

**Access Advisory Committee to the Massachusetts
Bay Transportation Authority (AACT)**

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Members Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 26, 2016

Board of Directors:

Chairman – James F. White

Vice Chairman – Lisa Weber

Executive Board

Mary Ann Murray

Beverly Ann Rock

Lisa Weber

Meeting opened at 1:10 PM.

Reading of the Agenda

Introductions

Attendees: James White, Lisa Weber, Jim Tozza, Thomas Gilbert, Gail and Malvin Weinstein, Elizabeth, Richard Mahoney, Nadine Jones, Angela Manerson, Christine Daniels, Reggie Clark, Debbie Weathers, Dee Whittlesy, Kevin Wilson, Nancy Miller, Deane Sisco, and Suzanne Siino

MBTA Staff:

Mike Hulak, Carol Joyce-Harrington, Philip Balcom, and Rob Sampson

Vendor Staff:

Steve Epps, Scott Reeves, Ray Crotuea, Paul Crowley, Kevin McDonald, Bryan Overcash, Rita Hardiman, Elizabeth Hickey, and Christine Woznac

Other:

Paige Halloran, Toshiko Kudo, David Chia, Patricia Mendez, Rob Dias, Scott Reeves, and Jessica Podesva

Meeting Minutes Approval

June 22, meeting minutes were accepted unanimously.

Chairman White's Report

He stated the following:

- He attended the National Express passenger assistance training and the ADA training at the Charlestown Bus Garage.
- He would like to appoint a disabled veteran to serve on the Executive Board. He has contacted Giselle Sterling, Boston Commissioner of Veterans Service for recommendations.
- He was invited to participate in the MBTA Fiscal Management and Control Board Strategic Plan Stakeholder input session.
- He appointed Lisa Weber as the new AACT Vice Chair.
- He attended a meeting to discuss the implications of bus privatization with Laura Brelsford and Rob Sampson.
- He reported that Gerald Francis has been named President of Keolis North America and David Scorey will be the new general manager.

- He informed members that he is looking to appoint more Board members and that anyone who is interested should see AACT's Coordinator

There were no questions asked.

ReWalk Robotics

Scott Reeves, Northeast Manager, gave a brief overview of ReWalk Robotics exoskeleton suit (ES). A small company based in Marlboro, MA with some 20 staff members locally and is expanding in the United States quickly. He noted that the core company is based in Israel. The ES is the invention of Dr. O. Gofer who became disabled after suffering an ATV accident. Dr. Gofer is unable to use his device.

He explained that this technology will help with mobility that can help you stand and walk. The ES works for those who have a certain mass of muscle for balance while standing. He noted that the Federal Drug Administration approved the invention two years ago but is not cleared for stair climbing in the United States. He commented that both the Veterans Administration and some health insurers are financing the ES for persons who may qualify. He showed a short video of how a user walking in the ES.

He then asked for comments or questions.

R. Sampson recommended that Mr. Reeves be more thoughtful in his delivery and to choose his words appropriately.

T. Tozza noted that he has a friend with his plates missing. Would he be a candidate for the ES? *S. Reeves* noted that the ES is not designed for that type of injury. He noted that ReWalk considers all types of injury.

Chairman White asked about the percentage of bone density and what is the minimum requirement. *S. Reeves* stated that the doctor would make that evaluation.

K. Wilson asked would the ES help you be more independent from your mobility device. *S. Reeves* noted that the ES is not designed to replace the mobility device. A person would need to have upper body strength. It is limited to certain areas such as the beach, rough terrain and stairs.

Chairman White asked about the battery life. *S. Reeves* noted that the battery life is for three hours.

Elizabeth commented that she has a friend that is blind and with multiple disabilities. Would he be a candidate for the ES? *S. Reeves* noted that a person would need vision for the ES.

G. Weinstein asked if anyone could be a candidate for the ES other than those that it is intended. *S. Reeves* stated that ES is designed for people with paralysis not for those who can get around under own their strength.

L. Weber pointed out that it was good for the video note that it had no audio or caption so access is a problem for people who are impaired. *S. Reeves* stated that he is aware.

She also asked what state consumer law covered the ES. *S. Reeves* stated that there are state laws for devices with wheels and those without she asked what state law covered the ES. *S. Reeves* that they are not working with anything with wheels.

MBTA and Vendor Reports

Keolis Commuter Services (KCS), LLC

Rita Hardiman, Director, EEO Director and Diversity, introduced Liz Hicky, new manager for EEO who will now assume the duties of Selena Walckner at full AACT meetings. She comes by way of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. Ms. Hicky has worked with all kinds of issues related to ADA access and to handling other kinds of complaints related to discriminatory treatment of passengers as well as employees.

Ms. Hicky commented that she is delighted to be working at Keolis as one of the new managers. She noted that the department is a very important one which handles Civil Rights complaints including customer complaints that involve ADA issues.

She stated the following:

- She noted that Keolis has had some challenges over the past few weeks:
 - She also expressed concern that there is no excuse and no amount of regret for the cancelation of any trains.
 - She noted that Keolis is committed to running trains; they never want to cancel a train even in inclement weather.
 - She explained that cancelations on the Fairmont Line are due to a large number of federal inspections performed on the trains that are taken out of service primarily for safety reasons.

She then asked for questions.

A. Manerson commented that passenger using bike racks on the train often make it difficult to maneuver since she is visually impaired.

MBTA System-Wide Accessibility Department (SWA)/Fixed Route Services

Rob Sampson, Manager for System-Wide Accessibility, reported the following:

- He noted that Wachusett station opened on Sept. 30 and is fully accessible.
- He commented that Plan for Accessible Transit Infrastructure was updated as of September 20.
- He stated that by December 21, 3500 bus stops will have been surveyed. He also noted that the new operation hours for the MBTA Customer Communication (CC) Department have changed operating hours as of September 1. The office is now opened Mon-Fri 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM and no weekend or holiday service.

He then asked for questions.

T. Gilbert stated that while traveling on the Red Line Bombardier 1800 series car and approaching Central Square, the audio announces the incorrect stop *R. Sampson* stated that he is aware of the problem and will look into it again. He apologized for the delay.

L. Weber asked if the CC on-line form page was still active. She also asked whether he was aware of any problems with leaving voicemail messages for CC regarding complaints. She asked if there is an influx of calls coming in after hours. *R. Sampson* noted that he was not aware of any problem but would do some research.

Chairman White commented that he had received complaints from people about the barricades at Downtown Crossing station near the

Charlie Store which was impacting their path of travel. *R. Sampson* explained that the equipment is for the elevator project and that the location of the barricades is in an accessible path of travel. He also noted that SWA had received no complaints about the area.

K. Wilson stated that there are many vehicles that block the bus stop. It becomes difficult to access the bus stop for all the vehicles that block the stop. Can something be done about this area? *R. Sampson* noted that he would do some research.

MBTA Office for Transportation Access (OTA) -THE RIDE Program

Mike Hulak, Manager, submitted the OTA report and shared the following:

- He explained the subscription service plan: it is now reduced from three days to two days. He noted that if you travel to the same location at least two or more days a week you are eligible for this service. He asked that passengers call their vendor to be added to the service.
- He explained that OTA will allow all customers to use “online booking” this service is now opened to everyone with conditional or unconditional approval. Currently, only unconditional customers can use this feature due to safety concerns. He noted that with more conditional eligibility increasing and with better technology on-line booking service is available to everyone.

He then asked for questions. There were none.

Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS)

Steve Epps, Director of Transportation, distributed his report and he explained that the month of September was a very tough one for GLSS. He noted that school is now in session which causes increased delays.

He then asked for questions.

G. Weinstein explained a problem that she had with dispatch. She also noted that the wrong type vehicle was sent to her home. She noted the politeness of the drivers. *S. Epps* noted that he would look into her concern and thanked her for the compliments.

K. Wilson stated that he has a problem getting information from their TTY machine. *M. Hulak* noted that he would look into the problem.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Epps for his report.

Veterans Transportation (VT)

Kevin MacDonald, Project Manager distributed his report and noted that they would conduct PAT and sensitivity training in early November.

He then asked for questions.

K. Wilson noted that the drivers are taking him on a scenic tour and oftentimes he is not very far from home. Sometimes it takes him hours to get home. *K. MacDonald* stated that he will give it more research to his travel log.

Chairman White thanked Mr. McDonald for his report.

National Express Transit (NEXT)

Victor Herrera, Operations Manager, announced upcoming passenger assistance training will be on November 3.

He then asked for questions.

S. Siino noted that her son is a customer of THE RIDE and that she advocates on his behalf. She explained that an incident with her son happened in August and here it is October still no answers. She stated that she received a response but there is no explanation. She is very upset and feels that there appears to be no policy or accountability. **V. Herrera** noted that his operations manager had addressed that issue and sent a response. **Chairman White** asked that Mr. Herrera speak with Ms. Siino after the meeting. **Mr. Hulak** addressed the membership and other individuals to let them know that they are acting properly to address complaints.

R. Dias asked whether passengers permitted to read the GPS report. **V. Herrera** noted that is not sent out with the response. He would need to get direction on the issue. **M. Hulak** explained that this is not the usual circumstances.

Chairman White thanked Mr. Herrera for his report.

Open Discussion

R. Clark noted that near the entrance of this building the city (Boylston Street) as all sorts of objects on the sidewalk which makes it difficult for a clear path of travel for the visually impaired. **P. Mendez** from the Boston Mayor's Commission for Person with Disabilities stated that she would take a look at the area.

D. Veria noted that route #39 bus operator(s) do not put the seats down when passengers with strollers, carts, or mobility devices exit the

bus. He noted that this makes it difficult for persons who are visually impaired.

T Gilbert has a problem with the audio system being inoperable on bus #1031. *R. Sampson* asked that when you experience problems on any modes to please report all complaints to Customer Communications.

D. Weathers noted that on fixed routes there can sometimes be a problem between persons with strollers, carts, bags in seats, and those with mobility devices. *R. Sampson* noted that you should speak with the bus operator, but know he cannot make any demands or remove someone from a seat.

T. Gilbert asked what will happen with the older model buses. *R. Sampson* noted that the CNG buses are the only ones that will be taken out of service.

Announcements

C. J. Harrington noted that the Boston Center for Independent Living is hosting a meeting with UBER Management to address the disability community here on Thursday, October 27. She reminded everyone that the meeting is public, but not an MBTA sponsored event.

Old Business/ New Business

None were presented.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.

Notables

The AACT Executive Board will meet from 10:00 AM to noon and the Membership meeting will be conducted from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM on the fourth Wednesday of the month, except when noted.

Notices of AACT meetings are posted on the website of the MBTA at http://www.mbta.com/about_the_mbta/public_meetings/. Visit the MPO's calendar page at <http://www.bostonmpo.org/calendar/month> to find AACT agendas, meeting minutes, and past meeting minutes. For more on AACT, see the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the MBTA and AACT, the AACT Bylaws, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations at <http://www.mbta.com/aact> .

Also, find articles about topics discussed at AACT meetings in the MPO's newsletter, *TRANSREPORT*, at <http://www.bostonmpo.org/transreport>. For more information on accessibility at the MBTA, please visit www.mbta.com/accessibility.

Comments and questions concerning AACT should be directed to Chairman James White by contacting the AACT Coordinator, Ms. Janie Guion, at 857.702.3658 (voice) 617.570.9193 (TTY), AACT@ctps.org (email), or c/o CTPS, 10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150, Boston, MA 02116 (US mail).

The AACT meeting location is accessible to people with disabilities and is near public transportation. Upon request (preferably two weeks in advance of the meeting), every effort will be made to provide accommodations such as assistive listening devices, materials in accessible formats and in languages other than English, and interpreters in American Sign Language and other languages.

The MPO complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other federal and state non-discrimination statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. The MPO does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, English proficiency,

income, religious creed, ancestry, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or military service. Any person who believes her or himself or any specific class of persons has been subjected to discrimination prohibited by Title VI, ADA, or other non-discrimination statute or regulations may, her or himself or via a representative, file a written complaint with the MPO. A complaint must be filed no later than 180 calendar days after the date on which the person believes the discrimination occurred. A complaint form and additional information can be obtained by contacting the MPO (see above) or at www.bostonmpo.org.

Members needing service information or wanting to inquire about MBTA services should do so through the MBTA Marketing and Communications Department at 617.222.3200 or 800.392.6100, TTY 617.222.5146, Monday through Friday 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM. There are no weekend or evening hours. You can log on to the MBTA website at www.mbta.com/customer_support/feedback/.

Please sign in at all meetings.

Announcements are always welcome. Please be prepared to give as many details as possible: date, time, location, contact person, and phone number. A written notice is always appreciated.