

## ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority  
(AACT)

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### AACT Meeting Minutes for August 22, 2007

#### NOTABLES

- The next AACT meeting will be on Wednesday afternoon, September 26, from 1:00 to 3:30 PM in Conference Room 2
- THE RIDE complaints should be filed at the Office for Transportation Access 617- 222-5123
- *Chairman Haynes recommends that AACT members file complaints, obtain information, or inquire about other MBTA services through the new Customer Support Services at 617 – 222-3200 or log on to their Web Site at [www.mbta.com/customer\\_support/feedback/](http://www.mbta.com/customer_support/feedback/)*
- A new policy for taking photos on MBTA property is in effect. Persons taking photos on any MBTA property will be required to show photo identification.
- Judge Patrick King, the court-appointed independent monitor for the MBTA and Boston Independent Living Center 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.
- As a courtesy to the hosting vendor, training sessions are to be attended for the full day; members, please plan your day accordingly.
- Announcements are always welcome. Please be prepared to give as many details as possible; date, time, location, contact person, phone number. A flyer would be appreciated.

#### ATTENDANCE

Marilyn MacNab, Kathryn Piccard, Brian Coppola, Gabriole Martell, Ben Haynes, Lillian Haynes, John Marshall, Cheryl Ravalli, Divinah Payne, Thomas Gilbert, Frank Taverna, Betty King, Marian Emerson, Reggie Clark, and Angela Mannerson

#### **MBTA Representatives:**

Cheryl Hinton, Jessica Goss, Dottie Winn, Lt. Donald O'Connor, Michael Festa, Michael Hulak, Paul Fitzgerald, Carol Joyce-Harrington, Alex Murkinson, Ron Mariani, Paul Strobis, Annette Griffin, and Philip Balcom

***Vendor Representatives:***

Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN – Carlton Jones, Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc.– John Soucy and Heather Hume, Kiessling Transit, Inc. – Claire DiPillo, and Veteran Transportation Services – John Tuttle

***Agency Representatives***

Barbara Garlington – Mayor’s Office Elderly Advisory  
Kathy Roach – Massachusetts Office on Disabilities  
Richard Chapman – Massachusetts Commission for the Blind  
Janie Guion and Walter Bennett – Metropolitan Planning Organization (CTPS staff)

***The AACT Chairman opened the meeting at 1:15 PM with a welcome to everyone***

***Agenda***

- Self-introduction of the members, friends and guests
- Agenda read by the Vice-Chairman

***Chairman Haynes Update***

Chairman Haynes informed the AACT members, friends and guests that he has been very busy improving the lines of communication with MBTA department executives in an effort to improve safety and comfort for seniors and persons with disabilities. He is pleased that the meetings were productive and well received.

He briefly commented on his impromptu meeting today with Assistant General Manager, Gary Talbot, concerning the fixed route services and paratransit transportation.

During this morning’s Board meeting he discussed the new section on the agenda “open discussion,” during which members are invited to submit in writing or e-mail their topics or concerns they would like addressed at the next meeting. He added that these topics or concerns would be added to an upcoming agenda and would get added time for a response

He then asked for questions.

**K. Piccard:** To whom and when should questions be submitted?

**B. Haynes:** Submit your questions two weeks in advance or earlier to the AACT Coordinator, at [AACT@ctps.org](mailto:AACT@ctps.org).

**K. Piccard** I am concerned that I was not notified about the Blue Line car inspection.

**B. Haynes:** I take full responsibility for not notifying the membership. Only the Board was notified. There were many questions about the car by AGM Talbot and others. There will be another opportunity to view the Blue Line car. We have asked that we be notified at minimum two weeks in advance.

**M. MacNab:** I have a notice from MBTA Design and Construction concerning the design of the new Four Corners Station in Dorchester on the Fairmont Line. Why has AACT not notified the membership of this meeting?

**B. Haynes:** AACT has not been notified.

**M. MacNab:** I would like to see AACT adopt a procedure for preparing AACT correspondence from the Chair. The first step would be to draft a letter: Then give the membership an opportunity to add their facts to the draft. Then have the letter read to everyone. Once the response is received it is then shared with the membership. You are here to represent the members of AACT.

**B. Haynes:** If there is an occasion for a letter that should have mass distribution or a letter asking for the support of the membership for their signature, that letter will be presented to the members of AACT for each member's signature. If a letter is sent to the executive management of the MBTA with regards to any function of transportation, any question that is raised will be presented to the AGM for Systemwide Accessibility; then that person presents the letter for a response. Any response will be mailed with the AACT meeting minutes.

**M. Festa:** In the past, Design and Construction presentations to AACT have been given at the 60 and 90 percent stage.

**B. Haynes:** This was a personal request, that Design and Construction will notify AACT when the design is at 60 percent. I will then notify the membership. Mr. Festa, along with a representative from his office, will make the presentation and take questions and comments.

The report was accepted.

### **MBTA Director of Bus Operations and Engineering**

Cheryl Hinton, Director of Bus Operations and Engineering, opened with a thank you to the AACT members for the opportunity to speak. Ms. Hinton stated that she began her career with the MBTA 20 years ago as a part-

time bus operator, and has been in her present position for two years.

She shared the following:

- The purchase of new Flyer buses will arrive in January of 2008
- The Office for Transportation Access staff will assist in the training of bus operators
- That Bus Operations training will focus on customer service; assigning operators to mobility aides and low vision goggles during training; mobility securement procedures; emergency evacuation procedures; stop announcements; destination times; importance of pulling into curbs and looking at different slopes; and a review of the MBTA Settlement Agreement with the Boston Center for Independent Living

She then asked for questions.

**T. Gilbert:** Is there anything you can do to remind operators to relower seats when a wheelchair passenger departs.

**C. Hinton:** A reminder to all operators will be sent to relower seats.

**R. Chapman:** How many of the new low-floor buses are serving the system?

**C. Hinton:** There are 154 in service.

**T. Gilbert:** During rush hour is there any way to add a bus going to Watertown?

**C. Hinton:** I will do research.

**M. MacNab:** Ms. Hinton and the Bus Operations staff should be praised for their support to the disability community for helping with the mechanics of the paratransit vehicles.

**D. Summerfield:** On game day could operators announce when you are boarding that they are going take a diversion and not after you are on the bus?

**C. Hinton:** Yes.

**T. Gilbert:** There is a really big problem concerning illegally parked cars at bus stops. Do you think that the MBTA could write a letter to the State Senators about this issue?

**Chairman Haynes:** A meeting was held with the Deputy Director of Community Partnerships for the MBTA Transit Police and Lt. Commander D. O'Connor the subject of illegally parked cars at bus stops. Deputy Director Titus is in full support of AACT's approach to this issue.

**D. Summerfield:** The legislative bill concerning illegally parked cars is working its way through the State House.

**Chairman Haynes:** I will make contact at the State House on the legislative progress of the bill.

**B. Coppola:** Which legislative bill are you referring to?

**Chairman Haynes:** I am referring to the bill that deals with who can tag and tow illegally parked cars in the cities and towns serviced by the MBTA. I will research the bill.

**M. MacNab:** There is a lot of misinformation about what can and cannot be done in certain municipalities concerning police jurisdiction. I would like to see us have discussion on this issue at the next meeting.

**M. Emerson:** Will THE RIDE be extended to the Merrimack Valley?

**Chairman Haynes:** No.

The presentation was accepted with one abstention.

### **Manager of the *Office for Transportation Access (OTA) for Fixed-Route Services***

Kathy Cox, Manager of Fixed-Route Services (buses, trains, subway, bus rapid transit, commuter rail and boat) from the MBTA OTA, distributed her report and stated that there were no new updates since the report was produced.

She stated the following:

- Recently a video was produced with members of AACT; it shows a variety of persons with disabilities
- The MBTA will retrain the entire workforce over the next few years; Gary Talbot, AGM for Systemwide Accessibility will be involved in the trainings; AACT members will be asked to participate in the training

She then asked for questions.

**K. Piccard:** Are you comparing the effectiveness of different training methods to see which work better with the large number of operators?

**K. Cox:** Not that I am aware. We have added the new hands-on with the mobility devices and vision goggles, a combination of classroom and hands-on activities, and with the securement of wheelchairs. There is an awareness that people learn in different styles. Some people learn best by watching, others by hearing, or participation. The AGM for Systemwide Accessibility is reviewing the training material, based on his knowledge of programs around the country.

**K. Piccard:** Legally, operators are to be trained to proficiency. Consumers have noticed that drivers are not trained to proficiency. I would like to encourage you to randomly select operators and bring them back two days after the training for an additional two hours to evaluate and compare the complaints against them from six months earlier.

**Chairman Haynes:** Thanked both Ms. Hinton and Ms. Cox for their time and he is looking forward to hearing more in the future about Bus Operations updates and improvements.

The presentations were accepted with one abstention.

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

Carol Joyce-Harrington, Administrative Coordinator, presented THE RIDE update in the absence of Mr. Rizzo, Manager of Paratransit (THE RIDE) Contract Operations. His absence was due to his participation in the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority's Paratransit Selection Committee.

Prior to her update, THE RIDE activity report sheet and the vendor statistical report for July 1 through July 31, 2007 were distributed. She introduced the members, friends, and guests to the two newly hired contact administrators. These positions were a result of the Access Study findings that was commissioned by the MBTA Board of Directors.

*She then asked for questions.*

**K. Piccard:** Your update states you hired three staff members.

**C. J. Harrington:** We also have two new clerical staff members, hired in July 2007 and November 2006.

**K. Piccard:** Can you tell us to what the extent the public recommendations and comments were used in the design of the 84 new THE RIDE vehicles?

**C. J. Harrington:** OTA had several outreach programs. There were 20 improvements and alterations done. The 84 vans that were purchased have incorporated an additional 25 improvements and alterations incorporated. All were based on customer input and customers with special types of wheelchairs have been accommodated.

**M. MacNab:** Can you share the comments and recommendations made by volunteers who participated in the inspection of the vehicle?

**C. J. Harrington:** Yes, it is a public document. We can make that information available.

## ***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 for paratransit and fixed route services, Kiessling Transit, Inc. (KTI), Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS), The Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN Transportation (JV) and Veterans Transportation Services (VTS) as well as members of the AACT Board.

**K. Piccard:** What are the details of the forensic investigation concerning a fire that took place with one of your vehicles recently?

**J. Tuttle:** The results were inconclusive. The fire may have been electrical or the vehicle may have overheated.

**K. Roach:** My office has been getting phone calls concerning broken air-conditioner units in THE RIDE vehicles. What is the procedure when this happens?

**J. Soucy:** The policy concerning equipment is the same at all vendors. Drivers must do an equipment check before their shift begins with a "circle check". During the course of the day should the equipment fail, the driver must report to dispatch for a vehicle replacement immediately. That vehicle will be taken out of service.

**B. Coppola:** What is being done to make sure that bus operators, THE RIDE drivers, and dispatchers are able to speak English?

**J. Soucy:** All vendors are contractually obligated to give a Standard English test to employees. Applicants can't be hired if they don't pass the proficiency test. If a consumer with a dialect requires special interpretation, a service is available for assistance. This is the same policy for all vendors.

**K. Roach:** What is the company policy for drivers who state that they can't transport a consumer with a service animal?

**J. Tuttle:** THE RIDE vendors are under contract to transport persons with service animals. It is a state law that service animals be transported. No one can be refused service. This is the policy for all vendors and other transportation carriers.

**R. Chapman:** It's a serious problem that drivers discriminate against passengers accompanied by their service animal. Consumers with service animals have a terrible time with drivers who allege they suffer from allergies. Drivers oftentimes don't identify themselves; they just drive off leaving the consumer stranded.

**Chairman Haynes:** A person with a personal care attendant (PCA) and the person with a service animal have equal rights to being transported by THE RIDE. What happens to the employee who discriminates against the consumer?

**J. Tuttle:** Just as you would not separate a person from his or her PCA you could never separate a person from his service animal. The service animal issue is discussed in the driver training class. This will give the driver the opportunity to discuss his options. Oftentimes drivers are accommodated if they have allergies.

**B. Coppola:** How often do you allow drivers to discriminate before they are disciplined?

**J. Soucy:** Drivers are disciplined immediately.

**D. Summerfield:** My vendor is mainly Veterans Transportation Service. I think it would be very helpful if the drivers would introduce themselves when they arrive to take you to your destination.

**J. Tuttle:** This is a policy for all companies. All drivers are trained to introduce themselves, say the company name, ask your name, your destination, and if so, ask you if you need assistance, and what kind.

**D. Payne:** Is there a way of informing the AACT Board of management changes at a vendor office? When you phone a vendor, you may find that the person you are trying to reach no longer does that job. The people who answer the phone will admonish you and say "that is no longer my job".

**C. DiPillo:** Contractually we are required to inform the MBTA of staff changes. That person should then direct you to a staff person who can assist you.

**K. Piccard:** Why are there no current flyers of AACT meetings in THE RIDE vehicles?

**Chairman Haynes:** We expect flyers for the September meeting to be in all vehicles. I hope that management will take the appropriate action so drivers can leave the garage with posted flyers in vehicles.

**C. Jones:** Yes.

**A. Mannerson:** Do persons with vision impairments need a special pass to ride the commuter rail trains?

**K. Cox:** Yes, you will need a new card. The conversion of the new access card for commuter rail trains will take place at the end of the year.

**T. Gilbert:** My concern is that conductors sometime leave the doors open on the commuter rail trains at South and North stations. I see this as a danger for a small child that may be on the train while it is in motion.

**K. Cox:** I will pass on your concerns.

**D. Summerfield:** It has been brought to my attention that the Green Line cars are still pulling into Lechmere Station and going beyond the tactile warning strip.

**M. Festa:** I have brought your concerns to the attention of the Green Line officials.

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

Lt. O'Connor reported that:

- For the month of July transit officers wrote a total of 120 tickets with 76 issued for vehicles parked illegally at bus stops and 6 at handicap spaces and 38 that were non-accessibility related
- There was a meeting with Chairman Haynes and Deputy Titus at the MBTA Police Headquarters
- The latest MBTA 2006 crime statistics can be found at the Transit Police Website at [www.transitpolice.us](http://www.transitpolice.us). This information is in printed form at this time. Other formats are being explored.

He then asked for questions.

**D. Payne:** Where can a person e-mail parking violator photos, or MBTA personnel breaking policy or rules?

**D. O'Connor:** You can e-mail me at [DOConnor@mbta.com](mailto:DOConnor@mbta.com).

**K. Piccard:** Are THE RIDE crime statistics included in your report?

**D. O'Connor:** Yes, by the five Transit Police Service Areas.

**M. MacNab:** There needs to be more signage concerning smoking at the Chinatown Station near the elevator.

**D. O'Connor:** I will send out officers and look into more signage.

The report was accepted with one abstention.

**Old Business:** None was presented.

### **New Business:**

**Brian Coppola:** I would like to suggest that AACT look into where the funding comes from for crossing signals at the new Charles Street Station. He would like to see more done to provide a safer path-of-travel for persons who are visually and hearing impaired. He is suggesting audible.

**K. Piccard:** The gold “Paddle” with the bold black lettering “THE RIDE ‘ is very useful when traveling. People are using them, which is why they break. Has there been a firm decision to discontinue their use?

**C.J. Harrington:** The “Paddle” was a suggestion introduced by an AACT member. It was put into use a few years ago on a temporary trial basis. The “Paddle” is very costly; there are no plans to replace them. I will take this under advisement.

**K. Piccard:** I would like to see the following additions to the “Paddle”; the circled “T” or the letters MBTA, and add a reflector tab. This could be a great advertisement for the MBTA. Many people have found them to be very useful. Oftentimes, people think we are in need of help. With this added information the public would be aware why we are holding the “Paddle”. This is a wonderful tool to help identify passengers and drivers have found it to be a useful passenger locator.

**M. MacNab:** I was told there would be no replacing THE RIDE “Paddle.” She had spoken with AGM Talbot about he “Paddle” and its usefulness. She stated that many passengers have found the “Paddle” to be very resourceful. It can be used has a locator for passengers as well as THE RIDE drivers.

**Chairman Haynes:** stated that he would pursue the request with AGM Talbot since this appears to be an accessibility issue. I think he can help explain reasons why THE RIDE “Paddle” should remain active.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 PM.

