

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

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Meeting Minutes for May 23, 2007

The meeting was called to order at 1:05.

NOTABLES

- The next AACT meeting will be on *Wednesday evening, June 27, from 5:30 to 8 PM* in Conference Room 2
- Judge Patrick King, the court-appointed independent monitor for the settlement agreement asked that he be contacted with members' thoughts, comments, and questions; he can be reached by phone at 617-228-9125 or e –mail MBTAMonitor@gmail.com. He promises to answer as quickly as possible
- 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
- THE RIDE does not honor subscription service on major holidays. All trips must be requested for that holiday service
- 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

Barbara Garlington, James Oliver, Philip Beaulieu, Frank Taverna, Marilyn MacNab, Tammy Perrault, Paul Barresi, Kathryn Piccard, Don Summerfield, Richard Nurt, Karen Nurt, Angela Mannerson, Ben Haynes, Richard Mahoney, Richard Chapman, John Marshall, Mark Kalashian, Jeff Grant, Lorraine Lavoie, Cheryl Ravalli, Sharon Harrison, Loretta Williams, Elizabeth Commerford, Pauline Downing, Marilyn Goulston, Reginald Clark, and Divinah Payne,

MBTA Representatives:

Lt. D. O'Connor, Michael Festa, Michael Hulak, Paul Fitzgerald, and Carol Joyce-Harrington, Paul Strobis, Ron Mariani, Alex Murkinson, Erik Scheier, Kathy Cox, Bob Rizzo, and Tangela Burgess

Vendor Representatives:

Joint Venture – Victor Herrera, Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. (GLSS) – Ron Airey,

Kiessling Transit, Inc. – M. Claire DiPillo and Bob Tobin and Veteran Transportation Services – John Tuttle

Central Transportation Planning /MPO Staff:

Janie Guion, Sree Allam, Kate Parker - O'Toole, Walter Bennett, Seth Asante, Pam Wolfe, Ben Rasmussen, Haynes Morrison, Maureen Kelley, and Eve Gauthier

Agenda

- Self-introduction of the members, friends and guests
- Reading of the Agenda
- Members were informed the meeting was being taped

Chairman Beaulieu Report

He discussed his activities for the months of April and May, which included his participation in the following events:

- He attended a MetroWest meeting on the development of the new Regional Transportation Authority
- On May 16 he attended a Safety Meeting that focused on Multiple Chemical Sensitivity; Information will be distributed in the June mailing
- Investigating a commuter rail complaint on behalf of a consumer

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

The April 25 minutes were not presented.

Announcements:

- Kate Parker-O'toole asked for volunteers for photos for the AACT brochure; all contact information should be given to Janie Guion, the AACT Coordinator
- Kathryn Piccard announced that AACT would be celebrating its 30-year anniversary; anyone with ideas or suggestions should bring them to the next meeting
- M. MacNab announced that the MBTA has hired the new Assistant General Manager for Systemwide Accessibility, Gary Talbot

Old Business: None was presented.

New Business: None was presented.

Public Comment:

A consumer commented that THE RIDE drivers are not skilled at reading road maps. She is concerned that she is always asked to give directions. She asked if THE RIDE drivers are given map-reading classes that include how to locate downtown Boston. Are drivers given sensitivity training to help them be sensitive to persons with disabilities?

The Joint Venture representative stated that drivers are given a map reading class. Drivers are given as much time to learn how to read maps during orientation as needed.

B. Haynes explained that all questions are valid but should be asked at the appropriate time during the meeting. All questions concerning paratransit or fixed route services should be asked during the reports of vendors or MBTA staff.

A consumer asked if there were any thought to sharing THE RIDE area with another vendor serviced by Veterans Transportation since they cover a large territory. Chairman Beaulieu suggested that should be taken up with the MBTA directly

M. Goulston wanted to know why AACT meeting announcements are not posted in THE RIDE vehicles.

B. Haynes added that the AACT Coordinator at CTPS produces these flyers and distribute to all four vendors. The vendors are then responsible to distribute these flyers to THE RIDE drivers to post in the vehicles. Passengers have the right to comment anytime if they see no announcements in THE RIDE vehicles.

P. Downy asked how would the visually impaired locate schedules at stations.

J. Marshall commented that customer service agents (CAS) have shared with him that their moral is low and feel they will be replaced.

MBTA Bus Operations

Erik Scheier, Project Director of MBTA Operations, shared with the AACT members, friends, and guests that the MBTA is embarking on a new initiative. The MBTA is trying to improve the transfers between subway and bus systems for consumers. The MBTA is taking advantage of the new automated fare system to enable customers who use CharlieCards or Link Passes to transfer from subway to bus for free. Many customers are not aware of this feature. Of the 50 major subway stations, the MBTA is targeting 10 to 30 stations that have bus connections. These maps are large-scale, 4'x4', and resemble system subway spider maps. These maps show the neighborhood street pattern and the transit routes. The MBTA would like consumers to use these maps as a guide to locate buses, streets, landmarks, and the proximity of their destination. Consumers may be encouraged to walk to their destination after viewing the new maps; perhaps the consumer may find that the location is closer to the station than realized.

He then asked for questions.

D. Summerfield: Why did it take six months to replace incorrect spider maps at North Station?

E. Scherer: I did try to get an answer. I have no answer.

Consumer: I have approached an MBTA CSA with a simple question. Why are there no schedules in the kiosk? The CSA was not prepared to answer questions and was rude. Employees should not be so confrontational.

E. Scherer: The goal is for all kiosks to have schedules. All booths should have schedules.

R. Mahoney: Can you get the buses on a 15-minute schedule?

E. Scherer: It depends on the bus.

M. MacNab: I was told that landmarks such as hospitals would be identified on these maps.

E. Scherer: Yes.

MBTA/OTA Paratransit Contract Operations Report

Bob 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.

Highlights:

- The General Manager, Daniel Grabuskas, has hired the new Assistant General Manager for Accessibility Systemwide, Gary Talbot, and believes the group will be pleased with his experience on issues of accessibility
- Mr. Rizzo thanked AACT but most notably Jim Oliver for his persistence pursuing THE RIDE's new telephone payment option for credit or debit card transactions
- Responding to a question from the March 28 meeting concerning the Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) system, he commented that the Joint Venture (JV) and Veterans Transportation Services (VTS) have the GPS system in their vehicle fleets; Kiessling Transit, Inc., and Greater Lynn Senior Services may be testing one; JV and VTS have the device installed in THE RIDE fleet. It is an additional after-market device that provides directions both visually on the screen and audibly to assist drivers in locating addresses and landmarks. It has been in testing for a few months. The MBTA gave permission for both firms to go forward after discussions at THE RIDE Safety Committee meeting. The testing proved that operations were improved greatly by both companies; the performance is measured before and after installation.

Report on OTA activities:

- Kiessling Transit on behalf of the MBTA, provided shuttle services for the 2007 Walk for Hunger. Vendors are asked to provide this service for worthwhile endeavors in the community
- Staff from Kiessling and Greater Lynn Services investigated and resolved consumers' vehicle access issues
- Engineering personnel from Bus Operations visited the home of two consumers to obtain input on THE RIDE 's new van vehicles' accessibility
- Staff attended a planning meeting of THE RIDE to discuss the new payment plan by debit or credit card transactions
- Staff participation in the Rutgers University and the National Transportation Institute web seminar on paratransit policies concerning: Cancellations and No-Show trends
- There was a meeting with representatives of MBTA Technology Dept and StrataGen Systems to discuss the future enhancements of THE RIDE computer system
- THE RIDE Safety Committee meeting featured a seminar on Multiple Chemical

Sensitivity awareness

Service Updates

- Ridership increased 11.2% for the month of April compared to April 2006, and year-to-date (YTD) ridership increased 8.6%; 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% / 92.3% (within 15 minutes of scheduled pick-up time) YTD
- Complaints decreased by 11.4% from April 2006. YTD complaints continue to decrease by 12%. During the month of April the complaint level remained below 200 for the 25th consecutive month. YTD average is 7.6 complaints per 10,000 trips requested, or 1.04 complaints per thousand trips delivered
- YTD vehicular accidents are up 8.4%. The next RIDE Safety Committee will meet at Kiessling Transit on June 28, 2007 from 11 AM to 1 PM

He then asked for questions.

D. Payne: When will THE RIDE service contract end for the vendors?

R. Rizzo: The contracts were awarded in 2005 and will end on June 30, 2009.

R. Chapman: A consumer wants to file a complaint against customer service. Should she call your office?

R. Rizzo: The best way to file the complaint is with the Office for Transportation Access.

Consumer: What can be done regarding wait-time with a vendor for THE RIDE?

R. Rizzo: Call the Office for Transportation Access during regular hours at 617 222-5123 or after 5 PM call 1-800-533-6282. Staff is available.

M. Goulston: What are your plans to deal with persons who deliberately are no-shows?

R. Rizzo: We need to get the advice of the AACT and the other consumers.

J. Grant: I have heard a rumor that new hires are bringing interpreters to THE RIDE training classes.

R. Rizzo: I will check into this.

Consumer: What is the Internet address for THE RIDE?

C. J. Harrington: THERIDE@MBTA.COM

A. Mannerson: I am having problems with the new debit system.

R. Rizzo: If anyone is having trouble with the new debit system for THE RIDE please call OTA at (617-222-5123) and we will work with you on an individual basis.

The report was accepted.

Paratransit (THE RIDE) Coordinator Report

Paul Barresi gave a brief report that included the following:

- Most consumers complaints have been about drivers, scheduling or promptness of pickup and drop-off
- Consumers filing complaints should remember the following: be accurate and detailed with complaints

He then asked for questions.

M. Kalashian: Has anyone ever suggested a separate telephone lines for dispatch and reservations?

P. Barresi: I know of no complaint concerning this issue.

The report was accepted.

Vendors' Reports

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

Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. (GLSS)

Ron Airey, Executive Director, read from his report for the month of April.

He then asked for questions.

Consumer: What time is the Passenger Assistance Training?

R. Airey: It starts at 9 AM.

The report was accepted.

Kiessling Transit, Inc (KTI)

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

She then asked for questions.

M. Kalashian: Why is your company experiencing so many missed trips?

C. DiPillo: Oftentimes the consumers have found another way home. This is considered a missed trip. We may be running late.

The report was accepted.

Veterans Transportation Services, Inc. (VTS)

John Tuttle, Operations Manager, read from his report for the month of March.

He then asked for questions.

M. Kalashian: Who makes the decision on what discipline is given to drivers?

J. Tuttle: VTS wants to deliver the best service that we can to the consumers. It serves no purpose to fire drivers. Many times there are extenuating circumstances. If I feel a driver needs to be fired, I have no problem in doing so. If the ultimate disciplinary action needs to be taken, I will do so.

Consumer: What is your e-mail address?

J. Tuttle: You can reach us by Veteranstransportation.com or Jtuttle@veteranstransportation.com

The report was accepted.

Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN (JV)

Victor Herrera, Safety Manager, read from his report for the month of April. Reporting for Carlton Jones, he stated that Mr. Jones would return next month. He also congratulated Ben Haynes for his winning the AACT Chairmanship. He also responded to a consumer question concerning the AACT flyers not being posted in vans. He stated the all drivers are given flyers of AACT meetings to post in vehicles. He encouraged consumers to call his office to file a complaint when they don't see AACT flyers in JV vehicles.

He then asked for questions.

D. Payne: The figures on the number of complaints filed are wrong.

V. Herrera: Someone else produced the report. I am only reading what was presented to me.

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. She congratulated the new AACT Board member and thanked all who devote their time to participate in meetings. She is looking forward to working with everyone.

Reported on the following items:

- Gary Talbot has joined the MBTA as the new Assistant General Manager for Systemwide Accessibility
- D-Line inbound and outbound will be getting nine mini-high level platforms over the next 15 months
- Major track work on the Green Line, Riverside Branch D-Line, will begin in late June. This extensive work will give the #3 low-floor Green Line cars access to tracks when completed
- The new #8 low-floor Green Line cars will connect with a Kinki car on the Boston College, Heath Street and Riverside

- AACT members were encouraged to attend meetings on both the MBTA Program for Mass Transportation (PMT), a 25-year plan for public transit, and the MBTA 2008 Service Plan
- New vehicle purchase continues.

She then asked for questions.

P. Downy: Some of the new low-floor cars have no railings to help you board the train.

K. Cox: I will research this.

Consumer: Are drivers trained to be aware of persons with service animals?

K. Cox: Drivers are instructed during training to make sure that all doors are cleared of passengers before closing.

K. Piccard: My concern is that the snow and ice should be removed for consumers using the mini-high platforms during the winter months.

K. Cox: This is a good time to deal with these matters.

The report was accepted.

Fixed Route Coordinator Report

Frank Taverna gave a brief report of his participation in a bus operator training and bus operations video. After contacting Ron Mariani the video will be made available upon request. He is planning to monitor South Boston and other communities for illegally parked cars at bus stops.

He then asked for questions. There were none. 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 on the following:

- 122 violations were written for the month of April 2007
- Lt. Fitzgerald informed Lt. O'Connor that the police academy staff is ADA certified by the National Adjusters Training Council
- He reported that the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office has two representatives that are certified and perform the training
- There is smoking on the commuter rail platforms; the response from commuter rail personnel is that there is nothing that they can do with this issue; Lt. Vinterilli stated he would communicate with commuter rail personnel to deal with this issue

He then asked for questions

M. Kalashian: My mother witnessed a conductor smoking on the platform at the Haverhill Station. Where can I report this infraction?

Lt. O'Connor: I will need to do research. It would also help if we knew the date and time.

J. Oliver: A survey was done concerning safety on the subway in Boston. Channel 5 reported that 60 percent of the people riding said that safety was a real concern. I was under the impression that more security had been added.

Lt. O'Connor: We have added additional officers to begin on June 2.

R. Clark: What is being done for the safety of bus operators?

Lt. O'Connor: We do have officers riding the buses. We can't be on all buses but when we are aware we do patrol.

The report was accepted.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM.