

*Access Advisory Committee to the Massachusetts Bay  
Transportation Authority*

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*AACT Membership Meeting Minutes*

*Wednesday, October 23, 2013*

*Notables*

The AACT Executive Board will meet from 10 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.

AACT has a page on the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) website at [www.bostonmpo.org](http://www.bostonmpo.org); click on "Get Involved" then scroll down to "Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA." 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, and ADA regulations. There are also links to the MPO's newsletter, TRANSREPORT, and information on accessibility at the MBTA. This page includes the contact information for the AACT Coordinator.

Comments and questions concerning AACT should be directed to the Chairman James White by contacting the AACT Coordinator, Ms.

Janie Guion, at 617-973-7507 (voice); 617-973-7089 (TTY); 617-973-8855 (fax); [AACT@ctps.org](mailto:AACT@ctps.org) (email); or at c/o CTPS, 10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150, Boston, MA 02116 (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. Please contact the MPO staff at 617.973.7100 (voice), 617.973.7089 (TTY), 617.973.8855 (fax), or [publicinformation@ctps.org](mailto:publicinformation@ctps.org).

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 herself/himself or any specific class of persons has been subjected to discrimination prohibited by Title VI, ADA, or other non-discrimination statute or regulation may, herself/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](http://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 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/).

*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.

*Meeting opened at 1:03 PM*

*Reading of the Agenda*

*Introductions*

*Attendees:*

James White, Ian Perrault, Rick Morin, Alan M. Karon, Beverly Ann Rock, Mary Ann Murray, Kathryn Piccard, Reggie Clark, Nancy J. Miller, Angela Manerson, Tammy Perrault, Marilyn MacNab, Deanne Sisco, Cameron Casey, Jackie Fernaays

Also Kristen McCosh, Boston Commission for Persons with Disabilities; Robert Dias, Massachusetts Office on Disability; Penny Shaw, Disability Consortium; Theadora Fisher, Executive Office of Health and Human Services; Theresa Casey, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

### **MBTA Staff:**

Laura Brelsford, Carol Joyce-Harrington, Mike Hulak, Jim Nihan, and Rashaad Lyn

### **Vendor Staff:**

Victor Herrera and Mike Rushin, National Express-Joint Venture of Thompson Transit; Jacquelyn J. Reynolds, Greater Lynn Senior Services; Kevin MacDonald, Veterans Transportation

### **MPO Staff:**

Pam Wolfe, David Fargen and Matt Archer

### **Approval of Minutes**

Chairman White asked for a motion to approve the July AACT meeting minutes. The motion was made and seconded by Rick Morin and was carried with no one opposing and one abstention.

### **Chairman's Report**

*The Chair stated the following:*

- He and Vice-Chairman Morin have been participating in THE RIDE Selection Committee meetings.

- He appointed Mr. Morin to draft a letter to MBTA General Manager Scott on the subject of questions regarding medication during In-Person Assessment, a subject previously raised by Ms. Piccard and Ms. Shaw. The letter asks that at the beginning of each interview, applicants be informed that questions are to assess their ability to use the fixed-route system, but that applicants are not required to give this information.
- A final report from the *Fare Impact Study by EOHHS and MOD* has been released.
- He was invited to visit Work Inc., whose main mission is to train and employ persons with disabilities. He stated he was impressed by their facility, and that anyone in the disability community should contact them if they are looking for a job.
- AACT will be holding a Summit on November 20 to discuss accessibility issues. Currently about twenty people are registered. He stated that the summit is open to the public.

He then took questions.

**K. Piccard** commented that she does not feel the letter specifically addresses the topic that applicants do not need to disclose their prescription medication.

Chairman White and Vice Chairman Morin stated they would amend the letter.

**Vice Chairman Morin** added that AACT also plans to include wording stating that if applicants are asked to sign a release allowing their doctors to provide information, the applicant be informed that they may amend or not sign that release.

**P. Shaw** stated that those releases should only pertain to whether the applicant can use fixed route services.

*Kristen McCosh, Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities for the City of Boston*

Ms. McCosh made a presentation on the City of Boston's work with accessible taxis:

- Boston has 100 Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV). They are equipped with a ramp in the back, allowing persons with wheelchairs or scooters to be loaded into the vehicle. They were issued by the Boston Police Hackney Unit in 1990.
- She noted that the access level of these cabs is not great; very few wheelchairs fit into the cabs. Her department did an assessment of these cabs over the summer, and found that only one was in compliance with the ADA and the hackney guidelines; that about 10% (or 10 cabs) are probably usable for

persons with disabilities; 50% are not usable; and 40% are a toss-up, depending on factors including wheelchair size and height of the user.

- Her department identified two problems with the taxis. The first was that nobody from the city was monitoring the cabs after they had been modified, and therefore they may not meet guidelines. The second problem was that the places making these modifications would make said modifications haphazardly and randomly; they were not making the modifications up to code, they did not have any training in compliant vehicles, and the modifications would vary between multiple vehicles of the same model. The vehicles were also not brought to garages, but rather to two machine shops.

She will release a report on October 24.

She then asked for questions.

**K. Piccard** stated that visitors to Boston often don't understand that they can sign up for THE RIDE, or how to sign up for THE RIDE. She stated this information could be made available online. She also noted that people have had to use shuttle services provided by hotels, which are not usually wheelchair accessible. She asked if Ms. McCosh's report addressed this issue.

**K. McCosh** stated her report does not address that issue, as the report is specifically on taxis, but one of her priorities in her overall work is to get more information about transportation to more people. She also noted that hotel shuttle vans and busses are required to be accessible, and if hotel shuttles are not accessible then they are required to find accessible transportation at no cost, to the passenger provided shuttle service is provided to everyone (including those who are not disabled) at no cost.

**A. Manerson** stated that she would like to have the disability community continue to work with the Hackney Unit.

**K. McCosh** stated that Captain Steven McLaughlin, the new Hackney director, is making WAVs and regular cab service for people with disabilities his main priority. She commented that Captain McLaughlin has been very supportive of the Boston Commission for Persons with Disabilities, unlike previous directors, and has basically agreed to all their recommendations. She added that 75% of Boston cabs have a system where you can pay with a credit card and understand your route with audio technology, and that they would like 100% of Boston cabs to have this technology in the next few years.



She stated that the consultants hired by Mayor Menino, Nelson\Nygaard, have a lot of experience with paratransit, and they recommended outsourcing things like training.

**P. Shaw** suggested that EasCare, LLC in Dorchester could be used in emergency situations where an individual in a wheelchair needs a free ride.

**K. McCosh** stated that residents of Boston can buy taxi discount tickets, which are five dollars for a book of coupons worth ten dollars that will pay half your fare; residents can buy 2 books a month.

**R. Clark** asked if Ms. McCosh would send her report to AACT. He commented that current cabs are uncomfortable, and that drivers do not follow instructions about which way to go.

**K. McCosh** stated that the new audio system will tell passengers their route audibly, so passengers can hear about and follow the route the driver is taking. Regarding the report, she clarified that Nelson\Nygaard did an assessment of the current taxi system in Boston, and in their report they made both short term and long term recommendations. Ms. McCosh gave them input on the WAV situation from her personal experience, from input she has received, from her assessment and measurements of the vans, and from her work with others; Nelson\Nygaard included her recommendations in

their report. She will be making a separate report specifically about transportation for persons with disabilities that offers long-term recommendations. In the short term, the Boston Commission for Persons with Disabilities graded the current WAV vehicles for usability on a scale of “A” to “D.” The “A” cabs should be usable; the “B” cabs would most likely be usable by many people; the “C” cabs are a toss-up; the “D” cabs have minimal height and depth, and people in a wheelchair probably could not use them. Decals with the grade will be put on the cabs.

**K. Piccard** suggested that the Boston Hackney Unit allow surrounding municipalities to take part in their trainings.

**R. Morin** asked Ms. McCosh if she saw a short term fix for difficulties with hailing cabs and problems with dispatch.

**K. McCosh** stated that there are both short-term and long-term recommendations, and that there will be a change of administration in January, so she cannot promise anything immediate; however, she recognizes this as a major priority. She added that the Boston Commission for Persons with Disabilities looks at transportation options across the board, and they have been working with the Elderly Commission to help them buy more vans with wheelchair accessibility.

**Chairman White** thanked Ms. McCosh.

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

**Laura Brelsford, Deputy Director of SWA**, filled in for Larry Haile and distributed his report with no further updates.

She asked for questions.

**R. Clark** asked for updates on the Government Center station construction.

**L. Brelsford** stated that the Government Center project will start in early January 2014; the station will be closed to the public for two years, but trains will still be able to pass through the station. During construction, there will be a shuttle available that will circle around Government Center, and operate from Haymarket to State Street.

**R. Dias** asked if the new electronic “Next Train” signs at Kenmore have an audio feature.

**L. Brelsford** stated that an audio feature will be added in about two weeks.

**A Consumer** asked if there were plans to reduce fares for THE RIDE.

**Chairman White** stated there were no plans to reduce fares that he was aware of. He added that Charles Planck informed the AACT Executive Board that the next fare increase is scheduled for 2015.

**R. Morin** noted that there is a public meeting regarding some legislation that addresses a potential fare structure.

**Chairman White** thanked Ms. Brelsford for her report.

*MBTA Office for Transportation Access -THE RIDE Program*

Mike Hulak, Manager of Paratransit Contract Operations, submitted THE RIDE report and stated the following.

The MBTA has entered into an agreement with Coach Equipment / Shepard Brothers Transportation to purchase 216 accessible paratransit vans; expected delivery will be in the first quarter of 2014. He then took questions.

**K. Piccard** expressed concern that the seats in some of the vans are in current use are out of compliance, stating that she has seen people need to sit sideways.

**M. Hulak** stated that the 2006 model had seats that were closer together, which were spaced out in the 2009 model. The new vans will be based on the 2009 model.

**K. Piccard** asked if the new vans will have a maximum capacity of two wheelchairs.

**M. Hulak** confirmed that the capacity is for two wheelchairs, stating that it is very unusual to have three wheelchairs.

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

## *Veterans Transportation (VT)*

**Kevin MacDonald, Project Manager**, distributed his report and announced the dates of Passenger Assistance Training (PAT), CPR & first aid, and defensive driving classes for the next month; see the full listing in the submitted report.

He then took questions.

**R. Clark** asked what VT planned to do about rude dispatchers.

**K. MacDonald** stated that the complaint process is the way to register a problem, and that VT has ongoing resolutions and investigations of any complaints. He added that managers audit random phone calls to assure quality, and anyone who is shown to be “outside the box” receives coaching; if they persist, they are put through a disciplinary process.

**Chairman White** noted that each vendor has a contract administrator that you can call to register a complaint, and emphasized that any problem needs to be brought to someone’s attention.

He thanked Mr. MacDonald for his report.

## *National Express and the Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN Transportation (JV)*

**Victor Herrera, General Manager**, distributed his report and stated that JV is conducting training for all managers and supervisors

relating to customer service; this training will be expanded to all employees. He announced upcoming Passenger Assistance Training (PAT) dates; see the full listing in the submitted report.

**Chairman White** encouraged people, especially those with mobility devices, to take part in Passenger Assistance Trainings.

Mr. Herrera then took questions.

**D. Sisco** asked if there was a problem with automated call-backs at night. She stated she received a call that did not give times.

**M. Hulak** stated that he hadn't heard of issues with the phone system, but stated that if a call-back fails, you can call back and use the automated telephone system or check online. He added that automated callbacks should end at 9:00pm, as 9:30pm is a bit late.

**Chairman White** thanked Mr. Herrera for his report.

*Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS)*

Jacquelyn Reynolds, MBTA Contract Relationship Manager, distributed her report and had no further updates.

She then asked for questions.

**MA Murray** asked about GLSS computer problems that resulted in her not receiving a phone call.

**J. Reynolds** stated they had an internet connection failure that lasted for approximately eight hours.

**M. Hulak** stated that GLSS still runs on a paper manifest, so they still had all pickup times; he added that he believes that the internet connection failure did not affect service the following day.

**Chairman White** thanked Ms. Reynolds for her report.

### **Open Discussion**

**L. Flanagan** expressed concerns about the design of Green Line trolley cars, stating that the angled doors at the front of the cars create a gap between the trolley car and the platform that can be dangerous for persons with visual impairments.

**L. Brelsford** explained that the angular design allows the Green Line cars to negotiate tight turns in narrow tunnels. She stated that the MBTA will be purchasing several dozen new cars to accommodate the Green Line Extension. SWA, and most likely AACT, will be involved in finalizing design decisions for these cars. She noted that the gap created by the angled doors is an issue that has been raised before, and that Green Line drivers let persons board via the middle set of doors if they have difficulty entering or exiting via the front doors.

**R. Clark** stated that MBTA bus drivers need to be better protected against assault.

**Chairman White** stated that there is pending legislation in the State House addressing the MBTA Police's ability to arrest anyone who makes an assault on MBTA employees. He added that Deputy Chief Green and Chief MacMillan would both like to have a camera on every bus.

**P. Shaw** commented that an acquaintance recently had to wait for forty minutes to get a bridge plate.

**L. Brelsford** stated that the policy regarding bridge plates is that if you need a bridge at a heavy rail station, you can use a call box at the station and let the dispatcher know; that dispatcher will radio ahead to the motor person of the next incoming train, who will then get off the train and deploy the bridge plate. She stated that if this does not happen it is unacceptable, and a complaint should be filed the same day or the next day; she added that very serious action is taken based on these complaints.

**D. Sisco** stated that reservationists for THE RIDE should be aware of the dates of AACT meetings.

**Chairman White** suggested that the AACT meeting notice given to THE RIDE drivers should also be given to the reservationists.



**MA Murray** expressed frustrations with the CharlieCard Store. She stated that she had difficulty finding it, and had difficulty with the elevators. She asked if there could be an additional sign to indicate its location.

**L. Brelsford** acknowledged that the area is quite confusing. She stated that there are directions online and at customer service centers.

**M. MacNab** asked the Board of Directors if they could advocate allowing paratransit vehicles to utilize bus only lanes in the City of Boston.

**Chairman White** stated that he thinks it would be beneficial, and that he will talk to General Manager Scott. He asked Mr. Hulak what his position was on the matter.

**M. Hulak** stated that he has taken this matter under advisement.

Meeting adjourned at 3:01pm.