

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

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AACT Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, December 19, 2007

NOTABLES

- Kathy Cox continues with the title Manager for Fixed Route Services, Office for Transportation Access (OTA)/Back Bay. She was incorrectly identified in the November 28, 2007 meeting minutes as “Manager, System-Wide Accessibility.” OTA/Back Bay now reports to System-wide Accessibility.
- Chairman Haynes commented that questions concerning AACT should be directed to the Chairman.
- THE RIDE users are asked to file complaints at the 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.mbtacom/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. 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, Ben Haynes, Cheryl Ravalli, Lillian Haynes, John Marshall, James Oliver, Reggie Clark, Don Summerfield, Marilyn MacNab, John Kane, Thomas Gilbert, Angela Mannerson, and Philip Beaulieu

MBTA Representatives:

Paul Fitzgerald, Lauren Brelford, Gary Talbot, Sandra Belhaimer, Dottie Winn, Paul Strobis, Carol Joyce-Harrington, Annette Griffin, Philip Balcom, Robert Rizzo, Mike Festa, Kathy Cox, and Alex Murkison

Vendor Representatives:

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

Agency Representatives

Richard Doucet – Director of Building Security for Genesis Management Group
Kathy Roach – Massachusetts Office on Disability
April Maselli – Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
Janie Guion and Walter Bennett – Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization staff

The AACT Chairman opened the meeting at 1:10 PM with a welcome to everyone.

Agenda

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

The November 28, 2007 meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Chairman' s Update

The Chairman noted the following:

- MBTA's Office for Transportation Access is taking steps to improve relationships and conditions between consumers and vendors
- He noted that THE RIDE service has been identified as the number one paratransit service nationwide and they should continue to strive to be number one
- He attended a meeting with MBTA staff and vendors that addressed scheduling, pickup, drop-off, timeliness, complaint responses, handling of complaints and investigations
- He also indicated that more needs to be done to improve service

Richard Doucet, Director of the Security, State Transportation Building for Genesis Group Management

Mr. Doucet briefed members, friends and guests on the responsibility of building security when the building fire alarm is triggered. In the event of an emergency evacuation AACT members, guests, and friends should follow the lead of building security. Anyone who will need the use of an elevator will be instructed to wait until the Boston Fire Department (BFD) arrives. The building security staff is not trained to evacuate persons from the building who may have physical limitations. Persons attending meetings in the Conference Center will be instructed by building security to wait there for further instructions. The BFD will make an assessment of the situation and be in full control of the building and the security personnel. The building security is then directed by the BFD.

J. Marshall: Would you repeat instructions how to exit from the second floor to the first?

R. Doucet: The elevators are directly tied into the fire alarm systems. The BFD has override. When the alarm sounds all elevators return to the main floor for safety reasons. This is done to ensure that persons are not trapped in elevators. The BFD has keys for all elevators.

M. MacNab: Building security evacuated this group from the conference room during a morning meeting with no clear directions where we needed to go or what to do.

R. Doucet: The protocol is decided by building management.

J. Marshall: How many fire drills have you had to evaluate in order to determine the response time of the BFD?

R. Doucet: The response time is about three to four minutes for the arrival of the BFD.

J. Marshall: Persons in wheelchairs cannot leave this floor until the BFD arrives to assess the situation.

R. Doucet: Yes.

D. Summerfield: I think it would be better to evacuate the building before the BFD arrives.

Chairman Haynes: The security personnel are not trained to evacuate the building. The BFD is trained to evacuate in a safe manner.

R. Doucet: Send questions or concerns about the building's evacuation plan during an emergency to Genesis Management. The best situation is for you to remain in the building and BFD will come to you.

D. Summerfield: I would like to see building management institute a plan to train security personnel to evacuate persons with physical impairments.

R. Doucet: That is outside the concept of the security contract.

Chairman Haynes: Mr. Summerfield, are you suggesting that maybe AACT approach building management to have them develop a plan to evacuate persons from the building?

D. Summerfield: Yes.

Chairman Haynes: I will meet with building management. We cannot impose our conditions on the administrative and security staff of the building without the cooperation of both.

K. Piccard: Approaching building management is an issue the membership should vote on.

Chairman Haynes: Agreed.

J. Oliver: When the alarm sounded this morning the security personnel instructed us to go to the elevator to await further notice. What should we have done?

R. Doucet: When there is a meeting in session we will not evacuate this room until further notice from the BFD.

R. Clark: I agree with you Mr. Chairman; we should wait for directions from the BFD for safety reasons.

M. MacNab: Do you know the ownership of this building?

R. Doucet: The ownership is very complicated. It is owned and rented by the state. The downstairs is 8 Park Plaza and the second floor and above is 10 Park Plaza. The fire evacuation plans along with the sub-plans created by the agencies meet the BFD standard for the City of Boston.

D. Summerfield: I recommend that AACT discuss whether or not to approach building management on evacuation procedure before the BFD arrives.

Chairman Haynes: It has been moved and seconded that AACT put forth an effort to have building management develop an evacuation process prior to and not subsequent to the BFD arriving.

J. Oliver: I do not believe AACT is in the position to tell building management or the BFD how to evacuate the building.

J. Marshall: This discussion has to do with whether persons with impairments are able to get out of the building in an emergency. If the elevators are automatically turned off we become trapped. Persons with physical disabilities have the right to be assisted away from danger when it exists.

D. Summerfield: Minutes waiting on the BFD to direct persons with disabilities to evacuate safely are minutes lost. Persons with disabilities often walk very slowly.

Chairman Haynes: The motion to be voted on is: AACT should approach building management about training of their personnel to help evacuate persons with disabilities prior to the BFD arriving.

The motion was presented and defeated by a margin 7 to 5 with no abstentions.

MBTA Manager of MBTA Fixed Route Service

Kathy Cox, of the Systemwide Accessibility Office (bus, train, subway, bus rapid transit, commuter rail and boat) for the MBTA reported the following:

- Regarding the concerns by AACT members that pay telephones would be removed from MBTA stations due to the popularity of cellular phones; the MBTA is contracted with Verizon for telephones in stations. There are no plans to remove telephones located in stations
- The MBTA will be expanding weekday, evening and weekend service on routes #15 Kane Square, #111 Haymarket Square; the #88 Lechmere will have additional trips during rush hour. The route # 225 (Quincy Ctr. To Weymouth Landing) bus service connects with the Greenbush Commuter Rail Line at Weymouth Landing /E. Braintree Station; the # 714 (operated for the MBTA by a private carrier) service will extend to connect with the Greenbush at Nantasket Junction in Hingham.

She then took questions.

T. Gilbert: I called MBTA OTA at Back Bay and the Customer Support Services and asked about the new System-Wide Accessible Services. Neither of those departments could direct me.

S. Belhaimer: The Assistant General Manager, Office of System-Wide Accessibility will be drafting a letter today to inform all staff concerning this issue.

D. Summerfield: What were your findings on the parking area at the Waltham commuter rail station?

K. Cox/M. Festa: City of Waltham owns the parking facility and there are four accessible spaces.

M. MacNab: The MBTA presented the Dorchester Four Corners station plans to the community and they were rejected. The community would like to an elevator installed. There were many other concerns addressed by the community.

K. Cox: I will pass on your concerns.

J. Marshall: Who is responsible for removing snow and water from the bus stop areas?

K. Cox: Snow removal from bus stops is the responsibility of the cities and towns. The MBTA is responsible for snow removal on MBTA property.

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.

He shared the following items:

- Transportation plans for Boston's First Night were incomplete
- An apology was given for THE RIDE service problems on two storm events: Thursday, December 13 when there were very lengthy delays in service that impacted and inconvenienced users and Sunday, December 16 when another storm caused a suspension in service

He then asked for questions.

K. Piccard: Why was the automated system not activated to contact customers concerning a suspension in service? Why were customers not notified that Sunday service was temporarily suspended? I was listening to the radio and heard nothing about THE RIDE service being suspended.

B. Rizzo: We will be evaluating this with overall operations and it will be reported to central control. I was personally disappointed that customers did not get a promised call. Due to the limited number of persons using THE RIDE on Sunday there was no need to use the automated call system. Vendors will be reviewing their procedures in the use of the automated system during this type of emergency.

L. Caswell: GLSS did call me about the delay in service. I went on and cancelled my trip.

J. Oliver: Now that you have received your 84 new vans, will you be getting more new sedans?

B. Rizzo: My office will be meeting with THE RIDE vendors the first of the year to discuss the next order. We are scheduled to receive some 30 vans and several sedans for delivery this spring or summer. As in the past, we will evaluate what the appropriate vehicles are. Some vendors have expressed a desire to switch to all vans. We do have a couple of hundred sedans available. If vendors indicate a preference to get some vans and sedans we will work with them. The market is

always changing in what may be the appropriate choice of vehicle. We will keep AACT involved as we move forward.

D. Summerfield: I really appreciate the safety device that indicates the vehicle is moving.

Open Discussion: Mr. Gary Talbot, MBTA Assistant General Manager for System-Wide Accessibility

Mr. Talbot, entertained questions from AACT members and friends.

J. Marshall: Thank you for all you are doing and the many things you will be doing. Would you address what plans and new issues are being addressed by the MBTA to make the bus stops in the community and stations accessible for elders and persons with disabilities?

G. Talbot: My staff and I are well aware of the difficulty for persons with disabilities when snow becomes a factor. If you experience problems, I encourage each of you to contact the MBTA's Customer Service Department so there will be a permanent record of all complaints and snow related issues. There are also issues that we will need to address during the summer months going forward. We all need to complain together. In many cases the MBTA does not own the (sidewalks) property. How do we fix the problem? It is going to take a lot of effort between the MBTA, AACT and other organizations. Thanks to the Governor of the Commonwealth for getting on board and helping with all the different agencies so that everyone understands the importance of this issue.

D. Summerfield: What is the MBTA doing to address the problem bus stops that were built years ago to accommodate the older series buses that were shorter in length than today's new series? What is being done to alleviate this problem system-wide?

G. Talbot: My staff and the Bus Operations staff have worked really hard on the new bus operator procedures. Oftentimes buses are not able to pull into the curb. Should the operator be unable to pull into the curb (illegally parked vehicles or structure problems) the operator will now have the option to press a button that will indicate why the operator can't pull into the curb. Bus Operations will establish a data file on the 9,000 bus stops and find out what the real issues are. The community needs to send a very clear message to the politicians and others that it is our civil right to be able to access bus stops. With the help of Judge King, Dan Manning from Greater Boston Legal Services, Bill Henning from Boston Independent Living Center, AACT, and others in the community, we can

send a clear message that we need help. We have got to stop using bus stops that are inaccessible. The disability community will never be served as long as this happens. We need to find out the locations and issues, and then present solutions to the people making the decisions.

R. Clark: Can you find out what the delay is on the route #70 bus?

G. Talbot: If you can, call my office or see me after the meeting with more information. I will get this logged into the system and do research.

G. Thomas: Would you check why there are delays in service of the 4 PM and 6 PM pullout from the Charlestown garage?

G. Talbot: I was not aware of this issue. I will do research on this issue.

M. MacNab: Can you verify the policy for pulling over to the curb by operators?

G. Talbot: I believe it is one foot or less. We are teaching new procedures to the operators. Anyone at anytime can request the deployment of the ramp or kneeler.

T. Gilbert: Is there anything that can be done to make the bus stop at Union Square more accessible?

G. Talbot: If you are aware of bus stops with accessibility issues, please call the MBTA Customer Service Center and have them flagged as an accessibility problem. I am pleased to announce that Kathy Cox will now be focused on complaint investigation and resolutions.

R. Clark: Would you check the reason bus route #60 is often late and why on occasion it will change its route?

G. Talbot: I will do research.

D. Summerfield: What is the timeframe for the completion of Alewife?

G. Talbot: If I had to guess I would say in about six months, sometime in June.

Chairman Haynes: Do you think the articulated buses because of their extension, are inappropriate for some of the bus stops that have been there for years?

G. Talbot: You are probably correct. We will be working with our database to know the extent of the problem.

Chairman Haynes: Do you have any comments for THE RIDE users that may be selected to use the CharlieCard?

G. Talbot: This is a wonderful time for more transportation independence on the fixed route system. You will not lose THE RIDE eligibility. You will pay a one-time fee of five dollars for the CharlieCard. The MBTA is giving passengers the opportunity for lots of feedback. The more complaints we get the more opportunity for improvement.

Chairman Haynes: Thank you very much, Mr. Talbot, for your time.

J. Oliver: Have you heard of any problems with any of THE RIDE users being overcharged when they make payments by computer?

B. Rizzo: Yes, it happens several times a day. In some instances it may be customer error striking the keyboard double or keys that may stick. The number for making phone deposits 1-888-844-0345.

J. Kane: I have experienced the overcharging of my account on several occasions. My account was adjusted.

Old Business:

None was presented.

New Business:

J. Marshall: Discussed the snow removal policy for the City of Boston.

Announcements:

A. Maselli: The 30th Anniversary Committee, Chair reported that members met on December 5 and planned a tentative date and location for the AACT celebration on Saturday, April 26, Brookline Holiday Inn.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:23 P. M.