

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

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Members Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 25, 2017

Board of Directors:

Chairman – James F. White

Vice Chairman – Lisa Weber

Executive Board

Nadine Jones

Mary Ann Murray

Beverly Ann Rock

James Tozza

Lisa Weber

Meeting opened at 1:09 PM

Reading of the Agenda

Introductions

Attendees:

Jim White, Lisa Weber, Jim Tozza, Beverly Ann Rock,
Dee Whittlesy, Sylvia Mekler, Debbie Weathers, Reggie Clark,
Bill Corcoran, Kevin Wilson, Nadine Jones, David Vieira,
Jennifer Smith, Elizabeth Crocker, Lynn Hutchins, Tom Gilbert,
Christine Daniels, Angie Manerson

MBTA/MassDOT Staff:

Dana Nye, Mike Hulak, Rob Sampson

Vendor Staff:

Elizabeth Hickey, Kevin MacDonald, Victor Herrera, Steve Epps,
Brian Overcash

Other: Janet Maloof

Approval of Meeting Minutes

September 27, 2017

Minutes were approved unanimously.

Chairman White's Report

He stated the following:

- He thanked Vice Chair Lisa Weber for running the September meeting, noting the positive feedback he has heard.
- He participated in the Taxi Subsidy meeting with the Office for Transportation Access staff by remote.
- He attended the Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB) meeting; he endorsed delaying the transition of Veterans Transportation (VT) to THE RIDE Access Center (TRAC). Due to ongoing issues following the transitions of National Express (NEXT) and Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS), he felt there would be a potentially large ADA violation if VT also transitioned to TRAC.

- He described that an extended trip on THE RIDE arranged by TRAC caused him serious medical issues. He also noted he was physically unable to take another trip the next day.
- He stated that dispatchers need at least one year of experience to learn how to react to certain situations.
- He explained that GLSS has been unable to provide enough drivers on the road; GLSS frequently has more trips than they can comply with under ADA guidelines. NEXT has taken some of these trips, but these drivers are not familiar with the GLSS area.
- He stated that AACT initially supported TRAC because on-time performance was supposed to improve. He stated that this issue needs to be addressed during the next RIDE Task Force meeting.
- He explained that in the request for proposal Global Contact Services (GCS) stated that by February 28, 2017 every department would have half of its workforce fully trained; this did not materialize. Part of this issue stems from the stipulation that RIDE employees who transferred over to TRAC would need to be paid their current salary; GCS offered these employees less money, and in turn many of these employees did not transition.
- He noted that a RIDE consumer was left stranded by a no-show driver. A call was made to the Transit Police for assistance.

Casey Arbor-way Project Update

Jonathan Kapust, *Highway Project Manager*, HNTB, stated the following:

- He explained that the Casey Arborway project is a \$74 million project that includes the reconfiguration of the Arborway from having an overpass to an at-grade crossing system. It also reconfigures sidewalks and bike paths. The project has been under construction for several years. The goal for this year is to complete all roadways and all major intersections.
- He commented how the project will construct more than three miles of new sidewalk. Aside from some locations where there are right-of-way constraints, the sidewalks will be eight feet wide. The sidewalk joints will be saw cut, which is a new City of Boston standard. There are over 130 curb cuts within the project limits. The majority are over six feet wide and at all major intersections they are eight feet wide.
- He said that there are median refuge crossings along the Arborway, for those unable to cross the full length of the road.
- Mr. Kapust discussed several specific locations, including the following:
 - He noted that the entrance to the Arnold Arboretum now features a larger plaza area, detectable warning panels, and a graded path in front of the Arboretum. There will also be a new signalized crosswalk. Beyond this, there is a new sidewalk heading toward the station and a new bike path; these are separated throughout the project area.
 - He described several improvements to the Washington Street streetscape near Ukraine Way, Asticou Road, and

the Forest Hills bus shelter. North of this location, there will be a bike path, a sidewalk including a pick-up/drop-off location, and between these a hardscaped permeable paver area. This is technically not an accessible pavement, as it can move over time; however, the contractor has made an effort to have it begin as accessible. There will be a new crossing to the upper busway.

- He commented that Shea Circle has been converted into a fully functioning signalized intersection. Benches or bus shelters will be installed in the area.

He then asked for questions.

B. Corcoran asked about the frequency of benches throughout the project area. *J. Kapust* stated there will be many benches, although none of them are currently installed. In part, this is because the contractor wants to complete sidewalk construction before bench installation.

Chairman White stated when travelling from Forest Hills station toward the courthouse, there are no wheelchair ramps to exit the sidewalk. This resulted in him moving between jersey barriers and travelling against traffic. He suggested installing a temporary ramp in the area. *J. Kapust* stated that the lack of crossings is intentional; however he noted that this is not currently signed properly.

D. Vieira asked when construction will be complete. *J. Kapust* stated that the contractor has agreed to have the project “substantially complete” by the end of 2017; this means that all paths of travel will be constructed, though some additional elements will be incomplete. The full project will be completed in full in 2018.

A consumer asked for more information about the permeable paver.

J. Kapust stated the permeable paver will catch moving water, preventing icing on the sidewalk and bike path.

J. Podesva asked if there are tactile strips between the bike paths and sidewalks. *J. Kapust* stated that there are.

T. Gilbert asked about the configuration of crossings at intersections. *J. Kapust* stated that each crossing has separated ramps for the intended direction; the detectable warning panels do not necessarily point to the opposing destination, depending on the geometry of the roadway. He noted that in locations where sidewalks and bike paths converge, there are indicators for cyclists on the correct route of travel; this brings cyclists to their own ramp. He noted that at the ends of the bike paths, there are tapered bike lanes and signage to slow cyclist travel. Cyclists and pedestrians also have separate signals.

Thomas Rovero, Project Manager, MBTA Capital Delivery, stated the following regarding the upper busway canopy project at Forest Hills station:

- He reminded the members that had presented to AACT in November 2016; the upper busway canopy project was a standalone project. The MassDOT Board has since expanded the scope of the Casey Arborway project to include the upper busway canopy. The project will conclude by the end of 2018.
- He explained that the upper busway canopy will be constructed over the extended upper busway canopy deck. It will enlarge the area for bus berths. It will accommodate the Route 39 bus as well as the bus routes currently using the upper busway.

- He noted that there will be benches with windscreens and sufficient signage. The project includes a wayfinding and signage package.
- He also described how the large busway canopy will connect to a lower connecting canopy, allowing passengers to exit the station and board their bus while sheltered. Lighting has been focused in the bus berthing areas to minimize the amount of light pollution in the surrounding areas.
- He commented that the elevator and stairs of the new Orange Line head house are currently under construction. The new head house will allow passengers to access the Orange Line without crossing the street.
- He mentioned that automated fare collection gates and fare vending machines from Wollaston Station will be repurposed into the new head house.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Kapust and Mr. Rovero for presenting before AACT on short notice.

MBTA and Vendor Reports

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

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

- On October 18, the new MBTA ferry *Champion* began operations. This is the first new commuter ferry since the mid-1990s, and it is one of two new ferries that will be added to the

fleet. It travels from Hingham and Hull to Long Wharf. The new ferry features priority seating signage, assistive listening devices, audio and visual stop announcements, and seating areas for customers with mobility devices.

- On October 15, MassDOT Security and Emergency Management, along with Keolis, held an emergency drill. SWA staff was present and appreciated the efforts of the participating first responders.

He then asked for questions.

D. Vieira expressed appreciation of the new bathrooms at Back Bay station. However, he noted that the men's and women's rooms switched position during construction. He noted a lack of warning for persons with visual impairments, and asked why this decision was made. *R. Sampson* stated he will investigate the issue.

T. Gilbert stated that stop announcements on the Orange Line are consistently poor. He noted that stop announcements are often poorly timed. *R. Sampson* empathized with Mr. Gilbert's frustrations and thanked him for the feedback.

A. Manerson stated that MBTA station staff should identify themselves when offering help to persons with visual impairments. *R. Sampson* stated this is included in MBTA training, and acknowledged that it is frequently overlooked. He asked that customers report such incidents.

Chairman White stated that AACT normally has an opportunity to provide comment on new MBTA vehicles. He asked if they would have the opportunity to view the new Orange Line car prototype. *R. Sampson* stated he would investigate, noting that AACT will likely be involved in testing.

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 stated the following:

- He encouraged RIDE customers to join the UBER/LYFT pilot program to visit www.mbta.com/paratransitpilot.
- He reminded AACT members that checks and money orders for THE RIDE should be sent to the new address: MBTA THE RIDE, PO Box 847091, Boston, MA 02284-7091
- He thanked Transit Police for their assistance with sidewalk duty at the State Transportation Building during the AACT meeting.

He then asked for questions.

B. Corcoran asked if their subsidy for Uber and Lyft trips had increased. *M. Hulak* stated that there was a slight increase specific to the pilot program.

A. Manerson asked why the address for sending checks and money orders has changed. *M. Hulak* stated the MBTA has made a business decision to have all checks and money orders sent to an outside agency to be processed. He added that they can assist her with the new process.

MBTA Transit Police Department

Dana Nye, Community Outreach Coordinator, asked for questions.

T. Gilbert stated that cars continue to park in the bus zone at the Holden Street and Boston Avenue bus stop in Medford. *D. Nye* stated she will give this information to the Deputy Chief, who can inform the northern shift of the Transit Police and possibly reach out to the Medford Chief of police.

J. Smith Workman asked if there will be a greater police presence at the Forest Hills station when construction is completed. *D. Nye* stated there is an officer assigned to Forest Hills sixteen hours a day, but during afternoon school breaks there is generally extra coverage.

A consumer asked how many officers are assigned to Park Street, and asked if they handle issues outside of the station. She also asked if fencing in the area has an effect on security. *D. Nye* stated that Transit Police have full and concurrent jurisdiction over Park Street with Boston Police; however, Transit Police's priority lies with MBTA property. A task force in the area has been assigned to provide accessibility and deter criminal elements. However, Transit Police cannot assign an officer to Park Street all day. She added that she is unsure of the effects of the fencing.

Keolis Commuter Services (KCS), LLC

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

- She noted that Construction at North Station (NS) has begun. The Beverly drawbridge project has concluded, and normal

service has resumed. Track work has concluded on the Needham Line and will no longer have weekend disruptions.

- She stated that the mini-high platforms at Mansfield station are under construction. There are temporary mini-highs in place.

She then asked for questions.

A. Manerson asked for details of the NS construction. *E Hickey* stated that there will be a covered pathway to protect customers from the elements when crossing over to North Station.

Chairman White thanked Ms. Hickey for her update.

Global Contact Services, LLC

Ray Croteau, General Manager, distributed his report and asked for questions.

B. Corcoran stated that some drivers do not ring his doorbell; rather, dispatch places a phone call. He stated that this is not effective. He added that he has scheduled pickup times and had them changed slightly when he called back to confirm the time; this could lead to missed trips. *R. Croteau* stated that drivers are supposed to come to the door at every trip. If a driver cannot locate a customer, they are supposed to call dispatch and send a no-show message; at that point, dispatch calls the customer.

J. Tozza stated that during the AACT meeting, he received a phone call from TRAC stating that his RIDE vehicle was on its way; this was an hour before he had scheduled his pickup. *R. Croteau* stated he will investigate the issue.

J. Smith Workman stated that geographic knowledge should be incorporated into training, as she has experienced a lack of such

knowledge among dispatch and scheduling. *R. Croteau* stated that the scheduling department has much experience; the least senior staff member has five years of experience. He acknowledged that dispatch has less experience. If he identifies issues with staff, he works to address them. He noted that GCS has hired a new trainer from Veterans Transportation. GCS continues to refine their standard operating procedures and ensures that each employee has this information.

L. Weber asked what the specific responsibilities of TRAC staff are daily. *R. Croteau* stated that TRAC is responsible for four parts of trips: booking, scheduling, dispatching, and archiving. Vendors are responsibility for the drivers and vehicles.

T. Gilbert asked if GCS could send a representative from their MBTA customer service department in addition to a TRAC representative. *Chairman White* asked that he send his question to the AACT coordinator.

D. Weathers suggested that dispatchers do a ride along with drivers to give them a better understanding of operations. *R. Croteau* stated that the best dispatchers are former drivers.

B. Corcoran concerned that his RIDE vehicle was nearby according to a call from TRAC. He noted that the vehicle did not arrive for over an hour. *R. Croteau* stated he would speak with Mr. Corcoran after the meeting.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Croteau for his update.

Veterans Transportation (VT)

Kevin MacDonald, Project Manager, distributed his report and announced passenger assistance training (PAT) on November 7.

He then asked for questions.

L. Hutchins described two incidents in which she had difficulty reaching VT. *K. MacDonald* stated he would speak with her after the meeting and research the issue.

D. Weathers asked when VT will transition to TRAC. *M. Hulak* stated that a transition date has not been selected at this point.

B. Corcoran stated TRAC instructed him to call VT directly to set up a transfer. This has not previously occurred. He asked if this is the standard process. *K. MacDonald* stated that TRAC should have called on his behalf. *M. Hulak* confirmed this.

Chairman White thanked Mr. McDonald.

Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS)

Steve Epps, Director of Transportation, distributed his report and announced PAT training on November 3. Those interested in attending should contact the AACT coordinator.

He then asked for questions. There were none.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Epps for his report.

National Express Transit (NEXT)

Victor Herrera, Operations Manager, distributed his report and announced PAT training on November 1, adding there will likely be an additional class toward the end of the month.

He then asked for questions.

J. Smith Workman stated that she has noticed drivers' frustration with having two distant pickup locations at the same time. *V. Herrera* stated this is an issue that needs to be addressed with scheduling personnel.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Herrera for his report.

Open Discussion

J. Smith Workman suggested that GCS take input from drivers about pickups. She also asked if there was a bid regarding work hours.

M. Hulak stated there is currently a bid to adjust the work hours for the current service demand.

D. Vieira stated that Veterans Transportation could not find 10 Park Plaza during a trip request, and was told to call TRAC; he experienced the same difficulty with TRAC. He stressed that reservationists need to be aware of frequently used locations. *M. Hulak* stated that all high frequency zones, including 10 Park Plaza, are landmarked in the database. However, some individuals need to be re-trained.

Chairman White stated that reservationists use to follow a script when taking calls, ensuring that they asked the same questions every time. He noted that TRAC staff does not seem to be following this script, and stressed that this needs to be corrected. *M. Hulak* agreed with Chairman White and stated that there is a script they should follow. He added that Mr. Croteau will take this back to his staff.

R. Clark noted the negative effect of poor on-time performance on customers who take the RIDE to work. *M. Hulak* agreed and stated that on-time performance is a key element that TRAC needs to improve.

T. Gilbert asked if MBTA staff could attend an AACT meeting to explain how the announcement system on the new Orange Line cars will work. *Chairman White* stated AACT will continue to work with SWA.

D. Vieira stated that MBTA staff at Forest Hills will not open the rear doors of buses for persons with passes. *Chairman White* acknowledged the issue and stated he will pass this information along to the MBTA.

A. Manerson asked when the new Orange Line trains will begin operations. *R. Sampson* stated that they will not be delivered until late 2018.

Old Business/ New Business/Announcements

None were presented.

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM.

Notables

AACT Executive Board will meet from 10:00 AM to 12:00PM 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.

The MBTA Customer Call Center is *NO* longer located at 10 Park Plaza to receive walk in customer comments, concerns and inquiries. Please visit the MBTA website at www.mbta.com to submit your comments, concerns and inquiries. ***You may also call to speak with a Customer Service Representative.***

6:30 a.m. – 8 p.m. Monday – Friday

8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday/Sunday

(617) 222 – 3200

(800) 392 – 6100

TTY (617) 222 – 5146

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.

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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.