



Access Advisory Committee

to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

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AACT Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 23, 2009

NOTABLES

- Vice-Chair John Kane chaired the September meeting in the absence of Chairman Haynes
- The AACT has a page on the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organizations' website at www.bostonmpo.org. Links can be found there for the following items: upcoming meetings, past meeting minutes, the Memorandum of Understanding between the MBTA and the AACT, and the AACT Bylaws, the AACT Brochure in accessible format, and ADA Regulations. There are also links to the MPO's newsletter, *TRANSREPORT*, the MBTA's Office for Transportation Access, and the AACT Coordinator
- Comments and questions concerning AACT should be directed to the Chairman
- Chairman Haynes recommends that AACT members needing information or wanting to inquire about MBTA services, do so through the Customer Support Service Center at 617-222-3200 or 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 would be appreciated

ATTENDANCE

John Kane, Philip Beaulieu, Linda Blair, Bill McCarthy, Thomas Gilbert, Marilyn MacNab, Paul Barresi, Sears Cummings, Ellen Frith,

Kathryn Piccard, Reggie Clark, Kenneth Smyth, Sharlene Blundell, John Daley, Brian Coppola and Romin Koebel

MBTA Representatives

Paul Strobis, Michael Hulak, Carol Joyce-Harrington, Dorothy Winn, Kathy Cox, and Michael Festa

Vendor Representatives

Joint Venture of Thompson Transit Inc. and YCN – JoAnne Thompson

Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. – Jackie Dunlop

Veterans Transportation LLC – Kevin MacDonald

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

Walter Bennett, Michael Callahan, and Pam Wolfe

Mr. Kane called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM

- He extended a welcome to everyone and read the agenda
- Members, friends and guests introduced themselves
- The August 26 meeting minutes were approved with one abstention
- *The Chair's report was waived.*

Member Hot Issues Session

B. Coppola: Could there be some outhouses at the Haverhill commuter rail station for those of us who are disabled?

K. Cox: The MBTA does not plan to install any type of restroom facility at outdoor commuter rail stations. Stations that have a building structure attached do have restrooms.

T. Gilbert: At the Heath Street station on the Green Line --why are operators not boarding people from the left side?

K. Cox: Operators are being instructed to board customers from the left side. Please call the MBTA Customer Support Services Center at 617-222-3200 voice; 617-222-5146 TTY should you observe any Green Line Operators not opening the left side doors.

Michael Festa, Senior Accessibility Specialist and Project Manager of System-Wide Accessibility (see attached handouts).

Mr. Festa presented to the members and friends two of the four new station additions to the Fairmont Line Corridor. He gave a detailed presentation on the Newmarket and Talbot Avenue stations. He discussed the new tracks and signal improvements, rehabilitation and or replacement of bridges, and also the planned upgrades to the three existing stations.

He then asked for questions.

B. Coppola: When will the projects start and end?

M. Festa: We're at 60% design. It will take about 8 months for construction. The line should be completed in 2012.

K. Piccard: On the Newmarket Station map, on the right side, there are emergency egress stairs on each side of the platform tent. When the Red Line emergency drills were done maybe two years ago it was discovered to be extremely difficult to lift wheelchairs up through the emergency exit, particularly when two people use the lift with one above and one below. These stairs were designed without occupied wheelchairs in mind. I'm hoping that you can tell us that the stairs have been designed with very specific specifications.

M. Festa: The stairs are for workers and not the general public. Your point is correct; there should be a ramp.

K. Piccard: My point is that there should be a ramp. It says "emergency egress stairs", but if it needs to be used to remove a person in a wheelchair and if you follow the standard model of the Red Line, it will be difficult to move a person in a wheelchair.

M. Festa: There will be evacuation chairs.

Mr. Kane: How wide are the accessible parking spaces? Are they wide enough for a van to put a ramp down?

M. Festa: Eight feet wide with eight feet on either side for a ramp.

K. Piccard: Is there room for more parking at Newmarket Station? I don't know if it is possible to have more designated parking along the wall on the west side. I'd like for it to be noted that accessible parking in both cases is woefully inadequate.

R. Clark: It is a long walk to the buses.

T. Gilbert: Ashmont Station is now open.

Mr. Kane: I read that there are only two accessible parking spaces. How many parking spaces at Talbot will be accessible?

M. Festa: There are only two. But there are only three spaces at the station. There is not enough land to accommodate more spaces.

K. Piccard: Has the MBTA asked the City of Boston to designate more parking near the station and to make them restricted?

M. Festa: The MBTA has notified the City of the issue. The MBTA is working on it.

**Kathy Cox, Manager for MBTA System-Wide Accessibility (SWA)
(report attached)**

She announced the following items.

- The MBTA is addressing the Huntington/Heath Street issue on the Green Line.
- The MBTA applied for a Homeland Security Grant to purchase rescue chairs, and is awaiting an answer
 - The grant will fund 500 state-of-the art chairs for stations and MBTA buildings
 - The model will have simple instructions for the user

She then asked for questions.

K. Piccard: How will people read the instructions in the dark?

M. Festa: There is emergency lighting in the tunnel.

K. Piccard: How will a respirator work with the rescue chair so one will not suffocate during the rescue?

K. Cox: The training will include that.

P. Barresi: What provisions have been made for persons who are blind who need to use the rescue chair? Will directions be in Braille?

K. Cox: Staff will use the chair to rescue passengers. Only staff will operate the rescue chairs in tunnels and buildings.

P. Barresi: Is passenger assistance training ongoing?

K. Cox: Yes. Scheduling depend on hiring. There are no set dates. Correction: Bus Operations is currently holding one class per month. Dates for the following month are selected at the end of the current month. SWA will provide the date for the November training to AACT as soon as it is available.

M. MacNab: Why wasn't more notice given about reviewing and commenting on the new rescue chair? Usually the state will bring in several different vendors and have people observe, listen, experience, and comment on the new equipment before a selection is made. I don't see this as happening at the MBTA. The Commonwealth holds demonstrations in many areas on voting equipment, doorknobs and other equipment all around the state. How do we know what other options and choices were available so that questions are answered and corrections can be made before purchase or before an evacuation problem occurs?

K. Cox: A number of vendors were brought in to the MBTA. The Operations Support engineers evaluated the chairs. There were demonstrations with Judge King, SWA staff and persons from the Boston Center for Independent Living for the chairs that were being considered. The chair is being used in a number of different locations. I will take your suggestions back to the MBTA.

M. MacNab: I am a plaintiff in this lawsuit and did not hear about this demonstration. What usually happens is that the vendors leave the room and the people observe, have demonstrations and comment on the equipment. What we have found is that the MBTA doesn't really

understand the equipment. It's very nice that the MBTA staff reviewed the chair. What the public does is look for flaws and point out problems and get them resolved before the purchase of the equipment.

K. Cox: The chair is being used in other settings such as hospitals.

M. Festa: The MBTA conducted an on-line demonstration of the rescue chair.

L. Blair: What happens after the rescue? And what becomes of the customer's \$30,000 or \$35,000 power wheelchair that is left behind? How does a rescued individual recover their abandoned mobility device?

K. Cox: The MBTA prioritizes rescuing individuals. Every effort will be made to rescue persons and their mobility devices. The MBTA Safety Department is in the process of expanding and improving emergency evacuation materials and programs.

***Paul Strobis, Assistant Manager of Paratransit Operations –
OTA, THE RIDE (reports attached)***

Mr. Strobis reported the following update:

- The MBTA's THE RIDE program will soon add the 108 new vehicles purchased through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) program
- 48 of the vehicles have been received, 21 are in service and all should be in service by mid-October
- A thank-you was extended to the Greater Lynn Senior Services for transportation services provided to residents of the Soldiers Home to their annual Red Sox baseball game.
- GLSS assisted a film crew in filming for a "Day in the Life of THE RIDE passenger." I heard you performed well. Thank you.

He then asked for questions.

K. Piccard: What is the standard for air-conditioning temperature in THE RIDE vans?

P. Strobis: There is no federal standard for air-conditioning. We checked with the manufacturer and were told to expect the air-conditioning units to perform at about 20-degrees less than the outside temperature in normal running conditions of the vehicle. For example, 90-degrees outside you should feel 70-degrees inside. But because of the loss of cooled air through opening doors for pickups and drop-offs, that would not necessarily be the inside temperature of the cab.

K. Piccard: I asked specifically about the contract standard?

P. Strobis: There is none.

Consumer: Will we get to see the film?

P. Strobis: This was not an MBTA project. A film school from New York asked permission to film a user of THE RIDE.

P. Barresi: Can you update us on the August 25 meeting regarding the Chair's request for accessible format?

P. Strobis: I did not attend that meeting. This should be in the next Chair's report. It was his request of documents from the Authority to be in accessible format.

M. MacNab: Are there any restrictions placed on transit authorities when using the ARRA "bailout funds"?

P. Wolfe/MPO: These are not "bailout funds." These ARRA funds are for needed transportation projects and the funds are in addition to those funds that agencies typically expect to receive. There was a big chunk of additional money that Congress gave to each of the states and various other programs to allow agencies like the MBTA to take care of needed transportation projects & programs in addition to what was already planned. The ARRA funds are meant to help improve transportation and stimulate the economy. It is not "bailout money."

Open Discussion

E. Frith: There are still problems with MBTA employees parking in the bus stop outside this building. MBTA inspector #9490 is blocking the bus stop on the west entrance.

T. Gilbert: Are MBTA employees trained to properly speak into the public address system?

K. Cox: Yes. This is part of the training.

K. Piccard: I work for a small non-profit and receive a number of complaints concerning different THE RIDE vendors. Our current problem is people in the dispatch office at night who feel apparently very hurried and hang up before the call is completed. I get these reports regarding different vendors. It is an ongoing problem. My concern is that it is people who have no idea how to ask for help. Sometimes the call is disconnected by the supervisor and sometimes not.

J. Thompson/Joint Venture: Calls should go to the night manager. No one should hang-up on a customer. We have a reservationist who works until 9 PM. No one should hang up on the caller. If this is a problem ask for the name of the dispatcher and file a complaint.

E. Frith: There is still no enforcement of no parking in bus stops nor any cooperation with either the Cambridge or Somerville Police. The officers' even direct people to park in the bus stops. Boston Police have been very cooperative. We cannot get the Somerville Police, particularly the Chief Anthony Holloway, to cooperate; he absolutely refuses to enforce the law. I'd like to hear people's ideas on how to approach the different police departments to impress them with the law and the seriousness, get them educational information and sensitivity training on this issue, and get them to enforce the law.

R. Clark: Why are Green Line trains pulling so far into the Boylston Street station? This is happening both on the inbound and outbound sides. This is a safety problem. Please make the adjustments.

K. Cox: This complaint has been forwarded to the Chief of Green Line Operations.

R. Koebel: Hynes Convention Center station on the Green Line serves a large population of older people, but is inaccessible. Are there plans to make the station accessible?

K. Cox: Studies were conducted at Hynes regarding the physical limitations of the station. I'm not sure if Hynes is on the list of stations to be improved. I'll keep checking to see if any funding has been set aside for accessibility work at this station.

E. Frith: Why are no escalators working in the down direction at Charles/MGH?

K. Cox: Stations with more than one escalator have one operating in the up direction and one in the other direction. Stations with only one escalator have that escalator going up to assist customers who have difficulty climbing upstairs at the station.

B. Coppola: AACT needs to look into the audible pedestrian signals near the Charles/MGH station; they are not working properly. Should the City of Boston be contacted?

K. Cox: The signals belong to the City of Boston.

T. Gilbert: Can drivers with the handicap/disability plate park in bus stops?

E. Frith: No one can park in bus stops.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.