

## **ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority  
(AACT)**

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### **AACT Meeting Minutes for July 25, 2007**

*The meeting was called to order at 1:05 PM.*

#### **NOTABLES**

- The next AACT meeting will be on Wednesday afternoon, August 22, from 1:00 to 3:30 PM in Conference Room 2
- Judge Patrick King, the court-appointed independent monitor for the settlement agreement asked that he be contacted with members' thoughts, comments, and questions; he can be reached by phone at 617-228-9125 or by e –mail [MBTAMonitor@gmail.com](mailto:MBTAMonitor@gmail.com). He promises to answer as quickly as possible
- Please sign in at all meetings
- Keep your attendance current to ensure your right to vote or hold office
- All meetings are equipped with assistive-listening devices
- As a courtesy to the hosting vendor, training sessions are to be attended for the full day; members, please plan your day accordingly
- Handouts should be distributed at least fifteen minutes before the meetings
- Announcements are always welcome. Please be prepared to give as many details as possible; date, time, location, contact person, phone number or flyer would be appreciated

#### **Corrections to June Minutes by R. Rizzo:**

*Page 7, line 20 should read, "The July 4<sup>th</sup> shuttle would run again".*

*Page 8, line 24 should read, "There are four members from my staff appointed to observe THE RIDE."*

*Page 8, line 27 should read, " I am not familiar with training programs aside from THE RIDE Program."*

#### **ATTENDANCE**

James Oliver, Marilyn MacNab, Kathryn Piccard, Don Summerfield, Richard Nurt, Ben Haynes, Lillian Haynes, Richard Mahoney, John Marshall, Cheryl Ravalli, John Kane, Divinah Payne, Maria Viera, Raine Newman, Gail Thomas, David Edwards, Tammy Perrault, and Paul Barresi

### ***MBTA Representatives:***

Jessica Goss, Gary Talbot, Carl Merrick, Lt. Donald O'Connor, Michael Festa, Michael Hulak, Paul Fitzgerald, Erik Scheier, Carol Joyce-Harrington, Alex Murkinson, Ron Mariani, Robert Rizzo, and Tangela Burgess,

### ***Vendor Representatives:***

Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN – Carlton Jones, Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc.– John Soucy, Kiessling Transit, Inc. – Bob Tobin, and Veteran Transportation Services – John Tuttle

### ***Agency Representatives***

Anna Biton – Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
Kathy Roach – Massachusetts Office on Disabilities  
Richard Chapman – Massachusetts Commission for the Blind  
Janie Guion and Walter Bennett – Metropolitan Planning Organization (CTPS staff)

### ***Agenda***

- Self-introduction of the members, friends and guests
- Reading of the Agenda

Members were given an explanation and the reason meetings are recorded.

### ***Chairman Haynes' Report***

- Chairman Haynes welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanked all who came, and said that he looks forward to all having an enjoyable time participating in AACT.
- He announced that his report was distributed just before the meeting
- He discussed the new format changes for meetings
- He reminded MBTA staff and vendors that all verbal reports have been discontinued and that only updates from Ms. Cox and Mr. Rizzo would be presented

He then asked for questions. There were none.

### ***MBTA Assistant General Manager (AGM) for Systemwide Accessibility***

Gary Talbot, MBTA's AGM for Systemwide Accessibility expressed his joy that General Manager Daniel Grabauskas selected him for this newly created position. He shared with the audience that he will be reporting directly to General Manager Grabauskas, which gives him the ability to be a true decision maker and provides a tremendous opportunity for the community. He went on to discuss his background, his career path, his Chairmanship in the Society for Automotive Engineers (a committee that writes all the accessibility standards for adaptive devices for vehicles) and involvement as a Presidential appointee to the United States Access Board (a 13-member panel that writes the federal accessibility standards for the country). He briefly discussed his recent meeting with the AACT Chair and Vice-Chair and was eager to hear about AACT's role and vision on accessibility at the MBTA.

He also shared the following goals:

- To provide an accessible transportation system in the city
- To improve stations and bus stops
- To improve accessibility on all elements of the MBTA
- To assist the City of Boston and the other communities in which the MBTA operates to understand the importance of accessibility for everyone
- To have improvements done in a relatively short period of time
- To have complaints decrease over time

*He then asked for questions.*

**D. Summerfield:** What can you tell us about the bus stop legislation that is being discussed on Beacon Hill?

**G. Talbot:** MBTA Transit Police Chief Carter and his executive staff suggested a meeting with the Massachusetts Human Rights Commission (MHRC). Perhaps MHRC might be willing to help elevate the issue of illegally parked vehicles at bus stops during Disability Awareness Month in October. This would be a great opportunity to get the entire state involved during this time. I will look into this suggestion.

**J. Oliver:** Will the Customer Support Services produce a monthly report for AACT just has the Paratransit Contactors and Fixed Route Services managers.

**G. Talbot:** I need to speak with the Ms. Howze. There are many categories. I will need to do research.

**M. MacNab:** Will you do more to see that paratransit transfers between fixed route services are safe and more accommodating?

**G. Talbot:** Usually the two are not connected. The paratransit is a compliment to the fixed route services. They are typically separate. I would like to review any information you might have on the issue.

**R. Newman:** Are you aware that persons in wheelchairs or scooters who transfer from the Orange Line - Forest Hills and use the elevator are subject to pay again to transfer to the Red Line?

**G. Talbot:** My suggestion is that you locate a customer service agent to help you continue your trip. There is a long-term plan on the way for an elevator to be added to eliminate this inconvenience. Please let me know of other stations that present this problem. I will get back with the schedule for the start of construction for the elevator service.

**M. MacNab:** The new automated fare machines audio is not loud enough when it is competing with the trains and trolleys. The instructions need to be clearer, and the machine cancels you out much too fast before you have time to complete your transaction.

**Consumer:** The signs are being removed from the doors on trains.

**G. Talbot:** I'm not aware of any changes; it is probably vandalism. I will look into this issue.

**D. Payne:** Are the operators trained to advise people to relinquish the seating designated for

persons with disabilities?

**G. Talbot:** There needs to be more focus on operator's rules and procedures. Operators' rules need strengthening. Operators need to know that it is critical to pull to the curb.

Chairman Haynes thanked Mr. Talbot for his presentation. Members were encouraged to contact Mr. Talbot at 617-222-3200 or by e-mail [GTalbot@mbta.com](mailto:GTalbot@mbta.com) with their concerns.

### ***MBTA/OTA Fixed-Route Services Report:***

Ron Mariani, staff from the MBTA Office for Transportation Access (OTA) represented Kathy Cox, Manager of Fixed-Route Services (buses, trains, subway, bus rapid transit, commuter rail and boat) at the meeting.

On her behalf he distributed the attached report and indicated that there were no further updates since the report was produced.

He then asked for questions.

**R. Mahoney:** Do you have any idea how many defective Transportation Access cards have been reported to your office?

**R. Mariani:** I will need to do research.

**J. Oliver:** Has the August date been set for AACT to inspect the new Blue Line cars?

**R. Mariani:** I will need to do research.

**K. Piccard:** Will you be sending out notices and include wheelchair users to view the Blue Line cars?

**R. Mariani:** Yes. Once we are notified of the date we notify the AACT Chair. We would like to get as much feedback as we can.

**K. Piccard:** Ben will you notify people of the arrival of the train.

Chairman Haynes: Once AACT is notified we will send out a notice to all interested parties and members of AACT.

*The report was accepted with two abstentions.*

### ***MBTA Office for Transportation Access (OTA) Paratransit (THE RIDE) Contract Operations Report***

Bob Rizzo, Manager of Paratransit (THE RIDE) Contract Operations for the MBTA discussed the following:

- He thanked all the vendors for their participation in arranging a very successful shuttle services for the annual July 4 concert on the Esplanade. A special thank you to Carol Frazier and the staff of Veterans Transportation Services (VTS) who coordinated the shuttle services. Another superb job has reported by several sources. He asked J. Tuttle to pass along his appreciation for a job well done.

- On July 14 MBTA Operations designated a new THE RIDE drop-off and pick-up area on the west side of North Station–TD Banknorth Garden station
- He discussed the new phone access for deposits on debit and credit cards for THE RIDE. The staff is monitoring the new automated credit card system for THE RIDE and found that it is very popular with the users.

*He then asked for questions.*

**K. Piccard:** Is there any truth to a rumor that VTS will be sold?

**R. Rizzo:** We have not been notified formally of any change in ownership. A meeting on other issues is planned in the future. If there are further developments regarding the rumor we will contact the AACT Chair.

***Open Discussion:***

Chairman Haynes informed the members that this portion of the meeting is an open dialogue where you may ask questions of the MBTA representatives, Kiessling Transit, Inc., Greater Lynn Senior Services, The Joint Venture and Veterans Transportation Services as well as members of the AACT Board.

**R. Chapman:** Have all station personnel been notified that the visually impaired consumers are allowed to have their escort ride for free?

**R. Mariani:** Yes, all station personnel are aware of that rule. Everyone has received the special order. They are also reminded periodically over the radio.

**T. Perrault:** Would you describe the procedure a vendor takes when scheduling THE RIDE for a consumer?

**R. Rizzo:** The procedure of THE RIDE program operates 365 days a year; customers can call into a contractor between 1 and 14-days in advance of the date of travel. Consumers can call in the advance request between 8 AM to 4 PM 365-days a year on a toll-free number; the telephone systems all have features which allow you to select the type of activity you choose to undertake; you can eliminate a reservation, or ask to speak with a dispatcher, or you can leave a message concerning your issue whether it is a cancellation or some other reason. If you would like

to make a reservation with a staff person your wait time should be about two-minutes or less. Follow THE RIDE manual directions when giving them your information. As a safeguard you should have all the information read back to you. He also reminded everyone to follow the guidelines in THE RIDE manual.

**K. Piccard:** During the last meeting I asked what percent of the time THE RIDE cam is triggered by accident or other incidents.

**B. Tobin:** I looked at the data you requested through yesterday. 34 percent of the time the cam was activated by driver activation. We have only had two accidents in the last month.

**D. Payne:** We were told that the drivers never activate the cam. Activation is only triggered by accident.

**B. Tobin:** I have explained to the drivers that they need to stop activating the cam. I have informed

the drivers that they should not activate the cam. This is also done as part of the circle check.

**T. Perrault:** Can you assure me that if I ask to be at my destination at a certain time I am not dropped off earlier than expected?

**R. Rizzo:** In general, paratransit and scheduling software have certain guidelines and rules to calculate the travel time. OTA also uses software that indicates a 30-minute window.

**K. Roach:** The Massachusetts Office on Disability receives lots of complaints from people being denied THE RIDE. I have been told that the application is confusing to the applicant and to the doctors. Is there some way to update the application so it won't be so confusing?

**R. Rizzo:** If you have any suggestions for the language or questions for THE RIDE application please let us know or send your suggestions to AACT. We notify AACT when we make a change to the application. We always contact the healthcare provider and the consumer with an explanation of denial. We don't just deny the consumer. The applicants are contacted repeatedly, and sometimes we receive no response when we ask for more information. We are working within a 21-day window to process the application. Many times the application is denied, because the 21-days have expired.

**R. Newman:** I am a frequent traveler on the trains and have noticed that platforms and trains are uneven. I have also witnessed people with little kids who could fall through the gap. Wheelchair users also have a difficult time entering or exiting the train due to the gap between the platform and train.

**M. Festa:** We have bridge plates at all stations in a secure location. The bridge plate can be requested from station personnel or from the train attendant when the train arrives at the station.

**R. Mariani:** The bridge plates are located on the platform and secured by lock. All customer service agents and station officials are aware of the bridge plate and can assist anyone who needs help.

**K. Piccard:** I have seen the bridge plate on the commuter rail and AMTRAK lines. Are there bridge plates for subway cars?

**M. Festa:** Yes. The bridge plates are located on the Orange, Blue and Red Lines.

**D. Edwards:** How would someone know that he is going have problems exiting the train?

**R. Mariani:** You can get the attention of the train attendant when you exit the train.

**D. Payne:** Why are the customer service agents' not located on the platform to help?

**R. Mariani:** The customer service agents are stationed mainly at the fare gates, they do have the keys to unlock the bridge plate and assist you.

**D. Edwards:** How is it possible for a person to get the attention of the attendant if you can't get off the train?

**M. Festa:** When you get on the train you should inform the attendant where you would like to exit the train.

**J. Marshall:** Who answers the emergency call box that is located on the train? Can this button be used to alert the operator?

**R. Mariani:** I am not sure who answers the call box.

**R. Nurt:** Why can't the gaps be repaired?

**M. Festa:** The reason for the gaps have many factors: (1) the trains suspension system needs to be recalibrated frequently; (2) the tracks may have changed over time and this affects the height; (3) the platform may have shifted due to changes in weather conditions.

**K. Piccard:** Chairman, you spoke about a letter you received from the MBTA that gives AACT members requesting information on accessibility to be able to make copies at no charge.

**Chairman:** AACT is exempted from paying for materials requested from the MBTA. There is no official letter, just an understanding between AACT and the MBTA.

***MBTA Transit Officer Report by Lt. Commander Donald O'Connor [DOConnor@mbta.com](mailto:DOConnor@mbta.com)***

Lt. O'Connor reported the following:

- For the month of June transit officers wrote a total of 134 tickets with 96 issued for vehicles parked illegally at bus stops
- Ron Mariani of OTA requested someone from transit police to observe the Haverhill commuter rail station to observe smoking on the platform; a request to address the issue was sent to Lt. Venturelli of the Transit Police Service Area Five

He then asked for questions.

**J. Oliver:** Are employees ever confronted when they illegally park MBTA vehicles? Today I arrived to find MBTA employees' vehicles being illegally parked at the Charles Street entrance. Also there were four buses illegally parked in this area.

**LT. O'Connor:** There is no policy on the issue. When THE RIDE issues complaints we do issue disciplinary actions to violators.

**Chairman Haynes:** When I arrived today the same vehicles were still illegally parked. Are you saying that a complaint has to be filed before the MBTA police can ticket or tow an illegally parked MBTA vehicle?

**LT. O'Connor:** No. An employee who parks illegally is subject to the same ticketing procedure as anyone else. We can tag any vehicle.

**Chairman Haynes:** Last month I requested that there be an explanation on how to extract services from the MBTA police if someone from THE RIDE is stranded due to miscommunication.

**LT. O'Connor:** I spoke with Mr. Titus and will contact you soon.

The report was accepted with one abstention.

**Old Business:**

R. Rizzo indicated that after further research on the rumor of the potential sale of Veterans Transportation Services (VTS) he was advised that discussions are ongoing with a firm. The MBTA and VTS have not met on the issue. The MBTA has the rights regarding terms of acceptance of any assignment of the VTS contract. There is nothing formal at this time to report.

**New Business:**

K. Piccard moved that AACT dispense with voting for the acceptance of the various reports that are given by various individuals. D. Payne seconded the motion.

K. Piccard: She stated that her reason for the motion is that it is unnecessary and ultimately a waste of time and went on to make other comments.

D. Summerfield commented that according to the Roberts Rules of Order we need a vote of acceptance.

J. Oliver stated that he is against the motion. He also noted that it only takes about 30 seconds to make a motion to accept the report and take a vote.

R. Chapman commented that he is definitely against the motion. If we are not satisfied with the report we should let the person know. It would not be inappropriate to let the presenter know.

P. Barresi commented that having questions on a report or part of a report does not necessarily mean that it would not be accepted. This would give the presenter the opportunity to know what it is that we want in the report.

Chairman Haynes expressed his opinion on the procedural matter with the following: According to AACT Bylaws adopted by the membership the meetings are governed based on Roberts Rules of Order. To accept a report as being accurate or true or misleading is not the issue. The issue is whether or not the audience heard the report, received it and was satisfied. AACT operates under parliamentary procedure. The motion to avoid the vote to acceptance of reports is out-of-order.

D. Payne commented that these reports are not always accurate.

Chairman Haynes commented that the issue is to vote on the acceptance of the report, not the accuracy. The issue Ms. Piccard raised is whether or not to vote on reports, not the content of the report, but the acceptance of the reports.

Chairman Haynes asked if there was any other discussion to the motion. There was none. He then opened the floor to members to vote on the motion that AACT dispense with voting for the acceptance of reports that are given by various individuals.

<b>In favor of the motion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Opposed to the motion</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Abstentions to the motion</b>	<b>0</b>

**The motion failed.**

**Announcements:**

J. Marshall announced that on July 26 the Boston Independent Living Center would commemorate

the 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act with a march on Boston City Hall to protest the lack of sidewalk curb cuts accessible to persons with disabilities.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 PM.