



Access Advisory Committee to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

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AACT Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

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, Jim White, Richard Mahoney, Jim Oliver, Leslie Parra, Bob Carr, Don Summerfield, Mary Watkins, Barbara Garlington, Philip Beaulieu, Lloyd Caswell, Paul Barresi, Marion Lent, Richard Ashley, John Kane, Cheryl Ravaili, John Cappuccio, Bill McCarthy, Thomas Gilbert, Marilyn MacNab, John Marshall, Rev. Ellen Frith, Kathryn Piccard, and Reggie Clark

MBTA Representatives

Scott Darling, Jim Folk, Frank Oglesby, Philip Balcom, Paul Strobis, Michael Hulak, Carol Joyce-Harrington, and Kathy Cox

Vendor Representatives

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

Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. – Jackie Dunlop

Veterans Transportation LLC – Kevin MacDonald

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

Walter Bennett and Janie Guion

Chairman Haynes called the meeting to order at 1:10PM

- Members, friends and guests introduced themselves.
- The AACT Coordinator read the agenda.
- Members were given the opportunity to ask questions.

D. Summerfield: According to MBTA officials there is no Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator at the MBTA for the consumer. Why isn't there one? Are they required to have a consumer coordinator? Do you know if there is a law that supports this? If I need special accommodations from the MBTA, whom would I contact?

B. Haynes: No, I know of no law. Special accommodations for meetings can be made through the AACT Coordinator.

J. Oliver: Why was the December 2009 meeting canceled? Why cancel the December 2010 meeting so far in advance? In the past AACT held its' holiday party in December. Is membership dropping? I would like to see the December 2010 meeting reinstated.

B. Haynes: The December meeting was canceled by a poll taken and agreed by the Executive Board. The December meeting is never meant to be a festive occasion; the AACT meeting is convened and held monthly for individuals who use paratransit and or fixed route services to bring concerns that have an impact on their riding capabilities. If you have issues you wish to bring to the meeting we will gladly get you an answer. Meetings are held by the Board and based on the Board's agreement.

M. MacNab: We have all heard about the devastation in Haiti. Would you share with us what you know concerning the outreach and support of owners such as Veterans Transportation are doing?

Chairman Haynes: Yes. I will mention this in my report.

Chairman's Report *(No written report submitted)*

He greeted members and friends with enthusiasm and stated that he is recovering from his illness and is happy to be back. He looks forward to continuing to help evaluate and critique THE RIDE Program and transportation for persons with disabilities. He is eager and ready to lead AACT. He is looking forward to completing his term as chairman, which ends June 2011.

He reported the following highlights.

- The devastation in Haiti is crushing; many of the Veterans Transportation drivers are Haitian d
- Anyone wishing to contribute to the relief effort for Haiti please contact your locate vendor
- He is doing research on the following THE RIDE issues that are of concern to him:
 - There are long consumer "wait-times" on the telephone with THE RIDE reservationists and some operators do not seem to know how to handle the same-day requests
 - Drivers are not using the most direct path-of-travel and this inconveniences the customers
 - There are reports that vendors are not meeting the demand for service to the consumer
 - Some committees that represent the interest of the disability community have not included persons with disabilities in their discussions and meetings regarding paratransit
 - He has heard about recommended changes ordered to be made to THE RIDE Program and he is investigating them

Chairman Haynes is concerned that THE RIDE Program, which has been made efficient and effective over a period of years, is in jeopardy because of changes. He said that he feels that the work of the late Bob Rizzo is being pushed aside with little regard. He is going to work to make sure that Mr.

Rizzo's efforts were not in vain. The Chairman plans to meet with MBTA and Massachusetts Department of Transportation officials.

Consumers are advised to notify AACT of any changes they may see in their service.

R. Clark: It's important that the disability community has access to good transportation service.

T. Gilbert: This can also have an effect on the fixed route service.

D. Summerfield: In the words of the former MBTA General Manager Daniel Grabauskas, this service is "Customer Driven." Oftentimes now when the drivers' are asked to accommodate a simple need they do not respond in a respectful way.

M. MacNab: I just wanted people to know that Veterans Transportation went out of its way to help their Haitian staff by setting up telephone lines and other help for their staff.

Also, I want to know why we not are getting the designs from MBTA's Design and Construction Department before they are at 75 percent. We need to see designs sooner instead of later.

Chairman Haynes: In the past AACT and Design and Construction have worked very closely in the development of designs, drawing, and models. Recently AACT has been excluded from reviewing designs and developments until they are out to bid. We have noted that if you put the project out to bid and AACT objects to it because it doesn't meet accessibility requirements, you take it back to be redone and this costs more money. I agree with you that designs should be reviewed at an early stage and changes that are necessary with regard to accessibility in any transit station or any revenue equipment should be included.

Chairman Haynes presented the following issues to Mr. Folk and stated that he is looking forward to working together with the MBTA on transit accessibility issues:

- Where does the MBTA stand under the new leadership of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MASSDOT)?
- To whom should AACT take issues in order to get things done?

MBTA Guest Speaker

Acting-Chief Operating Officer for Operations John C. Lewis was unable to attend the meeting due to illness. Jim Folk, MBTA Chief of Operations and Service Development, made a presentation to AACT on behalf of Mr. Lewis.

- The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the MBTA remains the same. There are no changes now that we are under one umbrella with MASSDOT.
- MASSDOT was created on November 1, 2009.
- There are no changes with AACT as far as the MBTA is concerned
- If AACT has any issues in Operations, please give us an opportunity to address your concerns. We have always had a good relationship with AACT and I would like to see it continued; whether it is with Mr. Lewis, Mr. Oglesby or my staff, give us a chance before you go to the top.
- You mentioned Mr. Rizzo, he was the best in the business and there is no doubt about it. He mentored many of the Office for Transportation Access staff and they remain dedicated.
- Mr. Rizzo's memory will remain in OTA.
- MassDOT board meetings are separate from the MBTA.
- There is no change to the public comment segment during MBTA Board meetings.
- If you need any assistance from MASSDOT, with Administration, or insight on state issues we will reach out to MASSDOT for you.
- He has met with the new Secretary and CEO of MASSDOT and so far the relationship is great.
- The MBTA will cooperate with MASSDOT in anyway we can to improve the service.
- He stated that during meetings regarding discussions of the MBTA, the Secretary will ask is this what the MBTA wants. This is really refreshing and reassuring that working with MASSDOT will bring us improved service.

He then asked for questions.

J. Oliver: Is there a way to have the Massachusetts Department of Transportation begin their meetings with the MBTA Board at the beginning of the meetings? I'm concerned that being a customer of THE RIDE there is no way to determine the end time of meetings for a return trip home.

J. Folk: I will pass along your concerns.

D. Summerfield: I am very grateful to be part of the process for improving the MBTA for all. In June 2008 during the reconstruction of the Kenmore station I took a digital smart meter and measured the ramps and found them severely in non-compliance. I reported this to Customer Service, and Mike Festa reported it to his supervisor. I was told that the ramps were in compliance and did not need any work. They measured the percents of incline; 9.6, 11.2 10.2, and 10.2.

I was told the ramp was fine and nothing needed to be done. I reached out to a number of people in System-Wide Accessibility. Gary Talbot found that the slope did have problems. I was told a severe mistake was made and would not be made again. Why was the station allowed to open knowing that it was in severe non-compliance?

J. Folk: I will need to refer to Kathy Cox.

M. MacNab: How can you reassure us that projects already in the MBTA pipeline will be completed when personnel are leaving due to retirement?

J. Folk: I apologize for any delay. That is a concern of the Acting-General Manager; he has asked that we all work together to make sure projects continue to be monitored.

T. Gilbert: Is there a particular department devoted to repairing the train public address system?

J. Folk: The maintenance department. We are working on automation.

J. White: Do you think AACT can get a letter from MassDOT making it clear that there will be no changes to the MOU with AACT? Do you think that MassDOT may revoke the agreement?

J. Folk: The MBTA is a separate entity from MassDOT. The only way any changes can occur is that both agree in writing to make changes.

E. Frith: Will MassDOT be involved in enforcement of vehicles that illegally park in bus stops? MBTA vehicles that park in bus stops are parked illegally and are offenders.

J. Folk: This is a great concern of mine. I want people to report illegally parked vehicles, not just in the downtown area, but also throughout the other cities and towns that we serve. Please report any MBTA vehicles, I want to know about them personally.

Chairman Haynes: If you would like to meet with AACT on this issue, fine. There are some concerns I have before anyone takes any action.

R. Clark: Why are buses being sent out that are malfunctioning?

J. Folk: The Director of Bus Operations, Cheryl Hinton does a good job of monitoring to make sure defective buses are not put into service.

J. Oliver: Has MassDOT brought up the issue of the Southeastern Rail Link at any of the Board meetings?

J. Folk: No, I have not heard anything.

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

She reported the following:

- The SWA staff made a 15-minute presentation to the new MassDOT Board to bring the newest members up to speed. They began with the history of accessibility legislation, the class action lawsuit by Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL), the MBTA/BCIL Settlement Agreement and an overview of some key settlement commitments.
- The Board's impression was that a lot had been accomplished but there was still a great deal to be done.
- AACT members should telephone the Customer Support Services Center with all fixed route complaints.

She then asked for questions.

Chairman Haynes: In 1993, AACT and the Design and Construction Department agreed that all key stations would be presented at 60 percent design. At that time we would be updated on the progress and what the next step would be. In the recent past there has been little or no information from Mr. Festa, you Ms. Cox, or anyone from Design and Construction. At the next meeting I would like to see designs that are at 60 percent. If you see a problem with this, we need to talk.

K. Cox: Sixty percent is still the target number. There are a number of stations that can be presented. Nothing moves forward unless SWA signs off on the project.

Frank Oglesby, MBTA Deputy Director of Paratransit Operations – OTA, THE RIDE (report attached)

He reported the following:

- On December 7, 2009, OTA installed a new call-center phone system. In the first 20 days of operation the system has automatically handled over 3,100 calls, at an average of 1.5 minutes, per call. This allows us better utilization of staff time.

He then asked for questions. None were asked.

Open Discussion

J, Oliver: I would like for the Joint Venture telephone greeting system to be more user-friendly. Why is it that I'm told to call the next day for same-day trips?

J. Thompson: You are correct; the greeting package came with the telephone system. I will do some research to see if there are other options. If people want to change their trip times after their callback, the best time is after 9 or 9:30 PM when calls are all completed. The later you wait in the evening the more options you may have.

D. Summerfield: Once a year, in 2008 and 2009, I booked the same trip going to Topsfield; both times it was booked incorrectly.

K. MacDonald: Without knowing all the facts I can't answer. I will do some research.

Chairman Haynes: If you are going to have specific questions on a complaint you need to bring all the details of your complaint. The vendor representative here today may not have handled your complaint.

M. MacNab: My question is directed to Joint Venture; many of us have found that while waiting in the telephone queue to make reservations in the last five minutes of the reservations day (at four o'clock) you are told that reservations have closed after being on hold for at least five to six minutes. Why can't we get our reservations if we are in the queue before cut-off time?

J. Thompson: I am not aware of this problem. We will address this issue.

C. Dipillo: Our reservationists don't leave until all calls have been answered. I have two people working on issues of time. I am in the office until 8 PM and I

have sat with the night personnel; they take every call and try to get back to the consumer as soon as possible.

M. MacNab: I leave a request regarding my trip with night staff. Oftentimes I'm told to callback at 5 AM. I make the call and the morning person will say, "I don't have your request."

Chairman Haynes: The reservation line is not to be closed at 4 o'clock until all customers in the queue have been taken care of. I hope that this is being impressed upon your entire reservation staff. All calls in the queue are to be answered before the board is cleared.

J. Thompson: I need to do research.

Chairman Haynes: I intervened on behalf of a consumer with a dispatcher who did not know what same-day service was. We were told it was too early to change a pickup time; I suggested he cancel the trip and get a same-day service and the reservationist was perplexed. Some people in reservations and dispatch do not know what is meant by same-day service. You are told to callback the next day. It is clear that the reservation staff do not understand same-day service. I want OTA to work with the vendors to correct these problems.

F. Oglesby: Yes.

Chairman Haynes: Due to illness the former AACT Chairman, Philip Beaulieu, was unable to serve as an ex-officio board member; he is now able to complete his term until the next election. If there are any questions please give me a call.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:10 PM.