



Access Advisory Committee

to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

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AACT Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, August 27, 2008

NOTABLES

- 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 the MBTA Web Site 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, W. McCarthy, D. Silva, John Cater, John Cappuccio, Rene Mardoner, Robert Vaccaro, Judy Babriana, Kent Stasiowski, Philip Beaulieu, Lillian Haynes, Bill McCarthy, Richard Mahoney, Bob Carr, John Marshall, Kathryn Piccard, Marilyn MacNab, Linda Blair, Cheryl Ravalli, Tammy Perrault, April Maselli, John Kane, Paul Barresi, and James Oliver.

MBTA Representatives:

Cheryl Hinton, Alex Murkinson, Paul Strobis, Barbara McKenzie, Susan Lebossiere, 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 – Joanne Thompson and Carlton Jones

Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. – Jacquelyn Dunlop

Kiessling Transit, Inc. – M. Claire DiPillo, Roger Kiessling, P. Kiessling, and C. 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.
- Vice-Chair Phil Beaulieu read the agenda
- The July 23 meeting minutes were accepted with one abstention.

Chairman's Update

The following concerns were noted:

- THE RIDE program is being monitored by AACT Board members to determine whether all drivers, reservationists and dispatchers are in compliance with the terms and conditions of the contract between the MBTA and vendors.
- All vendors have agreed to retrain and take action against staff members who fail to adhere to performance guidelines.
- Drivers have indicated that there is a lack of training time devoted to using landmarks as focal points.
- Consumers were reminded to be patient once the vehicle stops for their own safety.
- Problems can't be corrected if you (the consumer) refuse to report them immediately. You may phone your local vendor or the Office for Transportation Access at (617) 222-5123 with your concerns.

He then asked for questions.

There were none.

The update was accepted with one abstention.

MBTA Director of Bus Operations Cheryl Hinton introduced the Susan Lebossiere, superintendent for Training and Bus Operations

Ms. Hinton thanked the AACT members for the invitation and was pleased that the group continues to support her staff during operator trainings. She is looking forward to a continued good working relationship with AACT.

Superintendent Lebossiere reported that the Bus Operations Recertification Program was introduced in January 2008. Gary Talbot, Assistant General Manager for System-Wide Accessibility and his staff designed the program. The training consists of two-day classes focused on compliance of the American with Disabilities Act compliance. All employees are required to pass a written proficiency test. The training is a hands-on experience for operators to ensure that persons with disabilities have a positive experience while traveling on the MBTA. As of today a total of 1,700 employees have been trained. There are 300 employees remaining to be trained. Training will continue on an as needed basis with new hires and retraining operators who return from extended leave.

Superintendent Lebossiere highlighted a number of the procedural changes for boarding; passenger destination; pull over bus to curb; the bus operator database; mobility securement loops; new equipment defect card and the operator pocket guide.

She then asked for questions.

P. Barresi: Would you tell us how participants are involved in the training?

Superintendent: There are four training stations set up for each bus. Students are required to practice at all stations and the visitors are part of the hands-on training.

J. Oliver: I attended your training and was pleased with your teaching methods.

Superintendent: Thank you.

P. Beaulieu: How can persons with disabilities participate?

Superintendent: You can request information from Sandra at the System-Wide Accessibility office. Classes are held twice monthly – on a Monday and Wednesday except holidays. Transportation arrangements can be made to the Charlestown Garage for anyone arriving at Sullivan Square Station.

Chairman Haynes: You did not address how your operators are trained to approach and assist persons with service animals.

Superintendent: We address this issue by teaching our operators that all service animals are allowed on all vehicles. Operators are not allowed to question whether the animal is a service animal. We welcome anyone to the training with a service animal for that hands-on training.

Chairman Haynes: Thank you for your presentation and we look forward to a return visit.

MBTA Office for System-Wide Accessibility (SWA)

Kathy Cox, Manager for Fixed Route Services and SWA apologized for late distribution of her written report. (Report attached.)

She stated the following:

- The Back Bay office has resumed outreach regarding the Charlie Card program.
- The Lynn Garage on the North Shore will be getting new accessible buses.

She then asked for questions.

T-Riders Union: Is it the responsibility of the bus operator to lower the seat after a wheelchair passenger has departed?

C. Hinton: The seat should be lowered. Please report it anytime you ask an operator and are ignored. The time of day and bus number should be reported, or you can report them to the station official. Call the MBTA Customer Support Service Center (CSSC) at 617- 222 – 3200 or go to www.mbta.com numbers for supervisors are listed.

Chairman Haynes: What degree of change in reducing complaints has your office noticed as a result of this training?

K. Cox: My office is still in the development stage of transforming the complaint system that has been in existence at the MBTA for some 20 years over to the new CSSC. Last May the MBTA opened the new CSSC with the goal of streamlining and centralizing complaint reporting to the MBTA. Prior to that there were some 20 different places people could file a complaint. There was a very small office that did their best to oversee all the different methods that people had to contact the MBTA. With the introduction of the new CSSC, the MBTA has opened an office with 26 call takers and four supervisors. This first year was focused on getting the department up and running. CSSC has now taken over centralized complaint operations. In the past accessibility related complaints went to the old Office for Transportation Access at Back Bay, my former office. I do not have any statistics at this time on the training, but it is a brand new day at the MBTA. A number of changes are taking place at the MBTA. This is part of the settlement agreement between Boston Center for Independent Living, the MBTA and the plaintiffs.

J. Kane: Is the out reach listing for the CharlieCard on the MBTA web site?

K. Cox: Yes at www.mbta.com, click on meetings or the CSSC 617-222-3200.

Chairman Haynes: To what extent has the staff at CSSC been trained to recognize a complaint that is ADA related?

K. Cox: We are now in step two of the process, and we are working to resolve issues.

Chairman Haynes: How can independent monitor Judge King, for example decide whether or not the issues are being addressed and complied with if there is no formal training.

K Cox: The staff at the CSSC is for intake only.

K. Piccard: Is there someone to review the responses? Often times the response is not appropriate and doesn't address the complaint.

K Cox: That is in stage two, and that is now in development. There will be oversight.

R. Mahoney: Should MBTA staff be sitting while customers stand?

K Cox: Never. It is policy that employees should not be seated while customers stand. You should report these complaints.

T. Riders Union: I am still waiting to hear about a complaint that I filed. Is there a time line for stage two for complaint responses?

K Cox: There are some technology changes that will be taking place that should help.

Chairman Haynes: THE RIDE CharlieCard Pilot program instituted by the General Manager has been difficult for persons who are visually impaired. The card can only be accommodated at a reduced fare gate. Often times there is no assistance at these stations. What is being done to eliminate this problem?

K Cox: Management is aware of the problem; it is being worked on.

Chairman Haynes: Will the MBTA consider restarting the Travel Training Program?

K Cox: No, not at this time, but it is not to say that it won't one day. The MBTA is focused on the 100 items in the BCIL lawsuit agreement.

J. Oliver: Would the MBTA consider contracting with Easter Seals staff to do the Travel Training?

K Cox: No, not at this time. This would be an enormous undertaking. The MBTA is focused on the BCIL lawsuit agreement.

MBTA Office for Transportation Access (OTA) Paratransit Contract Operations

Mr. Rizzo read highlights from his OTA paratransit activity report. (Please see the attached reports). At last month's meeting Mr. Rizzo was asked to provide modifications that were requested by consumers on past vehicle inspections. Members were provided a detailed list of modifications and were informed that not all modifications had been listed. Anyone needing further details please contact OTA.

He stated the following:

- OTA staff did 12-days of unannounced road observations in different service areas. The locations were done near consumers homes', hospitals and other institutions. When necessary complaints and compliments were reported to the vendor.
- Proposals for THE RIDE's new multi-year contract are due in on September 16. The AACT Chair is a voting member on the selection committee.
- OTA staff met with the MetroWest Region Transportation Authority (RTA) to lend support for the upcoming transition for their paratransit program.

He then asked for questions.

K. Piccard: Some time ago a request was made by AACT to have software written that would give consumers the option to return home after one hour. When the arrival time is uncertain the departure trip can be scheduled after the arrival.

R. Rizzo: The request is in. It is one of the featured requests of the computer company.

A. Maseli: With Framingham and Natick in of the MetroWest RTA will there be transfers from THE RIDE?

R. Rizzo: Yes, we are still looking for suitable transfer location.

P. Beaulieu: I want to thank you, your staff and Veterans Transportation staff for helping my family with a very serious emergency.

R. Rizzo: Thank you, I will pass that along. I am very glad the issue was resolved reasonably quickly.

K. Piccard: OTA participated in the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works statewide vehicle procurement bid for paratransit vehicles. Many consumers would like to see handgrip as a specification on the sedans.

R. Rizzo: This statewide procurement is for accessible vans. For another organization it could be a type of bus. The sedans will not be purchased for least two years and are in our control. My office would be glad to take suggestions from AACT. Retrofitting vehicles would be considered and require some research.

T. Perrault: How will consumer fares be handled?

R. Rizzo: Those arrangements would need to be addressed by those communities.

B. Haynes: Will the new RTA sub-division treat individuals from the MBTA's THE RIDE as visitors when going from the MBTA service area to the new RTA?

R. Rizzo: I would hope not. Our intention is to accept their eligibility determination and honor it in our area. This would be done not only for Natick and Framingham but the other communities in the area. We would like the same in return. There are no final discussions on this issue.

Chairman Haynes: Thank you.

Additional Transportation Issues

K. Piccard: I am concerned that using bright colors are not appropriate for persons who are visually impaired.

K. Piccard: I see a conflict of interest with your being the AACT Chairman and you're contacting the vendors. Is this a good use of your time? According to the bylaws this is not the role of AACT.

Would you tell me why AACT functions? I am hoping that different people will respond.

R. Rizzo: Over many years with the MBTA I have worked with different AACT Chairs. They all have their own style. He his not the first Chair to contact THE RIDE vendors to test their system.

30th Anniversary Update

Chairman Hayes: The AACT celebration is fast approaching. The committee continues to work on the dinner that will be held on Thursday, October 16, 2008 at the Holiday Inn in Brookline, MA. The committee has been unable to solicit funds to reduce ticket prices. If you plan to attend the dinner please respond by calling Janie Guion at 617-973-7507 and reserve your ticket.

J. Oliver: The committee has made arrangements with the MBTA that all transfer trips from the dinner be direct.

Old and New Business: None were presented.

Announcements: None were presented.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:50 PM.