

**THE ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA
MEETING MINUTES
February 26, 2003**

NOTABLES

RIDE tickets are available at all AACT meetings.

All meetings are equipped with assistive-listening devices.

Handouts should be distributed at least 15 minutes before the beginning of meetings.

ATTENDANCE

James Oliver, Cheryl Ravalli, Elizabeth Dillard, Reginald Clark, Mark Kalashian, Marilyn MacNab, James White, Kathy Mooney, Steve Skiffington, Jeff Grant, Kim Parlon, Ken Smyth, Lillian Haynes, and Christina DiEnno.

MBTA Representatives

Carol Joyce-Harrington, Kathy Cox, Carl Merrick, Bob Rizzo, Ron Mariani, Alexander Murkinson, and Officer Matthew Haney.

Vendor Representatives

Joint Venture–A. Maldonado, GLSS–Jacqualyn Hunt and Maria Colameta, Kiessling Transit, Inc.–N. Claire DiPillo, VTS–Kevin McDonald and Carol Fraizer, and B. Haynes Consultants–B. Haynes and P. Beaulieu.

CTPS Support Staff

Janie Guion and Kate Wall.

AACT Chairman's Report

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 PM

The January minutes were not voted on because only a few AACT members had received them before the February meeting. Mr. J. Oliver highlighted the following events for the past month:

- The opening of the new Joint Venture facility in Hyde Park.
- Trainings continue with all vendors.
- The AACT Focus Group report was submitted to the MBTA's General Manager in early February.
- Reminder of the upcoming hearings on the PMT draft on Wednesday, March 5, and Thursday, March 6. Mr. Oliver will attend the Thursday meeting.
- OTA's status reports of THE RIDE during the recent snow storms.
- The April 23 AACT meeting will be held in the evening, 6-8:15 PM, to try to increase attendance. Location: Conference Room #2 in the State Transportation Building at 10 Park Plaza. The speakers will be the MBTA and vendors.

Mr. Oliver asked for questions. There were none. The report was accepted.

Following his report, the Chair gave more details on the new AACT nomination process. No nominations may be made from the floor, and an AACT member may nominate only one person. All nomination papers must be postmarked by April 30 or turned in to the CTPS office by 5 PM on April 30. Any AACT member who is eligible to vote may submit nomination papers, accompanied by five signatures from other AACT members. Anyone who would like nomination papers should call Janie Guion, the AACT Coordinator, at 617-973-7507, at which time membership status will be reviewed. Mr. Oliver asked for questions.

M. Kalashian: Is it in the bylaws that nominations cannot be made from the floor?

J. Oliver: Yes.

J. Grant: The current draft of the Transportation Plan does not contain information on how to obtain the information in accessible formats, or how to submit written comments.

J. Oliver: Ms. Guion will take care of your request.

K. Mooney: How do we find out which AACT members are eligible for the election?

J. Oliver: Ms. Guion will make a copy of the list of AACT members who are eligible to vote.

MBTA/OTA Fixed-Route Access Report

Ms. K. Cox, Manager, began her report from the attached handout on the following topics:

- The MBTA received delivery of a new Blue Line car, a CNG bus, and a pilot low-floor trackless trolley in March. More details will be given at the March meeting. The Massachusetts courts ruled in favor of the MBTA regarding the contract for automated-fare equipment.
- Malden Station construction.
- The temporary closing of some of the elevators at Park Street. (MBTA officials are on hand to assist passengers.)
- The Stop Announcement Monitoring Program.
- Travel training continues for registered RIDE users.
- AACT's screening of MBTA's new vehicles.
- The purchase of 28 new double-decker commuter trains that will have toilets

Ms. Cox asked for questions.

J. Oliver: A shooting at the West Natick Station caused the trains to bypass this station. How did the MBTA coordinate getting passengers back to this station?

K. Cox: This is news to me. I will get the details for you.

M. Kalashian: Could you detail the steps you take to document harassment of disabled consumers by commuter rail personnel against passengers who may have previously complained?

K. Cox: We send complaints to AMTRAK or to Steve Jones of the MBTA Railroad Operations. We hope to have a more rapid response from the new commuter rail service provider.

J. Oliver: The handling of complaints will be stressed in meetings with the new provider.

J. White: It was brought to my attention that a lack of snow removal caused stations to be inaccessible. Many people with disabilities were inconvenienced due to the lack of snow removal at bus and commuter rail stations. Whom can we call about this issue?

K. Cox: If you have such problems, just call my office. The amount of snow that fell could not be adequately cleared. In many cases, cities and towns plow and push snow in front of ramps. MBTA snow removal crews are then sent back to do more clearing.

M. MacNab: Were the new Boston bus shelters discussed with AACT?

K. Cox: No, a private company installed the shelters, which meet the ADA requirements.

The report was accepted.

AACT Fixed-Route Access Coordinator's Report

The report was tabled because the Coordinator was absent.

MBTA/OTA Paratransit Contract Operations Report

Mr. B. Rizzo, Manager, began his report with the activities involving OTA staff:

- The MIDAS Users Group meeting.
- Assisting Bus Operations in retirement of RIDE vehicles.
- A presentation to Greater Boston Aid to the Blind in Boston and Cambridge.
- A visit to Joint Venture's new Hyde Park facility.
- A presentation at the Annual Seniors' Day event held by the City of Boston.
- The monthly Safety meeting in Braintree.
- A meeting with a RIDE customer and GLSS to resolve service concerns.

He also reported that:

- Cape Ann Transit is doing a needs assessment within Essex County to identify the transportation needs of persons with disabilities with limited transportation resources. GLSS's Executive Director is the resource person for the group.
- The RFP RIDE contracts for July 2004 are in progress.
- RIDE services were scaled back during the snow emergency except for medical priorities.

In addition, Mr. Rizzo highlighted the following service statistics from the attached report:

- Ridership was up 4.69 percent in January 2003, with year-to-date ridership up by 5.2 percent.
- January's not-available rate of 0.13 percent continues to be lower than in past years.

- Vehicular accidents were 16% lower in January 2003 than in January 2002 (decreased from 31 to 26). Year-to-date vehicular accidents are down 8.9% over fiscal year 2002 (from 190 to 173).
- Complaints sharply increased over the same period last year (from 76 to 159).

Mr. Rizzo asked for questions.

M. Kalashian: Can something be done to simplify the fare structure of THE RIDE? I am given different information each time I call your staff.

B. Rizzo: There is a table in the RIDER's Manual that is very specific, although it is not simple to understand. The staff should be able to provide you with precise information on transfers.

J. White: In the last batch of complaints I received, the riders' complaint letters were missing, so I was not able to get a clear view of all complaints.

B. Rizzo: Was this true of all complaints?

J. White: No, just one recent batch.

B. Rizzo: We will rectify this right away.

The report was accepted.

AACT Paratransit Coordinator's Report

Mr. J. White, Coordinator, gave a report on the following.

- On-time performance cards.
- A visit to the new Joint Venture facility in Hyde Park.
- Complaints.
- Training by all four vendors in January.

Mr. White asked for questions. There were none. The report was accepted.

Vendors' Reports for January 2003

Kiessling Transit, Inc.

Ms. C. DiPillo, General Manager, read from the attached report. She then asked for questions or comments.

M. MacNab: Your drivers have been great about informing passengers of the "Write To the Top" program and giving out the "Your Right to On-time Service" refund cards.

C. DiPillo: Thank you.

The report was accepted.

Joint Venture of TTI and YCN

Mr. A. Maldonado, General Manager, read from the attached report. He then asked for questions or comments.

M. Kalashian: You have a high N/A and complaint rate.

A. Maldonado: Our performance quality was a disaster. We are addressing this with the MBTA.

J. White: Can you explain the drastic increase in 30-minute-late trips?

A. Maldonado: Yes, it was scheduling.

J. Oliver: Are you having more training lately because of a shortage of drivers?

A. Maldonado: The Human Resource Department is scheduling more training sessions and giving advance notice to AACT. If there are no trainees, it's easy to cancel a training session.

B. Haynes: Does subscription service guarantee a set pickup time if the service is at least three times a week? Shouldn't the customer expect service at the same time each day?

A. Maldonado: It's a shared service so the times may vary to accommodate other passengers.

B. Rizzo: If a consumer stipulates they must be to work at 9 AM, we ask the vendor to give a 15-minute window, but sometimes they have to extend it to 30 minutes.

The report was accepted.

Veterans Transportation Services

Mr. K. MacDonald, General Manager, read from the attached report. He then asked if there were any questions.

M. Kalashian: Isn't it illegal for air fresheners to be placed in RIDE vehicles? Why do you allow the drivers to use them? Why have my complaints gone unanswered on this subject?

K. MacDonald: It is not illegal in the Commonwealth, but it is company policy. If vehicles are found with air fresheners, we ask that they be removed.

E. Dillard: I want to compliment you on your response to a complaint letter.

B. Haynes: Is it customary for your company to allow an employee to hang around the premises if they've been suspended or terminated?

K. MacDonald: I don't know of this happening. Let's talk later.

J. White: How is it that your statistics are so good when your trips have increased?

K. MacDonald: One reason the rates were down in January is the opening of the new tunnel.

The report was accepted.

Greater Lynn Senior Services

Ms. J. Hunt, General Manager, read from the attached report. She then asked for questions.

E. Dillard: Once a driver completes the circle check report, where does it go?

J. Hunt: The morning person gets it, sends it to the Malden facility for processing, and then it goes to the Fleet Maintenance Department.

The report was accepted.

MBTA Police Report

Officer M. Haney reported on the following:

- Chief Carter has reinstated Officer Haney to AACT meetings by request of many AACT supporters. (He thanked the members for their support.)
- An updated list of emergency contacts from OTA.
- The training of new recruits by Jacqueline Vermont, Assistant DA Suffolk County.

He then asked for questions.

B. Haynes: What credentials did the Assistant District Attorney have for doing the training?

Officer Haney: I'll check and get back to you.

M. Kalashian: What can your office do about conductors who verbally retaliate, intimidate, or harass passengers who complain about not making stop announcements? Would the MBTA police meet the train at my particular station and intervene?

Officer Haney: Your call would be forwarded to the MBTA complaint line and an internal investigation would happen before we could make a charge of harassment.

M. Kalashian: The witnesses are gone now. Could the MBTA Police have come onto the train to interview these witnesses?

Officer Haney: Yes, we could have.

J. Oliver: Amtrak answers commuter-rail complaints in a delayed manner. There is a new system in place that involves Kathy Cox and Ron Mariani, so it should get faster.

J. White: What operational changes, if any, have happened since the two recent shootings?

Officer Haney: We have more officers out on patrol. Chief Carter has made some changes, such as having more officers riding the trains all over the system instead of staying at one station.

The report was accepted.

Building Evacuation Plan

Mr. M. Faia, of RM Bradley Building Management, presented an overview of the emergency evacuation plans for the State Transportation Building. If there are persons in the conference rooms, they will be escorted out of the building by security personnel to the nearest safety zone.

Mr. Faia asked for questions.

J. Grant: A few years ago I was asked to observe the building's annual fire evacuation drill. The tenants were phoned and told to take people down the elevators and not to go to the safety zones. In addition, there were no visual alarm signals. Have you rectified the way you now handle your fire drills?

M. Faia: I was not here during that time. However, changes have been made.

B. MacNab: Isn't it against the law not to have audio signals in a building?

M. Faia: This building was constructed without visual and auditory alarms in the conference rooms, although they are in other parts of the building. I would need to check the building codes.

B. Haynes: How can people escape from a conference room that is this small, from the upper floors, with so many people impaired.

M. Faia: The buddy system works for staff in the building. We provide a service for the second-floor conference rooms. We could take care of the set-up by making more space between the chairs and the walls. We do not have a list of the events or who is at each event. Every agency is responsible for their evacuation plan. Once the groups have made it to the second floor, they are assisted by security.

J. Grant: Who reviews the evacuation plan of the agencies?

M. Faia: The Department of Public Safety.

K. Mooney: Why not use the visitor sign-in sheet for the building?

M. Faia: It becomes an issue of control.

J. White: How can I get out of here in an emergency in my motorized chair?

M. Faia: We could work on the setup.

B. Haynes: How many people can you assign to this group in the event of an emergency?

M. Faia: One or two people could handle this room very easily.

J. Oliver: Last month this room was very crowded. We all could have been trapped.

M. Faia: Did you request a larger room?

J. Oliver: Yes. Your office assigns us to the rooms.

J. White: We need a room that is ADA compliant.

B. Haynes: Usually we use conference room 2 and 3; both have more exists.

J. Grant: During the months of October, November, and December, an electrical outlet lay exposed in the floor. I informed your staff but was told that it couldn't be fixed because the cover was round and that there were only square covers.

M. Faia: I'll look into it.

In addition to the Q&A exchange about Conference Room 4, Mr. Faia listened attentively to the membership. Several members explained their fears about what would happen if the building needed to be evacuated in a hurry. Mr. Faia agreed with the members of AACT that Conference Room 4 has problems for persons with mobility and visual-impairment issues. The members conveyed to Mr. Faia that they have complained for years about the room being too small. The huge tables make it virtually impossible for wheelchairs to get out quickly. Mr. Faia indicated to the group that changes would be on the way soon.

The report was accepted.

Announcements

B. Haynes: The Massachusetts Senior Action Council is sponsoring a cookbook sale. All books are \$5.00. This event is to raise money for the continued Council operations.

J. Oliver: Former AACT Chairman Phil Beaulieu shared the news of the birth of his first grandchild, a beautiful baby boy.

J. White: Project Action Easter Seals has a catalog that lists various accessibility resources, including training videos for disabled transit riders and paratransit providers. He brought in a copy to show AACT and the vendors and said that extra copies may be obtained from him. This is not to be confused with the University of Wisconsin's passenger assistance "Train-The-Trainer" manual, which is the official guide of THE RIDE.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:29 PM