

# Access Advisory Committee to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

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Wednesday, July 25, 2012

## AACT Meeting Minutes

### Notables

Comments and questions concerning AACT should be directed to Interim Chairman James White by contacting the AACT Coordinator, Ms. Janie Guion, at 617-973-7507 (voice); 617-973-7089 (TTY); 617-973-8855 (fax); or at [AACT@ctps.org](mailto:AACT@ctps.org) (email).

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 8:00 PM and Sat/Sun from 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM, or the MBTA website at [www.mbta.com/customer\\_support/feedback/](http://www.mbta.com/customer_support/feedback/).

AACT has a page on the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's website at [www.bostonmpo.org](http://www.bostonmpo.org);

click on AACT. Links can be found there for the following items: agendas, upcoming meetings, past meeting minutes, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the MBTA and AACT, and the AACT bylaws, the AACT brochure, and ADA regulations. There are also links to the MPO's newsletter, *TRANSREPORT*, the MBTA's Office for Transportation Access, and the AACT Coordinator.

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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 appreciated.

## **Attendance**

### **AACT Members**

Ian Perrault, James White, Tyler Terrasi, Rick Morin, Angela Manerson, Barbara Garlington, Allen Karon, Kathryn Piccard, Margaret Crowdis, Viola Thacker, and Ellen Frith

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

Daniel Amstutz and Janie Guion

### **MassDOT - MBTA Representatives**

Mary Ainsley, Mike Hulak, Carol Joyce-Harrington, and Kathy Cox

### **Vendor Representatives**

John Tuttle – Veterans Transportation, LLC

Jackie Dunlop – Greater Lynn Senior Services

Claire DiPillo – The Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN, LLC

## Other

Gilbane Company:

Elizabeth Arpino and Michael Landry

## Meeting

Interim Chairman James White called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm

Members, friends and guests introduced themselves

## Chairman's Report

Interim Chairman (IC) White reported:

He met on July 6<sup>th</sup> with MBTA Acting General Manager Davis and Special Assistant Mike Lambert.

- There will be a September presentation by the Innovative Paradigms vendor for THE RIDE In-Person Assessment Program
- Special Assistant Lambert suggested that the AACT Executive Board not meet separately from the full membership
- The MBTA is in discussion with the cities of Boston and Cambridge on the Taxi Subsidy Program
- THE RIDE No-Show Policy:
  - IC White is not sure if process is legal by ADA standard and that he would be hard-pressed to support such a policy since people with disabilities have so many medical issues

- He also stated that consumers will be advised of free medical transportation through Mass Health Standards
- He informed members that the use of the free RIDE Charlie Card Program may not be expanded

He is looking forward to meeting monthly with Special Assistant Lambert and possibly quarterly with Acting GM Davis in order to know policy changes ahead of time that may affect the disability community.

He briefed members on the MBTA Board of Directors meeting in June attended by AACT Board member Ian Perrault (see attached).

He then asked for questions.

**K. Piccard** commented that she did not agree with the information on rides to medical appointments in IC White's report. She suggested that THE RIDE subscribers should inquire into the details of free medical transportation carefully.

**K. Piccard** suggested to IC White that the idea to combine the membership meeting with the Executive Board should have been brought to a vote by the membership. She also stated that maybe the membership should be included in part of the discussion.

**IC White** \*\*stated that there are a number of issues that the AACT Board members discuss in detail that it makes it necessary to have separate meetings.

*\*\*Executive Board meetings are open to all members of AACT. They are also open to the public.*

## Meeting Minutes

Meeting Minutes for AACT on June 27<sup>th</sup> were presented and approved with corrections

*Corrections to the AACT June 27<sup>th</sup> meeting*

On page 3, line 4

**Allen Karon** said his surname was misspelled; it should be Karon

## Presentation

Mary Ainsely, MBTA Senior Director of Design and Construction presented an overview of the Green Line Extension (GLE) with design handouts (see attachments).

### *The Project Purposes:*

- Improve regional air quality
- Improve corridor mobility and regional access
- Boost transit ridership

### *The Project Elements:*

- The GLE begins at the intersection of Land Boulevard and Monsignor O'Brien Hwy in Cambridge at the existing Green Line Viaduct north of Science Park Station
- There will be a total of seven stations which will all have universal design with the same path-of-travel from the entrance of the station to the platform

### *The Project Schedule:*

Expected completion of the entire project is between 2018 and 2020

She then asked for questions.

**K. Piccard** shared her concerns that the station designs have some safeguard for persons using wheeled mobility devices (WMD) so they too will be protected from bicycles that may block their path-of-travel. She stated that this may obstruct persons with WMD from entering and exiting stations safely.

**M. Ainsley** stated that due to the design of the stations there would be no need for bicycles to be in the station area.

**M. Crowdis** commented that all fare gates should be accessible to the public. She also asked if there will be an escalator going downward.

**M. Ainsley** stated that the goal is to have all universally accessible gates available to everyone. She also stated that

all escalators will be going upward. There is not enough room for a second escalator going downward but the elevator will be available for persons going down.

**K. Piccard** commented that she would like to see rubber type handles on the outer entrance of all MBTA station restroom doors. She also suggested that the wheelchair accessible stall doors swing out and that there be some type of accessible handle designed especially for persons who have limited use of their extremities for easy closure and exit.

**M. Ainsley** thanked her for the comments.

**K. Cox** stated that in the past, some MBTA stations had gates that were inaccessible. Only the wider gates were accessible. Now most updated stations have all gates accessible to accept all fare cards.

**M. Ainsley** recommended that members take a look at the station designs that she placed on the wall. She also asked that she be contacted with questions and that she would return at AACT's request to discuss the designs when they are at 60 percent design stage completion.

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

Kathy Cox, Manager for Fixed Route Services presented the SWA /Fixed Route Services report for Larry Haile, Coordinator for SWA (see attached)



She stated the following:

A paid focus group for persons with low-vision will be taking place on Wednesday and Thursday at Focus Point in Downtown Boston.

She announced that today's AACT meeting would be her last since she will be retiring from the MBTA on Tuesday, July 31<sup>st</sup>. She stated that after twenty-three years of service she had some parting words (please see attached).

She shared with members her early years (1980s and 1990s) at the MBTA. She stated that in past years persons who wanted the accessible fixed route transportation would phone the "Call-A-Life Bus Program." The reservations would need to be done prior to 1 PM for the next-day service. It was her responsibility to coordinate the buses and make sure that they were at the right stop at the right time.

At the passage and implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) she assisted the MBTA Operations Department with ADA passenger assistance training five days a week until the entire workforce was trained.

Ms. Cox stated that she is confident that with AACT's continuing diligence, the youthful energy and enthusiasm of the "next generation" of colleagues she leaves behind, and the ongoing support of management throughout the MBTA

that one day the goal of 100 percent accessibility will be reached.

She thanked the members of AACT and was presented with a huge bouquet of red roses on behalf of the AACT membership.

She then asked for questions.

**E. Frith** extended good wishes to Ms. Cox on her retirement.

She asked for an update on the opening of the Porter Square elevator. She also stated that she is not getting help from commuter rail personnel to get on or off trains safely.

**Ms. Cox** thanked Ms. Frith for the good wishes. She then stated that the elevator would be back in use at the end of the summer.

**IC White** thanked Ms. Cox for her report and wished her well on her new phase of life.

## **The Office of Transportation Access (OTA)**

Mike Hulak, Manager for THE RIDE presented the report for Frank Oglesby, MBTA Deputy Director of Paratransit Operations – OTA, THE RIDE (reports attached).

Mr. Hulak distributed the June 2012 reports for THE RIDE and stated the following:

He expressed appreciation of the organizational operation for the transportation to the 2012 July 4<sup>th</sup> concert. This was coordinated by John Tuttle and staff of Veterans Transportation, as well as staff from Greater Lynn Senior Services and the Joint Venture of Thompson Transit. Everyone has once again performed a very good job.

Kudos to the vendor staff and National Guard for moving the concert goes out of the path of a storm twice during the concert without incident to waiting MBTA vehicles that was on stand-by.

As of July 1<sup>st</sup> THE RIDE subscribers have fallen off by 1,000 per a day.

He then asked for questions.

**K. Piccard** asked what percentage is the one-thousand fewer riders in the first twenty days.

**M. Hulak** stated it was roughly thirteen percent. He said that the number should not be used as an accurate figure since there are many variables for the decline. He also noted that the number of riders is being monitored.

**M Crowdis** asked if he knew the reason for the drop. She also suggested that a survey be sent to subscribers asking their reason for not taking THE RIDE. She also noted that there are fewer members here today than in previous

meetings. She asked Mr. Hulak to find out if the MBTA can offer free rides to subscribers who attend AACT meetings.

**M. Hulak** noted the survey possibility and that there could be many variables for the drop in the ridership: vacation, weather, or the fare increase. He stated that he did not know if the MBTA was in a position to offer free rides at this time.

**IC White** stated that he asked the Acting General Manager Davis over a month ago about free rides to subscribers who participate in AACT or other MBTA activities. He states that there has been no word since.

**R. Morin** asked if the one-thousand fewer subscribers were off compared to last year. He also asked if he knew how the entire system was doing since the new fare increase.

**M. Hulak** stated it is relatively close to last year's figure.

**IC White** asked if Fixed Route had had a significant increase in ridership since the fare increase.

**K. Cox** stated that she would do research.

**IC White** spoke with M. Lambert regarding two issues: (1) the number of hours a subscriber is kept on THE RIDE vehicle, in some cases more than two or four hours. He went on to say that this should not be happening. 2) He also noted that vendors should not have trainees working during rush hour. He stated that subscribers' time should not be sacrificed at the hands of an inexperienced trainee. The subscribers are being inconvenienced at double the fare.

**M. Hulak** stated that he agreed and that they will do their best to limit the impact. He also commented that the MBTA has concerns about the “transport chair.” He stated that the MBTA asked for a ruling from the Federal Transit Administration which stated the chair does meet the guidelines. He stated that they would offer the person a more stationary chair for their safety, but they cannot insist that the person take it.

**IC White** stated that he felt strongly about warning the membership of the danger in this type of chair and advised subscribers not to use a “transport chair” outside of their home, for personal safety.

**K. Piccard** asked for comments on the Ford Transit Connect (FTC) vehicle that was viewed by OTA staff.

**M. Hulak** stated that they were recently looking into this vehicle and that nothing had been decided on. He stated that Ford has stopped making the Crown Victoria. The MBTA is looking at the FTC vehicle for fuel efficiency and not as an accessible vehicle. This vehicle may replace the MBTA fleet of vehicles due to its fuel efficiency. He assured the membership that his office would not do anything without informing AACT.

**IC White** asked if the MBTA had considered the MV One vehicle.

**M Hulak** stated yes, they had knowledge of the MV One; it costs twice as much as the FTC and it has poor fuel efficiency, and noted that the FTC has good fuel efficiency.

**M. Hulak** congratulated Ms. Cox on her retirement and thanked her for all her assistance over the years and wished her the best of luck.

**M. Cox** thanked Mr. Hulak for the kind words.

**IC White** thanked Mr. Hulak for his report.

## Vendor Reports

**IC White** made a request to all vendors to refrain from training drivers during the peak rush hour.

### *The Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN Transportation*

Claire DiPillo, Manager for the Joint Venture, distributed her report and announced their Passenger Assistance Training (PAT) classes and stated that the schedule is included in the handout.

She then asked for questions. There were none.

**IC White** thanked Ms. DiPillo for her report.

### *Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS)*

Jackie Dunlop, Director of Transportation, distributed her report and announced their PAT classes and stated that the schedule is included in the handout.

She then asked for questions. There were none.

**IC White** thanked Ms. Dunlop for her report.

### *Veterans Transportation (VT)*

John Tuttle, Operations Manager, distributed his report and announced their PAT classes and stated that the schedule is included in the handout.

He then asked for questions. There were none.

**IC White** thanked Mr. Tuttle for his report.

### Open Discussion

**IC White** announced that Harvard Dental School would be hosting a free dental clinic on August 4<sup>th</sup>, from 9 AM to 1PM appointments only on a first come, first served basis. The contact number is 617-665-3990.

**M. Crowdis** stated her concerns that the bus schedule from the Salem train station to Lynn was changed. When she arrived at the connection in Lynn for Boston the bus had departed. She states that there should be more buses that run every twenty minutes. She also stated that the bus schedules should not be printed with shaded gray areas that impact people with low-vision. She also addressed her concern that the buses at Wonderland are at a distance of

one-hundred fifty feet away from the entrance. She commented that while walking toward the stop the bus will leave right in front of you. She would like to see the bus pick up area moved closer to the entrance. She also stated she has made numerous attempts to file her complaint at the Customer Service Department on the 800 line but no one answered her call.

**IC White** commented that the procedure for suggestions and complaints at the MBTA Customer Service line, 617-222-3200, is to file a formal complaint on the issues you have just shared.

**E. Frith** commented that she is having difficulty exiting and or entering buses in Somerville and Cambridge. She stated that the stops are cluttered with newspaper boxes. Also that there is more clutter with U.S. Postal Service boxes, trash bins, bikes and motorcycles at the stops. She also noted that commercial and police vehicles continue to park at the stops. She would like for AACT to draft a letter that states that no vehicles should ever park in MBTA bus stop. She also stated that when she phones the Customer Service number it continually rings for twenty minutes and no one responds to her call. She also would like to have accessible elevator signage in train stations. She states that it is very difficult to locate elevators.

**IC White** stated that AACT has no control over where the boxes or any other items can be located in cities or towns. He suggested that she call the Transit Police for assistance. AACT can only make recommendations to the MBTA. He also directed her to contact her Congressman, State Senator or Representative.



**E. Frith** asked if there was any bus stop documentation.

**K Piccard** stated that she is in full agreement with the IC White. She went on to say that AACT is an advisory group to the MBTA. She also stated that it would not be proper for AACT to write any town. She states that since AACT is an advisory group to the MBTA it should draft a letter to the MBTA Board and state the concerns of MBTA customers. She stated that the letter should have a specific context for the request. She would like to vote on this issue of sending a letter to the MBTA Board at the August meeting.

**IC White** stated she should contact the Customer Service Department at 617-222-3200 and file a formal complaint to make sure there is documentation filed before AACT can take any action. Have the Department send a copy of her complaint to AACT Board.

**A. Manerson** asked who would be replacing Ms. Cox in SWA. She too congratulated her on her retirement.

**K Cox** commented that Larry Haile is in place now doing her job. She stated that she is not sure if her job would be posted. She did mention the fact that they are still waiting the arrival of the new Assistant General Manager for System-Wide Accessibility (AGMSWA).

**IC White** stated that he would like to invite the new AGMSWA to speak at an AACT meeting.

**K. Cox** stated that at a meeting in June, Judge Patrick King announced that the new AGMSWA would be starting in July.

**E. Frith** comment that a call to report complaints to customer service can take up to twenty minutes. She is looking for guidance on how to address the issue.

**IC White** suggested that she address all the issues she has brought up here today in her complaint to the Customer Service Department. She was also directed to contact the Director, Ms. Carla Howze, if she is not getting any response.

**E. Frith** inquired about who is responsible for the bus stop sign replacement.

**K. Cox** said the MBTA has a crew that replaces all signs.

**IC White** asked for an update on replacement bus stop signs with the \$100 fine addition.

**K. Cox** said that signs are being replaced when signs are reported missing.

**E. Frith** asked for a contact person regarding signs that are not far enough apart for the bus to pull into the stop.

**K. Cox** recommended she talk with the speaker at next month meeting.

**IC White** announced that the City of Boston will have a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new accessible asphalt surface that will be an easier path-of-travel for persons with canes, walkers, and wheeled mobility devices. This smooth entrance is from Cambridge Street to the steps of Boston City Hall.

**K. Piccard** asked for a summary of the AACT treasury report.

**IC White** stated that the account has \$1,995.95.

**IC White** thanked Daniel Amstutz for helping with the microphone today.

The meeting ended at 3:00 pm.