



# Access Advisory Committee

to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

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## ***AACT Meeting Minute for Wednesday,***

**November 19, 2008 (Updated)**

### **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/](http://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, Lloyd Caswell, Paul Barresi, Willie Pete, John Kane, John Cappuccio, Philip Beaulieu, Raheemah Abdullah, Reggie Clark, Marilyn MacNab, April Maselli, Kathryn Piccard, Ester Minar, and John Marshall

### **MBTA Representatives**

Bob Rizzo, Dottie Winn, Philip Balcom, Michael Hulak, Kathy Cox, and Paul Fitzgerald, Carroll Joyce Harrington, Annette Holder Griffith, and Michael Festa, Alex Murkinson, and Tangella Burgess

## **Vendor Representatives**

*Joint Venture of Thompson Transit Inc and YCN* – Gustavo Vasquez, Carlton Jones, and Loretta Jenkins

*Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc.* – Ron Airey and Helen Driesback  
*Kiessling Transit, Inc.* – Roger Kiessling, Claire Dipillo, and Lisa Stevens

*Veteran Transportation LLC* – John Tuttle and Carol Frazier

## **Agency Representatives**

Planners Collaborative  
David Chia

*Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization*  
Walter Bennett and Janie Guion

### ***Chairman Haynes called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM***

- Chairman Haynes extended an enthusiastic welcome to all
- Members, friends and guests introduced themselves
- Vice-Chairman Beaulieu read the agenda
- Chairman Haynes presented the September 24 and October 22 minutes for approval
- K. Piccard asked that the September 24 minutes be amended to add the Vice-Chairman's comment during his report on page 2, these comments regarding his purchase of a new model computer to keep track of his complaint database".
- The AACT minutes of the September 24 meeting were approved with corrections as submitted and the October 22 meeting minutes were also approved as presented.

## ***Chairman's Update***

He stated the following:

- There was a meeting with Gary Talbot, Assistant General Manager for System-Wide Accessibility (SWA), and others from the disability community concerning the vehicle development on the Orange and Red Lines. Members of this committee and other interested parties will have input on accessibility issues.
- The training of Bus Operations personnel is still on-going. There are requests for members to participate. The SWA staff was asked to provide an updated schedule to the AACT Coordinator of the training classes.
- There are issues surrounding the Green Line Extension Project which may have been a bit over ambitious
- There is a possibility of an economic impact on fixed route services due to the proposed increase of tolls. There have been no discussions regarding any fare increase.
- Should there be any action taken for fare increase by the MBTA members will be informed of any public hearings.

*He then asked for questions.*

**R. Rizzo:** THE RIDE vendors will also be impacted by the proposed turnpike and tunnel fees.

**Chairman Haynes:** Will this affect the consumers or only the MBTA?

**R. Rizzo:** It will certainly have a ripple down affect. It is too early to tell.

**D. Winn:** Regarding the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, I would like to say that the Committee did a splendid job. Those of us who attended would be remiss if we didn't take the time to thank the committee for a job well done.

**Chairman Haynes:** Thank you. The Committee really deserves a round of applause. Thanks also to all who attended and shared their time.

The report was accepted with one abstention.

### ***Vendor Representative Supervisors***

#### *Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN (JV)*

Ms. Loretta Jenkins, training supervisor for reservationists for the Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN provided an overview of training regarding THE RIDE consumers' account deposits for trips.

**Chairman Haynes:** Each time a consumer calls in to book THE RIDE they are given their account balance along with making the request. How long is it after funds are deposited before they are available?

**L. Jenkins/JV:** A deposit made in person at Back Bay Station will be processed in two hours; by U.S. mail, five to seven business days; or if submitted by the Internet or credit card it will take two business days before the funds are available.

**K. Piccard:** A handout was distributed to us and the information you have given is in error.

**Chairman Haynes:** Our speaker will give more information.

**Chairman Haynes:** Thank you Ms. Jenkins.

#### *Kiessling Transit Inc. (KTI)*

Ms. Lisa Stevens, training supervisor for reservationists at KTI presented an overview of training regarding THE RIDE consumers' account deposits for trips.

*She then asked for questions.*

**Chairman Haynes:** Did you bring a copy of your training material?

**L. Stevens/KTI:** Yes, last Wednesday.

**Chairman Haynes:** I'm not aware that I got copy.

**R. Kiessling:** It was turned in to OTA.

**Chairman Haynes:** Would you explain to the consumer why funds for an immediate trip might not be available if the consumer was a subscription user?

**L. Stevens/KTI:** Subscription fares are withheld two weeks in advance. A round-trip weekly fare is \$4 per trip x5 =\$20 weekly. A deposit to an account is usually \$24. Oftentimes consumers find their funds are short or with a negative balance.

**Chairman Haynes:** Is there a way to use funds from subscription funds for an immediate trip?

**L. Stevens/KTI:** If there is a cancellation for a subscription trip and funds are deducted from your subscription. The consumer is reminded that they are responsible for rescheduling that subscription trip.

**M. MacNab:** The Kiessling reservationists are very courteous; I always get my balance no matter how often I call.

**L. Stevens/KTI:** Thank you.

*Chairman Haynes, thank you, Ms. Stevens.*

### ***Greater Lynn Senior Service (GLSS)***

Ms. Helen Driesback, the GLSS training supervisor for reservationists gave an overview of training regarding THE RIDE consumers' account deposit for trips.

*She then asked for questions.*

**M. MacNab:** Your staff is very good about giving me my balance. I really appreciate that.

**Chairman Haynes:** Are you a certified trainer?

**H. Driesback/GLSS:** Not professionally.

**Chairman Haynes:** Did I understand that you train reservations to assist consumers?

**H. Driesback/GLSS:** Yes that is correct.

**Chairman Haynes:** Thank you, Ms. Briesback.

### **Veterans Transportation LLC (VTLLC)**

Mr. John Tuttle, the Operations Manager for VTLLC gave an overview of training regarding THE RIDE consumers' account deposits. He also commented that when rides are booked in advance the funds are held in reserve. When the consumer actually takes THE RIDE, the funds are then taken out of the account.

**Chairman Haynes:** Who is the trainer for your reservationists?

**J. Tuttle:** We have a comprehensive program run by Paula, Jean, and Cindy.

**Chairman Haynes:** Did you bring a copy of your material?

**J. Tuttle:** Yes.

**M. MacNab:** I have had a problem in the past with your company. Paula was very courteous and worked with me to help resolve the problem.

**P. Barresi:** For all the vendors, are reservationists given passenger assistance training (PAT)?

**J. Tuttle:** All reservationists for VTLLC are given the opportunity to be consumers on a ride-along for four hours. This provides them the experience consumers' deal with on a daily basis.

**L. Caswell:** I find that I am treated with lots of courtesy.

**M. MacNab:** I find that Veterans reservationists are always courteous and remind you of your account balance and subscription use.

**L. Stevens/KTI:** The reservationists are given PAT training with Bob Tobin.

**R. Kiessling:** We have a two-step program. Bob Tobin handles the PAT aspect and Lisa handles the call-takers.

**H. Driesback/GLSS:** All GLSS reservationists take PAT training and experience other training as well, except for driver training.

**L. Jenkins/JV:** JV our training works somewhat like the other vendors'. The reservationists do not interact with customers until they have had their PAT training.

**M. McNabb:** I find that Kiessling reservationists are always courteous and remind you of your account balance and the subscription use.

**Chairman Haynes:** Thanks to all the vendors for their willingness to participate and inform the consumer in regards to how the process works with deposits. I have heard from consumers who were not aware of the lack of funds in their accounts for a round trip, and who have been given extensions. Some have had conflicts with the reservationist. This information session is an opportunity for consumers to learn more about the process in advance so that they can avoid an inadvertent depleted account.

### ***Office for Transportation Access (OTA)***

Carol Joyce-Harrington, OTA Assistant Manager of Administration, presented an overview of how checks, cash, and credit cards are processed by OTA. Along with her presentation she circulated an informational sheet for consumers' future reference. (Flyer attached)

*She then asked for questions.*

**K. Piccard:** Credit card processing is two business days whether it is done in person or on the Internet?

**C. Joyce-Harrington:** No, if a deposit is done in-person at Back Bay station during Mon-Fri, the transaction is seen in 1 hour. A deposit made via ERG over the phone or via the Internet requires 2 business days to post.

**M. MacNab:** When did this program begin?

**C. Joyce-Harrington:** It began in November 2004.

**K. Piccard:** How many people have funds in their account?

**C. Joyce-Harrington:** There are over 20,000 accounts with funds.

**K. Piccard:** When I book THE RIDE on-line with multi-persons riding with me the system does not accept the third booking. Can you explain why?

**C. Joyce-Harrington:** I will need to do research.

**P. Barresi:** I have noticed that once you make a credit card purchase your information remains on file. You probably need to update your card expiration date when it changes.

**C. Joyce-Harrington:** Yes, once you establish a credit history the information will remain on file.

**E. Minar:** How long after your office receives the on-time performance cards will those funds be added to your account?

**C. Joyce-Harrington:** It goes to a central processing area, is sorted, and then redirected to OTA. We check for accuracy and it is processed in a matter of weeks; if the information is correct the funds are deposited to your account.

**Chairman Haynes:** I would like to thank Ms. Harrington for her in-depth explanation of processing deposits. I hope that the members have learned about the processing and will take with them the information sheet. If you follow the method you are not in trouble.

### ***Kathy Cox, MBTA System-Wide Accessibility (SWA) Fixed Route Service Update***

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

Ms. Cox stated the following:

- The new AACT brochure is ready for distribution. There was a good deal of hard work that went into it. Everyone should get a copy.
- A public meeting with Judge Patrick King, independent monitor in the MBTA/Boston Center for Independent Living, and the Assistant General Manager Gary Talbot, will be held on Monday, December 8, an update on the settlement agreement will be provided.

- The Vehicle Development Committee meets weekly with staff from SWA.
- MBTA Operations has begun Phase I of reducing the gaps between the subway cars and platforms.
- The Bridgeplate Program is now in place for persons who need assistance due the gap between the train and the platform. The Customer Service Agent (CSA) will assist you and notify your destination station attendant of your arrival.

*She then asked for questions.*

**K. Piccard:** In regards to stations where there are no CSA at the time a passenger boards, could you develop a method for them to notify someone that the customer needs to exit at their destination with a bridgeplate?

**K. Cox:** The train crew will assist you.

**K. Piccard:** My concern is the accuracy of that because the customer may get on a long distance away from the train crew. Some trains may have only one crew member. They may not know they need a bridgeplate. I am concerned about that element of communication.

**K. Cox:** All stations are equipped with intercoms so that you can contact someone for assistance.

**K. Piccard:** Stations that are not staffed with CSA personnel should have a posting that could read, "Please let us know if you need assistance". A video on service animals could be shown to CSA personnel during PAT to demonstrate how to work with service animals. This would help enhance their level of ability to work with persons with service animals

**K. Cox:** A video has been produced with a visually impaired person and his service animal. This is a very good suggestion.

**E. Minar:** When will Science Park Station be made accessible?

**K. Cox:** The design is now at 60 percent.

**Chairman Haynes:** I plan to have a reviewing of Science Park Station on the agenda in the next few months.

**Bob Rizzo, MBTA Office for Transportation Access (OTA)  
Paratransit Contract Operations**

He also read highlights from his OTA paratransit activity report.  
(Reports attached)

He reported on the following:

- OTA hosted THE RIDE monthly meeting concerning Rail Road Safety.
- OTA staff did road observation safety checks.
- He attended the annual winter prep meeting held by General Manager Grabauskas for the upcoming winter season.
- THE RIDE RFP Selection process is ongoing.

*He then asked for questions.*

**K. Piccard:** What is the date THE RIDE contract for this fiscal year will be awarded?

**R. Rizzo:** I can't project with certainty. We will need to have something in place before the current contract expires. We had hoped for the business decision this month with a fall back of December. It now looks like a January timetable.

**J. Marshall:** Is it your sense that the spike in increase in ridership for October and then again today is symbolic of a rise that is going to continue. I don't mean necessarily go higher, but stay at that level. Are you able to meet that number of rides both in terms of rides as well as dispatch and other things? Do you see this as a trend from now on with more riders?

**R. Rizzo:** It is not an exact science. We are certainly always trying to gauge future needs so that we can look to have the resources available. We have, of course, in the RFP that we issued last May a projection out in terms of future ridership. It may be a bit conservative, but it was based on an approximately 7 percent growth per year. We have experienced 11 percent last year and year-to-date is just fewer than 16 percent. Some of our projections in the future have to do with the planned transfer of the Framingham-Natick

ridership to a local regional transit authority that was announced some months ago.

**J. Marshall:** Is that increase in October and November reason for the increase?

**R. Rizzo:** No, this is a steady increase that is I think will be with us. I was just responding for future years. Most of the major paratransit operations around the country have seen ridership increases in the 8-15 percent range over the last few years.

**J. Marshall:** No specific reason for the October increase.

**R. Rizzo:** No, the October increase is right in line with the July, August September rate of growth we have seen for this fiscal year.

THE RIDE update was accepted.

### ***Open Discussion***

**Chairman Haynes:** If you have additional transportation issues that have not been covered by vendors, fixed route, and paratransit you may ask now.

**R. Clark:** I am concerned with the speeding buses.

**B. Haynes:** Have you reported this?

**R. Clark:** Yes, I reported the driver to Customer Service.

**K. Cox:** No, speeding is not allowed. The Bus Operations will send someone from the Safety Dept to monitor the driver's future movements.

**K. Piccard:** I move the following rule of order: When an AACT member or visitor is recognized to ask a question and asks it and believes that the question has not been understood and answered, the questioner shall make this known and shall be given an immediate opportunity to clarify the question.

**J. Marshall:** I second it.

This motion and second was followed by extensive and sometimes contentious discussion regarding the process and procedure for considering the motion and about the nature and substance of the motion. Issues of disagreement or misunderstanding included: the conditions under which the motion could be explained by the maker of the motion; whether the motion was intended as a rule of order or a change of an AACT by-law; whether it was a supplemental rule to allow members to ask a follow-on question or whether it was a challenge to the Chair's authority and responsibility to conduct orderly AACT meetings; and whether members had already agreed to the existing, one-question-only rule.

All parties in the discussion agreed that AACT rules should have the effect of making sure that AACT members have the opportunity to ask the MBTA questions, get answers, and make comments.

A vote was taken and called as a defeat of the motion. The results were contested, since the maker of the motion charged that comments made by the Chair had resulted in a misunderstanding of the motion.

Ms. Guion read the motion. A second vote was taken. The motion failed, with seven voting no and five voting yes.

**B. Haynes:** If there is no other business with respect to open discussion we move to the next segment of this agenda.

**R. Clark:** When will you have someone from the Transit Police to speak?

**Chairman Haynes:** The new MBTA Transit Police Chief will be sworn in on December 2. I will ask that he attend the December meeting.

**Announcements:** None was presented.

**Old and New Business:** None was presented.

**Meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.**