

Memorandum for the Record Access Advisory Committee to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (AACT) Membership Minutes

Wednesday, November 15, 2017, Meeting

1:00 PM – 2:50 PM, State Transportation Building, Suite 2150,
10 Park Plaza, Boston

Voice: 857.702.3658; Fax: 617.570.9192; TDD: 617.570.9193;

E-mail: AACT@ctps.org

Board of Directors:

Chair – James F. White

Vice Chair – Lisa Weber

Executive Board

James Tozza

Nadine Jones

Mary Ann Murray

Beverly Ann Rock

Reading of the Agenda

Introductions

Attendees

Lisa Weber

James Tozza

Nadine Jones

Marcia Brennan

Angela Manerson
Jennifer S. Workman
Mary Davis
Nadine Jones
David Vieira
Dee Whittlesy
Joyce Kilgoe
Tom Gilbert
Christen Daniels
Marcy Segelman
Stephen Theberge
Debbie Weathers
Reggie Clark

MBTA Staff

Carol Joyce-Harrington
Mike Hulak
Rob Sampson
Nathan Larson

Vendor Staff

Steve Epps
Victor Herrera
Kevin MacDonald
Elizabeth Hickey
Ray Croteau

Other

Patricia Mendez
Nicole Chandler

Meeting Minutes Approval

October 25, 2017, minutes were unanimously approved.

Chair Report

Vice Chair Weber, standing in for the Chair, stated the following:

- The RIDE Task Force visited TRAC on November 14, 2017. She found the experience informative, and stated she would give further details if members were interested.

MBTA—THE RIDE On-Demand Paratransit Pilot

Nathan Larson from the MBTA Office for Transportation Access provided information on the upcoming pilot.

He stated the following:

- RIDE customers can sign up for UBER or LYFT access. Customers with smartphones can use the app; customers without smartphones can contact the call center as an alternative.
- One of the original goals of the pilot was to improve customer flexibility and mobility. This has been achieved.

- Some RIDE users have expressed that the pilot has provided better service than THE RIDE; others have reported issues.
- As of October, there were approximately 800 active users who generated more than 8,000 trips. The average cost of each trip is approximately \$17 to \$18. This is an increase from September, in large part due to increasing the subsidy from \$13 to \$40. The subsidy was increased to encourage riders to take longer trips; fewer long trips with traditional RIDE service will potentially make the service more efficient.
- Customers can use UBER Pool, which will pick up other passengers along the way. This service costs less. Twenty percent of customers used this service in October, which is a decline from September.
- The average trip cost paid per user has declined to approximately \$2. Eventually, this will be increased to \$5.25, which is on par with traditional RIDE service. This will help with cost savings for THE RIDE.
- In September, cost analysis showed two percent savings to THE RIDE; in October, cost analysis showed negative four percent savings. The program will need to be altered to either provide savings or result in a net neutral impact; this would make the pilot more financially feasible.

He then asked for questions.

L. Weber commented that on-demand trips are not comparable to scheduled trips. She noted that there has been a discussion about how certain trips may lend themselves better to on-demand service, such as events with uncertain end times.

J. Tozza asked whether there is a telephone number to call with questions regarding this pilot. *N. Larson* replied that if the question relates to UBER or LYFT, they have their own customer support lines. If customers find support from UBER or LYFT difficult, they can notify MBTA Office for Transportation Access (OTA) at ridepilots@mbta.com.

M. Davis asked for clarification about how much customers pay per UBER or LYFT trip. *N. Larson* replied that customers pay the first two dollars of the trip, and the MBTA will subsidize the next \$40; anything over that \$40 will be paid by the customer. Customers will need to provide a credit or debit card when signing up for UBER or LYFT.

A. Manerson asked what happens if a customer's credit card is maxed out. *M. Hulak* replied that the app will prevent them from booking a trip.

D. Vieira asked if customers can sign up with both providers. *N. Larson* replied customers can only choose one service, though there is currently an exception for persons with mobility device users.

R. Clark stressed the importance of training taxi drivers.

C.J. Harrington noted that trips taken with UBER, LYFT, or the taxi subsidy pilot are non-ADA trips, and customers may not receive the assistance provided by RIDE drivers.

M. Hulak stated that taxi drivers need training, but customers should not expect the level of training given to RIDE drivers.

T. Gilbert suggested using the Green Cab company in Somerville, noting their quality service. *CJ Harrington* stated there is a request for proposal (RFP) out for the taxi pilot. **M. Hulak** added that companies can sign up on the MBTA website to receive the RFP.

M. Davis asked if the Wheelchair Accessibility Vehicle (WAV) program has started. *N. Larson* replied that it has.

MBTA and Vendor Reports

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

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

- On December 6, Judge King will host his biannual public meeting. There will be an update on the settlement agreement, and MBTA staff will be present.

He then asked for questions.

R. Clark described an incident in which a Green Line driver shut the door before he could exit, resulting in needing to backtrack from the next station. *R. Sampson* said he would investigate.

S. Theberge stated that automated announcements are often obscured by background noise, such as musicians. He added that he would prefer announcements that are too loud than quiet. *R. Sampson* said that the automated announcements have a set decibel level, which the maintenance team tests regularly. He added that in-station performers are supposed to stop playing as trains approach and announcements begin.

T. Gilbert stated that badge number announcements on buses are frequently cut short, preventing individuals from hearing the number. He noted that the announcements were not interrupted by stop announcements. *R. Sampson* explained that if a badge announcement is cut off, it should be reported to the Customer Service line. MBTA Operations Technology department indicated that manual announcements could cut off badge announcements; complaints can help determine the cause of these interruptions.

J. Tozza reported that signage at Park Street station is out of date. He asked if these will be updated. *R. Sampson* stated there is a plan to update signage at Park Street, though he is unsure of its current status. He added that wayfinding signage is of high priority, and asked that MBTA users report these issues.

D. Weathers stated that bus passengers frequently stand in the front of buses when there is room in the back, inhibiting other passengers' entrance. She asked if drivers are trained to ask passengers to move further into the buses. *R. Sampson* stated that drivers should ask passengers to move further into the bus. Complaints about this issue will be investigated.

M. Davis stated that in previous years, drivers would instruct passengers to move to the back of the bus to clear space for boarding passengers. *Vice Chair Weber* asked what if the MBTA had a policy regarding this issue. *R. Sampson* stated this is included in training, though he was unsure if this was policy.

A. Manerson stated that complaints lodged during AACT meeting should be treated with equal importance as those filed through the customer service line. *R. Sampson* stated that they are.

D. Vieira described multiple incidents in which bus passengers have blocked access to rear seating with their possessions, including baby strollers. He added that a bus driver acted unprofessionally when he raised this issue. He added there should be posted restrictions on what is allowed, thus removing the onus from the driver. *L. Weber* stated the new buses should ease this issue, as they have designated areas for strollers.

2. MBTA Office for Transportation Access (OTA)—THE RIDE Program

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

- THE RIDE customers can still enroll in the program through 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. Customers should note their ID number on checks and money orders. Funds can also be added in person at

the Charlie Store in Downtown Crossing, the 888.844.0355 phone number, and the MBTA website.

He then asked for questions.

A. Manerson asked if RIDE customers can still check their account balance. *M. Hulak* stated this has not changed; customers can call OTA at 617.222.5123 or speak to a reservationist.

J. Tozza asked how to contact OTA with concerns. *M. Hulak* stated that theride@mbta.com is the general mailbox.

3. Keolis Commuter Services (KCS), LLC
Elizabeth Hickey, Manager, Diversity, Inclusion & Title VI,
stated the following:

- She explained that there is a temporary mini-high platform at Mansfield station during construction.
- New Commuter Rail schedules for the Providence, Worcester, Haverhill, and Lowell lines will go into effect on November 20, 2017. Severe weather information is more readable on the new schedules.

She then asked for questions.

R. Clark stated that the South Station platforms should have railing. *E. Hickey* stated this will be part of the upcoming South Station construction, though there is not a specific timeline.

A. Manerson commended Commuter Rail alerts and conductors. She asked about an alert she received regarding Beverly. *E. Hickey* stated there was busing, which has ceased.

S. Theberge expressed his appreciation of the passenger assistants at South Station. *E. Hickey* added that they can be found at the information booth. Passenger assistants will walk customers to their train.

J. Tozza asked if Keolis has investigated the stairs at the Natick Center station. *E. Hickey* stated that many stairs on the Commuter Rail network need improvement. She is unsure when improvements will begin.

4. Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS)

Steve Epps, Director of Transportation, distributed his report and announced a PAT class on November 17, 2017. Those interested should contact the AACT coordinator.

He then asked for questions.

A. Manerson stated that she received a phone call from dispatch during a transfer stating they were waiting for her; normally, transfers are handled between dispatchers. *M. Hulak* stated this was done in error. He asked that *R. Croteau, General Manager, Global Contact Services*, investigate the issue.

5. Veterans Transportation (VT)

Kevin MacDonald, Project Manager, distributed his report and announced a PAT class on December 5, 2017.

He then asked for questions.

D. Weathers asked for clarification on THE RIDE's policy regarding drivers assisting customers with mobility devices on stairs. *K. MacDonald* stated the policy dictates that drivers can only help passengers down one step or curb. Beyond this distance, the driver should be beside them and ready to assist if an accident occurs. *M. Hulak* stated that this is a long-standing policy.

6. National Express Transit (NEXT)

Victor Herrera, Operations Manager, distributed his report and announced a PAT class on December 6, 2017.

He then asked for questions.

J. S. Workman suggested that some drivers be re-trained on PCAs. She described an incident in which a personal care attendant (PCA) stayed on a RIDE vehicle after their client was dropped off; the PCA exited the vehicle with another RIDE customer who had a different PCA on the vehicle. *V. Herrera* stated he will address this with the driver.

7. THE RIDE Access Center (TRAC)

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

J. Tozza reported that he did not receive an automated call when his RIDE vehicle was en route. He called dispatch, who informed him that the vehicle would arrive at 11:15 AM. The driver arrived at 11:00 AM, and informed Mr. Tozza that many of his passengers had not received automated calls. *R. Croteau* explained how the system normally operates. When a driver is 15

minutes or one mile away from a RIDE customer, the driver's automatic vehicle locator (AVL) sends a message to TRAC; in turn, TRAC calls the RIDE customer. Because Mr. Tozza's driver experienced this multiple times in the same day, it is likely an issue with their AVL, though it could be a different connection issue. He will need to investigate the issue. *M. Hulak* stated the automated call is a courtesy, but RIDE customers should still be ready at the time of their scheduled pick-up.

J. Kilgoe explained that she called dispatch to cancel her RIDE trip; however, the dispatcher never cancelled the trip. *R. Croteau* stated dispatchers should cancel trips while on the phone with the customer. He will investigate the situation. *M. Hulak* suggested that if customers are cancelling a trip at least one hour before their scheduled pick-up, they should use the automated phone line; if customers call less than an hour before their pick-up, they will need to speak to a dispatcher.

J. S. Workman said that the automated phone line does not have her correct date of birth; she added that her secondary number is incorrect. *M. Hulak* stated he would update her information.

A. Manerson reported that some passengers are listed as no-shows before a significant effort is made to locate them.

J. Kilgoe described an incident in which a driver informed her that he had arrived, but he had left by the time she exited her fourth floor home. She expressed that the driver could not have called dispatch in the time it took her to exit her home. *R. Croteau* stated

that dispatchers have been trained to contact customers and inform drivers if they will need some time to reach the vehicle.

Open Discussion

S. Theberge asked if there is a wayfinding app for MBTA stations. *R. Sampson* suggested the BlindWays app, which uses crowdsourcing to pinpoint the locations of bus stops. Currently, there is no app that offers wayfinding within stations; however the MBTA is testing an indoor navigation system called PERCEPT. This was tested at Arlington station several years ago; North Station will be the next test location. PERCEPT offers directions from the entrances to the platforms.

R. Clark stated that the recent Park Street to Kendall shuttles were operated by Yankee Bus; he was surprised that MBTA buses weren't used. *R. Sampson* stated that due to multiple State of Good Repair projects, the MBTA needs to contract out shuttle services.

P. Mendez asked how MBTA riders can learn about upcoming work on elevators. *R. Sampson* stated that all elevators at Tufts Medical Center are being replaced; this will be completed in May. This information was put on the MBTA website and signage throughout the Orange Line system. For long-term closures, the MBTA makes this information available several weeks prior to closures; for short-term closures, this information is available a week in advance.

Announcements

There were none.

Old Business/New Business

None were presented.

Notables

The AACT Executive Board meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month, except when noted, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM (noon). The Membership meeting follows immediately from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM.

Notices of AACT meetings are posted on the MBTA website at www.mbta.com/about_the_mbta/public_meetings/. Visit the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) calendar page at 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 ADA regulations at www.mbta.com/aact.

Also, find articles about topics discussed at AACT meetings in the MPO's newsletter, *TRANSREPORT*, at 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 Chair 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 MBTA Custom Call Center at 10 Park Plaza is closed.

Please visit the MBTA website at www.mbta.com/customer_support/feedback/ to submit your comments, concerns, and inquiries.

6:30 AM to 8:00 PM Monday–Friday

8:00 AM to 4:00 PM Saturday and Sunday

617.222.3200

800.392.6100

TTY: 617.222.5146

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.

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.