

## **THE ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA MEETING MINUTES**

**January 31, 2005**

### **NOTABLES**

- Always sign the attendance sheet when attending meetings.
- All meetings are equipped with assistive-listening devices.
- As a courtesy to the hosting vendor, training sessions are to be attended for the full day. Members, please plan your day accordingly.
- Handouts should be distributed at least 15 minutes before the beginning of meetings.

### **ATTENDANCE**

James Oliver, Philip Beaulieu, Kathy Roach, Thomas Gilbert, Gail Thomas, Kathryn Piccard, Kathy Mooney, April Maselli, Marilyn McNab, Paul Barresi, Richard Chapman, Frank Taverna, Mike Sears, Richard Mahoney, Sara Young, Jini Fairley, Jo-Ann Dwyer, James White, Mark Kalashian and Richard Berman.

**MBTA Representatives:** Carol Joyce-Harrington, Bob Rizzo, Carl Merrick, Mike Hulak, Kathy Cox, Paul Strobis, Dottie Winn and Ron Mariani.

**Vendor Representatives:** Joint Venture – Richard Armour, Jo-Anne Thompson, and Frank Osojnicki; Greater Lynn Senior Services – Vince Lique, and John Soucy; Kiessling Transit, Inc. – Claire DiPillo and Roger Kiessling; and Veteran Transportation Services – Dan McInnis and Kevin MacDonald.

**Central Transportation Planning Staff:** Janie Guion

Chairman James Oliver called the meeting to order at 1:04 P.M.

Members and guests introduced themselves.

### **AGENDA**

**Meeting Minutes:** The December minutes were unanimously approved.

Chairman Oliver thanked all the owners from Kiessling Transit Services, Greater Lynn Senior Services, Veterans Transportation Services, and Joint Venture for taking time out of their busy schedules to report how all are doing in the conversion of their computer systems, fare collection, and other items.

### **AACT Chairman's Report**

Chairman Oliver summarized the monthly activities for December and January and gave his yearly report that included the following items:

- December 17 opening of the Silver Line Courthouse Station
- January 11 Rider Oversight Committee (ROC) meeting.
- Meeting with Jeff Parker to discuss ROC issues.

The following vendor trainings:

- Greater Lynn Senior Services held two.
- Veteran Transportation Services held one and another scheduled for Friday was cancelled.
- Joint Venture has a training scheduled for Saturday, February 5.

### **Review of 2004**

- The deaths of Board Members Elizabeth Dillard and Michael Warshawsky were announced with sorrow.
- The coordination of all vendor Passenger Sensitivity Training standard training for all drivers.
- THE RIDE produced a new user-friendly manual
- The Office of Transportation Access (OTA) coordinated THE RIDE's new four-year contract with twelve meetings with vendors, sub-contractors and AACT members.
- The new contract for THE RIDE began on December 1.
- Chairman Oliver served on the selection committee to hire a contract monitor for THE RIDE and Fixed Route Services.
- Many plans of Design and Construction were reviewed.
- AACT was the first group to see the new Automatic Fare Collection.
- AACT participates in the ROC, which was organized in March.
- Paul Barresi and Frank Tarverna were appointed to the AACT Board.

He then asked for questions. There were none. The report was accepted.

### **MBTA/OTA Fixed-Route Services Report**

Kathy Cox, Manager of Fixed-Route Services for the MBTA Office of Transportation Access, summarized the activities for December and January (report attached).

#### Highlights:

- December 17--opening of the Silver Line Waterfront project, providing service between South Station and the World Trade Center, with more station stops to be added.
- December 31--service began to Boston Marine Industrial Park and City Point.
- January 2-- Silver Line connection was opened; expansion service to the airport will be completed in the Spring of 2005.
- Orange Line Community College Station elevator is operating.

#### Ongoing events:

- The new Bi-Level commuter rail coaches with accessible restrooms are being purchased. Railroad Operations will arrange for AACT to view the new coaches in the next few weeks.
- Green Line low-floor car repair update: the first two of ten will be shipped to the Breda facility in Littleton for extensive repairs.
- The MBTA is seeking customers with valid MBTA Senior ID cards or Transportation Access passes to be a part of the Charlie Card testers for feedback on the Silver Line. Those interested should contact Carol Joyce-Harrington at 617-222-5526 or TTY 222-5415, for those interested.
- The Stop Announcement Monitoring Program continues with monitors riding buses to determine if drivers are in compliance with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). Ms. Cox was pleased to announce that the compliance rate was at 77.5%.
- The new, automated stop-announcement equipment continues to be installed on the new buses. As of today, 605 MBTA buses have the new equipment.
- A free Travel-Training Program is provided for registered users of THE RIDE. The Kennedy Center has provided training for 26 users in the fiscal year contract. For further information on the program, please call 617- 782-9400.
- All bus routes are now accessible for persons with disabilities.
- New vehicle purchases continue.

She then asked for questions.

**Chairman Oliver:** Will AACT get to view the new Blue Line cars?

**K. Cox:** Definitely, yes.

**Chairman Oliver:** During the last snowstorm the Silver Line buses going from Washington Street to Herald Street had difficulties. Were there any complaints that the bus had a difficult time making the turn?

**K. Cox:** This would go to the regular customer service office.

**Chairman Oliver:** Please contact B. Burke with that information.

**R. Chapman:** Can you comment on the situation with Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) and the MBTA concerning the new fare cards for MCB?

**K. Cox:** We are still meeting with the MCB. We are working on a solution. There is no plan for massive layoff of workers at the MBTA.

**G. Thomas:** Who is responsible for removing snow from bus stops?

**K. Cox:** Your local city and town officials are responsible for removing snow at bus stops. It is not the responsibility of the MBTA.

**R. Mahoney:** What is going to be done about buses not pulling into the curb?

**K. Cox:** The rule is that they are supposed to pull over to the curb.

**Chairman Oliver:** The Director of Bus Operations will be here shortly. Please save those questions for then.

### **AACT Fixed-Route Coordinator's Report**

Lynda Hoffman, AACT Fixed-Route Coordinator, was absent.

### **MBTA/OTA Paratransit Contract Operations**

Bob Rizzo, Manager of Paratransit and Contract Operations for the MBTA distributed the attached MBTA December statistical report and gave a brief report on OTA activities.

December 16, 2004 – January 31, 2005

Mr. Rizzo noted his disappointment with the start of the new THE RIDE contract. He stated the MBTA and THE RIDE contractors are not pleased with what has transpired over the past few weeks. Service to THE RIDE consumers has been abysmal despite the extensive preparations for the transition. He cited the following for the disruptions to customers: sporadic outages with contractor computers, radio and telephone systems, and human error. Some problems have been identified as bugs in the system. He admits that all the above issues are correctable and want he wants THE RIDE consumers to know that the MBTA and its contractors are working hard to correct the problems. He noted, "While there is steady progress towards the delivery of reliable service to our customers, with the January complaints down by about 40 percent from December levels, we can and will do much better."

December 22 and January 27 the OTA staff held meetings to address issues with THE RIDE contractors.

January 14, 21, and 28 OTA staff made site visits to observe operations and follow-up on concerns of THE RIDE contractors.

Also, daily meetings and teleconferences with OTA staff, StrataGen's Project Manager, and THE RIDE contractors held multiple times a day to work out issues and bugs associated with the implementation of the Adept software.

### **Service Updates:**

- Good News

Year-to-date ridership has increased 2.85 percent. Year-to-date "Not Available" (NA) rate is at 0 percent compared to last year's rate at 0.02 percent.

- Bad News

December ridership decreased by one percent over last year. Complaints increased by 158 percent from last December. Year-to-date complaint totals are up 28%. On-time performance decreased to 92 percent, for the month compared to 96.9 percent last December. Also, year-to-date on-time performance (trips within 30 minutes of the scheduled pickup time) was at 96.9 percent, decreased slightly from 98.4 percent in fiscal year 2004. Year-to-date accidents are up 12 percent over fiscal year 2004.

He then asked for questions.

**M. Kalashian:** How does the University of Wisconsin training for THE RIDE driver suggest approaching a passenger?

**J. Soucy:** THE RIDE driver must do the following: Clearly identify himself, THE RIDE company, ask, "Are you waiting for THE RIDE;" "the passenger's name and or identification number, and ask the destination. Also, the driver should offer his assistance.

**S. Young:** My driver today had an impossible schedule. Does the computer do anything to avoid drivers having to be all over the cities and towns in unreasonable amounts of time?

**B. Rizzo:** The only way we know about this type of complaint with a drivers' schedule is for consumers to file a complaint. We would then ask the contractor to research this complaint and find an explanation. Also, there are traffic patterns

and the road conditions are horrible, so there are other factors that may slow the path-of-travel down. A complaint will be filed.

**J. White:** The comparison between last year's statistics and this December is dramatically different: trips available, no shows, missed trips, and others. Do you see this as due to the new computer system?

**B. Rizzo:** It is certain to have an impact. Also, this is the first month of the new contract. The bugs in the computer are also having an impact.

**G. Thomas:** I called for THE RIDE and was directed to call Kiessling Transit. Will the software be corrected permanently so this mistake will not happen again?

**B. Rizzo:** Please keep in mind that there are many bugs in the system. We are working hard to make the corrections.

**K. Roach:** Many people, myself included, really like the automated system. The problem is, it does not leave you a voice mail. Will there be an automated system for paying for THE RIDE with debit or credit cards?

**B. Rizzo:** Thank you for your feedback. If you are having problems with the callback processes please inform the OTA so that the contractor can be aware. We are all using the same software. A request to have the feature of pay by phone has been submitted. This will be our next process

**Chairman Oliver:** Thank you Mr. Rizzo.

### **Paratransit Coordinator's Report**

James White, Paratransit Coordinator for AACT, apologized for his absence over the past few meetings. He did inform the group that he has ongoing health issues. He did not have an official report and felt it was too soon to comment on THE RIDE contract since it is in its first month. He has read all the consumer complaints and has major concerns about consumer's ongoing complaints about drivers. Mr. White is looking forward to becoming more active in future AACT activities.

### **Vendors' Reports**

Veterans Transportation Services, Inc.

Kevin McDonald, General Manager, read from his report for the month of December (report attached).

Daniel McInnis, CEO of the Veterans Transportation Service, Inc. (VTS) gave the members an overview of how his company was handling the new software and the changes within VTS Company. He apologized for the service and reported that:

- The company has installed new hardware and software
- His General Manager and his staff are very capable
- Twenty-two additional drivers were hired
- The company handles 2000 trips a day
- If there is no money in a consumers' account, trips will not be honored.

He then asked for questions.

**P. Griffin:** What do you think will be better next month in your service?

**D. McInnis:** I have a manager in the dispatch room and there is more multi-tasking by staff.

**K. McDonald:** We are trying to change how the system schedules trips.

The Joint Venture of TTI /YCN Transportation, Inc.

Frank Osojnicki, Manager, read from his report for the month of December (report attached).

He then asked for questions. There were none.

Partners Jo-Anne Thompson and Richard Armour, of the Joint Venture of Thompson Transit Inc., and YCN Transportation, Inc., attended the meeting. Partner Richard Armour; spoke on behalf of the company. He gave an overview how the staff was handling the new software and the changes within the new contract. He apologized to the customers for the disappointment in service and stated, "We take the job serving you the consumer very seriously". He then reported that:

- The new system is very challenging
- The cost was approximately two million dollars
- The same problems occurred with MIDAS software
- The StrataGen software is state-of-the-art and they are very pleased with it.
- The automatic Vehicle Locator is very useful (two drivers have been fired)

He then asked for questions. There were none.

**Chairman Oliver:** Complimented the Joint Venture on the informative new telephone system.

**M. McNab:** She was very disappointed in the service and felt she would no longer use their service.

**J. Thompson:** She gave words of encouragement to continue as a customer to Joint Venture. As well as apologized for the service and stated, 'she is willing to work with her to solve any concerns she may have about her company.

Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. (GLSS)

John Soucy, Director of Transportation, read from his report for the month of December (report attached).

He then asked for questions.

**P. Barresi:** Can you tell me when GLSS will use passenger's names instead of your identification numbers when making automatic callbacks?

**P. Strobis:** Our callback software utilizes voice recordings. In order to do this we would need to record all 60,000 THE RIDE customers, as well as future customers. This would be a tremendous undertaking.

Vince Lique, Executive Director of the Greater Lynn Senior Service said that he apologized for the delay in service to all THE RIDE users and that his staff was working very hard for a smooth conversion.

He then asked for questions. There were none.

Kiessling Transit, Inc.

Claire Dipillo, General Manager, read from her report for the month of December (report attached).

She then asked for questions. No questions were asked.

Roger Kiessling, partner with Kiessling Transit, Inc, apologized for the lack of service during this transition and reported that: all vendors were working together, it is a work in progress and that his staff was working seven days week to get the job done.

He then asked for questions.

**M. Kalashian:** I was charged twice for THE RIDE. I presented a ticket to the driver and at the same time my account was debited. How is this possible?

**R. Kiessling:** Yes, it can happen. It was an error. The reservationist probably keyed it in wrong.

## **MBTA Transit Police Report**

None was presented.

## **Rick Leary, MBTA Director of Bus Operations**

Mr. Leary thanked the group for the invitation to speak. He informed the group that he was succeeding Steve Epps who was with the MBTA for 26 years. He was pleased to accept the position and says he will carry on the good work of Mr. Epps under the direction of General Manager Mulhern.

When Mr. Mulhern was Deputy General Manager; the fleet of buses was modernized. The current number of vehicles in the fleet now is 700. Mr. Leary, gave an overview of the following:

- Buses with wheelchair lifts that are automatic or manually operated
- Smart bus system with automatic voice response
- Networking with other transit authorities
- Bus maintenance
- Frequent meetings with senior staff
- Training consultant hired for bus operators
- Snow removal for Silver Line right-of-way

He then asked for questions.

**K. Piccard:** Is there anything that can be done to adjust seats for women drivers on buses?

**R. Leary:** This is the first I have heard that it is a problem. They are adjustable.

**T. Gilbert:** Can you research other transit authorities on how their maintenance garages operate?

**R. Leary:** We very close with other transit authorities and some services our fleet.

**K. Mooney:** Is it true that the express Merrimack Valley bus will be eliminated?

**R. Leary:** I can't speak to that.

**K. Cox:** You are asking about Service Planning. I will do some research and get

back to you.

**P. Griffin:** Can you tell me what percentage of the MBTA fleet is accessible?

**R. Leary:** It is 98 percent accessible. The oldest 10 will be eliminated.

**Chairman Oliver:** During the last snowstorm the Silver Line buses going from Washington Street to Herald Street had difficulties. Were there any complaints that the bus had a difficult time making the turn?

**R. Leary:** As of Tuesday afternoon we had to re-route the buses.

**J. Farley:** Are you looking into making buses accessible for the blind and visually impaired travelers?

**R. Leary:** This is new to me. I'll have to do some research.

**Old Business:** None was presented.

**New Business:** None was presented.

**Announcements:** Chairman Oliver announced the November 23, 2005 meeting would now be on November 15. Also, new nomination papers will be mailed out to members in good standing upon request. If you have the lavender copy, please discard it. He is running for re-election. Anyone who is running for the Board should be prepared to work.

**The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 P.M.**