



Access Advisory Committee to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

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Wednesday, May 26, 2010

AACT Meeting Minutes

NOTABLES

- 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: agendas, 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 Services Center at 617-222-3200 or the MBTA website at www.mbta.com/customer_support/feedback/
- The AACT Coordinator is Ms. Janie Guion; she can be reached at 617-973-7507 and AACT@ctps.org.
- 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

Ben Haynes, Lillian Haynes, Philip Beaulieu, Angela Mannerson, Beverly Rock, Esther Minar, John Kane, Bill McCarthy, Michael Lentini, Tammy Perrault, Mary Murray, Steve H., Maria Santangelo, Kathryn Piccard, Betty Commerford, Sears Cummings, Rev. Ellen Frith, Thomas Gilbert, and Paul Barresi

MassDOT /MBTA Representatives

Laura Brelsford, Frank Oglesby, Dottie Winn, Michael Hulak, Philip Balcom, Carol Joyce-Harrington

Vendor Representatives

Joint Venture of Thompson Transit Inc. and YCN – JoAnne Thompson and M. Claire DiPillo
Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. – John Soucy and Michael Lentini
Veterans Transportation LLC – Kevin MacDonald

Other Attendees

Kathy Roach-Devin-Massachusetts Office on Disability
Sharon Harrison-Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)/ Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)

Walter Bennett and Janie Guion

MEETING

Chairman Haynes called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM

Members, friends and guests introduced themselves.

Approval of the AACT Meeting Minutes

The AACT minutes from the April 28 meeting were approved as written with one abstention.

Chairman's Report (No written report was submitted)

The Chairman Haynes reported the following:

- AACT Executive Board did an on-site review of all vendors to ensure that their facilities are ADA compliant:
 - The overall review rating of vendors was 90% compliant
 - Each vendor is asked to submit an evacuation plan for his or her facility within 30 days
 - The communication system at each site was examined because of consumer complaints; the problem is currently being addressed
- Vendor trainings have taken on a new approach; so, each vendor was asked to submit an updated copy of all training material within ten days
- Sometime ago AACT, the Office of Transportation Access (OTA), vendors and members of the disability community updated THE RIDE Guide from about 30 pages to 12. I have just found out that OTA without consulting with AACT for comments and or review to the changes released their version. According to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) neither one of those versions are acceptable. Should this guide adversely affect the disability community I will be seeking answers from OTA, the General Manager or the Justice

Department in Washington, DC. We must be consistent and live by the agreement of the MOU.

- An agreement between the MBTA and the Union representing bus operators regarding cameras on buses. Cameras would not focus on the operator. That agreement may not be valid. According to ADA Part Sec. 37.11 in the amendments section that states, “no agreement with labor relations can be used to cover or avoid compliance with the ADA.” I will continue to do research.

He then asked for questions.

M. Santangelo: As a customer of THE RIDE, I’ve never been informed that we are being videoed.

Chairman Haynes: The video is not continuous and there is no audio. Cameras are only activated by the impact of a sudden force.

A. Mannerson: How long has this video camera been on-board?

Chairman Haynes: The cameras are on board to ensure your safety. A flyer with this information was mailed to consumers.

F. Olgesby: The video cameras in THE RIDE vehicles began in 2007.

The Chairman’s report was accepted as presented.

Kathryn Piccard, AACT member and former Director of Boston Self Help Center (see the attached)

Ms. Piccard gave an overview of Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) and distributed material on the disabling affects that the disease causes. She discussed how to make THE RIDE chemical free and safe for others. She was very helpful in educating members of the audience regarding the effects of MCS.

She focused on the following points.

- Only a few people with mild MCS have safe access to public transit.
- She described the effects (for people with MCS) of not having access to public transit.
- People with a diagnosis of MCS do not automatically have a right to paratransit, how and the way they can qualify.
- The MBTA has already implemented eight policies on The RIDE to make it more accessible for people with MCS than it was five or ten years ago.
- Ms. Piccard answered the question of what might be done if the conditions that make regular transit unsafe and unusable for a person with MCS are also present on THE RIDE. She explained that they are indeed present on THE RIDE because of other ride passengers and drivers, but that changes in policies could change the situation.
- As requested, she also described what else the MBTA could do that is not currently being done. They could set a date by which the vendors have to be certified in Boston Self-Help Center's *MCS Train the Trainers program*, and if OTA then followed up by implementing additional policies.
- Ms. Piccard gave examples of several inexpensive possible policies that OTA might choose to implement.

She then asked for questions.

A. Mannerson: How can you tell if someone is suffering from MCS?

K. Piccard: MCS is usually a private matter. If you would like THE RIDE to make MCS accommodations for you, you must show medical documentation.

Consumer: How many people in THE RIDE Program suffer from MCS?

Chairman Haynes: I am not aware of any persons with MCS that take THE RIDE, however that is information that is restricted to the medical files of the Office for Transportation Access.

K. Piccard: We have found through a survey that many people with MCS cannot take THE RIDE. MCS is a very dangerous disease. There are a few people with mild cases who use THE RIDE. I would think the number is under twenty. Some people who take THE RIDE and are diagnosed with MCS may not have shared that information.

Chairman Haynes: Thank you Ms. Piccard for your time and effort. It was with a well-presented overview.

***Laura Brelsford, MBTA System-Wide Accessibility (SWA),
Coordinator, in for Kathy Cox (report attached)***

She reported that no new information was gathered since the report was updated.

She then asked for questions.

A. Mannerson: Are you doing a brief synopsis of your report?

Chairman Haynes: No, reports are not read anymore; all reports are distributed and are available in accessible format. They are placed on the table. The verbal report is the update of events that have occurred since the drafting of the written report.

E. Minar: I have experienced ramps that do not work properly on the Silver Line and other bus routes. Are drivers required to check buses before leaving the garage?

L. Brelsford: Yes, there is a procedure, the “circle check” (CC). All drivers are required to use the CC to check all the items listed, which includes deployment of the ramp. The ramps can also be manually deployed.

M. Murray: I have had many incidents on THE RIDE and the MBTA fixed routes. On October 20 I had an accident and reported it, even though a supervisor witnessed it. I had an accident on the bus where

my leg was injured and bleeding. My problem is the attitude of the Customer Support Services Center (CSSC) people. When I reported my injuries to CSSC, the staff person yelled at me for not knowing the bus number, name of the driver or his identification number nor the exact time of the accident. Since then I have made sure I have the correct information to report. I am still waiting to hear from someone concerning my injuries.

Chairman Haynes/L. Brelsford: I'd like to speak with you before you leave.

T. Gilbert: During the re-certification classes for operators I would like to see more focus on the public address announcements.

E. Frith: I am still observing buses that are not pulling into the bus stops.

L. Brelsford: Operators should be using the option on the "transit master box" to alert Operations that they are unable to pull into a bus stop. I will take this under review for the re-certification classes.

E. Minar: During snow season, who is responsible for the clearing of snow at the bus stops? This past winter I was in an accident where I fell out of my chair.

L. Brelsford: This is an on-going problem but we now have a system in place that will identify the party responsible for each stop.

Chairman Haynes: Ms. Brelsford, I would like a two-week advance notice for all future training sessions sent to Ms. Guion's office.

L. Brelsford: Yes.

Frank Oglesby, MBTA Deputy Director of Paratransit Operations – The Office Of Transportation Access (OTA), THE RIDE (reports attached)

He reported that no new information was gathered since the report was updated.

He then asked for questions.

M. Santangelo: How often are consumers re-certified with THE RIDE Program?

D. Winn: You are encouraged to check on your status for re-certification. Oftentimes people will take the application to the doctor and ask him or her to sign. They have done as they are told and leave the rest blank. The ADA states re-certification as every three years. OTA worked with the AACT Board several years ago to determine that there are many categories that are permanent disabilities. For example, someone in a wheelchair, someone on oxygen, someone on dialysis not intending to get a transplant, would not be re-certified for ten years. A permanent disability would be someone over the age of 75 years. In some cases it could be as little as six months, for example a broken leg; it might be a year for a stroke, and for a knee replacement, which is not a permanent condition. Re-certification varies by disability; applications are mailed out three months in advance.

K. Piccard: I hear from people several times a month who have been rejected and feel a sense of despair. It appears that they actually qualify for THE RIDE but then find that the application is not completed correctly.

D. Winn: The form we are using is from 1992. The ADA is twenty-years old and I would like to see the form updated. There are only two people reviewing the applications. We are understaffed. We do expect a new hire in July. The applications are reviewed very closely. The more accessible the MBTA becomes, the fewer people will be eligible for THE RIDE.

Chairman Haynes: I recommend that consumers review the application process with, a health care professional or rehab specialist; these people will know your limitations and will better understand mobility issues.

Steve H.: How can I be more pro-active to make sure my doctor completes my application correctly?

D. Winn: The application should not simply list your disabilities. We need to know how your disability limits you from getting on and off public transportation; how the disability impedes your ability to navigate the public transportation system. The process takes 21 days. If you have not heard from us and your eligibility is running out please call my office.

Open Discussion

Steve H.: I am concerned with the new voice message you hear when calling to make your reservations. The options on the menu appear to be off. If you are not careful you could cancel your trip by accident. I have also noticed some improvements.

K. MacDonald: The design is under review. We were trying to make the system more efficient but it appears we only made it more complicated. With good intentions there were some unforeseen consequences. Thank you for your comments.

K. Devin: Could there be an option to bypass the message by pressing another key? The message is very slow; I do understand the need for a slow message.

K. MacDonald: We have made the message shorter and it is still slow. We are still working on this issue.

Chairman Haynes: I have also found that by pressing zero this will take you to a live operator immediately.

A. Mannerson: How many “no-shows” are you allowed before you become ineligible for THE RIDE program?

F. Oglesby: Currently, we do not have a “no-show” policy.

M. Santangelo: How does one become a member of the AACT Board?

Chairman Haynes: There is a process explained in the AACT Bylaws that identifies how you become a member and can become a candidate for the AACT Executive Board.

E. Frith: I have seen no change with illegal parking of commercial vehicles and MBTA employee in bus stops. I have been reporting all violators to the CSSC. What is the process? Is there something that AACT needs to do? Do we need to contact the companies of the violators?

L. Brelsford: This is a big issue and we are currently in discussion on this topic.

Chairman Haynes: Illegal parking in bus stops is an on-going issue. Drivers think they are exempt because they know someone. When you observe illegal parking, please report it to the MBTA Transit police, city or town police, or transportation department or the MBTA CSSC at the 617-222-3200. Remember, no one should be approaching drivers who are parked illegally.

T. Gilbert: Just a comment. Is there anything that can be done to prevent THE RIDE vehicles from illegally parking at bus stops?

E. Minar: I encountered a commercial driver parked in the bus stop at this building. The ramp had to be deployed in the street, which is very dangerous.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:05 PM.