

**ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
(AACT)**

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

Meeting Minutes for March 28, 2007

The meeting was called to order at 1:05.

NOTABLES

- The next AACT meeting will be on Wednesday, April 25, 2007 in Conference Room 2.
- A request for absentee ballots will be available on April 25. Please contact Janie Guion, the AACT Coordinator, by phone, e –mail, TDD machine or fax. (Please see the numbers listed above.)
- Please sign in at all meetings.
- Keep your attendance current to ensure your right to vote or hold office.
- 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 fifteen minutes before the meetings.
- Announcements are always welcome. Please be prepared to give as many details as possible: date, time, location, contact person, phone number, or flyer would be appreciated.

ATTENDANCE

James Oliver, Philip Beaulieu, Kathy Roach, Frank Taverna, Elizabeth Commerford, Divinah Payne, Pablo Abanumra, Kate Ryan, Marilyn MacNab, Tammy Perrault, Paul Barresi, Kathryn Piccard, D. Summerfield,

Richard Nurt, Loretta Williams, Pauline Lincoln, B. Haynes, Lillian Haynes, Richard Mahoney, Cheryl Ravalli, Richard Chapman, Anthony Nosike, John Marshall, Marilyn Goulston, Reggie Clark, and Mark Kalashian

MBTA Representatives:

Lt. D. O'Connor, Michael Festa, Robert Rizzo, Michael Hulak, Paul Fitzgerald, Carol Joyce-Harrington, Ron Mariani and Kathy Cox

Vendor Representatives:

Joint Venture – Carlton Jones
Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. (GLSS) – Jacquelyn Dunlop
Kiessling Transit, Inc. – M. Claire DiPillo and Bob Tobin

Veteran Transportation Services – John Tuttle

Central Transportation Planning /MPO Staff:

Janie Guion

AGENDA

- Self-introduction of the members, friends and guests
- Reading of the Agenda
- January Minutes were accepted with several members reporting that they did not receive copies of the drafted minutes. Ms. Guion will check her mailing database.

Chairman Beaulieu Report

He discussed his activities for the month of March, which included his participation:

- A vendor sponsored Drive-Cam training
- A support meeting with the AACT Coordinator
- A conference on disaster preparedness
- The MBTA Bus Operations training for new operators
- A mock train disaster
- The grand opening ceremonies of the Charles Street/MGH Red Line station

Also in his report were the following: An invitation to the Director of the MBTA's Customer Care Center; an upcoming letter to the Manager of Paratransit Contactors concerning the change in format for vendor reports; and a notice that the AACT Executive Board approved a motion to invite a Bus Operations representative to give a hands-on demonstration for reduced-fare users on how to add value to a CharlieCard at a working farebox.

The report was accepted.

AACT Officer Nominations

Executive Board

Jeff Grant nominated by L. Haynes; not present to accept but he will be notified of the nomination.

Vice-Chairman

Philip Beaulieu nominated by B. Haynes; he did accept the nomination.

Chairman

Ben Haynes nominated by Paul Barresi; he did accept the nomination.

Nominations were closed until the April 25 meeting.

Old Business:

D. Payne stated that since expressing her concerns at the January meeting the benches at Jackson Square station still had not been replaced.

J. Marshall commented that benches have been installed at Back Bay station. During the last meeting were told about the inventory of benches being taken at MBTA stations. He asked why are new benches being installed at Back Bay and not at Jackson Square?

M. Festa of the MBTA Design and Construction office said that he was working on finding the person in charge of bench procurement.

J. Oliver commented on the disappointment he felt that no member of the AACT Board attended the Framingham meeting concerning the development of the MetroWest Regional Transportation Authority. He indicated that he alone spoke on behalf of the disability committee.

K. Piccard, Board member, stated she was told that only residents of the Town of Framingham would be allowed to speak.

M. MacNab stated that Framingham has been in contact with the MBTA General Manager concerning this issue. AACT has no authority on how this will progress.

B. Haynes stated that Framingham is establishing a Regional Transportation Authority and would need to conform to the Americans with Disability Act just as does the MBTA. They may also be looking to negotiate for services with one of its vendors.

B. Haynes remarked that the General Manager Grabauskas has indicated that he is interested in improving services and the safety and comfort of passengers. This is not a complicated issue or request. AACT's responsibility is to monitor the situation to make sure that there is follow-through on the issues that are brought by the members to the committee not to make MBTA purchases.

New Business: None was presented.

Announcements: None was presented.

Public Comments:

M. MacNab stressed that the AACT Board members are volunteers.

D. Summerfield stated that if this is the case then he expects the work to be at 100%.

M. Kalashian asked for a list of the nominees.

D. Summerfield expressed his excitement with the opening of new Charles Street/MGH Station.

The MBTA Program for Mass Transportation (PMT)

Joe Cosgrove, the MBTA Director of Planning and Development, and Liz Moore, Project Manager, of the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) gave a brief summary concerning the PMT. Ms. Moore and Clinton Bench, Manager of the Transit Planning Group at CTPS, will draft the document. The focus of the document will be how to make the system more reliable, convenient, safe, and accessible. He stated that the PMT is prepared every five years and that the process would take place over a 15-month period. The outreach and stakeholder meeting will take place throughout the process. The PMT document will be presented for approval to the MBTA Board of Directors and the MBTA Advisory Board in 2008.

Mr. Cosgrove and the Project Manager answered questions from the group.

R. Clark: Are copies of the report available?

J. Cosgrove: The report will be available in spring of 2008 after all the outreach meetings have been concluded.

J. Oliver: Will the meetings be posted on your website?

J. Cosgrove: Yes, on the MBTA and the Boston Region MPO websites.

M. Kalashian: How will THE RIDE be factored into the PMT?

J. Cosgrove: We will be looking for input into this process to on how to help THE RIDE.

B. Haynes: Will the notices outline how and where you can get this information in accessible format to participate in these meetings?

J. Cosgrove: Yes.

K. Piccard: How will the disability lawsuit be factored into the PMT?

J. Cosgrove: The Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) agreement specifies an agenda for action commitments by the MBTA in making Boston region transit services more convenient, accessible, and reliable. The PMT is the long-term capital planning document for the MBTA and, as such, will incorporate the specific implementing commitments specified in the BCIL settlement as well as reflect the policies and planning justification used to prioritize an MBTA program of access improvements.

B. Haynes: Who can I submit my request to for accessible format or accessibility? It should also go through the electronic media.

L. Moore: We will make all the information available in accessible format. We can also inform you through this forum. Do you mean radio?

B. Haynes: Yes.

K. Roach: Will you make sure that your Websites are user-friendly?

L. Moore: Yes.

M. MacNab: I want to make sure that the logistics are workable; that there are entrances to buildings with ramps, and that phone numbers, materials and restrooms are accessible.

L. Moore: Thank you for your comments. It is a pleasure to work with. You are a wonderful advocate for the group.

J. Cosgrove: Thank you for this opportunity Mr. Chairman. I thank you personally for serving on the PMT Committee.

The report was accepted.

MBTA/OTA Paratransit Contract Operations Report

R. Rizzo, Manager of Paratransit and Contract Operations for the MBTA, gave a summary of the following activities carried out by his staff, vendor representatives, and other participants.

Following-up on the Drive Cam issue (whether the unit was recording conversations) that members were concerned with, he stated that he has advised all contractors to only utilize the video and not the audio.

Mr. Rizzo gave the following highlights:

- THE RIDE Safety Managers and others met at the Joint Venture for training with the Drive Cam.
- The Project Access Study Group met to discuss monitoring phase of THE RIDE by TranSystems. The study is nearing the end with a final report to be issued.
- THE RIDE vendors coordinated updates to computers for the new Daylight Savings Time.
- Joint Venture hosted the customer inspection of THE RIDE vehicle's to aid in the next purchase of vehicles. Written comments are also welcome.
- MBTA staff met with the Framingham town officials to discuss THE RIDE service and the possibility of MetroWest Regional Transportation Authority contracting with the MBTA to continue to provide THE RIDE. He commented that the voice of Bob Donahue, a strong advocate for THE RIDE program and accessible transportation, was a great loss to the MetroWest community. The General Manager has made a commitment to town officials that the MBTA is willing to help with service with the Joint Venture for a price.

Summary of OTA Activities attended by staff:

- A site visit to the Joint Venture by MBTA Bus Operations personnel to inspect a new van
- A meeting concerning service with the representatives of the Norwood Dialysis
- The Peabody Senior Center Low Vision Group meeting
- A forum held in Lawrence sponsored by the Boston University Center for Psychological Rehabilitation
- The Emergency Planning session sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security

Service Updates

Ridership up at 5.2% for the month of February compared to February 2006, and year-to-date (YTD) increased to 8.8%; the Not Available rate remains the same at zero; while the on-time performance (within 30 minutes of scheduled pick-up time) was at 98.7% / 92.2% (within 15 minutes of scheduled pick-up time) YTD.

Complaints continue to decrease by 15.4% from January 2006 and YTD the complaints have decreased by 7.7%. During the month of February the complaint level remains below 200 for the 23rd month. Complaints have increased by 1.4 % from February 2006.

YTD vehicular accidents are up 1.5%.

On April 24, Great Lynn Senior Services will host THE RIDE Safety Committee from 2 to 4 PM.

He then asked for questions.

K. Piccard: I am looking for an update on the issue concerning pick-ups for people who wish to return one hour after drop-off.

R. Rizzo: It is on our working agenda. It is a very technical issue.

M. Goulston: Will there be another time for consumers to view the vehicles?

R. Rizzo: No. I encourage you to send in your written comments.

M. Kalashian: How can pick up times be assigned out of the parameters by the computer? We have been told that it is not possible.

R. Rizzo: It may be that the program is in override by the operator.

B. Haynes: What is the procedure when THE RIDE vehicle becomes involved in an accident? Are the MBTA Transit Police (TP) called?

R. Rizzo: Yes, the TP should be called especially if it is an MBTA-owned vehicle instead of a vendor. The TP will probably tell you they cover some 62 cities and towns and 729 sq. miles and that the force is spread very thin with a particular focus on fixed route. If the accident occurs in the farther suburbs, the vendor may need to rely on the local police for assistance.

P. Barresi: An operator of THE RIDE has told me that there are problems with the lifts in the new vehicles. According him the lift in the new vehicles is the residential style. The older vehicle lifts are the industrial style. Have you had any complaints on the new vehicle?

R. Rizzo: Yes, we have reports on both models. I can assure you that all the equipment we purchase are commercial grade and of the highest quality. There are three or four major lift manufactures in North America. The two major ones in the paratransit industry are Braun which had been a product included in most of the vans we purchased previously in part because Braun also manufactures vehicles, so they use their own lift. Another manufacturer is Ricon. The new vans that we bought are the Ricon, which is entirely comparable to Braun and as listed, has a piece of equipment that the manufacturer made. In the past the year the federal regulations changed dramatically and several very sensitive additional components were added to all these

types of lifts for safety features. They now include infrared and audio warnings that are triggered by very sensitive equipment. Our models are not on this new list since they were purchased before this model. There have been problems around the country.

Consumer: Can you tell me about the audio directions for drivers?

R. Rizzo: I believe you are speaking about personal equipment that drivers' use. I have asked the contractors to monitor for safety concerns. If we find it to be a problem we will ask that they be removed.

R. Chapman: What is the start-up date for the MetroWest Regional Transportation Authority?

R. Rizzo: I believe it is July 1.

D. Summerfield: Can the dispatcher give the driver directions using GPS verbally?

R. Rizzo: This is not MBTA-provided equipment. I would ask that each vendor report on this during his or her report.

K. Piccard: Can you say briefly tell us about interface between the new Customer Care Center (CCC) and OTA? Are you getting complaints and compliments from the CCC? How is that working out in the last month?

R. Rizzo: We are still receiving calls in my office. Our literature gives the OTA direct number. Calls do come in to the MBTA main number and OTA. This is a work in progress in terms of their implementation of different systems they are bringing on-line. We are cooperating with the CCC. We are working hard to set up the necessary rapport with the new director. It is a very positive outcome for the Authority's customers and THE RIDE program. A few years ago OTA was first of any MBTA department to have a highly developed database. In the implementation of the new system, they are not looking to undo our database (that began in 1989). If someone is unhappy with our assistance they can always seek help from the CCC.

B. Haynes: Regarding the new vans with single seats curbside just behind the steps, I find that the seat is in close proximity to the partition. This is very uncomfortable for people with long legs. Someone has screwed a board or something to the fair side of that partition. The screws can go through to the inside. Anyone sitting in the van could be injured. This is similar to the problem we had with the gas tank.

R. Rizzo: Yes.

M. MacNab: I would urge you to have a second viewing for persons who work nine to five. This viewing you are holding looks like preferential treatment to those who can inspect the vehicle at a certain time. Everyone should have a fair chance to inspect the vehicle. I suggest you do a mass mailing so that we can have a good showing.

R. Rizzo: I will take this under advisement. Written comments are gladly welcomed. You don't necessarily need to come to the inspection to give your comments. I would like to hear from the AACT Board on this matter.

The report was accepted.

Vendors' Reports

The following vendor representatives gave statistical reports and questions were taken from AACT members.

Veterans Transportation Services, Inc. (VTS)

John Tuttle, Operations Manager, read from his report for the month of February. In response to Mr. Rizzo's question concerning the MBTA GPS unit. The MBTA has supplied all vendor vehicles with these units; the units will help in the location of vehicle when the consumer calls looking for THE RIDE. The units are also tied into the MBTA system. The dispatcher has the capability to reach the driver by pushing a button. The vehicle's location is then tracked on the computer screen.

He then asked for questions.

M. Kalashian: Can you explain why over the years you have not solved the problem of your extremely high number of missed and late trips that are higher than other vendors, despite the fact you do more trips than other vendors'?

J. Tuttle: We do try to maintain an absolutely accurate number and that is why they are higher. We do pay attention to the numbers. It is an on-going process.

D. Payne: Can you tell me why I cannot get a next day pickup if I call before 2 P M?

J. Tuttle: My apologies to you. Yes, that information should be taken at time of a call. Please, let me or the Customer Service Supervisor know.

D. Summerfield: I called to book a trip but instead was told to use e-mail. The reservationist just insisted that I use a computer. I informed her I did not own have a computer. I then requested her supervisor who never returned my call. Why is there no prompt on the automation system to help you complete the trip?

J. Tuttle: My apologies to you. There is no need to e-mail your request. You need to have a maximum of 10 selected trips to make your own reservations.

K. Piccard: Do you have the results on the van that burned about a month ago?

J. Tuttle: No. We have hired an expert in the field of fire investigations. We are patiently waiting for the report.

B. Haynes: It has been stated that Charles Street entrance is the official designated pick-up and drop-off point for THE RIDE. Would you explain why drivers consistently go to Stuart Street to wait for passengers without checking with dispatch to find out the location of the passenger?

R. Rizzo: The Charles Street entrance is a safer loading zone, more curb space and broader sidewalk space. The building management has made this very complex. I believe it has officially declared the Stuart Street entrance the accessible entrance to the building. I have asked the vendors to add both Stuart and Charles Street entrance addresses.

M. MacNab: GPS Navigational equipment has been very distracting for drivers. The drivers are not using very safe practices when activating the equipment. I would appreciate very strict monitoring of drivers with this equipment.

J. Tuttle: It is a safety concern. It has enhanced driver productivity.

The report was accepted.

Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN (JV)

Carlton Jones, Operations Manager, read from his report for the month of February.

He then asked for questions.

M. Kalashian: Considering you have the smallest amount of trips among the vendors, why are there so many late trips and what are you doing to solve this problem?

C. Jones: We have provided GPS equipment to all new drivers. We have noticed a reduction in late trips.

B. Haynes: Why does your company break the passenger assistance and sensitivity training into various components? This does not present the total package under the Passenger Assistance Training. Why?

C. Jones: I will need to speak with the trainer.

D. Payne: I compliment your drivers for being on time.

C. Jones: It is a work in progress.

L. Williams: Would you and the other vendors speak on the driver turnover rate?

C. Jones: We do try to get the best. It is a rigorous search for drivers.

L. Williams: I would like to see this added to the vendor report.

Chairman Beaulieu: I will speak with Mr. Rizzo who is in charge.

The report was accepted.

Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. (GLSS)

Jackie Dunlop, Director of Transportation, read from her report for the month of February.

She then asked for questions.

B. Haynes: Does your company have a sexual harassment policy? When does it become a part of your passenger assistance training?

J. Dunlop: Yes. It is done with our orientation package along with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) material.

M. Kalashian: Why are your trips 60 minutes lower than other vendors'? How can you help the other vendors?

J. Dunlop: There is no wisdom to share. We are all in the same boat. My staff monitors all drivers very closely during runs.

The report was accepted.

Kiessling Transit, Inc (KTI)

M. Claire DiPillo, General Manager, read from her report for the month of February.

She then asked for questions.

R. Mahoney: What is the best time to arrange for a pickup?

C. DiPillo: Anytime would be good.

J. Oliver: Did the Video Cam show which driver was at-fault with the accidents you have listed.

B. Tobin: Yes.

M. Kalashian: When you are part of a transfer trip that was not booked through your office do you get all the information the booking vendor has or do you get a limited customer profile when the customer is not your customer?

C. DiPillo: The vendors are very good at providing the customers' information.

D. Payne: What are you planning to do concerning the drivers who are late and the poor condition of the vehicle?

C. DiPillo: I responded to your complaint.

Chairman Beaulieu: Please see Ms. DiPillo after the meeting.

P. Lincoln: I am very pleased with your service.

C. DiPillo: Thank you.

The report was accepted.

MBTA/OTA Fixed-Route Services Report:

Kathy Cox, Manager of Fixed-Route Services for Access (buses, trains, subway, commuter rail, bus rapid transit, and commuter rail and commuter boat) for the MBTA Office for Transportation Access (OTA) presented the following information.

Ms. Cox responded to the on-going concern of the lobby benches at Jackson Square. The benches were removed during the installation of the new automatic fare equipment. The benches were discussed at the February meeting. Members were informed that the benches had been replaced at Jackson Square in a different style. They are now located at either end of the lobby.

Highlights:

- There was an Emergency Evacuation Drill that took place between Andrew and Broadway Stations. The participants were the MBTA staff and AACT volunteers. For the first time a real wheelchair participant was part of the drill and the MBTA officials were given much to think about in the event of a real disaster. She also thanked all of the participants.
- Expansion of a mobile bridge plate program to be instituted at all stations. The bridge plate will be placed between the train and platform. Bridge plates are not available in all stations. For locations please call 617- 222-1542
- A CharlieCard reduced fare brochure is being drafted.

She then asked for questions.

J. Marshall: Did you say that there are benches at Jackson Square?

K. Cox: Yes, I spoke to the station official that indicated the benches are now in the station. They are now located at either end of the station lobby.

D. Summerfield: There was a time that the international symbols of access were being covered at the Green Line Station on the platform at North Station. You have routinely promised that this would be covered until the new system maps were in place. The new maps are now in place. When will it happen?

K. Cox: I will pass this on.

J. Oliver: My concern is the old green walls at the Charles Street/MGH Station. Can they be painted?

K. Cox: I will pass this on.

The report was accepted.

MBTA Transit Officer Report by Lt. Commander Donald O'Connor

DOConnor@mbta.com

LT. O'Connor began with a brief report for February concerning parking enforcement. He acknowledged that a total of 216 tickets were issued with 185 for persons illegally parking at bus stops. He noted that, due to the many concerns about 1010 Massachusetts Avenue and the Massachusetts Avenue Station bus stops extra patrol enforcement was stepped-up to discourage illegal parking in those areas.

He then asked for questions.

M. Kalashian: The Massachusetts Bay Commuter Rail conductors do not know how to approach persons smoking on the platforms. What advice can you offer me to advise them on this issue?

LT. O'Connor: You can tell us about a particular location. We can issue citations. I can send someone to monitor the area.

M. Kalashian: That would be the North Station and Haverhill platforms.

D. Payne: There are illegally parked cars in front of the U S Post Office on New Dudley Street. Also I have concerns about a bus stop at a construction site at 729 Harrison Ave. The driver let me out in the middle of the street. Due to all the construction and vehicles blocking the bus stop area.

LT. O'Connor: I will check that site.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 PM.