



Access Advisory Committee

to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150, Boston, MA 02116-3968 • (617) 973-7100
Fax: (617) 973-8855 • TDD: (617) 973-7089 • E-mail: AACT@ctps.org

AACT Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, July 23, 2008

NOTABLES

- ***The presenter Sgt. John Cantella was incorrectly identified in the minutes as Transit Officer Lt. John Cantella.***
- Comments and questions concerning AACT should be directed to the Chairman.
- Chairman Haynes recommends that AACT members needing information, or wanting to inquire about MBTA services, do so through the Customer Support Service Center at 617 – 222-3200 or their 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 would be appreciated.

ATTENDANCE:

Ben Haynes, Lillian Haynes, John Kneeland, Bill McCarthy, Raheemah Abdullah, Bob Carr, John Marshall, Ellen Frith, Kathryn Piccard, Marilyn MacNab, Linda Blair, Cheryl Ravalli, Tammy Perrault, April Maselli, John Kane, Paul Barresi, and James Oliver.

MBTA Representatives:

James Folk, Paul Stobis, Philip Balcom, Mike Festa, Dorothy Winn, Annette Holder-Griffith, Carol Joyce-Harrington, Robert Rizzo, Kathy Cox, Mike Hulak, and Paul Fitzgerald.

Vendor Representatives:

Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN – Richard Armour and Carlton Jones

Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. – Jacquelyn Dunlop

Kiessling Transit, Inc. – M. Claire DiPillo and Roger Kiessling

Veteran Transportation Services – John Tuttle and Bob Kelly

Agency Representatives

Walter Bennett and Janie Guion – Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization staff

Chairman Haynes opened the meeting at 1:00 PM

Members, friends and guests introduced themselves.

Chairman Haynes made the following remarks at the opening:

- Everyone was informed of an incorrect e –mail version of the July meeting notice sent to e –mail users. It showed the wrong speaker for today's presentation.
- A corrected meeting notice was distributed when the mistake was discovered. An apology went out to Mr. Rizzo who is today's speaker.
- Ms. April Maselli read the agenda
- The agenda was accepted as read
- Chairman Haynes announced that a visiting student from Boston University is taping and requested that we all be cooperative
- The June 25 meeting minutes were accepted with corrections.

Chairman's Update

- The following safety concerns were noted: A number of incidents are occurring when consumers are exiting THE RIDE vehicles. This could be avoided with better communication between driver and consumer. Consumers are reminded that THE RIDE is a door-to-door service and that they should wait for assistance from the driver who is there to be an escort to help you exiting the vehicle. The driver may ask the consumer needs physical help. If refused help the driver cannot be blamed for any missteps.
- The Chair is also concerned about the training given to drivers in locating certain landmarks. He noted that vendors should make a special effort in giving directions to 10 Park Plaza. He is also concerned that vendor staff is unwilling to give assistance to consumers who request information. Consumers are asked to report dispatchers who refuse to provide them with assistance concerning THE RIDE. He commended vendors who have trained their staff to proficiency.

The update was accepted with one abstention.

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

Bob Rizzo, Manager of Paratransit and Contract Operations for the MBTA gave an overview with a PowerPoint presentation on the acquisition of vehicles for THE RIDE Program. (Please see the attached report)

He introduced Jim Folk, who is the Director of Operations and Service Development.

He began with details of THE RIDE contract, which was approved in March 2004 by the MBTA Board of Directors. The contract runs from fiscal year 2005-2009.

The attached report of a recent site visit shows Mr. Rizzo and MBTA staff viewing the installation of changes to the vehicles requested by the MBTA. The acquisition of the last 42 vehicles of this contract is due on or about Labor Day. OTA, AACT and consumers have worked for improvements to the vehicles with the forward facing fold-up seating replacing to former style of side-facing seating and other safety improvements that may not be seen but just as important, such as: body-on-chassis design with steel reinforced construction throughout the passenger compartment, improved customer access, state-of-the-art passenger restraint and wheelchair securement systems, back-up sonar detection/ warning systems and the DriveCam video systems that is acknowledged as an Industry leader in driver behavior modification for improved safety performance. The vehicles will be divided among THE RIDE's four contractors: Greater Lynn Senior Services in the North; Kiessling Transit Inc., on the South Shore; Joint Venture in the Southwest; and Veterans Transportation in the Northwest.

K. Piccard: Do you have copies of the presentation?

R. Rizzo: No. I will make sure that they are provided electronically for next months mailing.

The following is a description of the photographs in the presentation and explanation from Mr. Rizzo.

THE RIDE – Vehicles

THE RIDE – Factory Site Visit July 2008

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This a picture of the consumer staging area for persons attending the July 4th concert on the Esplanade. A fleet of THE RIDE new style vans line Storrow Drive.

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At the top right is a picture of completed vans ready for delivery to a major transit agency.

At the lower left is the frame of the front nose, driver door and rails. Our former vehicle models were standard passenger vans that had the top literally cut-off and replaced with a high top conversion process. In our new models, which known as a body-chassis design-Coach and Equipment builds vehicles from the rails up. The interior will be added from the rails up with walls, flooring, seating and electronics all custom built.

*THE RIDE – Factory Site Visit
Coach & Equipment
Penn Yan, NY*

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A team of experts from Bus Operations and the OTA staff view THE RIDE vans on two different lifts. The team is viewing the vans while they are being built so that they can address problems early. The team views the vans from bumper to bumper, top to bottom, outside and inside. The team presented the company with thirty-nine concerns pertaining to the vehicle. The company was asked to address the concerns before assembling other vehicles.

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The top left picture is of the chassis with the gas tank forward. The team viewed the rail looking at the various features before the flooring is put on in order to understand how the manufacturing process works. The suspension at the back of the van is enhanced for a more comfortable ride.

The bottom left picture is a steel cutting machine that cuts to order. The company fabricates almost all parts in-house. If a design change is made it can be implemented in-house. There is also a full engineering staff on site.

The bottom right picture is a laser-cutting machine. The company can create cuts to very high specifications. The machine punches out parts that form components for the vans.

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Top left is a picture of some of the die cutting being done. This makes very precise parts. The next frame to the right is a picture of some of the side panels being fabricated. The company makes their own walls and reinforced steel frames.

The bottom left picture shows a little more detail of the side frame prior to the installation and the interior fiberglass wall.

Bottom right is a picture of the electronic section. All wiring is done in-house.

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The top left picture is of an incomplete vehicle where work is being done on the dashboard. The engine cover has been removed. They are in the process of installing the after-market wiring. This is a very important phase of assembly.

The top right picture is the required after market electrical box. All the cables are coded and each vendor receives a complete schematic of everything that is done by the company. This makes for easier installation of radios, data computers and all other equipment by RIDE vendors prior to the vehicle being placed into service.

M. Hulak of OTA then discussed the addition of a red light to warn drivers if there is a potential problem with the rear emergency doors and lifts. This problem was reported a year ago and this feature was incorporated into this latest build along with design of the door securement/ latching system. Also, Mr. Hulak pointed out that reflective tape have been added to the rear door of vans to help in reducing the risk of rear-end collisions.

That concluded the presentation and Mr. Rizzo then asked for questions from the audience.

J. Kane: I have noticed that vehicles in the 1700 and 1800 series have air conditioners that leak.

R. Rizzo: It may be condensation. The vans are still under full warranty. We did redesign it. The piping has been insulated. I will ask that all vendors report problems and turn those vehicles in for repair. I have been advised the instances that you refer to where due condensation forming along the evaporation tube rather than an actual "leak" in the ac unit.

Consumer: I have been on two of the new vans where the wheelchair lift malfunctioned. Are you aware? Are the vendors addressing the issue?

R. Rizzo: I know that in 2006 the first order received was built on a Ford chassis, during that first year procurement of this new vehicle design, all wheelchair lifts for public use across the country were required to have many additional sensors and warnings to comply with new Federal regulations. From our research, we were able to learn that all major wheelchair lift manufacturers encounter serious quality control and performance problems due to the addition of these new features. Since then, the industry has overcome those early problems and their products are much improved.

M. MacNab: How do you go about getting input from every single driver?

R. Rizzo: We do get input from every vendor. Not a single purchase has been ordered without significant input. That said, the MBTA is ultimately responsible for safety, quality and reliability of the equipment it purchases and must make the final decision on what changes and suggestions can, or should, be incorporated.

K. Piccard: Can you give us now or at the next meeting a reasonable number of actual changes that have been requested of your office that have been instituted?

R. Rizzo: Yes, some are obvious and some are not. There are some fifteen or twenty changes per order.

M. McNabb: Would you make sure that there are captions under the electronic version and in ADA formatted?

R. Rizzo: Ms. Guion please make sure this information is highlighted in the minutes.

MBTA Office for System-Wide Accessibility Department (SWA)

Kathy Cox, Manager for Fixed Route Services and SWA gave a copy of her report to everyone and an update from the June 25 meeting. (report attached)

She also stated the following:

- On August 4th an update concerning the Boston Center for The Independent Living Settlement will be presented by court-appointed Judge Patrick King and the MBTA, Assistant General Manager for SWA, Gary Talbot.
- The MBTA has limited involvement in the design of the Rhode Island Stations. There will be no viewing of the station designs by AACT. The state of Rhode Island paid for four double-decker coaches. There is some tension within the disability community of Rhode Island around station design issues.

She asked for questions.

There were none.

Other Transportation Issues:

E. Firth: In my neighborhood and here at 10 Park Plaza, there are problems with cars blocking the bus stops. I am urging everyone to call your State Representative about the Parking Bill that is being discussed and that proposes increased fines.

K. Piccard: What is the number of the Bill?

E. Firth: I am not sure.

Chairman Haynes: AACT is making a concerted effort to make sure Transit Police work with cities and towns. The Massachusetts Senior Action Council is also supporting the Bill.

J. Oliver: I left my wallet in one of your vehicles. You have honest staff and they should be recognized.

R. Armour: Thank you.

B. Carr: Ron, my driver from Joint Venture was very helpful.

R. Armour: Thank you, I think we should attend more meetings.

P. Barresi: What have you done to make sure I get prompt assistance?

J. Dunlop: We have added more staff.

K. Piccard: What percentage of information you receive from the MBTA is shared with the AACT Board.

Chairman Haynes: I share all the information.

R. Rizzo: Offered a caveat that there are certain instances where the Chairman cannot share information with the AACT Board due to the sensitivity and confidentiality of the information. For instance we have the upcoming contracts for THE RIDE, which require confidentiality until final Contracts are awarded.

30th Anniversary Update

Chairman Haynes announced that the AACT 30TH Anniversary Celebration will be held on Thursday, October 16 at the Holiday Inn in Brookline, MA, from 5:30 to 9:00 PM. The Committee is working hard to make it a wonderful event. The Celebration is open to everyone and the tickets are available for \$35.00. The Committee will advertise the event in THE RIDE vehicles with flyers.

Old and New Business: None was presented.

Announcements: None was presented.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:45 PM.

