

## ***AACT Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, November 28, 2007***

### **NOTABLES**

- The next AACT meeting will be on Wednesday, December 19, 2007.
- Chairman Haynes expressed concern that the MBTA staff vehicles continue to illegally park at 10 Park Plaza near the Charles Street entrance blocking access parking spaces which prevents THE RIDE van from deploying its passengers safely
- Members raised concern about the lack of public telephones at the MBTA stations. Kathy Cox, Manager for Systemwide Accessibility will provide information on the issue at the next AACT meeting.
- Chairman Haynes commented that questions concerning AACT should be directed to the Chairman.
- THE RIDE users are asked to file complaints at the Office for Transportation Access (OTA) 617- 222-5123
- Chairman Haynes recommends that AACT members obtain information, or inquire about MBTA services through the new Customer Support Services at 617 – 222-3200 or log on to their Web Site at [www.mbta.com/customer\\_support/feedback/](http://www.mbta.com/customer_support/feedback/)
- Judge Patrick King, the court-appointed independent monitor for the MBTA and Boston Center for Independent Living settlement agreement, asked that he be contacted with members' thoughts, comments, and questions. He can be reached by phone at 617-228-9125 or by e-mail at [MBTAMonitor@gmail.com](mailto: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.
- Announcements are always welcome. Please be prepared to give as many details as possible; date, time, location, contact person, and phone number. A flyer would be appreciated.

### **ATTENDANCE:**

Kathryn Piccard, Paul Barresi Ben Haynes, John Marshall, James Oliver, Frank Taverna, Reggie Clark, April Maselli, Tammy Perrault, Don Summerfield, John Kane, Angela Mannerson, Philip Beaulieu, Richard Nurt, Richard Mahoney, and Thomas Gilbert

### ***MBTA Representatives:***

Michael Hulak, Paul Fitzgerald, John Schwarz, Frank Astone, Mark Gyrllelis, Sandra B., Dottie Winn, Paul Strobis, Carol Joyce-Harrington, Ron Mariani, Annette Griffin, Philip Balcom, Robert Rizzo, Carl Merrick, Kathy Cox, and Alex Murkison

### ***Vendor Representatives:***

Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN – Carlton Jones, Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc.– John Soucy, Kiessling Transit, Inc. – Claire DiPillo, and Veteran Transportation Services – John Tuttle

### ***Agency Representatives***

Richard Chapman – Massachusetts Commission for the Blind  
April Maselli – Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission  
Steve Wolfel and Kate Victor – Executive Office of Transportation  
Pam Wolfe and Walter Bennett – Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization staff

***The AACT Chairman opened the meeting at 1:05 PM with a welcome to everyone.***

### ***Agenda***

Self-introduction of the members, friends and guests  
Agenda read by the Vice-Chairman

The October 24 meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

### ***Chairman' s Update***

#### ***The Chairman noted:***

- Being a member of AACT is strictly voluntary. This is not a job for pay. There are no stipends. Everyone in AACT volunteers his or her time freely. Board members serve as representatives and advocates for the disability community. He expressed the need to work in partnership and get as much accomplished as we can under the protection of the law so that it “benefits all of us,” the consumers, the vendors and the MBTA. Some consumers write directly to OTA management and other MBTA officials. There is a

concern that consumer are not informing AACT of their communication outreach to the MBTA. When members ask that AACT intercede on their behalf or that of the disability community. It is somewhat disingenuous when they then circumvent AACT and submit recommendations and or requests for changes without AACT being involved.

- He and others have been monitoring paratransit services based on complaints by consumers regarding dispatch and driver etiquette
- The agreed 14-day notice to AACT members is not being honored by MBTA –THE RIDE contactors; this is a concern drivers who fail to properly communicate with consumers on the initial contact should be reviewed for possible suspension.

He then asked for questions.

**K. Piccard:** If AACT is not successful on an issue, can't a member pursue the issue?

**Chairman Haynes:** It is unfortunate that AACT is sometimes not as effective in dealing with some issues as we would like. I ask that you first work with AACT to have your issues heard. If AACT fails to be effective, the AACT Board will never suggest that you not seek other solutions including direct dialogue with the MBTA.

**P. Barresi:** Why are the first two meetings of next year held on a Tuesday?

**Chairman Haynes:** We share the meeting space with others in the building. These were the best slots available.

The report was accepted with one abstention.

### ***Update on the MBTA Design and Construction Department with Edwards and Kelcey, consultant firm for the Fairmount Line Four Corners Project***

John Schwarz, Deputy Director with the MBTA Design and Construction Department briefed the AACT members, friends and guests on the new Four Corners commuter rail station on the Fairmont Line in Dorchester, located in urban Boston.

Frank Astone, design engineer consultant of Edwards and Kelcey for the Four Corners Station gave a detailed overview of the stations' amenities.

He and John Schwarz then took questions.

**R. Mahoney:** Is there only one bench in the station?

**F. Astone:** There will be approximately 8 benches on either side of the station.

**K. Piccard:** Will there be emergency lighting in case of a power failure?

**J. Schwarz:** There is no backup lighting.

**J. Oliver:** What is the estimated station cost and completion date?

**F. Astone:** The cost is approximately \$12 million and the completion will be in two-years. We are now at the 60 percent design stage.

**D. Summerfield:** Why is there no emergency power provided?

**J. Schwarz:** I will need to research this.

**J. Marshall:** Did any of the organizations you met with address accessibility issues specifically?

**J. Schwarz:** Not specifically, but the issue of accessibility was always mentioned.

**K. Piccard:** Have all your meetings been ADA compliant for accessibility interpreters, accessible meeting places, drawings, and formats?

**Presenter:** All meetings have been in accessible buildings. At the last community meeting in October, M. MacNab raised the issue; we have met with her and gone over the standards. We have made corrections for our next meeting. If interpreters are requested they will be provided.

**Chairman Haynes:** AACT did not receive notification about any meetings concerning this project. It is important that you notify organizations and committees that you are holding public meetings regarding transportation

services or construction that will affect accessibility. For future meetings please notify AACT in an appropriate time and manner.

**J. Schwarz:** Yes.

### ***MBTA Manager of Systemwide Accessibility***

Kathy Cox, Manager of the Systemwide Accessibility Office (bus, train, subway, bus rapid transit, commuter rail and boat) for the MBTA, distributed her report and stated the following. (October reports attached).

She gave an update on the following:

- She has forwarded the concerns about the limited amount of available parking at the Waltham Central Square commuter rail station.
- ADA accessibility monitoring will be expanded to include fixed route bus operators looking at lower kneeler operation, wheelchair securement, ramp deployment and other elements.
- Applications are currently being accepted for ADA monitors to help make the system better for those with disabilities. This effort has been going on since 1999. Interested parties should contact Ron Mariani at 617 222-1542.

She then took questions.

**Chairman Haynes:** How can AACT be assured that we will be notified concerning public meetings about MBTA Fixed Route matters: designs; expansions; constructions and improvements?

**K. Cox:** I will make sure that AACT is on all mailing lists.

**D. Summerfield:** I have noticed that on the MBTA call boxes the button “For Information or Help” signs throughout the MBTA system do not have the raised and Braille lettering for visually impaired people.

**K. Cox:** I will pass this information on.

The report was accepted with one abstention.

### ***MBTA Office for Transportation Access (OTA) Paratransit (THE RIDE) Contract Operations Update***

Bob Rizzo, Manager of Paratransit and Contract Operations for the MBTA, gave a brief update (October reports attached).

He shared the following items:

- THE RIDE recently experienced a record high for ridership in October and also an increase in complaints
- OTA staff Carol Joyce Harrington has been promoted to Assistant Manager for Administrations and Paul Strobis is now the Assistant Manager for Operations for Paratransit Contract Operations. Both bring positive contributions
- OTA is addressing concerns of both consumer and driver behavior. OTA is enforcing the retraining of drivers who have had complaints lodged against them
- A meeting to address general concerns of THE RIDE will be held with the AACT Chair and Vice Chair, contract owners, OTA staff is forthcoming

He then asked for questions.

**R. Chapman:** Due to increased ridership on THE RIDE, there is a possibility that those who are able to travel by MBTA fixed-route service may be encouraged to travel that way and will be charged a one-time fee for the Charlie Card. Will there be more accessible gates that accept the blind access cards or the other type accessible cards?

**R. Rizzo:** The MBTA held a summit meeting in which the General Manager Dan Graubaskas outlined the initial phase of "THE RIDE Charlie Card Program. It is almost final and will be launched in two months. The intent is to run it as a pilot program (for an undesignated period of time) that would likely target frequent customers who would purchase a Charlie Card with a picture ID at a nominal fee. Customers would have a choice and could travel free of charge on any fixed route. THE RIDE status would not be impacted by your choice. You would be able to travel on all modes of transportation as well as the commuter rail Zones 1-5 plus Water Transportation vessels. More information on the program is forthcoming. Ms. Cox and I have been in communication with the Automatic Fare Collection (AFC) staff that oversees the decision for access to gates, which also entails significant programming issues for them and the vendor regarding the accepting of particular cards at various gates. Ms. Cox and I have advocated strongly for an increase in the number of accessible gates in stations. The AFC is committed to moving to that eventuality. I am not aware of any deadlines.

**P. Barresi:** Would you say that legal blindness is the only criteria for THE RIDE or for someone who is visually impaired or would they need other disabilities too?

**R. Rizzo:** No.

**J. Oliver:** Congratulations to Carol Joyce-Harrington and Paul Strobis on their promotions. The audience broke out in applause.

**K. Piccard:** Would you review your standards complaints?

**R. Rizzo:** He gave a detailed outline of how complaints are entered into THE RIDE database and processed, whether they are received by e-mail, letter or telephone. All complaints are responded to within 10-days.

**D. Summerfield:** Why are complaints that are received at OTA delayed getting to the vendor? When the vendor receives the complaint it is dated on the day it is received in their office not the day it was received by OTA.

**R. Rizzo:** We are not a 24-7 staffed office. We are working on this issue.

The report was accepted with one abstention.

### **Steve Woelfel of the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works Manager of Statewide Transit Planning**

Mr. Woelfel gave a brief update on the Green Line Extension north through Somerville. He explained that the initial stages with Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Unit and they are with Federal Transit Administration, and the MBTA. This project will have some 90 public meetings on station locations, needs, access and development concerning the extension of the Green Line project. Meetings will also address the relocation of the Lechmere Station and a sitting for new maintenance facility.

**K. Piccard:** Will all your public meeting locations and information access be fully acc  
**Woelfel:** He noted that he wanted to inform AACT how at the beginning of the project, and that he intends to keep AACT informed.

**Chairman Haynes:** The MBTA is well over 100 years old. During that time accessibility was not an issue. Today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is imperative to include the disability community in the planning of new station construction in the very early stages. AACT members would like to be kept informed of all the planning for this project.

**S. Woelfel:** Yes, that is why we are here to start the dialogue in the early stages of the project.

**Chairman Haynes:** Thank you. I hope other projects managers follow Mr. Woelfel's example by involving us early on.

**Open Discussion:**

**K. Piccard:** I would to commend Veterans Transportation Services for having the current AACT notices displayed in their vehicles.

***Old Business:***

**J. Marshall:** Thanks to everyone who participated in the Boston Councilors' public hearing at Boston City Hall on the parking fines increased fees for people who illegally park in spaces that are designated for accessible parking.

**New Business: None was presented.**

**Announcements: None was presented.**

**The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 P. M.**