

MBTA 2008 PMT Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting June 28, 2007

The fourth meeting of the PMT Stakeholder Advisory Committee was held in the MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150, on June 28, 2007 from 1 – 3 PM.

Attendees:

Christi Apicella, Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization, Inc.
Clinton Bench, Central Transportation Planning Staff / Boston Region MPO
Peter Bertozzi, MBTA
Paul Christner, Boston Transportation Department
Kay Carson, MassRIDES
Joe Cosgrove, MBTA
Leo Dirrane, MBTA
Kate Fichter, Executive Office of Transportation
Patrick Hart, Department of Housing and Community Development
Barbara Lucas, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
John Martin, MBTA
John McSweeney, MBTA
Elizabeth Moore, Central Transportation Planning Staff / Boston Region MPO
Ron Morgan, MBTA
Steve Olanoff, Regional Transportation Advisory Council
Charles O'Reilly, MBTA
Paul Regan, MBTA Advisory Board
Mark Siegenthaler, Department of Housing and Community Development
Chris Terzakis, MBTA Operations Support
Karen Wepsic, MBTA Rider Oversight Committee
Susan Wolfson, University of Massachusetts, Boston

Meeting Highlights:

- The Power system is not generally visible to the average rider, but is very important, complex, and expensive to maintain. \$126 million is currently programmed for power system improvements.
- Sections of the Green Line signal system are approaching 50 years old.
- Design is funded in the CIP for upgrading the Red Line signals at Columbia Junction (where the Braintree and Ashmont branches come together). Signal problems at this junction cause 30%-50% of current delays on the Red Line.
- The MBTA is currently spending on Green Line track replacement.
- Red Line tracks north of Harvard are reaching the end of their useful life and affect current service reliability.
- Replacing the tracks, ties, and ballast in the yards is a high priority.
- The signal and rail replacements will lead to better headways in some instances.
- It would cost several billion dollars to electrify the whole commuter rail system.
- Attendance at the five PMT public workshops was good with a total of just over 100 people attending. The people who came seemed pleased with the small group format, and all participated in the discussions. Most of the comments/feedback received focused on improving existing services and infrastructure.

- Several themes were consistently raised across all five workshops. In summary, these included:
 - Reliability
 - Connectivity
 - Accessibility
 - Frequency and span of service on weekends and evenings
 - Communication/information
 - Environmental protection
 - Operator training for courtesy and consistency
- The 2008 PMT vision, goals, and objectives were revised to reflect the themes that were raised at the workshops.
- The goals were divided into two types: planning goals and outcome goals. The outcome goals are framed as customer-oriented statements:
 - Take customers where they need to go
 - Take customers when they need to travel
 - Give customers comfortable service they can rely on
 - Treat customers fairly and with respect
 - Keep customers well informed
 - Reduce the regional impact of transportation on the environment
- The evaluation criteria for the 2008 PMT will be based on the goals and objectives, as well as evaluation criteria that are used for other MBTA planning processes.

Meeting Notes

Introduction – Joe Cosgrove, MBTA

Committee members introduced themselves, and Joe Cosgrove reviewed the meeting agenda.

MBTA Power, Signal, and Track Needs and Priorities — Joe Cosgrove, MBTA

Joe presented information about the MBTA power, signal, and track systems (see power point presentation for meeting). Additional presentation points included:

- Power
 - The Power system is not generally visible to the average rider, but is very important, complex, and expensive to maintain.
 - The current CIP has \$126 million programmed for the power system. CIP funded projects include replacing 50-year old power cables on the Green Line D Branch, increasing traction power on the Blue Line, and improving Mattapan High Speed Line power as part of the station modernization. In the future the MBTA will need to upgrade power on the Orange Line to accommodate the next generation of cars.
- Signals
 - Sections of the Green Line signal system are approaching 50 years old.
 - Green Line signals will be upgraded as part of the Lechmere relocation and Green Line extension projects

- The North Station–Science Park project included Green Line signal system upgrades, but kept the fixed block system instead of changing to the more modern moving block system, as the moving block system will not accommodate headways as short as occur on the Green Line.
- Design is funded in the CIP for upgrading the Red Line signals at Columbia Junction (where the Braintree and Ashmont branches come together). Currently 30%-50% of delays on the Red Line are a result of the signals at this junction, which date from the 1960's. The overall cost of this project will be around \$60 million, much of which is because service cannot be shut down to do the work, due to the critical location.
- Track & right-of-way
 - The MBTA is currently investing in Green Line track replacement to accommodate the Type 8 cars. The E Branch was completed last year, and work on the D Branch will take place over the summer.
 - It has been 25 years since the Red Line was extended north of Harvard, and the tracks are reaching the end of their useful life. Problems with the tracks in this area affect current service reliability.
 - The Orange Line tracks are also reaching the end of their useful life and will need to be replaced in the next 5-10 years.
 - Commuter rail tracks are being replaced with welded rail under a phased implementation program on the Fitchburg Line.

The presentation was followed by discussion with the MBTA officials in attendance.

Topics covered included the following:

- Replacing the tracks, ties, and ballast in the yards is a high priority. Tracks haven't gotten the attention they need for operational efficiency.
- The signal and rail replacements will lead to better headways in some instances. On the Blue Line, however, increasing to 6-car trains will have a much larger effect on service, and will increase through-put by 1/3. On the Orange Line, when the Absolute Block Signals (ABS) are replaced with an –Automated Train Control (ATC) signal system between Haymarket and Oak Grove, there will be an immediate improvement in service.
- The highest priorities for the signal system are Columbia Junction on the Red Line and the central subway system on the Green Line.
- Barbara Lucas (MAPC) indicated that much interest has been, and continues to be, expressed in electrifying the commuter rail system. She asked approximately how expensive it would be to do this, and whether it could be done gradually over time. Although it is very difficult to project the cost, the MBTA officials agreed that it would be several billion dollars to convert the whole system. Because individual trainsets are used on multiple lines over the course of a day, if only one part of the system were electrified, it would require a dedicated fleet. This would add to the cost and would have operational impacts.

PMT Public Process Update – Joe Cosgrove, MBTA, Clinton Bench CTPS/Boston Region MPO, and Elizabeth Moore, CTPS/Boston Region MPO

Attendance at all of the public workshops was good with a total of just over 100 people attending. The only meeting with disappointing attendance was the first one, which was

held in Braintree. To ensure better attendance at the subsequent meetings, a concerted effort was made to get the word out through phone calls to community groups, advocacy groups, chambers of commerce, etc. In addition, flyers describing the meeting schedule were posted inside of buses and distributed as a seat drop. The flyers were also posted in all stations and handed out at targeted stations.

The meetings attracted good geographic coverage. The people who came seemed pleased with the small group format, and all participated in the discussions. These PMT workshops were combined with the initial outreach for the 2008 Service Plan, and people were comfortable talking about all aspects of how they use the system and the problems they face in doing so. People expressed more interest in improving the existing system than in expanding it.

Several themes were consistently raised across all five workshops. In summary, these included:

- Service reliability – people want the services to operate as scheduled
- Connectivity – people want improved bus-to-bus and bus-to-train connections, as well as better circumferential/crosstown connections.
- Accessibility – people with disabilities want better access to the whole system
- Frequency and span of service – people want more service, particularly on the weekends, and later service in the evenings
- Communication – people want consistent and clear stop announcements, additional signage, real-time information on the web, better marketing of MBTA services and more communication between the planners and end-users of the services
- Environmental protection – people are concerned about global warming and would like better transit to help reduce greenhouse emissions. In addition, there is concern about environmental impacts caused by the transit system, itself.
- Operator training for courtesy and consistency – in addition to training for courtesy, people would like better operator training to ensure consistent application of existing policies

PMT Vision, Goals & Objectives – *Liz Moore, CTPS/Boston Region MPO*

After the public process had been completed, it became apparent that the vision, goals, and objectives should reflect the themes that were raised. The revised vision incorporates the desired service characteristics (such as quality and reliability) with statements regarding broader outcomes (meeting mobility needs, protecting the environment, strengthening the economy)

The goals were divided into two types: planning goals and outcome goals. The planning goals deal with the process of developing the PMT and on-going capital planning, as well as the process of identifying mobility strategies (through coordinated planning efforts and public outreach, etc.). The outcome goals are framed as customer-oriented statements that encompass the themes discussed above and include:

- Take customers where they need to go

- Take customers when they need to travel
- Give customers comfortable service they can rely on
- Treat customers fairly and with respect
- Keep customers well informed
- Reduce the regional impact of transportation on the environment

In general, committee members were pleased with the revisions to the vision, goals, and objectives. One point of clarification was needed: the planning goals do not preclude identification of additional expansion projects from consideration in the PMT.

PMT Evaluation Criteria – Liz Moore, Joe Cosgrove, MBTA, CTPS/Boston Region MPO, Clinton Bench, CTPS/Boston Region MPO, and Kate Fichter, EOT

The evaluation criteria for the 2008 PMT will be based on the goals and objectives, as well as evaluation criteria that are used for other MBTA planning processes, including (see presentation for criteria used for each plan):

- MBTA Service Plan
- MBTA Capital Investment Program
- 2003 PMT and Journey to 2030
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts Long-Range Transportation Plan

The evaluation criteria for each of these plans were reviewed, and the following points were discussed:

- Concern was expressed that the service planning process is a zero sum game, i.e., to add service to a bus route, resources must be taken away from somewhere else in the bus system. This was of particular concern because this approach is applied to bus, but not to rail.
- Expanding the bus fleet would be inexpensive, but could have the potential to greatly improve service.
- New interest in public/private partnerships might help to subsidize new services.
- The PMT is the only opportunity to look expansively at the system, so it should consider other types of services than those that fit the current spoke and wheel design.
- The spoke and wheel system is well used, so any change might be at the expense of existing riders. Any change to the current system would require a major policy shift at the MBTA.
- Although the PMT is not fiscally constrained, it should provide a realistic and honest appraisal of system improvement strategies and trade-offs as well as a clear vision for what the MBTA, as an operating agency, wants the transit system to become over the next 25 years.
- The system must continue to expand in a way that reflects current plans for dense development where no transit exists. However, a reasonable return on the investment should be expected in order for such plans to be realistic.

The next Stakeholder Advisory Committee will be held on Thursday, July 26, 2007 from 12:00 - 2:00 PM in the MPO Conference Room, 10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150.

Program for Mass Transportation

Vision:

The MBTA will provide safe, reliable, accessible, efficient, and cost-effective services that:

- meet the evolving mobility needs of the region, the communities, and the individuals it serves
- reduce environmental impacts and support environmental justice
- strengthen regional economic vitality and competitiveness

PMT Planning Goals:

To achieve the PMT vision, the 2008 PMT planning process will meet the following goals:

- Strengthen the MBTA's long-range planning process by:
 - formalizing coordination of planning efforts among project development, capital programming, operations management, and other areas within the MBTA
 - standardizing the on-going process to identify, prioritize, and address asset maintenance and replacement needs
 - coordinating with the Commonwealth regarding implementation of currently planned expansion projects, as well as those identified as future commitments
- Identify mobility strategies for identifiable customer markets within the MBTA's service area by:
 - engaging in coordinated land use and transportation planning with local/regional/ state agencies, community organizations, and other key stakeholders
 - supporting local/regional/state economic development plans
 - supporting sustainable/transit oriented development plans
 - conducting a meaningful public process
 - analyzing existing data to identify and project travel patterns
 - coordinating with the commonwealth regarding implementation of currently planned expansion projects, as well as those identified as future commitments

PMT Outcome Goals & Objectives:

Through the 2008 PMT planning process, the MBTA will propose and evaluate solutions to achieve the long-range vision by meeting the following goals:

Take customers where they need to go

- Improve transit system/intermodal connections and reduce transfers
- Coordinate MBTA service and fare collection systems with other services, including inter-suburban service provided by regional transit authorities (RTAs)

- Expand options for customers to conveniently access MBTA stations and services
- Add stops/stations where necessary to meet regional mobility demand and consolidate stops where doing so effectively promotes goals of increasing ridership and improving travel time.

Take customers when they need to travel

- Improve service frequency
- Decrease travel times
- Increase span of service, particularly in the evening and late night
- Increase off-peak & weekend service

Give customers comfortable service they can rely on

- Improve schedule adherence (through ROW, signal coordination, ITS, etc.)
- Provide sufficient service to meet customer demand and reduce loads
- Provide customer amenities such as shelters, heated waiting areas, benches, and bike racks
- Ensure consistent operation of vehicle air conditioning/heating, and station elevators/escalators
- Improve vehicle design/configuration
- Provide clean stations/vehicles

Treat customers fairly and with respect

- Ensure that the benefits and burdens of the transportation system are equitably distributed
- Make the system accessible to persons with disabilities
- Provide courteous and responsive customer service
- Train operators to be more courteous and responsive to customers
- Provide operators with strategies to deal with difficult/dangerous situations
- Develop clear policies for operators to follow and reward them for implementing them consistently
- Provide incentives/rewards for operators who excel in customer service

Keep customers well informed

- Improve and increase station signs & maps
- Translate signage, etc., for LEP populations and tourists
- Ensure that stop announcements are accurate, audible, and consistently implemented
- Make schedules readily available
- Market MBTA services to make the public aware of options
- Provide real-time information on the website
- Improve web-based tools that assist customers in planning their trips

Reduce the regional impact of transportation on the environmental

- Increase transit ridership and regional mode share
- Reduce emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gasses
- Reduce other transportation-related pollution of the environment