

**ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
January 24, 2001**

**Notables:**

- ◆ All AACT meetings will be held the fourth Wednesday of the month in 2001.
- ◆ RIDE Tickets are available at all AACT meetings.
- ◆ All meetings are equipped with Assistive Listening Devices.
- ◆ December minutes were approved with comments.
- ◆ Persons making presentations should submit written/BRAILLE copies to the AACT coordinator at CTPS address 24 hours before the meeting.
- ◆ Persons making presentations should stay within the allotted timeframe on the agenda.
  
- ◆ **Corrections :**
- ◆ The FRACAS Coordinator Lynda Hoffman's name was misspelled as Linda in the December minutes.
- ◆ The November minutes were approved with comments. This action was mistakenly left out of the December minutes.

**Attendance:**

Chairman-Ben Haynes, Lillian Haynes, Philip Beaulieu, Denise Jackson, Betty King, Cheryl Ravalli, Tammy Perrault, Barbara Taubenhau, Isabel McDonald, Jeff Grant, Jerry Lorusso, Mark Kalashian, Michael Newton, April Maselli, Mattie Akrod, Lynda Hoffman, Robert Posnor, Lloyd Caswell, Jeannie DuSombre, Elizabeth Dillard, and Norman Campbell

**MBTA Representatives:**

**Office of Transportation Access:** Kathy Cox, Ron Mariani, Bob Rizzo, Dan Smith, Alex Murkinson, Dottie Winn, Michael Festa, and Carl Merrick

**Design and Construction:** Barbara Boylan, and Ester Johnson

**Vendor Representatives:**

VTS-Dan McGinnis and Carol Frazier, GLSS-Tom Musgrove,

Joint Venture-Albert Maldonado, Kiessling Transit- Claire Dipillo,  
Carl and Roger Kiessling

**CleverDevices:**

Joel Zievi, Ed. D; Timothy Brandis, Project Manager;  
Stephen Bennett, Sales Manager; and Rich Cronin

**Chairman's Report-Ben Haynes**

(Please also see attached meeting handout).

Mr. Haynes began the meeting shortly after 1 PM by discussing consumer complaints. He informed RIDE vendors that he was appalled with the arrogance and lack of professionalism with which their supervisors have been processing consumer complaints. He reminded the vendors that people with disabilities would not tolerate being insulted. Any further responses that degrade any RIDE user will be taken to the MBTA General Manager.

Although the number of complaints is down, only some vendors are responding in a timely manner. A meeting will be scheduled with OTA and the vendors to address both the inappropriate manner and lack of professionalism when responding to consumer complaints, as well as the failure to respond to complaints more quickly.

Mr. Haynes put OTA and the vendors on notice that he will cease participating in the training of new RIDE drivers since it does not appear to be working. It appears that the training staff is not doing an adequate job. Mr. Haynes does not want to lend AACT's name to what he considers to be a "joke" in complying with the ADA and the terms of the vendors' contracts.

Also, vendors were reminded to send written notices for sensitivity training in a timely manner to AACT and other constituents in their area. Vendors are to provide participants with transportation to and from all training sessions.

Mr. Haynes gave his report and asked for questions.

**M. Kalashian:** Will reports and vendor responses to complaints be given at the meeting in accessible formats?

**B. Haynes:** No. The report from the AACT coordinators, the Chair, and OTA will be in accessible formats. The reports that the vendors present the day before a meeting cannot be put in accessible format in time. However, OTA presents the vendor report information in accessible format.

**B. Rizzo/MBTA:** In recent months Alex Murkinson and my staff have been working with the contractors in putting information in an accessible format. This is somewhat difficult; as you have explained, some of the numbers are different.

**M. Kalashian:** Do I have the right to expect written complaint replies from Mr. Castaline regarding complaints against Mr. Rizzo or from Mr. Rizzo regarding complaints from Mr. Merrick?

**B. Haynes:** You have the right to expect a response from any and all complaints that you file.

The report was then accepted as presented.

**MBTA/OTA Fixed Route Services Update-Manager Kathy Cox**  
(Please also see attached meeting handout).

Ms. Cox gave her report and asked for questions.

**B. Posner:** What is the stop announcement compliance percentage?

**K. Cox/MBTA:** We are at 52 % compliance. We are supposed to be approaching 100% this April.

**J. Grant:** What is the MBTA doing to drivers who have been found not to comply?

**B. Haynes:** That is not public information. See Ms. Cox in private.

The report was then accepted as presented.

**Fixed Route Coordinator 's Update-Lynda Hoffman**  
(Please also see attached meeting handout).

Ms. Hoffman indicated her concern about the adequacy of handouts from Design and Construction. Not only were they late, they were

not in any accessible format. She was also annoyed that the information appearing in the handouts was too tiny to read.

Ms. Hoffman concluded her report and asked for questions.

No questions were asked and the report was then accepted as presented.

**MBTA/OTA Report - Bob Rizzo, Paratransit Contract Manager**  
(Please also see attached meeting handout).

The annual comparison of complaints shows a slightly better performance over the last year. During the first six months of this year complaints were down by 29% compared the same period last year.

The Joint Venture and Veterans have separate agreements with the Authority outlining their action plan. Each vendor is addressing their difficulties and both are presently executing their plans. Apart from the Joint Venture's action plan is the expansion of a satellite office in the Boston area.

Mr. Rizzo gave his report and asked for questions.

**J. Grant:** Due to low vision I am unable to recognize the newer vehicles with the new decal or the wide variety of models. Would it be possible for the vendors to continue with the yellow striping on the vehicles?

**B. Rizzo/MBTA:** This will be taken under advisement, and presented to the vendors to see what improvements can be made. Contractors now purchase their own vehicles. Some twenty-two have been retired.

**M. Kalashain:** Why is it taking so long to fill your office positions?

**B. Rizzo/MBTA:** We have run into some unfortunate delays, candidates are no longer available. We have had to re-advertise.

**J. Grant:** I filed a number of complaints late last year concerning OTA's failure to monitor the program. They haven't responded. How can we expect the contractors to do any better?

**B. Rizzo/MBTA:** I apologize for that. If you wish I would be glad to speak with you at the break. OTA attempts to respond with lots of detail. Perhaps, we give a little too much detail. But we do want to keep the public informed.

**M. Kalashain:** Why, Mr. Rizzo, have you failed to respond in writing to the complaints I wrote to you regarding Mr. Merrick who works in your office?

**B. Haynes:** Mr. Kalashian, if you have a question about your complaint and it is not a systemic issue, I suggest you address that complaint to Mr. Rizzo or the vendor in private.

**B. Haynes:** If you have filed a complaint, or you have a question about response to the complaint, or if it does not meet your expectations, or it is incorrect, you have the right to bring the issue to the attention of the vendor or OTA. If you have not received a response to the complaint, you then should contact the person that the complaint was addressed to or their office and ask them to respond. If they do not respond then you have the right to contact AACT and we will seek a response on your behalf. Complaints that have not been responded to will not be aired in a public meeting.

**B. Rizzo/MBTA:** I would like to make a statement on this matter. I ask the community to keep a couple of things in mind. Whether it is myself, or my colleagues, or the contractors who we require to participate in these meetings, we respond as honestly as possible. Please, do not misconstrue or take advantage of our best efforts to serve you. I come in good faith. I just don't want myself or my colleagues to be subjected to abusive behavior in the process of attempting to serve customers.

The report was then accepted as presented.

**The Paratransit Coordinator Report-Vice-Chairman  
Philip Beaulieu:**

Mr. Beaulieu told the group that on January 11<sup>th</sup> he and the Chairman made a site visit to one of the vendors to observe the Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) in operation. This observance helped make them more familiar with the system from a technical viewpoint. This

was very helpful since they will be meeting with the staff of Securicor.

Mr. Beaulieu gave his report and asked for questions.

**D. Smith/MBTA:** I have an update concerning Ruggles Station. During the training session at VTS by instructors from the University of Wisconsin, it was brought to my attention that a crack in the sidewalk at Ruggles was posing a danger for wheelchairs users. The crack and snow removal will be addressed by the MBTA community liaison with the Boston Public works staff later this week.

**J. Grant:** A few months ago the vendors were asked to remove the block from their telephone system. This block makes it impossible for customers to screen calls that come into their homes. I have found that this has not been achieved.

**B. Haynes:** As each vendor gives their report they can respond to your question.

**M. Kalashian:** I have found the conditions at the Charles Street exit to be unacceptable. I have filed a complaint with Mr. Richard Doucet, Chief of Security.

**D. Smith/MBTA:** This area had been under construction all month. As of 1 p. m. today the construction crew will be gone. And the area will be free of snow.

The report was then accepted as presented.

**AACT nominees for April 25, 2001 election**

Executive Board Jeff Grant - Accepted

Lynda Hoffman - Conditionally

Chairman

Philip Beaulieu - Accepted

**Next nominations will be on February 28, 2001.**

**Vendor Reports:**

**Greater Lynn Senior Services by Tom Muskgrove**

(Please also see attached meeting handouts).

Mr. Muskgrove gave his report and asked for questions.

**M. Kalashian:** What improvements have you made to your phone system?

**T. Muskgrove/GLSS:** One system has now been reprogrammed.

**The Joint Venture (Thompson and YCN) by Albert Maldonado**  
(Please also see attached meeting handouts).

Mr. Maldonado gave his report and asked for questions.

**J. Grant:** What percentage of your complaints have you responded to?

**A. Maldonado/Joint Venture:** I am in charge of handling complaints. I am now working on January complaints. I do not want to make any assumptions at this time.

**B. Haynes:** Recently, I asked if all dispatchers had been trained to operate the AVL system. You did indicate to me that all your dispatchers had been trained.

**A. Maldonado/Joint Venture:** Yes, all but one dispatcher has been trained due to a conflict. As you are aware, I was away for sometime during the month of December. I am, however, well aware that I must revisit this issue.

The report was then accepted as presented.

**Kiessling Transit by Claire Dipilio**  
(Please also see attached meeting handouts).

Ms. Dipilio gave her report and asked for questions.

**M. Kalashian:** Compared to other vendors, you do not have as many trip requests. Please explain why your “not available” rate is very high month after month.

**C. Dipilio/KTI:** This month it has gone down from the 2.34% to 2.08%. It still should be much less than that.

**J. Grant:** Your figures for complaints are different from the MBTA's. You state 26 and the MBTA reported 24. How many of those have not been responded to so far?

**C Dipilio/KTI:** Only 19 have not been responded to.

**B. Haynes:** On October 26 you were asked, along with the other vendors, if all your dispatchers have been trained on the AVL system. You responded in the affirmative. Have they all been trained?

**R. Kiessling/KTI:** Yes, they have all been trained. We will also be having another training very soon.

**B. Haynes:** I spoke to a dispatcher at each site who informed me that they did not know how to locate a vehicle with the AVL system, which locates a driver when verbal communication is impossible.

**R. Kiessling/KTI:** If we told you they were trained, that is what we all believed.

The report was then accepted as presented.

**Veteran's Transportation Services by Dan McGinnis**  
(Please also see attached meeting handouts).

Mr. McGinnis gave his report and asked for questions.

**L. Hoffman:** Of the 126 complaints how many are still unanswered.

**D. McGinnis/VTS:** There are 54 as of today.

**P. Beaulieu:** Why is your accident rate so high? Are drivers still getting defensive driver training?

**D. McGinnis/VTS:** Yes, all our drivers get defensive training. I don't know if this is a high percentage as compared to other vendors. We do twice as many trips. We travel many more miles.

**B. King:** What happens to RIDE tickets when consumers turn them in to the driver?

**D. McGinnis/VTS:** At the end of day the driver returns tickets and fare vouchers and they are then counted. We have an automatic system.

**B. Taubehaus:** Are drivers given instructions in landmarks? I have had drivers unable to find their way.

**D. McGinnis/VTS:** Yes. VTS drivers are taught map reading in great detail.

**M. Kalashian:** When a driver is in training is it the veteran driver or the trainee doing most of the work?

**D. McGinnis/VTS:** Classroom training lasts for a week. The trainee then goes out with an experienced driver for another week. During this time the driver sits in the coaching seat so there are times when the trainee is behind the wheel.

**B. Taubehaus:** Are drivers encouraged or discouraged to call dispatch?

**D. McGinnis/VTS:** They are encouraged to call. We have four open channels for drivers to phone dispatch.

**J. Grant:** You reported a total of 126 complaints. Yet the MBTA only knows of a 109 of those complaints. Other vendors also have the same problem.

**D. McGinnis/VTS:** I can't account for that difference.

**M Kalashian:** Why are drivers allowed to smoke in vehicles?

**D. McGinnis/VTS:** It is against company policy and city and town regulations. We have "no smoking signs" in every vehicle.

**B. Rizzo/MBTA:** I will go back and check the figures reported by my office for each vendor. The numbers are very high.

The report was then accepted as presented.

**Malden Station presentation by Ester Johnson, Project Manager, MBTA Design and Construction**

(Please also see attached meeting handouts).

Ms. Johnson indicated that the Malden project is mainly about accessibility and is currently at 30% design, with design completion and advertisement expected next April. Construction should begin by early summer of 2002, with the entire station being completely accessible by September 2003.

**D. Jackson:** What do you mean by ADA compliant fare collectors' booth and fare gate?

**E. Johnson/MBTA:** This means moving the change tray down and making the gate more wheelchair accessible.

**J. Grant:** Will the brick court area on the south side of the station become ADA compliant?

**E. Johnson/MBTA:** Yes, I believe it will be in ADA compliance since we will be using the parking lot on the other side. It will have added curb cuts and we will use as an ADA path-of-travel.

**M. Kalashain** Will the accessible van space be in a more appropriate area for drop/off and pick/up by The RIDE vehicles?

**E. Johnson/MBTA:** We will look at that and certainly make all the accommodations that we can.

**L. Hoffman:** Will the change tray be more accessible to wheelchair?

**E. Johnson/MBTA:** Yes, there will be easy access for the wheelchair users.

**D. Jackson:** How will someone who has limited use of his or her hands open the gate?

**E Johnson/MBTA:** The person in the booth will be able to operate the gate from inside.

**B. Boylan/MBTA:** Let me clarify. With ADA compliance a gate with a magnetic release will open and a person can push through with their wheelchair.

**J. Grant:** As the project goes into the construction phase, will you be able to address the more readily achievable issues early in the project?

**E. Johnson/MBTA:** We can look at that. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell the contractor what to do with the project.

**B. Haynes:** Please repeat that statement.

**E. Johnson/MBTA:** We can't necessarily tell the contractor what to do. We can request that they comply.

**B. Haynes:** If the MBTA is paying for the modifications to update for accessible levels to meet the requirements of the ADA, why can't you tell the contractor how to build?

**B. Boylan/MBTA:** I would like to clarify that. We cannot tell the contractor what method to use but we can make recommendations. We can put accessibility in as an early milestone and then suggest that by a certain date in the construction contract, the tactile edge, for example, be done as an early milestone. The platforms have to be reconstructed. They are in very bad condition. They will get new edges as well as new concrete. But, keeping the trains running is foremost. There can be no shut down. Work affecting the track has to be staged operationally. However, if an accessibility milestone can be staged early in the project, we will try to do it. I think that is a good recommendation.

**B. Haynes:** I don't consider the train operation to be any more crucial than that of the safety of people with disabilities. I am not pleased that you are ignoring the potential for injury during the construction of this station. These are your plans. I find it difficult to believe you are paying the bill, but you have no input in the construction of the station with the contractors.

**B. Boylan/MBTA:** We do.

**B. Haynes:** First of all, I'd like to know why the handouts were not presented as they should have been ten days prior to today's presentation. We did make this agreement sometime ago.

**K. Cox/MBTA:** This was a misunderstanding that Mike Festa had. He was waiting for AACT's final approval since we had enclosed a memo with "Please let use know if you have any changes." It won't happen again.

**B. Haynes:** Sometime ago a letter was sent to you regarding presentations. The letter also addressed the issue of thorough explanations and color-coded presentations or handouts in order to effectively convey information to people who have vision problems so they can follow along with what is discussed. I understand that the handouts did not meet the criteria. What we have here now is not in accessible format and is difficult for people to read.

**K. Cox/MBTA:** M. Festa and I will discuss this after the meeting. We did enlarge them and put them on 11x17 paper.

**L. Hoffman:** Let me clarify for Ben and others. The copies we have been receiving are not color-coded but are in black and white. What I would like color-coded are the elevators, crosswalks and bus curbs.

Following the close of the presentation Mr. Haynes called for any further business and announcements. There were none and the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 PM.