

Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

Transit Working Group Coffee Chat on Closing Gaps in the Regional Transit System Summary

November 8, 2021, Meeting

4:00 PM–5:00 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

Meeting recording: <https://youtu.be/cS2JkaHWhCU>

Question One: What are some specific locations, corridors, or areas where transit riders may experience gaps and/or disjointed service?

- Stephanie Cronin, Middlesex 3 Coalition
 - The Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) does not represent Burlington, and forming connections from Lowell to Burlington is difficult.
 - There is similar difficulty in creating connections from Acton to the Middlesex Community College in Lowell. This was echoed by Franny Osman.
- Franny Osman, LRTA Board
 - A transit gap exists between Lowell and Framingham. This route passes many places of interest, including Market Basket and senior centers. Additional connections could be made to Sudbury, Littleton, and Acton.
 - Emily VanDewoestine (MetroWest Regional Transit Authority) expressed enthusiasm in connecting to other RTAs, but acknowledged the distance between the service areas of the MWRTA and LRTA.
 - Expressed a desire for Cross-Acton Transit to be operated by the LRTA. Neither service has operated during the pandemic.
- Collette Aufranc, Wellesley Select Board
 - There are missing connections that could route suburban residents to job centers, such as Wellesley, Natick, and Weston to Cambridge and Watertown.
 - There is a lack of direct connections to Logan Express from adjoining communities.

- Destinations that require multiple transit connections result in increased single-occupancy vehicle travel.
- Susan Barrett, Lexpress
 - There is a general challenge in north-to-south travel. As an example, she stated that traveling from Chelmsford to Waltham requires three connections.
 - Asked if there is an opportunity to study new travel patterns as the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) works on the Bus Network Redesign (BNR), and provide service to areas of new development.
 - Melissa Dullea (MBTA) stated that the MBTA is prioritizing all-day frequency during BNR, and wants to include weekend workers.
 - Regarding areas of new development, Melissa Dullea stated that the MBTA is using cell data to determine gaps in the bus network. This data accounts for years prior to 2020. As such, the data does not account for upcoming developments. However, the MBTA is working with its stakeholders to determine future needs.
- Bill McNulty, Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC)
 - OCPC is working to improve connections between the Brockton area and the Braintree/Quincy area. Currently, there is one MBTA bus that connects to the Montello Commuter Rail station, which is three miles from downtown Brockton. Brockton Area Transit also connects to Montello, but making this connection is difficult for riders. The need to improve this service is evident, based on congestion on Route 37 from Brockton to Quincy.

Question Two: How can regional transit operators provide seamless connections for riders?

- Collette Aufranc, Wellesley Select Board
 - The multitude of RTAs can be difficult for customers to navigate. Each service has its own payment system, different pay structures, different web sites, and different software. Some transit apps do not account for all RTAs. For users not well-versed in transit, making connections between services can be difficult. An overarching website that accounts for all

RTAs would reduce fractionalization and improve quality of service for users.

- Stephanie Cronin, Middlesex 3 Coalition
 - How much money are businesses and developers paying into the system? Are developers ensuring travel?
 - Sandy Johnston (MPO staff) stated that there isn't a comprehensive regional approach to these issues, as the development review process is generally run at the municipal level.
 - Melissa Dullea stated that the MBTA is considering how to build a bus network that accommodates new development, though they are not focused on seeking operational funding from developers. Rather, the MBTA is focusing on how developers can provide funding for capital improvements such as transit signal priority and accessible bus stops.
 - Susan Barrett stated that new developments go through a travel demand management process, and most developers will join their local transportation management association. Developers are required to contribute to a congestion mitigation fund.
- Susan Barrett, Lexpress
 - Low-frequency connections are difficult for transit users. Lexpress connects to the LRTA, but the service runs once per hour. She suggested that RTAs could discuss their schedules to make them best align.

Question Three: Who can champion regional coordination efforts?

- Franny Osman, LRTA Board
 - Anyone can champion these efforts, provided they have energy, capacity, and interest. This includes municipal staff or members of the public.
 - A person championing regional coordination should speak to town managers to determine the "point person" for each municipality. This person could be the town manager, a town planner, or someone involved in economic development.

- Susan Barrett, Lexpress
 - Regional coordination efforts may be difficult because there is no specific person to speak with at the municipal level. As an example, she stated that the MBTA recently released a survey asking for contacts; Lexpress responded with six contacts. In some municipalities, a planner may be the “point person,” but this may not be true for all communities.
 - Support from the MPO, elected officials, and municipal staff could bolster coordination efforts.
- Collette Aufranc, Wellesley Select Board
 - Asked who would be responsible for implementing a joint pay structure and coordinated schedules between RTAs.
 - Sandy Johnston noted the RTA Council and the Massachusetts Association of Regional Transit Authorities. Franny Osman noted the RTA Advocates Coalition.
 - In response, Collette Aufranc asked why there isn’t a single organization that service providers can put their efforts toward.
- Franny Osman, LRTA Board
 - Asked why there is a need for TMAs.
 - Stephanie Cronin stated that TMAs are needed due to the level of demand. TMAs interact with communities and businesses differently than RTAs, and TMAs try to connect the borders between RTAs.
 - Jeff Bennett (128 Business Council) stated that it would be a mark of success if TMAs were replaced by RTAs. However, the 128 Business Council has existed for approximately 30 years and will likely remain in operation for the foreseeable future.
 - Susan Barrett expressed appreciation of the TMA partners of Lexpress, but expressed a desire for fewer transit operators. She

asked if lessons learned from developing relationships between TMA's and businesses could be applied to RTAs and the MBTA.

Question Four: What should the MBTA and RTAs coordinate on?

The scheduled ending of the meeting occurred before this question could be addressed.

Attendance

Attendee	Affiliation
Collette Aufranc	Town of Wellesley
Susan Barrett	Lexpress
Jeff Bennett	128 Business Council
Stephanie Cronin	Middlesex 3 Coalition
Austin Cyganiewicz	Town of Acton
Lenard Diggins	Rider Oversight Committee
Melissa Dullea	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)
Rachel Fichtenbaum	MassMobility, Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)
Kelly Forrester	Brockton Area Transit (BAT)
Glenn Geiler	BAT
Robert Guptill	MBTA
Charles Kilmer	Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC)
Aniko Laszlo	MBTA
Bill McNulty	OCPC
Shona Norman	Cape Ann Transportation Authority
Olivia Mobayed	MBTA
Franny Osman	Lowell Regional Transit Authority Board
Amira Patterson	MBTA Rider Oversight Committee
Emily VanDewoestine	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Lisa Weber	EOHHS

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Matt Archer
Róisín Foley
Sandy Johnston

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