location that was not scheduled, riders should contact dispatch so they can arrange for drivers to pick them up at the new location.

J. S.-Workman asked how TRAC plans to handle transfers between vendors. *M. Hulak* said that the MBTA's ultimate goal is to remove the transfers, though this will require much planning.

J. Kilgore stated she has had medical appointments which have extended beyond her scheduled pick-up time. She asked how she should handle these situations. *C. Woznac* stated that RIDE users should contact dispatch as soon as they know their appointment will run late. When users are ready to leave, they should call again.

E. Crocker stated that there have been problems with drivers using GPS. Some drivers may not be aware of certain shortcuts or optimal routes, yet do not accept tips from passengers. She asked if training could address this. *K. MacDonald* stated that some passengers provide incorrect route information; as such, the vendors need to be cautious of accepting this information. Drivers may accept advice from passengers they are familiar with, yet the driver is ultimately responsible for the trip.

D. Weathers stated she has experienced trips in which the driver goes past her neighborhood before ultimately turning around and dropping her off. *C. Woznac* noted that scheduling trips is largely handled by software. She asked that RIDE users inform TRAC of similar issues so they can investigate and tweak these trips. *M. Hulak* stated this issue is

frequently due to add-ons from other trips which experienced problems. He asked that Ms. Weathers provide details of the trip to OTA.

Chairman White thanked Ms. Woznac for her report.

Meeting adjourned at 3:01 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 Chairman James White by contacting the AACT Coordinator, Ms. Janie Guion, at 857.702.3658 (voice) 617.570.9193 (TTY), AACT@ctps.org (email), or c/o CTPS, 10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150, Boston, MA 02116 (US 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.

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 her or himself or any specific class of persons has been subjected to discrimination prohibited by Title VI, ADA, or other non-discrimination statute or regulations may, her or 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 6:00 PM. There are no weekend or evening hours. You can log on to 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.