
THE ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA MEETING MINUTES

June 28, 2006

NOTABLES

- Please sign in at all 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
- Keep your attendance current to ensure your right to vote or hold office
- Handouts should be distributed at least fifteen minutes before the meetings

Access
Advisory
Committee to the
Massachusetts
Bay
Transportation
Authority



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ATTENDANCE

Steve Skiffington, Marilyn Goulston, John Kane, Mark Kalashian, James White, Dorothy Maben, Pam Rogers, Angela Mannerson, Ben Haynes, Lillian Haynes, Phil Beaulieu, Marilyn MacNab, Kathryn Piccard, Jim Oliver, Betty J. King, Thomas Gilbert, Reggie Clark, Frank Taverna, Phil Semans, Richard Nurt, Anne-Marie Leonard, Jeff Grant, Don Summerfield, Richard Mahoney, Karen Nurt, Cheri Lieberman, Chickie Abdallah and Paul Barresi

Agency Representatives:

Sharon Harrison – Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Richard Chapman – Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

MBTA Representatives:

Carol Joyce-Harrington, Michael Festa, Robert Rizzo, Michael Hulak, Kathy Cox, Ron Mariani, Alex Murkinson, Dorothy Winn, Carl Merrick, Paul Strobis, Tangela Burgess, and Eric Scheier

Vendor Representatives:

Joint Venture – Carlton Jones
GLSS – Jacquelyn Dunlop and Ray Croten
Kiessling Transit, Inc. – M. Claire DiPillo
Veteran Transportation Services – Dan MacInnis, Carol Frazier and John Tuttle

Interprets:

Amy McQuiggan and Marcia Gardiner

Central Transportation Planning Staff:

Janie Guion and Pam Wolfe

AGENDA

- Self-introduction of the audience
- Reading of the agenda
- Approval of April and May minutes with corrections

Corrections to the May 24 minutes are:

R. Rizzo paratransit corrections:
Highlights should read:

Page 6

Line 2

- Notices are being distributed by THE RIDE drivers to alert consumers of the new mailing address of the Revenue Department

Line 15

- Greater Lynn Senior Service has named Ron Airey as its interim director during its search for a permanent director

Page 7

Line 1

This equipment still is not 100 percent accurate.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Beaulieu: There was none.

Announcements:

Chairman Beaulieu informed members that the AACT brochure is in the process of being updated. Photographs are needed with all styles of mobility devices. Photographs will be taken with all modes of transportation. Volunteers are needed so members were asked to sign-up.

Old Business: None was presented. **New Business:** None was presented.

AACT Fixed Route Coordinator Report

Frank Taverna provided the following comments:

- He participated in ADA training for MBTA operators at the Charlestown garage
- He was unable to participate in the hands-on training due to a conflict with transportation
- As of today the Quincy Center elevator #810 is out-of-service

He then asked for questions and comments.

B. Haynes: Have you access to complaints filed by consumers to the Office for Transportation Access concerning service, treatment, or the condition of the vehicle?

F. Taverna: Yes, I have them. I am in the process of reviewing them.

J. Grant: What is your reason for not observing the hands-on training?

F. Taverna: It was a timing conflict. THE RIDE arrived as scheduled.

M. MacNab: Have you heard about a problem at the Sullivan Square Station?

F. Taverna: No I have not.

The report was accepted.

THE RIDE Coordinator Report

Paul Barresi provided the following comments:

- He participated in two passenger assistance training classes
- Consumers who are users of THE RIDE are welcome to participate in any of the passenger assistant training classes
- Consumers were urged to file complaints about services when incidents occur

He then asked for questions and comments

J. White: What are the new tie-down guidelines for power wheelchairs on THE RIDE vehicles?

Chairman Beaulieu: All vendors are very current with the guidelines; these types of issues are responded to in the monthly safety meetings and are shared among vendors.

The report was accepted.

MBTA General Manager Daniel A. Grabauskas

General Manager stated that from day one on the job, accessibility has been at the top on his priority list. He is particularly concerned about elevators and about escalators; about a great ride service, about fixed route services, and not just about paratransit issues. It's about subway stations and making modes accessible to all people. This is his goal and the standard he has set forth. He introduced two people who are supportive in helping him carry out his mission. The first is the new Deputy Chief Operating Officer Rick Leary and Mr. Grabauskas commended the operations staff on working very hard. He is pleased that the entire workforce is changing the way they serve people of all abilities. The next person introduced was Carmen Union 589 President Steve McDougall who is also making accessibility a top priority among his members. The General Manager indicated that the word is out -any operator who refuses to pull into the curb will receive a severe penalty.

The General Manager recognized AACT as being one of the key sources of information advising him and his predecessors on accessibility issues at the MBTA. He thanked AACT and its members for doing a tremendous job and congratulated AACT on their upcoming 30th anniversary of continued advocacy work. He noted that the receipt of information and complaints from consumers helps in effecting real change.

General Manager commented on the class action lawsuit by the Boston Center for Independent Living and other plaintiffs against the MBTA. He acknowledged that he understood that the plaintiff's reason for the lawsuit was based on their right to have basic services for persons with disabilities. He was pleased that both parties were able to come to a settlement, which put them not in court but on the same side of the table.

The General Manager received accolades from the courts that the MBTA is the absolute #1 in its position in the United States for all transit agencies regarding accessibility with a huge cooperative spirit and a mutual, shared vision. That mutual, shared vision is shared with both sides of leadership, the rank and file of the MBTA and the customers. He recognizes this as a huge accomplishment.

Mr. Grabauskas said the leadership of the new Operating Officer there will be a change in the way the MBTA personnel thinks and there will be education and training of staff.

The General Manager commented on the paratransit service issues by informing members that THE RIDE has a new computer system, complaints have decreased, and the Access Study for evaluation of THE RIDE is still a work in progress.

In his final comments to AACT members, he apologized to the members for problems with the elevators. He is not responsible for elevators at 10 Park Plaza. The General Manager commended AACT on its commitment to transit accessibility and encouraged the members to continue to push for further progress on issues that are important to them.

He then asked for questions and comments.

J. White: Why should we pay for system that is not accessible to persons with disabilities and that we cannot use now?

General Manager: I am required under law to balance the budget for the MBTA. There are 175 communities that we serve. The operating budget for the MBTA is \$1.13 billion. When the budget was set for fiscal year 2006 no one could have foreseen the spike in gas prices.

A-M. Leonard: I live in Melrose. I would like to see the buses run on Sunday. Would you make that a consideration?

General Manager: I will be happy to look into the services.

B. Haynes: There was an article published in the Boston Globe around June 16 in which Transportation Secretary Cogliano identified some very specific conditions on courtesy. Is the MBTA working on this issue?

General Manager: We have had in the past a general courtesy campaign for employee-to-employee and employee-to-customer relations. Now we have the customer-to-customer advertisement campaign that would encourage customers to offer seats to other customers, such as an expectant mother or a person with a disability. We also remind people not to talk on cellular phones and not to leave litter around.

Consumer: The MBTA contracted Transystems, Corp. to do an evaluation of their ADA compliance. The evaluation has been delayed due to the recent lawsuit. Now that there is a settlement will the contract be extended for six months to complete the ADA monitoring?

General Manager: Yes.

M. Kalashian: The commuter conductors do not make delay or stop announcements, they retaliate on prior complaints, and conductors offer no assistance to passengers to and from trains. What can be done to get commuter rail to comply?

General Manager: Let me assure you if there are issues with Massachusetts Bay Commuter Rail I will be glad to speak with them. I will pass along your concerns.

Chairman: This has been too short a time. May I speak with your administrative staff to arrange to have you attend another time?

General Manager: Yes.

MBTA/OTA Fixed-Route Services Report:

Kathy Cox, Manager of Fixed-Route Services for the MBTA/OTA (Office for Transportation Access), summarized the activities of May and June by announcing the following information (report attached).

Highlights:

- The U.S. District Court has approved the settlement agreement class action lawsuit brought by persons with disabilities against the MBTA over access to fixed-route services. It will become effective July 31.
- Extensive work on the Mattapan Station for one year and accessible busing will begin on the Mattapan High Speed Line
- There is a staffing issue that will cause a brief interruption with the Travel Training program; the issue is being addressed
- AACT representatives participated in ADA classroom training and on-board passenger assistance instructions for new-hire bus operators
- Activation of the MBTA automatic fare equipment continues
- Reduced fare ID replacement effort continues in the surrounding sixty-two cities and towns
- The Stop Announcement Monitoring program continues, with staff monitoring the ADA requirements that the stops be called out
- New automated stop announcement equipment continues to be installed in MBTA buses
- A pilot model of the new Emissions Control Diesel type bus from New Flyer of America will be at 10 Park Plaza for AACT evaluation at the July 26 meeting

J. White: I was at Forest Hills Station waiting for route #32. The crowd boarded ahead of me. The supervisor indicated I had to wait for the next bus. What is the policy for persons who may be in a wheelchair?

K. Cox: Bus Operations is considering a policy. I will need to do research.

Consumer: I live in East Boston. I would like to take my neighbor out. There is no elevator and the escalator is not very reliable.

K. Cox: This station is presently under construction.

Consumer: If a person cannot do the steps at the stations would this person be temporarily eligible for THE RIDE?

Chairman Beaulieu: Yes.

Consumer: I was at station where someone had removed a sign.

K. Cox: It may have been a crew while working. I will do some research.

B. Haynes: Is it not customary for the MBTA to bus passengers around stations that are inaccessible due to construction?

K. Cox: I'm not sure.

B. Haynes: Busing has happened in the past when there is an issue with the train or station.

K. Cox: Only if there is work going on at a particular station.

Consumer: Is there training for Bus Operations in Charlestown?

K. Cox: Yes.

The report was accepted.

MBTA/OTA Paratransit Contract Operations Report

Bob Rizzo, Manager of Paratransit and Contract Operations for the MBTA, distributed the attached May and June report.

Highlights:

- OTA hosted THE RIDE Safety Committee meeting, with representatives from each contractor, with a presentation from the Alzheimer's Association
- Staff members participated in several MBTA Fare increase workshops
- Contract Administrators and Veterans Transportation Services (VTS) made a home visit to demonstrate proper wheelchair boarding procedure
- Project Advisory Group meeting on the ADA Access Study was attended by OTA staff
- There was a site visit by OTA staff to Veterans Transportation Services to inspect a van that was damaged by fire. No passengers were injured
- OTA staff visited Greater Lynn Senior Services and Kiessling Transit, Inc to monitor problems; with software that caused a reporting error in recent problems. Corrective action is being taken at all four sites
- Staff participated in the Elderly Transportation Committee and the Boston for Older Adults meetings
- A meeting with Veterans Transportation and Joint Venture was held to discuss a software problem; All four vendors have taken corrective measures

Service Updates:

- Ridership increased 10.6 percent for the month compared to May 2005 (from 118,479 to 131,069)
- Fiscal year (FY) 2006 ridership year-to-date (YTD) increased by 9.4 percent (from 1,215,378 to 1,329,684) over FY 05, while maintaining a zero “Not Available” (NA)
- The on-time performance (within 30 minutes of scheduled pickup time) is at 98.4 percent, YTD pickups are at 92 percent within 15 minutes of scheduled pick-up time
- Complaints have decreased by 29.7 percent from May 2005 (from 155 to 109)
- March complaints levels are below 200 for the 14th straight month
- YTD complaints decreased by 16.3 percent (from 1,962 to 1,642)
- YTD average is 9.24 per 10,000 trips requested, or 081 complaints per thousand trips delivered
- YTD vehicular accidents were down 8.2 percent (from 597 to 548), while vehicle accidents for the month increased to 28 percent compared to last May (from 60 to 77)
- OTA and THE RIDE contractors’ monthly Safety Committee will be hosted by OTA on June 29

He then asked for questions.

M. Kalashian: Why does it take so long for a complaint to be answered by the vendor?

R. Rizzo: Many times the issues are very complex.

Consumer: Will any of THE RIDE services be expanded into other areas?

R. Rizzo: There are no plans for expansion geographically.

Vendors’ Reports

Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. (GLSS)

Jackie Dunlop Director of Transportation read from her report for the month of May (report attached).

She then asked for questions.

B. Haynes: Are all complaints identified in your complaint responded to in a timely

manner?

J. Dunlop: Yes.

The report was accepted.

Kiessling Transit, Inc (KTI)

M. Claire DiPillo, General Manager, read from her report for the month of May (report attached).

She then asked for questions.

M. Kalashian: Was discipline imposed on any of your drivers? Were any terminated?

C. DiPillo: None were terminated. One was disciplined with a written warning.

J. Grant: I have noticed a trend with drivers putting the shoulder belt behind the passenger. Were any of your drivers disciplined? Are drivers allowed to use cellular phone?

C. DiPillo: Your first question I will not discuss. Cellular phones are not allowed.

B. Haynes: What percentage of trips you completed were outside your service area?

C. DiPillo: I do not have an answer.

The report was accepted.

Joint Venture of TTI /YCN, Inc.

Carlton Jones, Safety Manager, read from his report for the month of May (report attached).

He then asked for questions.

Consumer: I live in Foxboro. I take a taxi to the next town. When your vehicle is late are you going to pay the fare?

C. Jones: No, it is probably your responsibility.

B. Rizzo: We cannot guarantee compensation. We don't have a policy. In extraordinary circumstances someone may fail to make a medical appointment or a day's work that may have cost associated. If you need someone from my staff to speak on your behalf to a doctor please let me know. The MBTA has a policy that if

THE RIDE arrives 30 minutes late you are refunded twice the fare on your next trip. I would suggest that in the future consumers find a convenient location for waiting.

J. White: Why would your company send multiple vans to take persons who are going to the same location?

C. Jones: Often times we do try to match all persons going to the same location. I will need to do some research.

Consumer: Why is there no penalty for people who abuse THE RIDE as no-shows? No-shows cost the vendors money. These consumers have no respect for other passengers who are inconvenienced by their disregard of others.

R. Rizzo: It is a complex issue. A consumer was waiting at one entrance and the driver was at another. The person was labeled a no-show. This could have been avoided if the driver was instructed by dispatch to try another entrance. This was not the fault of the customer but the fault of the vendor. We have not come out with a strong policy at this time. We still need to make sure our system is error-free before we can work with AACT and others to develop a policy.

Consumer: I mean people who are constant no-shows.

R. Rizzo: We still need to make sure our system is error-free before we can go down that path. We are willing to work with AACT on this issue.

The report was accepted.

Veterans Transportation Services, Inc. (VTS)

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

He then asked for questions.

M. Kalashian: Do you discipline your drivers?

J. Tuttle: My goal is not to discipline but to have drivers do the right thing.

M. MacNab: Is it true that if you are a constant complainer a supervisor is assigned to give you an individual ride?

J. Tuttle: We do not show favoritism.

The report was accepted.

The meeting was adjourned 7:30 PM.

