

THE ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA MEETING MINUTES

June 25, 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, Lynda Hoffman, Pat Lyden, James White, Elizabeth Dillard, Cheryl Ravalli, Mark Kalashian, Ven Srinivasan, Joe Belforte, Kathy Mooney, Lillian Haynes, Isabel McDonald, Kathryn Pic`card, Mike Warshawsky, Reginald Clark, Thomas Gilbert, Ken Smith, Tammy Perrault; Lea-Ann Markunis, and Marilyn MacNab.

Agencies

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission–April Maselli and Kevin Farrell, Massachusetts Office on Disability–Kathy Roach, Federal Transportation Administration–Peggy Griffin, and Greater Boston Legal Services–Valerie Christophilos.

MBTA Representatives

Kathy Cox, Carl Merrick, Bob Rizzo, Ron Mariani, Mike Hulak, Michael Festa, Carol Joyce-Harrington, Jeff Ganneville, Dan Smith, Anna Barry, Alex Murkinson, and Paul Fitzgerald.

Vendor Representatives

Joint Venture–Albert Maldonado, GLSS–Maria Colameta and Jacquelyn Hunt, Kiessling Transit Inc.–Roger Kiessling, VTS–John Tuttle and Carol Frazier, and B. Haynes Consultants–Ben Haynes and Philip Beaulieu.

MBCR Representatives

Jack Leary, Neil Shea, and Lloyd Fairweather.

CTPS Support Staff

Janie Guion and Kate Wall.

Chairman James Oliver called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM.

Introductions and reading of the agenda.

AACT Chairman's Report

Chairman Oliver made announcements and summarized the past month's activities:

He knows that everyone joins him in wishing Ben and Lillian Haynes a happy 32 anniversary.

Chairman Oliver thanked Ms. Cheryl Ravalli for her work with the Executive Board during his first term. He regretted that she was unable to get on the ballot for the recent AACT election. Her term expires on June 30, 2003.

Chairman Oliver requested that all vendors add to their monthly reports the dates and times of the training schedules; this would keep the AACT members informed.

The B. Haynes Consultants informed AACT that the MBTA General Manager has instructed that his staff observes all vendors' trainings.

- June 2—He attended the Water Transportation Week celebration at Rowes Wharf.
- June 11—He attended KTI vendor training. THE RIDE driver did not assist him from the vehicle, but did his paperwork instead. An OTA employee who was there observed what was happening spoke to that driver, and within 20 minutes the driver was suspended. Vendors were remind to inform drivers that this is a door-to-door service.
- June 13—The Board met with Bob Rizzo to review the AACT Focus Report.
- June 19—He with the Travel Training Selection Committee.
- June 26—The AACT Board met with Rick Leary, of the MBTA's Director of Vehicle and Rail Engineering, and Anne Herzenberg, Chief Operations Officer, to discuss changes and improvements with the No. 5 Blue Line cars.

Chairman Oliver asked for questions.

R. Kiessling: Would B. Haynes Consultants like a separate notice about the vendor training schedules?

B. Haynes: The notice to AACT is acceptable as long as the notice is provided in a timely manner.

The report was accepted.

MBTA/OTA Fixed-Route Services Report

Kathy Cox, Manager of Fixed-Route Services for the MBTA's Office of Transportation Access, read the attached handout about the following:

Ms. Cox thanked the AACT members for taking time to view the new Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) pilot bus parked at the Charles Street entrance of the State Transportation Building. The features of the bus are a low-floor style and a ramp in the front instead of a lift in the rear.

There will be pictures taken of consumers using the ramp with three styles of wheelchairs and a walker. The photos will help in the future instruction of trainers as well as bus operators.

Ms Cox provided follow-up to a question from the May 28 meeting on whether the Lynn busway was moving. The Mount Vernon Street busway at Central Square (Lynn) will no longer be available to the MBTA. The new location will be the driveway of the Lynn Commuter Rail Station parking garage, which is located two blocks west of Mount Vernon Street, at Market and Broad streets. Ms. Cox asked the AACT members continue to inform her about anything they may have heard through the rumor mill and bring the information to AACT meetings. This will help her to be informed and check out the information at the same time.

Renovations of the elevators at Park Street Station will begin on Monday, July 7. The Red Line center platform and Green Line lobby will be closed for approximately four weeks. The outage will be publicized in the media, the Elevator Update Line (617-222-2828), the MBTA website (www.mbta.com), signs on trains, public announcements, flyers, and the specialized list of agencies that was provided by AACT. Alternative travel instructions will be publicized as well. Station officials will be available to assist passengers during the outage.

Construction of the Charles Street/MGH Station on the Red Line is slated to begin this month. The project will include major accessibility improvements of the elevators, detectable platform warning strips, as new station entrances, and structural repairs.

Malden Station is now under construction for accessibility improvements. The station will be closed some nights and weekends. That will continue for the duration of the project. There will be an accessible shuttle bus service substituting for the Orange Line during these closings to accommodate passengers at the station during this time. The construction work is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Beginning with the new June 21 summer schedule the MBTA has implemented a new policy regarding the announcement of routes and destinations on board buses. Operators are now required to announce the route and destination at the curb when the door opens.

MBTA Bus Operations has asked that AACT submit public service announcements regarding access and senior services that would be helpful to passengers riding the MBTA. Any suggestions should be forwarded to the AACT Chairman.

Ms. Cox asked for questions.

M. Kalashian: Will the renovations at the Malden Center Station have any impact on commuter rail service?

K. Cox: No. The impact will not have an effect on commuter rail service.

M. Warshawsky: Did you say that both of the elevators would be replaced at Park Street Station?

K. Cox: Yes.

M. Warshawsky: Including the one that goes from the mezzanine to the street?

K. Cox: That one will be done sometime later in the summer. The first to be replaced will be from the mezzanine/lobby to the Red Line platform. MBTA has been instructed by the state to put in new features.

K. Pic`card: Why are there no functioning wheelchair lifts on the Route 93 bus from Sullivan Station to Downtown Crossing?

K. Cox: It's a quick route. It should have a lift at all times. Please call us when you have problems with any route. The only time a bus would leave the garage is when there are no other buses with one. Those buses should be taken out of service as soon as a bus with a working lift becomes available.

R. Clark: Why are buses not pulling into the curb at Ruggles Station? Instead drivers pull up to the far side of the wall.

K. Cox: Yes, this is a safety issue. I will speak with Bus Operations.

G. Thomas: Is there anything that can be done to insist that hand-held microphones should be used for better sound?

K. Cox: I will pass along your suggestions.

The report was accepted.

Fixed-Route Coordinator's Report

Lynda Hoffman, Fixed-Route Coordinator for AACT, gave a brief report, including the following:

- The Hingham dock RampRider is out of order on the Commuter Boat Line.
- Route #39 will no longer exist once the restoration of the Arborway Line is completed.
- To comply with the ADA, the MBTA will add more stops on the Arborway Line.
- Construction on the B and C Lines has been delayed due to a construction company failure.
- The Design and Construction presentations list for the next six months of AACT meetings has been completed.

Ms. Hoffman asked for questions. There were none. The report was accepted.

MBTA/OTA Paratransit Contract Operations. In the absence of Bob Rizzo, Carl Merrick, who read highlights from the OTA Paratransit activity report, presented this report. Please see the attached MBTA statistical report.

- June 6—OTA staff participated in a panel discussion at the North Shore Career Center in Salem. Work on THE RIDE RFP continues. Deadline for submission of Proposals is August 12th.
- June 11—OTA staff observed driver training.
- June 12—MBTA Deputy Chief Operating Officer and B. Rizzo participated in a site visit to NYC Transit Paratransit Group. THE RIDE provides 4,600 trips per weekday. NYC Paratransit provides 11,500.
- June 13—OTA staff met with the AACT Board to review THE RIDE Focus Report.
- June 19—OTA staff hosted a delegation from the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Metropolitan Bus Authority, and Paratransit Services with the help of VTS on short notice.
- June 24—OTA staff, along with Joint Venture, participated in a presentation at the Norwood Adult Day Care Center at Norwood Caritas Hospital.

Ongoing: OTA staff continues to monitor THE RIDE service by sampling the daily RIDE customers. They continue to get positive feedback. An occasional complaint is sometimes registered. When there's a complaint the OTA staff will follow-up with the consumer's vendor to address the issue.

Service Updates—Good News:

Ridership was up 8.10% over last May (from 98,219 to 106,175*). Year-to-date ridership is up 6.24% (1,005,424 to 1,068,177). May's NA is much lower than last year's at 0.05%. This is a 79.25% improvement compared to last year, when the NA rate was 0.24 %. Year-to-date the NA rate is down 56.80% (from 0.35% to 0.14 %). Year-to-date there is an 8.10% decrease in complaints (from 1,543 to 1,418). Year-to-date the on-time performance for the month was 98.7%. Vehicle accidents decreased by 3.5% during May of fiscal year 2003 compared to May of fiscal year 2002 (from 29 to 25).

Bad News: There was an 11.38% increase in complaints over the same period last year (from 123 to 137). Year-to-date, accidents are about the same, up from 299 to 300.

** This is the highest ridership month on record. There were 105,472 trips in March 1998. That was before the areas changed and many of today's passengers receive direct trips that were previously charged as two trips and required transferring vendors and vehicles.*

Mr. Merrick asked for questions.

T. Perrault: I don't have a copy of your report.

C. Merrick: This report is not for distribution. Only the Chair gets a copy. This is for the purpose of recording the minutes.

K. Pic`card: Did compliments go up or down?

C. Merrick: I don't have those figures. I will get back to you.

J. White: Compliments were up.

C. Ravalli: Is there any information on THE RIDE service for the Fourth of July concert on the Esplanade?

C. Merrick: Yes. We are just finalizing with the Massachusetts State Police. Additional criminal checks are being done for anyone who will be working in the secured areas.

L. Hoffman: Information can be found at www.mbta.com.

The report was accepted.

AACT Paratransit Coordinator's Report

Jim White reported on the following issues:

- All RIDE vehicles should have updated meeting flyers or the yearly calendar.
- On-time performance.
- April complaints.
- Vendors getting serious with warnings to driver.
- Reminder of vendor training at Joint Venture will be held on June 26, 2003 and Veterans Transportation Services on June 28, 2003.

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

Vendors' Reports for May 2003

Joint Venture (TTI/YCN)

Albert Maldonado, General Manager, read from the attached report for the month of May.

Mr. Maldonado then asked for questions.

Chairman Oliver: What is the difference between “difficulty in getting a ride” and “scheduling problems”?

A. Maldonado: The first involves negotiations regarding the time, and the second one involves delays.

J. Belforti: What do you think can be done to get consumers to be on time for THE RIDE?

A. Maldonado: Much of the time it is a communication problem between the consumer and the reservationist. Many issues determine how the services are impacted. Many times you have no control over what might cause a delay.

B. Haynes: I have question about your statistical data. You scheduled 20,000 trips—13,000 completed and 4,000 cancelled. These figures do not add up to 20,000 trips schedule by your company.

A. Maldonado: The number of trips requested/scheduled were 20,362 minus 4,583, minus 644, which account for the no-shows. All these numbers will add up to 20,000.

B. Haynes: I'm still not clear on your figures. Are you saying that trips completed do not count for late pickups?

A. Maldonado: The 13,708 trips do not include the cancellations and the no-shows.

J. White: Are you aware that your dispatchers' sheets do not designate how many are in wheelchairs?

A. Maldonado: Yes. We do indicate the type of customers, wheelchairs, and PCA by symbols.

J. White: Perhaps the symbols have been dropped from the sheet or the drivers are not familiar with the symbols.

A. Maldonado: I will look into it when I return to the office.

The report was accepted.

Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc.

Jacquelyn Hunt read from the attached report for the month of May.

She then asked for questions.

I. McDonald: Whenever I use THE RIDE I have been charged two tickets for what used to be a one-ticket ride. This has been going on for a long time

J. Hunt: I will need to check the records back at the office.

The report was accepted.

Kiessling Transit, Inc.

Roger Kiessling, Manager, read from the attached report for the month of May

He then asked for questions.

J. White: Can you explain the increase in the 30-minutes late category?

R. Kiessling: We now have many new drivers who are not familiar with the area.

The report was accepted.

Veterans Transportation Services, Inc.

John Tuttle, Operations Manager, read from the attached report for the month of May.

He then asked for questions.

M. Kalashian: Why does your office give me such a tight pickup time that I wind up being late?

Chairman Oliver: No personal complaints at an AACT meeting.

M. Kalashian: This is a systemic issue.

Chairman Oliver: This will be the last time you bring in a personal complaint.

B. Haynes: Can you identify from time of pickup to time of drop-off how much time you have as a vendor to keep a passenger on the vehicle and what constitutes a late drop-off?

J. Tuttle: A drop-off that is later than 15-minutes after the scheduled drop-off.

R. Clark: When THE RIDE is more than an hour late it becomes very chaotic.

J. Tuttle: I apologize for that. Every day is different. Things happen on the roads that we have no control over, such as the opening of the new Krispy Kreme Donuts in Medford. Traffic was jammed for 1 1/2 miles. Sometimes a truck will jack-knife on the highway or turning over spilling fruit and there is nothing we can do. Once we are aware of a problem like that, we do our best.

K. Pic`card: There are some things you can't anticipate. Why not check the weather report? If it's going to rain you can add five or ten minutes into the schedule per trip.

J. Tuttle: There are many days when rain is predicted and it doesn't rain. We also have to stick to a tight schedule in order to provide rides to all the customers. There are times when all of our vehicles are out on the road.

K. Pic`card: Next month I would like all vendors to report on their compliments as well as complaints. You do things well.

J. Tuttle: Thank you.

P. Beaulieu: Are drivers still getting defensive driver training? I see that your accident rate is very high.

J. Tuttle: Absolutely. We bring in those drivers for more training. The fender benders that are the driver's fault are a wake-up call. We have been known to fire people for unsafe driving practices.

M. Kalashian: Why aren't the taxi drivers able to assist blind customers? Isn't this a part of their training?

J. Tuttle: Taxi drivers have the same training as everyone else. We are very serious about providing safe, secure customer assistance for everyone. During the training each person is blindfolded and escorted in the manner of someone who is blind in and out of a vehicle. We take the training very seriously.

The report was accepted.

Chairman Oliver: I asked just before any reports were presented that all vendors inform the AACT members when their training programs are scheduled. The only vendor who did this was VTS. Will each vendor give us dates and times of your upcoming training?

Joint Venture: We have none planned.

GLSS: We have one three weeks from last Saturday. Your office has a list of all training sessions.

Kiessling: We have none planned.

P. Beaulieu: GLSS has one on July 12.

B. Haynes: The rationale for announcing the training dates at these meetings is for all AACT members to find out about the training. Not all members get the list of training dates.

M. Kalashian: You try very hard to make sure that this meeting is run efficiently. I have noticed today that in the area with the official staff that personal conversations are occurring, and beepers and cell phones are ringing. This makes it very difficult to hear the reports.

Chairman Oliver: I'm not aware of this happening. Please no talking and turn-off all phones and beepers. Due to a change in the printed agenda, the reports are ahead of schedule so the MBTA Police Report will take place before the break.

MBTA Police Report

Officer Matthew Haney gave a brief report, including the following topics:

- Blocked busways—The MBTA is removing all illegally parked cars from busways. Your calls are working; please continue. The MBTA hopes to completely eliminate the problem.
- A report of smoking at Haverhill Station is being investigated.
- Chief Carter, of the MBTA Police, has released his new action plan to the public. It included breaking up the department into five geographical districts, similar to the Boston Police Department's system. All the modes that are in a district will be included: bus, commuter rail, rapid transit, and the Silver Line. The plan also includes an honors program for youth. The youth who qualify will accompany officers on patrols and then get a college scholarship at the end of the program.

He then asked for questions.

T. Gilbert: Could the MBTA set up an academy where citizens could be trained so they could go out with the officers? Once a week, two or three hours during that time.

Officer Haney: I will pass the information on to Chief Carter.

J. White: There's a bus stop in Hyde Park near a Start Market that's really dangerous. Two people have been killed there crossing the street. There's a new traffic light now for pedestrians, but the MBTA bus drivers and private vehicles from the Star Market parking area are running the red light. Could you please look into the situation?

M. Haney: Yes, I'll have a cruiser go out there for a few days to assess the situation.

B. Haynes: When does the MBTA Police Department have training? Do the officers also ride the different MBTA modes and at what percentage?

M. Haney: The training usually takes place in the summertime. It will probably be between mid-July and mid-August this year. Forty officers at a time have a week of training. For the statistics about the percentage of officers riding the train, I'll have to speak with the crime analysts and bring the information to next month's AACT meeting.

M. Haney: I'd like to caution everybody during the Fourth of July that there are large crowds. Please beware of pickpockets.

Anna Barry, Director of Railroad Operations of the MBTA

Ms. Barry with a brief statement about the switch from Amtrak Commuter Service to the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Rail Company (MBCR) on July 1. The new company will provide commuter rail service for the MBTA. Ms. Barry stated that the MBTA spent three years attempting to put together a contract that would allow for new and improved commuter rail service. The new contract requires that MBCR comply not only with the minimal accessibility laws but also that they provide the maximum possible accessibility. MBCR was hired because they are a respected company with capable management. They will take over the existing workforce. Change will not be instantaneous. It will take time to change the culture. The MBTA is expecting that MBCR will provide customer service, civil rights for everyone, and proper and safe transportation services for all. Ms. Barry than introduced Mr. Jack Leary, Managing Director of MBCR.

Jack Leary, Managing Director of the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad Company

Mr. Leary introduced his colleague, Neil Shea, head of their customer service department. He briefly talked about the plans and programs of MBCR and was eager to answer the many questions from AACT. Mr. Leary feels that MBCR being anchored here in Boston will help make their operation more successful. He and his colleagues are committed to making sure that the best service is given by MBCR. The company prides itself on the best customer service for the

riding public. He is looking forward to working with AACT. He highlighted the following topics:

- Worldwide company
- Accessibility issues
- On-going training
- AACT feedback
- Going beyond the standard ADA requirements
- No stranded passengers

Mr. Leary and Mr. Shea then asked for questions.

Chairman Oliver: How is your organization going to control smoking in non-smoking areas, not only by the public but also by your employees?

J. Leary: Existing employees developed their habits over years. It will involve changing the culture, using training, monitoring, and enforcement.

N. Shea: We can be more visible, be out and about. We can have poster campaigns. We have good people we're inheriting.

Chairman Oliver: AACT is willing to assist you with your training. Just let us know when and where.

J. White: You said you'd try to coordinate THE RIDE with commuter rail service. Could you set up an 800 number so that people in wheelchairs won't feel stranded?

J. Leary: Providing accessible service is what I was referring to. Establishing an 800 number is easy, but there's lots of construction going on now. Also you can "write right to the top." I don't want to duplicate that service.

K. Farrell: I'm from the Mass Rehab Commission, and am a 28-year commuter of the Lowell Line. There were two recent situations one was a fatality on the Wilmington-Billerica Line, and the other involved train problems. Do you have emergency evacuation procedures for non-ambulatory people?

J. Leary: You raised a very good point. In these cases, local fire or police departments take over. They become the primary resource in these cases. The commuter rail operation becomes secondary. I just don't have a good answer.

N. Shea: We can never assume that everyone is able-bodied, without disabilities.

A. Barry: I don't think we've incorporated lessons learned. Our first task includes a re-write of all emergency-response procedures. Transit cars are equipped with stretchers, but the commuter rail is not downtown near help. We've been working on ways to solve those issues.

B. Haynes: Are your training materials and your agenda for training available in accessible format?

L. Fairweather: We'll make sure we work with you. We are willing to work in partnership to develop the materials.

M. Kalashian: Is it true that you're taking over the entire existing workforce? Will you be firing staff against whom many complaints have been filed?

J. Leary: Yes. The existing staff consists of 1600 union members and 125 supervisors who are non-agreement employees. At midnight June 30, they become employees of MBCR.

Chairman Oliver: Will you do a better job at answering complaints than Amtrak did?

N. Shea: I've been looking at our complaint procedure for a couple of weeks to change it— not just say "sorry," but to figure out what they can do about it. They'll need to link with the MBTA.

L. Hoffman: I have a suggestion about your emergency service. You could have equipment similar to the Green Line's mobile wayside lifts—maybe a bridgeplate to the car.

K. Farrell: Do you plan to put portable defibrillators on the trains in case of heart attacks?

A. Barry: We made decisions that we won't deploy them on the trains but we'll have them at seven stations and during training.

M. Warshawsky: Do you have any jurisdiction over which commuter stations will be made accessible? Quite a few aren't.

J. Leary: Our contract calls for maintenance and operations. That's MBTA policy.

M. Festa (via sign language interpreter): I'm responsible for access programming across the whole MBTA system, including the commuter rail. The ADA and the State Architecture Access Board are both responsible in terms of the whole system, not just key station accessibility.

R. Clark: During the changeover, will there be someone there to assist disabled passengers who need help, for example, on the Fitchburg Line?

J. Leary: We want a smooth transition from June 30 to July 1, and then we'll see improvements.

C. Merrick: He meant accessible assistance.

J. Leary: On July 1st, everything will be the same as today.

T. Gilbert: On the commuter rail trains, the bathroom facilities are dirty and smelly, and the doors are jammed. The public address systems often don't work.

J. Leary: Those are high on our ongoing priority maintenance list.

A. Barry: Our "coach program" that begins in 2004 will involve rebuilding safety parts of cars and the toilets. The maintenance staff will take care of the smell right away.

M. Kalashian: Some conductors don't make stop announcements when the public address systems don't work. What ideas do you have to get these people to do it once you take over?

N. Shea: I don't directly oversee the conductors. I'll put pressure on the training managers, etc. I'll encourage them to report back on good, as well as poor, performance of conductors. The contract puts pressure on us to succeed.

Chairman Oliver: Question #1 from the letter is about the top administrative staff and their background. Could you please make a list available to AACT?

J. Leary: Yes. If it is okay with the MBTA.

M. Festa (via sign language interpreter): Oftentimes on commuter rail, there will be engines that break down, switching problems, etc., and the train just sits there for 30 or 40 minutes. Sometimes no announcement is made about what's going on, and if there's an audible announcement, a deaf person must rely on others. There are no LED signs on trains, just in stations. Do you have any plans to address this?

N. Shea: I'm not sure if I can answer that but we can always make the suggestion. Back home in London, we've started training conductors in sign language. They haven't all gotten trained yet. Here at the MBTA you have some 350 conductors. It is something we can look into with the MBTA.

M. Festa: Right now, people can't even answer deaf people because there's been no announcement, even when the train is sitting there for 30 or 40 minutes.

N. Shea: A conductor walking through the train would possibly help.

Chairman Oliver thanked Mr. Leary and his staff and look forward to working with MBCR in the near future.

Old/New Business and Announcements

Chairman Oliver encouraged the AACT members to view the new CNG bus at the Charles Street side of the Transportation building and to make comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:28 PM.