



Access Advisory Committee

to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

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AACT Meeting Minutes for Wednesday,

June 24, 2009

NOTABLES

- The AACT has a page on the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organizations website at www.bostonmpo.org. You can find links there to the following items: upcoming meetings, past meeting minutes, the Memorandum of Understanding between MBTA and the AACT, the AACT Bylaws, the AACT Brochure in accessible format, ADA Regulations, a link to the MBTA's Office for Transportation Access, the AACT Coordinator, and to the MPO's *TRANSREPORT* newsletter.
- 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

Ben Haynes, Lillian Haynes, John Kane, Reggie Clark, Bill McCarthy, John Kneeland, Marilyn MacNab, Paul Barresi, Thomas Gilbert, Esther Minar, Linda Blair, Pauline Lincoln, Alice Fonseca, Crystal Jenkins, Robert Coppola, Madelyn Pulisciano, Williema Peete,

Cheryl Ravalli, Ralph Walton, Angela Mannerson, Sears Cummings, Deanne Sisco, and Ellen Frith

MBTA Representatives

Michael Hulak, Cheryl Hinton, Lt. David Albanese, Paul Strobis, C. Joyce-Harrington, Frank Oglesby, and Kathy Cox

Vendor Representatives

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

Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc. – Jackie Dunlop, Ron Airey, and Paul Crowley

Veterans Transportation LLC – John Tuttle and Derek Marcon

Kiessling Transit, Inc. – M. Claire Dipillo

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

Walter Bennett and Janie Guion

Chairman Haynes called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM

- He extended a welcome to everyone
- Members, friends and guests introduced themselves
- The May 27 meeting minutes were approved unanimously

Chairman Haynes Update:

Mr. Haynes stated the following regarding THE RIDE Program:

- A number of meetings were held with various communication companies to ensure that consumers' ability to communicate with their vendor and to be clear on the flow of information between the vendor and OTA
- He attended the University of Wisconsin Passenger Assistance Training (UWPAT) held at Veterans Transportation to ensure a uniform training by all vendors

- The MBTA is making major changes to THE RIDE Program; you will be informed by the Office for Transportation Access (OTA)
- He attended a mobilization meeting that focused on vendor readiness for the new contract
- AACT held its first meeting with the newly elected Executive Board; members of AACT were asked to work with the Executive Board on issues
- During a recent meeting with MBTA's General Manager it was agreed that that THE RIDE Program is the best in the United States and Canada and is a model for other cities

He then asked for questions.

A. Mannerson: Should I be concerned about early re-certification?

Chairman Haynes: According to the ADA regulations you are to be re-certified every three years. This would be at the discretion of the transportation entity. Several years ago the MBTA and AACT made a conscious effort to utilize the re-certification process effectively without a wait. It was determined that persons who are sight impaired, wheelchair restricted, and persons 75 years of age and older are to be re-certified every 10 years. You should wait for a notice from OTA concerning your re-certification.

E. Frith: What is a temporary disability as it relates to THE RIDE Program?

Chairman Haynes: A condition such as a fractured leg that will heal is considered a temporary disability; this condition usually makes it impossible to board fixed route services, or you may live in a specific geographic area. You could then be granted temporary approval. When your condition heals your temporary status will no longer be in effect.

A. Mannerson: I live on the North Shore. Will the July 1st change in service affect my attending the AACT meetings?

Chairman Haynes: No, it will not.

MBTA Representatives Cheryl Hinton, the Director of Bus Operations and Lt. David Albanese, Executive Officer of Patrol

Operations Division of the Transit Police filled in for Deputy Chief O'Connor who was called away.

They discussed the relationship between Bus Operations and the Transit Police Department on the overview of parking violators at bus stops.

Ms. Hinton cited the following:

- The MBTA serves 8,500 bus stops in a total of 62 cities and towns
- The MBTA services areas as far away as Beverly, Bedford, Walpole and Brockton
- The #1 service stop with the most issues is on the bus Route #55
- The bus corridors with the most complaints and that are the most heavily traveled are routes through Broadway Station in South Boston, the Silver Line-Washington Street, Routes #39 and the Route #111; these routes are inspected three times a day
- The inspectors will report violators to Central Control and then log in and forward the information to the police dispatch; operators are instructed to contact Central Control for assistance when they are unable to pull into the curb by pressing the “transit master button” (TMB) in the vehicle
- The location of bus stops are under the jurisdiction of the local town or city
- The MBTA coordinates with the municipalities on bus stop issues
- The MBTA does not control bus stop locations
- Anyone with service stop concerns, please contact Bus Operations

Lt. Albanese discussed the following issues regarding the newly signed parking law.

- So far during 2009 a total 571 citations have been issued
- Since the law went into effect on April 7 a total of 471 citations were issued

- In 2008 only 209 citations were issued
- Since the new fine increase, more emphasis and visibility is put on bus stop violators
- There is more of a command emphasis on enforcement of parking violators
- MBTA Chief MacMillan sent an e –mail to all Chief of Police in the MBTA service area regarding the April 7 law fine increase and asked that more visibility be placed at MBTA bus stops
- Deputy Chief O’Connor has asked the Area Commanders to enforce this issue
- The Chief has allowed for discretionary hours when needed on certain issues
- The MBTA has a Bicycle Patrol located in downtown Boston which allows for easy maneuvering in traffic to get to stations and they also issue parking citations

They then asked for questions.

T. Gilbert: There should be more bus stop enforcement in Area 5 at Glenn Street and Broadway (Somerville). There was a MBTA vehicle blocking a bus stop; there were no hazard lights on the vehicle. The person waiting at the bus stop was forced to wait in the street.

Lt Albanese: I will contact Lt. Linahan and find out who was operating that vehicle.

E. Minar: Tremont Street in the South End appears to have no police patrols in the area. Boarding Route #43 is impossible with vehicles blocking the curb on Tremont Street. Will you send patrols?

C. Hinton/D. Albanese: Yes, we can. I will inform Areas 1 and 4.

T. Gilbert: Is it possible for the operator to take a picture of the vehicle license number and forward it on to Central Control in the future?

Hinton: I will need to do research with the Information Technology Department.

E. Frith: I would like to stay in contact with you on this issue. As a member of the AACT Executive Board I have been assigned to monitor bus stops during my transit travels. I would like support from

you and others at the MBTA. I have witnessed and submitted photos of illegally parked vehicles to the Customer Support Services Center (CSSC). I would like to send you copies of the violations. This is an on-going problem.

C. Hinton: The operators can send a message by pressing their TMB; that will send a message to central control.

R. Clark: Operators are not doing enough to report vehicles that illegally park in bus stops.

J. Kane: Is there a way to find out if vehicles parked at Ruggles Station are authorized?

C. Hinton: It is probably employee parking. The inspectors are very aware of who parks at the station. Often drivers will get their buses at Ruggles Station with permission to park while on duty.

E. Frith: Is there a way to contact you regarding my findings of illegally parked vehicles?

C. Hinton/Lt. Albanese: Yes, you can contact Jim Monahan at 617-222-4147 and he can address those issues. Unfortunately, we can't send a citation after the violation has occurred.

R. Clark: Is there a way to check vehicles in the Town of Brookline near Brookline Village behind the fire station near the bus stop?

Lt. Albanese: If someone calls in that a car is parked at the bus stop we will send a car to respond. Often cars are diverted to other areas and when the officer arrives the illegal vehicle is gone. Brookline Police know about the law. No vehicles should be parked at bus stops, short of an emergency.

T. Gilbert: Can you send a short e-mail to Professional Ambulance in Cambridge? Their vehicles are always parked illegally for a long time.

Lt. Albanese: I will contact Lt. Linahan; he is in charge of Area 5.

M. MacNab: I want to commend you for this great service. In my area of Fields Corner the inspectors have done their job. The operators are pressing that button and reporting the violators. We really have very few problems now. The drivers are now aware of the law. MBTA

personnel are doing a wonderful job. It may not be working in all areas, but it is working.

C. Hinton: Thank you.

K. Cox: The MBTA is making tremendous progress. We can work cooperatively and make every effort possible on a constant basis to get other cities, towns and police departments to do the right thing; but we do not oversee those departments. Any support that AACT could give would be helpful. I read that it was a possibility that AACT would be sending a letter to various police departments to make them aware of this critical issue. That would be great. What we are looking at is a long-term effort to change a culture. Call your local police department when you see the problem. We need all the help we can get. This is a work in progress. In a recent meeting with Gary Talbot, Transit Police Chief MacMillan, and a deputy chief, we reviewed a list sent to us by MBTA Operations concerning problem routes. The transit police monitored some routes for a week, others for a month. The next report showed the routes were no longer a problem. This will be an on-going effort. It will take a long time to change the culture. The Transit Police will do what it can. If you call the local police continually they will take notice. Write your local newspapers. The MBTA can't do it alone. We have existing channels for complaints; please call all your complaints into CSSC at 617- 222- 3200. The information is then routed to the appropriate department.

Chairman Haynes: It makes little or no difference to have laws that are on the books if they are not enforced for all. No one is exempt from the law no matter what his or her status may be. If you have a law it should be enforced against any and all violators. I invite everyone to file complaints with the transit police department with regard to bus stop violations or disability parking violators. I have found that "direct action" gets "direct action." It makes no sense to file with the CSSC; they have no enforcement authority or ticket books. I had recently asked the AACT members not to report violators to the local police since we had problems in that area. Now I would say yes, call your local police concerning the violators.

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

Ms. Cox distributed her written report and gave an update on the automatic accessible doors at Back Bay Station. (report attached)

She stated the following:

- A concern in relation to the automatic accessible doors at Back Bay Station was raised; the Orange Line Chief had been notified concerning the issue. She spoke with the Chief who stated she was making a visit to the station to check out the issue. She would make sure that the inspectors who visit the station check the doors during their visits.
- On Monday, June 29, a public meeting will be held on the update and progress made regarding accessibility as a result of the ongoing work of the MBTA and the Boston Center for Independent Living
- Thanks to AACT members for taking part in many MBTA activities; Chairman Haynes was one of the speakers at the Arlington Street reopening.
- The U S Access Board met here in Boston and conducted a town meeting on public accessibility. The members were very pleased at the way the Boston meeting was conducted and said that it was perhaps the best held meeting they had had in a long time; this meeting will be a guide for future meetings around the United States.

She then asked for questions.

A. Mannerson: Would you explain the recent report heard on the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind radio service concerning the Lowell commuter rail use of the of the mini-high platforms during certain hours?

K. Cox: This is good news. AACT has been fighting for this for many years. During off-peak hours some coaches are closed-off due to low numbers of travelers. The MBTA wants to avoid separating persons with disabilities from other travelers. AACT worked with AMTRAK, the MBTA, and Massachusetts Bay Commuter Rail and it was agreed that everyone should be directed to the same open coaches. During

off-peak hours everyone will board where the mini-high platforms are located.

E. Minar: Is there a way that the operator can announce to passengers that the 34E outbound buses from Forest Hills between 4:30 PM and 6:00 PM do not go into the Dedham Mall?

K. Cox: I will pass this on to Bus Operations.

T. Gilbert: I have traveled on the old fleet buses on Routes #0199, #0259 and #0109 and found the “transit master button” to be malfunctioning.

K. Cox: I will need to do research.

L. Blair: There is still a problem with the accessible doors being inoperable at Back Bay station. I did approach the station security and he found that the switch was shut-off.

B. Coppolla: Are there any plans to cut the commuter rail service?

K. Cox: I don’t know of any final decisions.

E. Frith: What is being done to make the public more aware that parking in bus stops is against the law? Can signs be posted in bus shelters?

K. Cox: The shelters are under the jurisdiction of the municipality. The shelters have paid advertisements. The MBTA cannot pay for advertisements. Only a few buses have “tail advertisement”. I will pass this on.

Chairman Haynes: We have approached you about the accessible fixed route complaints that go through CSSC; we have not received any fixed route complaints. AACT would like a copy of all Fixed Route Services complaints relating to accessibility issues from CSSC.

K. Cox: You asked for a report, which I presented. We have not had any other discussion. I will be meeting with Ms. Howze of the CSSC and we will setup a meeting.

Chairman Haynes: Please get back to me in the next couple of days and we will make arrangements to do it.

The report was accepted.

Frank Olesgby, Deputy Director of Customer Service and the Interim Manager for the Office for Transportation Access (OTA) THE RIDE (reports and notices attached)

Mr. Olesgby reported the following:

- As of July 1 Joint Venture will be the lone THE RIDE vendor for the south area
- If you will require service from within Framingham and Natick please contact the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) 508-935-2222

He then asked for questions.

A. Mannerson: Will we need to pay the MWRTA driver or will it be a transfer?

P. Strobis: Customers who live in Framingham and Natick area will be served by the new MWRTA. If you plan on MBTA service, you will need to pay that fare separately. Customers who are traveling to and from the MBTA service areas will pay fares to the MBTA. The transfer will be a vehicle-to-vehicle transfer at Ruggles between vendors within the MBTA district. The Wellesley Farm commuter rail station will be the transfer point for the MWRTA transfer.

E. Minar: Will MBTA customers need to pay MWRTA when we transfer?

P. Strobis: Yes, you will book THE RIDE with your current MBTA vendor; they will coordinate with MWRTA for the transfer. You will need to setup an account on both systems. Your fare will be deducted as it is for every trip. If you are going to be a frequent rider you will need to become a member of the MWRTA. You will need certified eligibility for their service area. You can contact the MBTA to authorize us to share your certification records and your user ID number will be the same in both areas. The policies of MWRTA are the same as the MBTA. A recent mass mailing was sent to every user of THE RIDE with information concerning MWRTA. You can contact their reservationist. The hours are the same. You can pay by credit cards, check, and money order or by Internet access. No driver will be accepting cash. You will need to pay separate fares for each direction.

D. Sisco: Is it true that whenever you attend the AACT meeting THE RIDE does not charge your account?

Chairman Haynes: No, that is not true. This is not an MBTA meeting. It is an organizational meeting made up of consumers of both fixed route services, paratransit services and representatives of various organizations throughout the MBTA service area. Yes, you do pay.

P. Barresi: Are there any details on the travel arrangements for the Fourth of July concert on the Esplanade?

P. Strobis: As in the past, Veterans Transportation, on behalf of the MBTA, coordinates the service with all the vendors from a central drop-off and pick-up location. Service will begin at 8:00 AM into the Esplanade.

The report was accepted.

Open Discussion

M. Pulisciano: I would just like to compliment THE RIDE drivers and the vendor staff; God bless you all.

E. Frith: Is there a way to make the space at the concert more accommodating for persons with disabilities? The VIP's are given more space.

P. Strobis: The MBTA has no control over the layout. I can do research and get you a name.

J. Tuttle: We give the coordinators of the event our best estimate of how many people will be attending; they do their best to provide appropriate space. You are correct; the area has declined in recent years.

P. Lincoln: I will miss Kiessling Transit, Inc. They do a wonderful job; drivers are always on time. They deserve a round of applause.

E. Minar: Will THE RIDE fares be increased?

P. Strobis: There would need to be a public hearing before this could happen.

A. Mannerson: Why aren't drivers allowed to contact emergency personnel when they witness someone on the road in distress?

Chairman Haynes: Is this a policy throughout the system for all vendors or is it unique to one vendor?

P. Strobis: The MBTA has no policy that prevents a driver from reporting incidents while in operation. If the dispatcher is telling the driver no, this would be an internal company policy. I would ask that each vendor answer?

J. Dunlop: There is no specific policy. The driver calls for assistance from dispatch and then dispatch makes the decision to make the call. It really depends on the situation.

J. Tuttle: We do not have a specific policy. I would hope the drivers would report to dispatch and they would call the appropriate agency.

J. Thompson: I would hope that common sense would prevail. When a driver sees anyone in distress or a fire they should report it to dispatch. We have phone numbers of emergency personnel for all the communities we serve.

Chairman Haynes: When you witness an incident, you have the right to file a complaint with the vendor and report that staff person.

Announcements:

R. Clark: There will be public meeting held by the MBTA with Judge King and the Boston Center for Independent Living. It will take place here on June 29, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:15 PM.