

**Access Advisory Committee to the Massachusetts Bay
Transportation Authority**

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**AACT Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 22, 2012**

Notables

The AACT Executive Board meeting will meet from 10:00 AM to Noon and the Membership meeting will meet from 1:00 PM to 3 PM on the fourth Wednesday of the month except when noted.

AACT has a page on the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's website at 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.

Comments and questions concerning AACT should be directed to the Acting 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 (email).

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meetings are conducted in accessible locations, and materials can be provided in accessible formats and in languages other than English. If you would like accessibility or language accommodation, please contact the MPO at 617-973-7100 (voice), 617-973-8855 (fax), 617-973-7089 (TTY), or publicinformation@bostonmpo.org (email).

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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/.

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, Bob Carr, Tyler Terrasi, Rick Morin, Angela Manerson, Beverly Ann Rock, Mary Ann Murray, Nancy Miller, Donnie Summerfield, Merrian Williams, Jonathan Gale, Dianne Sisco, Sharon Harrison, Nancy Murray, Reginald Clark, Allen Karon, and Ellen Frith

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

Daniel Amstutz and Janie Guion

MassDOT - MBTA Representatives

Erik Scheier, Frank Oglesby, Mike Festa, Mike Hulak, Carol Joyce-Harrington, and Tim Davis

Vendor Representatives

Kevin McDonald - Veterans Transportation, LLC

Jackie Dunlop - Greater Lynn Senior Services

Claire DiPillo and Phil McGuire - The Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN, LLC

Marilyn Cole - Innovative Paradigms

Others

Myra Berloff - Massachusetts Office on Disability

Ann Hartstein - Executive Office of Elderly Affairs

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:

Mike Lambert, Special Assistant to the Acting General Manager Davis, is organizing a roundtable date to discuss the implementation of THE RIDE In-Person Assessment Program. He stated that the participants will come from the disability community and other organizations.

He thanked Board Member Rick Morin for representing him (IC White) at the MBTA Board of Directors where he spoke on his behalf about how the fare increase is negatively impacting daily subscribers of THE RIDE.

He also emphasized that there will be an impact study of the fare increase which is being done by a number of agencies. He stated that when the study is completed he will pass on the information.

He discussed the issue of the vendors' performance and penalty assessment in THE RIDE 2009-2014 contract that they are required to comply with.

He then asked for questions. There were none.

Meeting Minutes Approval

Meeting Minutes for AACT on July 25th were presented and approved with one abstention.

Correction to the July 25 minutes: This question was mistakenly not reported.

K. Piccard asked for the treasurer's report. **IC White** incorrectly reported that there is \$1,995. 95 in the account. The correct amount is \$1,997.52.

Presentation

Erik Scheier, MBTA Project Manager for the Bus Stop Improvement Project.

He stated the following:

The MBTA began the Bus Stop Improvement Project three to four years ago after receiving federal funds to improve the bus stops and bus corridors on key routes.

The program goals are:

- (1) To make service more reliable and eliminate the problem of buses bunching together
- (2) To make routes more accessible for persons with disabilities and elderly/senior riders
- (3) To improve and create more amenities such as trash bins, signage and shelters

They have encountered many challenges:

- (1) Many stops have obstructions such as guard rails and newspaper boxes
- (2) Sidewalks are uneven
- (3) Signs must be redesigned for ADA Compliance
 - contrast must be increased
 - size of the sign is a consideration
 - the letters may be too small
 - space limitations
- (4) Not all stops can be updated
- (5) Determining the greatest need

He also discussed the following:

- The MBTA received ten million dollars to implement the improvements
- Public meetings have been held
- There are one hundred eighty bus routes in the system
- Fifteen key routes have been identified as high ridership with frequent service
- Eight hundred stops have been reviewed
- The MBTA is proposing the elimination of twenty-five percent or two hundred of the bus stops
- Construction will begin in the fall with routes #23 and #39
- Project completion is targeted for 2013

He then asked for questions.

D. Summerfield thanked the MBTA for securing funds for this project. He gave notice that according to the settlement agreement of *Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) vs. the MBTA* all bus stops are to be made accessible. He stated that he has notified System-Wide Accessibility and Customer Service on numerous occasions that Route #71 is inaccessible.

E. Scheier stated that Route #71 is a key route in the program and will be made accessible.

IC White commented on the photos of the Fourth Avenue site which showed parking spaces that they would like to eliminate but would be a problem with business owners. In Cambridge and Somerville they have extended the sidewalk which is useful for everyone. This way, the businesses will not lose any parking spaces.

R. Clark commented that being visually impaired he finds it difficult to maneuver after getting off at a stop and there are so many obstacles in the path-of-travel.

E. Scheier stated that fixing that is part of the project.

N. Miller asked if the MBTA would have dedicated lanes as in other cities.

E. Scheier stated that dedicated lanes are used for the Silver Line. There is no space for dedicated lanes in many of the other areas.

A. Karon stated that he travels by fixed route on occasion and finds that bus stops are not near commuter rail stations such as the Fairmont Station. He would like to see bus stops closer to the stations.

E. Scheier stated that they would be looking at making stops more convenient.

R. Morin asked how many bus stops would be eliminated.

E. Scheier stated that it would be twenty-five percent or two-hundred out of eight-hundred stops.

B.A. Rock commented that she is annoyed when she sees her bus waiting at Ashmont Station and the path-of-travel is inaccessible to reach the bus and it leaves before you can get to it.

E. Scheier commented that he is aware of that station's situation. He stated that public safety is a priority.

J. Gale asked how curb cuts would be addressed to make sure they are accessible at bus stops. He also wanted to know if the accessible curb cuts would be on the MBTA website.

E. Scheier commented that when work on the bus stops is completed there will be a level landing pad at the front and rear doors for the bus to deploy the wheelchair ramp. He stated that they are making sure that any stop they are altering will be level when they are completed. All stops will be accessible, even though the ADA does not require that every stop be accessible.

R. Clark requested that he have the presenters' information on audio tape.

L. Haile stated yes it is available.

D. Summerfield asked for better training of operators who start up before passengers are secure in their seat. It is especially necessary for people who are disabled.

E. Scheier recommended that passengers take down the bus number (time is not necessary) and stop location to report the information to Customer Service so that the MBTA can take action. Operators are required to wait.

IC White thanked Mr. Scheier for his presentation.

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

Larry Haile, SWA Corrdinator, presented and distributed his report.

He thanked the members of AACT for attending the countdown at South Station and giving their meaningful feedback.

J. Gale asked for a one-minute overview of the new countdown system for commuter rail.

L. Haile stated that the MBTA unveiled the new count-down system last Wednesday. The system features a display board which reports a train's destination and the amount of time until its arrival in the station. He stated that the display screens in the station have been modified and that the audio function will differ a little from the video. He was pleased with the feedback.

IC White asked for an update on the arrival of the new Assistant General Manager for System-Wide Accessibility.

L. Haile stated he did not have any information but says that Ms. Marie Trottier is still undergoing a background check.

D. Summerfield stated the announcement of the MBTA "train arriving" in increments of every five minutes does not comply with the *BCIL* settlement agreement. The settlement states that all trains will be announced.

L. Haile stated that train announcements are set within five minute increments due to the frequency from the lobby of other announcements.

E. Frith identified the following problems at Porter Square: the elevator and signage illumination are no active. She also stated that operators lack the necessary training for proper scooter securement and that operators are not wearing seatbelts. She also noted issues with the bus stop at Assembly Square Mall. The curb cut is located awkwardly and she took a tumble.

L. Haile reported that the elevators at Porter Square are still under construction; they will be back in service tentatively in winter/spring 2013. He recommended that she report all other issues as well as the training concerns to Customer Service.

He then asked for questions.

The Office of Transportation Access (OTA)

Frank Oglesby, MBTA Deputy Director of Paratransit Operations -
OTA, THE RIDE

Mr. Oglesby distributed the July 2012 reports for THE RIDE and stated the following:

He announced that the MBTA Charlie Card Store opened on August 13 at Downtown Crossing.

He also reported that a van from Veterans Transportation was in an accident involving a motorcycle. It collided with the van and resulted in a fatality. No passengers were aboard the vehicle. The driver of THE RIDE vehicle was not injured but went to the hospital for stress-related treatment.

He then asked for questions.

IC White asked for the address to mail checks to THE RIDE.

C. Harrington stated that checks should have their THE RIDE rider's ID number listed and be addressed to:

*MBTA
Office for Transportation Access
10 Park Plaza, Suite 5000
Boston, MA 02116*

IC White asked what would happen if the number of THE RIDE subscribers continues to drop.

F. Oglesby stated that they would continue to provide THE RIDE service.

J. Gale commented on the decrease in ridership for all vendors. He mentioned that drivers are having their hours cut as a result of the decrease in ridership. He wanted to know if the group was aware that owners may be cutting back on driver wages and also asked about how the vendors were compensated for their service.

M. Hulak stated that the vendors are paid on a per trip basis and there is also an administration overhead fee. If ridership is falling, so is their payment.

Veterans Transportation (VT)

Kevin MacDonald, Project Manager, distributed his report and announced VTS's Passenger Assistance Training (P.A.T.) classes schedule.

He also gave a more detailed description of the motorcycle accident that occurred earlier in the month.

He then asked for questions. There were none.

IC White thanked Mr. MacDonald for his report.

Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS)

Jackie Dunlop, Director of Transportation, distributed her report and announced GLSS's P.A.T. classes and stated that the schedule is included in the handout.

She then asked for questions.

B. Carr asked about the location of the training.

J. Dunlop stated the training is in their Lynn location.

IC White thanked Ms. Dunlop for her report.

The Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN Transportation (JV)

Claire DiPillo, Manager for the Joint Venture, distributed her report and reported that the JV would not be having P.A.T. classes at this time.

She then asked for questions. There were none.

IC White thanked Ms. DiPillo for her report.

Open Discussion

Myra Berloff, Director of the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD), and Ann Hartstein, Secretary of the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA), requested a meeting with the AACT membership on Tuesday, August 21 to discuss their role as Co-Chairs to conduct a study of the impact of the fare increase on persons with disabilities and the elderly. In June the legislature passed the transportation bill to provide additional funding to the MBTA; it included a section that charged the EOEA and MOD to conduct this study.

The study will focus on the impact of the MBTA fare increase on riders' finances, employment and the quality of life. The deadline for getting the study completed is January 1st, 2013. They are looking not only at how to best accomplish this study in a short period of time but also to have it make a real impact in terms of reflecting what is happening for people since the fare increase on July 1st.

The Co-Chairs stated that legislation requires that they work together with the MBTA to provide the data needed to develop the study. The Co-Chairs stated that the MBTA staff has been very helpful in getting information to them.

The Co-Chairs would like to know how this is impacting people's lives. They are asking the MBTA to select a sample of customers from the following programs: THE RIDE, the Transportation Access Pass and the Senior Pass so that they can get a wide variety of people to participate in the survey. They are looking to have an on-line or mail survey that people can respond to.

The MBTA staff will be in charge of the mailing due to privacy concerns.

She urged the membership to participate if they are one of the members chosen and to remind others that if they receive a survey they should respond and return it immediately.

Ms. Berloff stated to the membership that she and Ms. Hartstein cared about how the fare increase is impacting everyone. She made a strong appeal that it is very important that they get the hard data showing whether it is meeting their expectations or not. It is very

important that if you do receive a survey you respond and return it. They can only know what is happening with your help.

They then took questions from the membership.

B. Rock suggested that while they are considering the random sample of users from THE RIDE, Transportation Access Pass (TAP) and Senior Pass Programs, they should survey the general ridership as well since they can easily do that now and have data to compare to the study target sample.

A. Hartstein stated that they have expectations of what the impact will be, especially after working on the Governor's 530 Commission. With this study they want to quantify and support their expectations with the information so they can make solid recommendations.

B. Rock stated that she feels it is important to have the data from the general population for further validation.

A. Hartstein stated that the MBTA will be working on the issue also. She stated that neither EOEA nor MOD have the resources.

R. Morin stated that it is very important to know why people are taking fewer trips. He also stated that there are a number of organizations in the disability and elderly community who would be happy to distribute the information; they would like to be part of the team to help develop and interpret the information. He feels it is important to include the disability and elderly communities, that they should be part of the process and contribute as well.

A. Hartstein stated that they have been connecting with elderly affairs in communities across the state and have been collecting information over a two-year period.

R. Morin states that they need to have people from the community working with them unlike the way the Governor's Executive 530 Commission was formed.

D. Summerfield stated that he attended five of the fare increase hearings and testified. He also stated that he has heard rumors that

people are foregoing doctor or dialysis appointments to buy food. He feels that the elderly and disabled have been unfairly targeted.

M. Berloff indicated that's why the state legislature mandated the study.

E. Frith asked if the study would be shared for additional comments. The benefits have not changed but the fare has. She asked what is going to be the outcome of the study: will the fare increase be dismissed? She also wanted to know what the point is if there is no practical outcome.

A. Hartstein stated that the study is required by the state legislature to report findings by January 1, 2013. She stated that the report will go to the Joint Committee on Transportation, the Senate and House Committee on Ways and Means, and the MBTA Board of Directors. She believes that, along with the required MBTA studies and studies by other advocates, this information will be analyzed as part of the next step.

M. Berloff offered to have people email her with information they would like to see addressed in the study.

J. Gale stated that the study came about as a result of anger from the community due to the fare increase; the mandate by the legislature was an amendment to the transportation package the MBTA was requesting. He asked if the study would be all-inclusive. He is concerned that no one has reached out to the disability community for their input.

M. Berloff stated that's the reason it was important that they attend the AACT meeting. They want to hear the concerns of the people being impacted. She also stated that they can only do what they can. She refused to make any promises she felt she couldn't keep. She asked that questions be sent to her office and she will include them in the discussion.

R. Morin indicated that the Co-Chairs should look at the disability community as resources and not as a group that would bog down the process.

IC White stated that he met Ms. Berloff at a Community Monitoring event over thirteen years ago and has complete confidence that the study will be done fairly.

M. Berloff thanked him for the support.

IC White thanked Daniel Amstutz for assisting at the meeting today.

The meeting ended at 3:05 pm.