

September 27, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 PM.

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
- Frank Taverna, board member, is out due to illness
- Keep your attendance current to ensure your right to vote or hold office
- Handouts should be distributed at least fifteen minutes before the meetings

ATTENDANCE

Marilyn MacNab, Paul Barresi, Ben Haynes, Phil Beaulieu, Jeff Grant, Kathryn Piccard, Don Summerfield, Gail-L Thomas, Reginald Clark, Ken Smith, Phil Semans, James Oliver, Richard Mahoney, Thomas Gilbert, Richard Nurt, Cheri Lieberman, Mark Kalashian, and Cheryl Ravalli

MBTA Representatives:

Michael Festa, Robert Rizzo, Michael Hulak, Ron Mariani, Carl Merrick, Alex Murkinson, Paul Strobis, Carol Joyce-Harrington, and Dorothy Winn

Vendor Representatives:

Joint Venture – Carlton Jones
GLSS – Jacquelyn Dunlop and Roy Airey
Kiessling Transit, Inc. – Claire DiPillo
Veteran Transportation Services – John Tuttle

Central Transportation Planning Staff:

Janie Guion and William Moore

AGENDA

- Self-introduction of the audience
- Reading of the Agenda
- June and July minutes were presented and approved
- No August minutes were presented due to the meeting's cancellation

Chairman's Report

Chairman Beaulieu gave a report on the following:

- No August meeting was held to allow for additional inspection of the new proposed THE RIDE van
- Inspection of the new van for THE RIDE consumer was held at Veterans Transportation Services (VTS) and with vendor representatives
- A special thank you to the VTS vendor for hosting this at their facility
- Thanks to the MBTA for complimentary rides by THE RIDE
- The Chairman attended the following two meetings:
 - the Disabled Persons Protection Commission and
 - the MBTA Board of Directors meeting

Attended a meeting concerning Commission

He then asked for questions.

M. MacNab: Would you tell us more about your safety meeting?

Chairman: Those meetings are confidential.

M. MacNab: Who were the participants at the meeting?

Chairman: MBTA personnel, vendors, others and me.

Old Business:

Dottie Winn of the Office of Transportation Access (OTA) asked that the AACT June and July minutes be amended to reflect that she was present during both meetings.

D. Summerfield: I would like to address Mr. Festa. It is just awful that the International symbol of Access was erected so early at the Charles Street Station. Vandals have done nothing but remove the tape making that sign visible and the MBTA continues to replace the tape. This was a huge mistake to have that symbol erected so soon.

M. Festa: Yes. I am aware of that problem. Thank you.

J. Grant: Is the Charles Street Station now accessible?

M. Festa: The station will not be accessible until February of 2007.

C. Lieberman: What is the status of altering the meeting format?

Chairman Beaulieu: We have started looking at all the suggestions. I'd like to invite you to a board meeting for further discussion.

M. MacNab: We have been looking at all the suggestions.

K. Piccard: We are looking into the new format with your, and other, questions submitted.

New Business:

J. Oliver: Will AACT be participating in the National Disability Awareness program on October 19 as it has in the past?

Chairman: I will take this under advisement. Members of AACT are welcome to attend the program.

Announcements:

Marilyn MacNab, AACT's representative on the MBTA Rider Oversight Committee (ROC), gave a report on the following. She is part of a select group from ROC that has been given the MBTA's new Smart Card for testing.

- Everyone should be aware of a problem when purchasing stored fare for the Charlie tickets
- Following the process "tap-money-tap" will store the money on your card; this is not on the screen but corrections are being made.
- When you are getting stored value on your cards please pay close attention that you process the card completely.
- Remind your friends of this process.

T. Gilbert: The Greater Boston Legal Service (GBLS) is taking affidavits in regard to the MBTA automated fare equipment. You can reach Alexa Rosenbloom at the GBLS office at 617-603-1564.

P. Semans: What is the reason for the affidavit?

D. Summerfield: GBLS is accepting this information should the courts need to

review to see how the MBTA is following the condition of the settlement.

D. Summerfield: The new automated fare gates pose a real problem for persons who are visually impaired. Their Smart Cards and Transportation Access Pass (TAP) only work on the wheelchair gate. All gates in the stations are not located in the same location. This is a potential and real hazard for persons who are visually impaired.

M. Kalashian: Disability Law Center (DLC) has put out a newsletter. I have brought a few for anyone who would like to have a copy. Anyone who would like to have his or her name added to the mailing list please contact DLC.

John D. Ray, MBTA Director of Railroad Operations

Mr. Ray began with a brief background of the commuter rail operations. The MBTA is in charge of a weekday run of 470 trains transporting some 140,000 passengers, on 13 lines, and connecting to 127 stations.

He then asked for questions.

T. Gilbert: What is the policy for commuter rail trains when stopping at platforms? Even when I wait at the disabled platform I find I am standing in the wrong place. There is no consistency for the trains as to where they stop.

J. Ray: Train stops should be very constant. The conductor may come out to the platform at the car where he may be located. The train should stop in the same location all the times.

M. Kalashian: How will you train the commuter train crew members to use the public address (PA) system properly? How will you keep the PA system maintained so that stop announcements are made at all times?

J. Ray: We are focusing on how the crew is operating the equipment. The conductors would like us to think that the PA is malfunctioning. We are investigating and getting a handle on whether some conductors are mishandling the equipment. Some of equipment is being serviced. A contract for the automatic PA system is being advertised. We are trying to make the situation better.

K. Piccard: Before you were appointed we had questions about personnel smoking on MBTA property. The last director said she would look into the issue of non-smoking incentive for personnel. What is going to be done to reduce the number of complaints about this issue? Would you consider offering incentives to persons to

stop smoking?

J. Ray: The MBTA has zero tolerance for smoking on the property. There is no smoking on MBTA property. Employees should not be smoking on MBTA property. I will do more research. The best incentive a person smoking on MBTA property should have to stop smoking is the thought of putting his or her job in jeopardy. I will check with Massachusetts Bay Commuter Rail Company (MBCR) on what their policy is on smoking.

J. Oliver: What is the process to get the commuter rail train to a new town? There are trains from Providence and Boston to Gillette Stadium eight times a year. Foxboro does not have any train service. I think it would be beneficial to have train service for the town of Foxboro. I know that CSX freight owns the tracks. Why can't this train be extended through the week?

J. Ray: Bob Kraft had contacted me sometime ago when the new stadium was being built. It was concerning the use of the parking facility Monday to Friday. If we had a train that ran daily the parking facility would be available. CSX freight lines own the tracks and have informed the MBTA that they will not be making any improvements to the tracks for expansion. The train only runs at a speed of 10 mph.

M. Goldsom: I have trouble getting off the train in Ayer. The path-of-travel is not accessible once you exit the train.

J. Ray: I will send someone to view the area.

J. Grant: During the modernization of both North and South Stations the MBTA was to meet the ADA requirement for intermediate seating when the accessible car was more than 200 feet from the station. I was told that the seating was stolen before they could be installed. Several years have now passed. How long will it take before you can order and install the seating?

J. Ray: This will not be a problem. We have them in our warehouse.

B. Haynes: Some eight years ago the commuter rail personnel had extensive training in customer relations. During that time AACT tried to get them to incorporate the passenger assistance and sensitivity; they did not refuse it but they did nothing about it. You are telling consumers to report the conductors' bad habits or behavior. When will MBCR train their people according to the ADA so that they are proficient in their job in assisting people with disabilities?

J. Ray: I can't answer that at this time. That training is done by MBCR the conductors are their employees. I will need to do research; understand what the

training consists of and what the materials are.

B. Haynes: The MBTA contracted with MBCR, which works for the MBTA. They are your employees. So for you to tell us that does not respond to the question.

M. Kalashian: When will commuter rail responses be more timely and thorough in response to the many many commuter rail complaints?

J. Ray: We work on improving this issue on a day-to-day basis. We get some 600 complaints a month. Some complaints have multi-issues. To respond too quickly can usually result in a less than adequate answer. The MBTA is creating a new customer service center that will keep track of all complaints and the amount of time it takes to respond. Also we try to address the conditions in the complaints. We look at complaints to see which is the most important. Complaints are handled in a triage manner to see which ones are more important to get out quickly. I cannot say that we can get you an answer in three days. We are trying to improve the responses and make them timely.

K. Piccard: What method is used to inform the consumers of the accessible features to the commuter rail lines? The MBTA website does not make it clear which stations are wheelchair accessible. I would like to see each time there is a mailing to all THE RIDE users that we include any information on access updates. The MBTA web site would not work for people who do not own computers.

J. Ray: We do need to find a better way. For example the announcing of the Rockport accessible platform did not work very well. We do use the MBTA web site and press releases. This may be something I ask of AACT; to help keep the disability community informed through your mailing. We can add this announcement to the train schedules although they are printed twice yearly.

K. Piccard: Did you notify the signage department to put up new signs?

J. Ray: No. We do need to find a better way.

M. MacNab: Often these elevators are out of service so that someone would have to know whom to contact. Would you place detailed signage on elevators that do not belong to the MBTA?

J. Ray: Yes.

Chairman Beaulieu: Thank you Mr. Ray. We look forward to hearing from you in the future.

Ron Mariani summarized the August/July report on behalf of Kathy Cox, Manager of Fixed-Route Services for the MBTA Office for Transportation Access (OTA), with the following information (September /August reports attached).

Highlights:

- There was a demonstration of the New Flyer of America bus held at Roslindale House
- The MBTA has hired the design team for MBTA elevators as per order of the Boston Center for Independent Living settlement; completion of design is due in one year
- Automated stop announcements are installed on all 996 buses
- The Ashmont Station construction continues
- Staff attended a conference held by Project Easter Seal's "Lessons Learned" celebrating the sixteenth anniversary of the American with Disabilities Act
- Automated Fare Collection equipment continues to be installed in buses and stations
- Brookline Village Station on the Green Line will become ADA accessible
- Green Line operators are to ask boarding consumer's where he or she will be exiting, tell the person where the accessible stations are and alert an MBTA official that someone will be needing assistance at a particular stop

He then asked for questions and comments.

D. Summerfield: I am monitoring the MBTA for access on the following: buses pulling into the curb, stop announcements, and courtesy, and will now be reporting the findings to bus operations instead of Ron Mariani. There are still problems with stop announcements on the Red Line.

J. Oliver: On September 27 Mr. Mariani gave a successful training of the ADA and passenger assistance to 65 new drivers.

R. Mariani: Thank you.

M. Kalashian: You and I both know that we have had long-standing problems getting commuter rail responses regarding commuter rail issues. What specific advice did you give Mr. Ray and Mr. Steadso regarding how to make things better

and how to get appropriate thorough and timely responses?

R. Mariani: I would recommend that you be persistent. The MBTA holds the contract over MBCR. I hate to be harsh. They should use any punitive measures that are listed in the contract. They are heavily fined on other issues. This really should be part of the contract also. It seems talking with MBCR is not working. This would be my recommendation.

M. MacNab: Would you get information to us about training?

R. Mariani: Yes, we certainly welcome people. I give the AACT Coordinator the information.

B. Haynes: It appears that people who get asked questions, specifically those questions in regards to the ADA and public records law, don't seem to know the laws or they are not aware of the laws. If they are not aware of the laws, how can they handle and respond to complaints and in a timely manner? Is there a trained group of people to do that?

R. Mariani: I know that the operations staff has 15 days to close out the complaints.

B. Haynes: This is part of the problem. According to the law it is 10 days not 15 days. Union decisions with regards to labor relations do not exceed the law.

R. Mariani: It is two separate issues. Labor does not exceed the ADA regulations.

The report was accepted.

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 (August/September reports attached).

Highlights:

- Staff participated in the sixteenth anniversary recognition of the ADA and shared stories on the improving of access. The Federal Transportation Administration and Project Action jointly sponsored a program in Washington
- OTA staff participated in a meeting with Boston Partnership of Older Adults
- Staff participated in a meeting with TranSystems, Inc. and THE RIDE contractors to discuss the Access Study and Service Monitoring Phase
- Staff presented THE RIDE vehicle for proposed purchase to the MBTA Board of Directors. Approval was granted pending the August 23 successful demonstration of accessible features to AACT members.

Service Updates overview:

- Services for both the months of July and August increased by 10 percent compared to 2005
- Complaints showed no difference from last spring; there was slight increase in complaints over last summer
- Complaints have registered at 7.8 percent for every 10,000 trips requested and at 1.05 percent for every 1,000 trips transported
- Vehicular accidents year-to-date have increased 2 percent through August with an increase of 24,000 trips during that time
- OTA and THE RIDE contractors' monthly Safety Committee will be hosted by OTA on September 28 at OTA. No presentation will take place due to the illness of the presenter.

He then asked for questions.

Consumer: Is there anything that can be done to reduce the time I am on a van with a person who is transferring and the other van is often late.

R. Rizzo: Please report this to OTA.

M. Kalashian: I continue to have difficulty getting my complaint responses in Braille from your office in a timely fashion. The breakdown appears to be between your office and the responder. Is there anything that can be done to expedite this matter?

R. Rizzo: I do apologize for this. If you find more delays, please bring it to my attention.

B. Haynes: This service has been in existence for almost 30 years and we are still experiencing the same complaints. What can we do to attack the root of the complaints and attack the matter at that level?

R. Rizzo: My sense on complaints is that problems are due to the scheduling, traffic delays, various issues of dissatisfactions of driver/customer interactions and interaction of office personnel. I believe those to be the chief causes. You are aware of what we have tried and what we are doing to tackle scheduling issues.

M. MacNab: I have been observing THE RIDE drivers who guide persons on to the lift in wheelchairs on vans. I have noticed two groups. There are the trained

professionals who take the time to guide and secure. Then we have the drivers who are unprofessional, no patience, in a hurry and guide the wheelchair in a dangerous manner. Would you please address this?

R. Rizzo: We are reviewing a memo that has been circulated to all the vendors and the AACT Chair.

M. Goulston: When making a trip request to go to Fenway Park, the reservationist then will ask for the address. Why is it that a historical landmark like a Fenway Park or Hatch Shell won't be enough to get you there?

R Rizzo: I will ask that each vendor speak about his or her address database.

The report was accepted.

THE RIDE Coordinator Report

Paul Barresi's report was tabled due to time constraints.

Vendors' Reports

Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. (GLSS)

Jackie Dunlop, Director of Transportation, read from his report for the month of August (report attached).

She then asked for questions.

B. Haynes: On August 23 did you have any passengers scheduled for 10 Park Plaza, only to find that the AACT meeting was cancelled?

J. Dunlop: Not that I am aware.

Consumer: You are doing a good job.

J. Dunlop: Thank you.

The report was accepted.

Kiessling Transit, Inc (KTI)

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

She then asked for questions.

P. Barresi: When responding to complaints of the consumer try not to use the term “service issues.” It is just too vague.

C. DiPillo: Yes.

B. Haynes: On August 23 did you have any passengers scheduled for 10 Park Plaza, only to find that the AACT meeting was cancelled?

C. DiPillo: I don't think so.

The report was accepted.

Joint Venture of TTI /YCN, Inc.

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

He then asked for questions.

B. Haynes: On August 23 did you have any passengers scheduled for 10 Park Plaza, only to find that the AACT meeting was cancelled?

C. Jones: Not that I am aware.

The report was accepted.

Veterans Transportation Services, Inc. (VTS)

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

Mr. Tuttle responded to a consumer question at the request of Mr. Rizzo. You as a THE RIDE passenger do not need to know the address for a known landmark. The program requires a known address for each pickup and drop off. There are two "layers" to the program. The street map layer contains all streets and addresses in the service area. This map layer is connected to another layer, which converts all the addresses to the exact location, the concept of which we all probably remember from high school. The program uses the longitude and latitude coordinates to determine the order of pickups and drop offs in a schedule. Each time a pickup or drop-off at a landmark is requested then an address must be supplied in order to access the underlying co-ordinates. This address is generally supplied and confirmed by the vendor. Until the landmark is created then a street address must be supplied.

He then asked for questions.

B. Haynes: On August 23 did you have any passengers scheduled for 10 Park Plaza for a 1:00 PM AACT meeting?

J. Tuttle: Not that I am aware.

M. Kalashian: Why are there so many problems with drivers who drive like maniacs, unable to lead the visually impaired, those who wear fragrances and a whole list of other faults?

J. Tuttle: Many times drivers know what has to be done but they get nervous.

C. Liberman: Please explain the difference between a site supervisor and the operations supervisor?

J. Tuttle: The site supervisor is on the property as a manager in the building and the operations supervisor covers "on the road" situations.

R. Clark: Do drivers have maps in THE RIDE vehicles?

J. Tuttle: Yes, it is a requirement. It is part of the daily circle check.

D. Summerfield: During my trip the driver used a cell phone. Are drivers allowed to use cell phones in THE RIDE vehicles?

J. Tuttle: We do take the cell phone issue very seriously. Many times drivers have been suspended with lost wages. The driver is trained to park the vehicle in a safe area before using a cell phone.

B. Haynes: Oftentimes when drivers are new to the area I will give directions and I will have the driver call the office to give the information for the return driver.

J. Tuttle: That is helpful.

J. Oliver: If a person has no computer, is there any other way that your office can notify a consumer when the funds have been added to his or her THE RIDE account.

R. Rizzo: This is a near impossible task. We get so much mail each day between applications and checks. If you call the office we can help.

K. Piccard: Can the consumer get a copy of his or her revenue transaction instead of just the total?

R. Rizzo: We will make a copy available upon request.

The report was accepted. The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM.