



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,

December 16, 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, Lillian Haynes, Willie Pete, John Kane, Philip Beaulieu, Cheryl Ravalli, Kathy Grant, Reggie Clark, Marilyn MacNab, Richard Mahoney, Robert Carr, Tammy Perrault, Bill McCarthy, John Marshall Ellen Frith, and Linda Blair

MBTA Representatives

Bob Rizzo, Michael Hulak, Kathy Cox, Paul Fitzgerald, Paul Strobis, Carol Joyce-Harrington, and Annette Holder Griffith

Vendor Representatives

Joint Venture of Thompson Transit Inc and YCN – Carlton Jones
Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. – Ron Airey
Kiessling Transit, Inc. – Paula and Carl Kiessling, and M. Claire
Dipillo
Veteran Transportation LLC – John Tuttle

Agency Representatives

Massachusetts Office on Disabilities – Kathy Roach

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
Walter Bennett, Sean Pfalzer, and Pam Wolfe

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

- The Chairman extended a welcome to all
- Members, friends and guests introduced themselves
- Vice-Chairman Beaulieu read the agenda
- Chairman Haynes presented the November 19 minutes:
 - C. J. - Harrington asked that the minutes be corrected; two changes on page 7, lines 22-25 and 29
 - Chairman Haynes asked that corrections be made and the minutes re-issued
 - He then asked for a motion for the minutes of the AACT meeting of November 19, 2008, with corrections to be accepted; the motion was made, seconded and the minutes of November 19 were approved, with the corrections

Chairman Haynes Update:

- The Chairman declared AACT's 30th Anniversary celebration a success and thanked all those who participated.
- All bills have been paid and a balance of approximately \$2000 remains in AACT's account. AACT's Board in coordination will make any future spending decisions with the membership.

- The Board approved unanimously the expenditure of \$50 each to five charities for the MBTA's "Fill a Bus" campaign and \$250 to the state police and the U.S. Marine's "Toys for Tots" campaign.
- A monthly financial update will be given to the membership and the Board will entertain ideas on what AACT might do with the remaining funds.
- A number of members' have concerns regarding complaint handling and response. Members say they have filed complaints and have received no response nor have they been contacted regarding any investigation. Members are not satisfied.
- Vendors have ten "calendar" days in which they "must" respond to complaints.
- The Chair has concerns regarding the conduct of various vendors' dispatchers and managers in dealing with members. Vendors need to be pleasant, polite and helpful.
- The Chair knows drivers are trained and certified on correct procedures and participate in sensitivity training. Some drivers are not following the training. They don't introduce themselves or make sure they have the correct passenger, or do they ask if the passenger requires assistance. Also (1) Drivers confuse the State Transportation Building with the Park Plaza Hotel (2) Consumers asking to be dropped off at a particular time are often picked up on time but dropped off very late (3) Vendors need to take these issues seriously. Additional training to get these issues corrected may be required. If the vendors fail to "get it right" other measures are going to be taken.
- Consumers please understand what THE RIDE is. Consumers have responsibilities and should know how THE RIDE is to be used and to understand its limitations and be accurate in reporting problems. Consumers need to be polite to drivers and dispatchers. If there is a problem with THE RIDE, talk to AACT or to Mr. Rizzo. File a complaint with the proper person. Everyone needs to work together to make THE RIDE service better.
- Labor relations agreements or vendor/MBTA contracts do not replace ADA regulations for vendors' operations.

He then asked for questions.

K. Piccard: May I reopen discussion regarding the minutes? I was late because I was picked up one hour late by a vendor.

Chairman Haynes: No. But you can check with the coordinator or me later.

The Chair's report was accepted.

Presentations by vendors on an overview of the Complaint Intake, Processing, Investigating, and Responses

GLSS, Ron Airey, CEO

When we receive complaint by fax or e-mail from the MBTA or verbally by telephone from a client it is sent to customer relation's liaison for review and it is logged in. Then it is sent to the proper supervisor, depending on its complexity. The road supervisor completes the investigation, and prepares all information. The investigation includes looking at where the vehicle was, replaying the dispatcher tapes, then replaying scheduling or call takers tapes, talking to complainants and other riders. The report is reviewed, and then sent to Ms. Dunlop for review. A letter is then sent to both the MBTA and complainant.

K. Piccard: In what percentage of complaints do you find you ask other passengers for their observations?

R. Airey: It depends on the type of complaint and if there were other passengers on the vehicle. If it's a driver problem, we call other passengers and ask them to co-operate.

K. Roach: Once a complaint is acknowledged to the consumer what is the follow-up. What happens? Some people say they never hear back from the vendor.

R. Airey: We are constrained by the labor relation's law but if the complaint can be corroborated that an employee did something improper, the employee is talked to and, if warranted, action is taken. We cannot go into detail because of employee law, but we do respond to all complaints.

K. Piccard: Apparently I didn't make myself clear. I wasn't asking under what circumstances you contact passengers, I asked what percentage of complaints during the investigation are other passengers contacted?

R. Airey: I don't know. If I give a percentage, it's a complete guess: 15-20%.

K. Roach: Customers who want to respond to a complaint get the results and see what action is taken—can't names be redacted? People want to know what action was taken with their complaint.

R. Airey: I'll need to talk with a labor lawyer and if they agree that it is acceptable, we'll do that in the future, but we can't commit to it at this time.

KTI, M. Claire DiPillo, General Manager

Complaints from the MBTA are logged in by date. All are answered within ten days. Regarding calling other customers, it depends on the type of complaint. We investigate where the error occurred. If it was on board the vehicle, we contact the customer and others on board to get their input if they are willing to participate. We involve everyone. If KTI is at fault we explain everything. We tell what happens to the driver— a warning or some other action. Even if the driver is not at fault a copy of the complaint goes into the driver's file. Every complainant is contacted; every effort is made to talk by phone, all are sent letters. The complainant can then call to discuss the complaint.

J. Kane: What happens if a complaint comes directly to you, not through the MBTA. Do you forward the complaint to the MBTA?

M.C. Dipillo: Often people don't want to file a formal complaint; they want to discuss the problem. If they file a complaint, the complaint is forwarded to the MBTA.

Chairman Haynes: When you investigate a complaint, with the information you uncover, do you send a letter to the complainant and the MBTA?

M. C. Dipillo: Yes.

Chairman Haynes: How do you know that your response to a complaint that is sent to a customer is acceptable to the MBTA if you have not received confirmation from MBTA that your investigation was adequate? How does the MBTA address this issue?

M. C. Dipillo: Our Contract Administrator will let me know if its was not acceptable—if not, I re-do it.

JV – Carlton Jones, Operations Supervisor

I receive all complaints, they are logged in. If it is a driver or safety issue it is sent to Victor the Safety Manager. He investigates, often going out with the drivers. Dispatch and call center complaints go to the General Manager who works with the Operations Manager to investigate the complaint. Then a written response is generated and sent to the owner of the company for review and signature. It is then sent to the MBTA and after being approved by the MBTA, it is sent to the customer.

K. Piccard: In what percent of complaints do you find you ask other passengers for their observations?

C. Jones: If it is related to the safety of passengers, all are contacted. Safety issues are approximately 20-25%, therefore 20-25% of the time other passengers are contacted.

J. Kane: What is the average turnaround time? You send a letter to the MBTA, the MBTA responds, and you send a letter to the customer?

C. Jones: Within ten days.

R. Rizzo: May I have a clarification of K. Piccard's question?

K. Piccard: What percentage of complaints involves interviewing *other* passengers in the investigation?

R. Rizzo: Every customer who files a complaint is interviewed.

J. Thompson/JV: If the situation is on a vehicle with other passengers, we try to reach them 100% of the time, but we are not always successful.

Chairman Haynes: There are no exceptions to the ten-calendar day rule for a response. Time starts at the inception of the complaint. How do you justify more time?

C. Jones: More than a ten-day timeframe is a rare exception. If there is a time problem in the investigation a letter is sent to the complainant about the delay and then a final response is sent at the conclusion.

VTLLC – John Tuttle, Operations Manager

Traditionally, a regular review and analysis of the complaint is made to determine if there is an underlying systemic problem and to identify what needs to be addressed. We receive a formal complaint from OTA at MBTA. First a decision is made to give the complaint to the proper manager for investigation and response. All factual information and evidence is gathered and reviewed, the computer is checked, and all recorded matter is checked. The complainant is contacted, the driver is interviewed, and all data and responses are reviewed. The “what, why, when and where” are analyzed. Upon completion, a written response is generated which lists the factual information with decisions and actions taken.

K. Piccard: In what percent of complaints do you find you ask other passengers for their observations?

J. Tuttle: A guess—5% or less, usually no other passengers are on board.

Chairman Haynes: Do you alone investigate and respond to complaints or is it a shared task?

J. Tuttle: It is a shared task. The managers of individual departments will respond to their department complaints. Managers and supervisors will visit the site, take pictures, gather all factual information, and act upon it appropriately.

Chairman Haynes: Are letters sent to all complainants regarding their complaint’s status?

J. Tuttle: Absolutely. All complainants are sent letters within ten days.

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

He gave highlights of his report to AACT of 12/17/08 (Report attached)

He then asked for questions.

K. Piccard: Is North Station's new pick-up place dry and climate controlled? Where exactly is it?

R. Rizzo: Yes, it is reasonably climate controlled, it is the station proper. You should wait inside. It is the east entrance and it is accessible. There is a designated THE RIDE stop on Legends Way.

Chairman Haynes thanked Mr. Rizzo for his update.

Chairman Haynes: We have a guest, Ms. Kathy Grant (Mrs. Jeffrey Grant). She will be speaking to us a little later and she brought us home baked cookies.

J. Tuttle/VTLLC: Announce that VTLLC is experiencing technical problems. The computers are down. VTLLC has added additional staff to help.

Kathy Cox, Manager, MBTA System-Wide Access (SWA)and Fixed Route Services

Ms. Cox distributed her written report and gave a brief update. (report attached)

She then asked for questions.

R. Mahoney: Does the MBTA give grades to bus operators when they complete this training program?

K. Cox: No. A test is given at the end of training. They are told what they need to know, they're shown and they do hands-on experience. There's a review, then the test. They take it on their own. They go over the answers with the instructor, they then write the correct

answers and the instructors must sign the test sheet showing the correct answers.

K. Roach: Regarding the Red Line cars without seats, how will blind people know which cars they are and how will it work?

K. Cox: It is one train. The two cars in the middle will have most seats removed. One car will have four priority seats; one will have two priority seats. It's a special train called "Big Red." An announcement is made at the stations that "Big Red" is approaching.

K. Piccard: Are they adjoining? What if you need a seat?

K. Cox: Yes, it's a six-car train. The two middle cars have four and two priority seats, respectively. So the big Red train will have two regular cars, the two cars without most seats, and then two regular cars.

R. Mahoney: I ride the Route #39 and Route #66 buses. I request drivers use the Transit Master Box (TMB) to send a quick text message about cars parked in bus stops. Also, there's a problem with drivers not curbing the bus.

K. Cox: The TMB has two buttons—one reports that a car is parked in the bus stop. The second button reports something is physically wrong with the stop; for example, street furniture or a newspaper vendor box may be blocking the stop. Bus operators are encouraged to press the buttons so that Operations has an idea where the problems are. Eventually this will be reported to the police so that they will know what particular areas should be checked. If buses are not pulling over to the curb, you should report it with bus number and times.

R. Clark: I have been dropped off in the street when the bus couldn't get to the curb. I have asked drivers to kneel the bus. Some drivers don't want to do it. Supervisors should see that operators are doing it.

K. Cox: We have road supervisors who monitor the various routes. Of course there are many routes and few supervisors; we need specific information about specific incidents so that we can monitor that driver.

Paul Strobis, Assistant Manager, MBTA Office for Transportation Access (OTA) Paratransit Contract Operations

Paul Strobis, Assistant Manager for THE RIDE Program gave an overview on consumer complaint filing, processing and response time by the OTA. He then asked for questions.

Contractually, we don't have an identified program for complaint investigation. Vendors must answer the concerns of each complainant. We consider all complaints to be service complaints and require vendors to respond to each service issue. We also use the complaint statistics to look at possible systemic problems. OTA's role in complaint processing is as follows:

- THE RIDE Guide is issued to all new qualifiers of THE RIDE. THE RIDE Guide identifies multiple options for customer complaints (by direct contact by calling the office with concerns or by e-mail, or by sending the completed form taken from THE RIDE Guide, or customers may make a complaint directly to the vendor)
- The vendor then sends the complaint to OTA to be tracked in THE RIDE Database.
- A customer may also file a complaint with the MBTA Customer Service Department or by the MBTA website.
- When the complaint is received it is entered into the database and issued a number; we can track every complaint filed by a customer; the Database goes back 10 years.
- We also file all letters and responses sent out.
- Our Contract Administrators (CA) who oversee THE RIDE contracts talk directly with each complainant if possible and get as much information as possible for the vendor.
- The information is transmitted to vendors electronically on an hourly basis.
- Vendors do their investigative process and draft a letter to the customer; they give it to the CA to review.
- Once approved, the letter is signed by one of the Vendors' principals and mailed to the customer. The 10-day time is monitored; a very small percentage is late; there is a provision in the Vendors contract for a possible late penalty.

- Complaints are shared with AACT unless asked by the complainant not to.

Chairman Haynes: Are vendors required to train complaint handlers in investigative techniques? What program is used and may we have a copy?

P. Strobis: I will have to get an answer for you on that.

K. Piccard: Some riders have multiple complaints in the same letter. These are often given the same number instead of separate numbers. Are these recorded as separate complaints?

P. Strobis: Yes, these are considered multiple complaints.

K. Piccard: Some customers who have submitted complaints say they have never received a response. When the vendor is contacted they say they sent the response; they blame the US Postal Service.

P. Strobis: Please let OTA know when this happens and we will look into it.

E. Frith: Do Vendor mini-vans have the right to park in MBTA bus stops?

P. Strobis: There are designated stops at some major stations. Also vans are allowed briefly in some station busways.

E. Frith: I see THE RIDE vans in handicap parking spaces. What is the protocol or the law on this?

P. Strobis: THE RIDE is not allowed in handicap parking spaces. If you witness this happening please report it and it will be dealt with.

Chairman Haynes: I met with the Boston Transportation Commissioner; he echoes Mr. Strobis's response. They will be ticketed!

Chairman Haynes thanked Mr. Strobis for his expertise and time.

Open Discussion – Transportation Related Issues

E. Frith: I am having a problem having access to buses at designated bus stops. I have reported this consistently to the Police; nothing changes. I am being harassed for taking pictures as

documentation, which I was told I needed to do. Police cars are sometimes in the bus stops. I take pictures and they harass and intimidate me. I'm a Street Minister to persons with disabilities on the streets. I met with the Cambridge Commission of Traffic and Parking and Parking Control. They say it is "their discretion" regarding enforcement. This is a much bigger problem than I am. I really need help and support. Persons with disabilities are being hurt because places like Cambridge refuse to enforce parking in bus stop laws.

Chairman Haynes: Thank you for that. I would like to meet with you after the meeting.

K. Piccard: I've known Ellen for years; I commend her to the group and I think we should talk about this at the next meeting. I thank you Ben for meeting with her.

Chairman Haynes: Thank you.

R. Clark: We all should support her.

Chairman Haynes introduced Mrs. Grant.

Mrs. Grant expressed her sincere appreciation for the tributes given to her deceased husband, Jeffery Grant, at AACT 30th Anniversary Celebration for his unselfish work on behalf of AACT.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.