

Access Advisory Committee to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

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AACT Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 24, 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; the AACT meetings will meet the second Wednesday, November 14 same time and location.

AACT has a page on the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) 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 AACT Coordinator, Ms. Janie Guion, at 617-973-7507 (voice); 617-973-7089 (TDD); 617-973-8855 (fax); or at AACT@ctps.org (email).

The AACT 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 Ms. Guion at the information above.

The MPO fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related 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 or related statutes or regulations 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.

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/.

You may contact THE RIDE at the Office for Transportation Access, Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM to 5 PM, to ask for a trip/fare history of trips you have taken. You may also file a complaint here if you feel you have been overcharged. Please telephone 617-222-5123 (Voice), 617-222-6119 (fax) or 1-800-533-6282 (voice, toll-free), 617-222-5415 (TTY) or email theride@mbta.com

Your checks for MBTA THE RIDE travel should include your account ID number and should be addressed to:

MBTA

Office for Transportation Access

10 Park Plaza

Suite 5000

Boston, MA 02116

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

Ian Perrault, Kathryn Piccard, James White, Richard Mahoney, Cheryl Ravalli, Angela Manerson, Marilyn MacNab, Mary Dennesen, Mary Ann Murray, Nancy Miller, Deanne Sisco, Katie Starks, Reginald Clark, Allen Karon, Rev. Ellen Frith, and Penny Shaw

MPO/Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)

Daniel Amstutz, David Fargen, and Janie Guion

MassDOT - MBTA Representatives

Frank Oglesby, Paul Fitzgerald, Larry Haile, Tim Davis, Martha Glover, Kim D., Alex Murkinson, Mike Hulak, Carol Joyce-Harrington, and Philip Balcom

Vendor Representatives

John Tuttle - Veterans Transportation, LLC
Jackie Dunlop - Greater Lynn Senior Services
Victor Herrera - The Joint Venture of Thompson Transit and YCN, LLC

Other

Ann Hartstein - Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA)

Myra Berloff and Kathy Devin - Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD)

Theadora Fisher-Health and Human Services

Meeting

Acting-Interim Chairman James White called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM

Members, friends and guests introduced themselves

Chairman's Report

Acting-Interim Chairman (IC) White reported on a wide array of items. Here are a few highlights with the report attached:

- Private vehicles continue to block the Charles Street entrance blocking the bus stop. He plans to contact Chief MacMillan of the MBTA
- He discussed that consumers are sometimes being overcharged for Premium Service (PS) areas and are not being refunded;
Vendor staff have stated they have no authority to make refunds; he has discussed the refund issue with the Office for Transportation Access (OTA)

He then asked for questions.

M. MacNab stated she is being overcharged for PS and that the dispatchers need to have more authority to issue a credit without any delay.

M. Hulak said that OTA is aware of the issue. He stated that he would be more than willing to investigate. He noted that OTA now has safeguards in place so overcharging would not occur. He asked that riders who feel they have been overcharged make a complaint with OTA to investigate.

K. Piccard stated that she has received calls from many people who now think that all fares are five dollars. She is certain that they have not filed any complaints.

M. Hulak stated that OTA has done quite a bit of outreach to advise people of the increased fares. He asked members to let them know of persons who did not get the mailing about the fare hike or have the person call his office. He said they have had flyers dropped in the seats and everyone was sent mail about the change.

J. White asked that when all the updates are complete, he would like to have OTA create a monthly report that would show which areas were overcharged with PS and refund the money to their accounts.

M. Hulak said it is not that simple; but he is open to discussion.

M. Dennesen asked how she would know if she was being overcharged.

M. Hulak stated that she should contact OTA and they would provide her with a trip/fare history to review.

Meeting Minutes Approval

The AACT Meeting Minutes for September 26th were presented and approved.

Presentation

There was an update from Ann Hartstein, Secretary of the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA), and Myra Berloff, Director of the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) who had visited AACT on August 22 to discuss the impending study of the MBTA fare increase impact upon persons with disabilities and the elderly.

They have returned to AACT thank everyone who gave input on what information and questions should be included in the survey. They said they both felt that with the information received from the survey they will get an accurate picture of how increased fares have impacted riders.

They are urging members who are selected to take part in the survey and to return the survey to them promptly. Additionally, if members know of someone who has been selected, that person should be encouraged to complete and return the survey in a timely fashion.

- Individuals who are randomly selected for the survey will receive a postcard from MOD by U.S. mail. The postcard will ask the recipient to call MOD and provide the randomly generated number from the postcard. This random number will not identify the person responding to the survey. It is necessary only for MOD/EOEA to know that the response being collected is part of the random scientific sample. Respondents should write or speak freely.
- There will be no way to identify who is giving the information
- Participants will be randomly selected by computer
- Postcards will be mailed from a clearing house, not the MBTA, but they will be addressed from MOD

- There will be a choice of three ways to complete the survey
 - On-line - with one of two types of surveys
 - By telephone - MOD will have call takers on hand to take answers for the survey
 - Written - participants must call and request the written survey; once they receive the postcard they are asked to return it ASAP
- There will be sub-sampling of persons in nursing homes and other groups; these surveys will not be included in the randomly chosen group.

They then answered questions.

K. Piccard said that the person taking the information by telephone should explain the reason behind the code number.

M. Berloff stated that the script has not been written for the person taking the call. The call taker will take your answers but cannot prompt responses in any way.

P. Shaw asked what percent of THE RIDE consumers would be randomly selected for the survey.

M. Berloff stated that they have limited the survey to people who have taken THE RIDE at least four times in a year; that number is 28,000. She stated that of this number they will be sending out 5,000 postcards in the mail asking people to participate in the survey. She also stated that THE RIDE users will be notified that survey is on the way by flyer seat drop. The flyers will be yellow and contain details on the survey.

M. MacNab recommended that Ms. Berloff and Ms. Hartstein contact a graduate student whom she knows personally. The young lady has started a newsletter that could be far-- reaching in notifying consumers that a survey on the fare increase impact of THE RIDE will be going out to selected users of THE RIDE. She also asked that the consumers be reminded of the need to return the survey immediately.

M. Hartstein asked that Ms. MacNab a member of AACT was asked to forward the link for the newsletter for her review.

P. Shaw stated that she is very concerned about the HIPPA Act being violated in some way.

IC White asked whether the survey would take into account the geographic locations of those hardest impacted.

M. Berloff said the survey is random and will only identify the areas by the questions asked.

M. Manerson asked what results they were looking to achieve through the survey.

A. Hartstein stated that the survey will be a detailed look at how people who take THE RIDE are impacted by the fare increases. She said the plan is to make recommendations to the legislature.

K. Piccard stated that she hopes that the survey will have room to let people write comments freely

A. Hartstein/M. Berloff stated that the survey is designed to let people speak freely. They also said that there is no way to link people to the answers that they give.

M.A. Murray asked if the survey would take into account other forms of transportation that others may take.

A. Hartstein stated that the survey does address that issue. She stated that she had been in discussion with agencies such as the Council on Aging.

IC White thanked both Ms. Hartstein and Berloff for their presentation.

A. Hartstein thanked the membership for the opportunity to speak.

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

Larry Haile, SWA Coordinator, presented his report.

- He announced that an Orientation Training was held on Thursday, October 4 with a variety of participants and guests. SWA received amazing feedback. He stated that the feedback received will help revise the program so that the end result will be something everyone can be proud of. He indicated that the training will help customers who want to learn more about the MBTA system.

He then asked for questions.

M. A. Murray asked if he could explain the goal of the training.

L. Haile said SWA plans to polish up the training based on the feedback received so that it will be mutually beneficial and informative for the customer.

K. Piccard asked if he would be working with the public school system to train school age students.

L. Haile stated that one of the things envisioned for the future will be to train personnel from other agencies so that they may train their own consumers. It is possible that this training may include school systems.

M.A. Murray asked how many people attended the training.

L. Haile indicated he did not have specific numbers but several agencies did attend.

K. Piccard noted that Easter Seals Project ACTION states that there are different kinds of trainings for persons with different kinds of disabilities. She asked if the training took into account a person's ability.

L. Haile said that Easter Seals Project ACTION states that it depends on each person's ability and what they need to learn. Persons who need a more intensive training should sign on for a class in the "Travel Training Program" instead.

The Office of Transportation Access (OTA)

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

Mr. Oglesby distributed the September/October 2012 reports for THE RIDE and had no further updates.

He then asked for questions.

K. Piccard requested that a written report be made each month that would indicate how many active and inactive certified riders have money in their accounts.

M. Hulak indicated that it would not be an easy task since accounts often change daily. But he suggested that a formal request be made through the Acting IC White.

K. Piccard made the following motion: That OTA give a picture every month as part of its monthly report of on-going numbers in one or two categories of people who are certified THE RIDE users; this should not just be limited to those who are newly certified. The motion was passed unanimously.

IC White asked that Ms. Piccard provide a detailed request for the report.

K. Piccard stated that she would leave it up to OTA to decide. She stated that the membership would like additional information in one or two categories about the ridership on a monthly basis and not just those who are newly certified.

M. Hulak asked if she was looking for registered as opposed to active users. He explained that this would not be that difficult.

IC White asked if the inactive status would be an account that has not been active for six months.

M. Hulak stated that it could be anything including someone who was deceased.

MA Murray asked whether someone who had not been on THE RIDE for several years would be removed or not.

M. Hulak stated that a person is still active until THE RIDE is notified by a family member that the person is now deceased. He noted that the person will then be removed from THE RIDE list. THE RIDE system has not been purged in about eight years.

IC White asked if people who are not recertified under the new program will be removed from the system with Paradigm.

M. Hulak he stated no. These accounts would remain inactive.

Penny asked about the ridership figures for THE RIDE.

IC White stated that it was announced earlier that there were no accurate figures due to problems with software for THE RIDE Program this month.

IC White thanked Mr. Oglesby for his comments.

Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS)

Jackie Dunlop, Director of Transportation, presented no written report.

She was available for questions.

IC White asked if the GLSS ridership has improved.

J. Dunlop stated that the ridership had increased slightly.

IC White asked if GLSS was still maintaining their workforce.

J. Dunlop said yes.

M. A. Murray stated that a few days ago on THE RIDE vehicle she noticed that there were no flyers pertaining to the upcoming AACT monthly meeting. She also noted that a flyer for the August meeting was in a vehicle.

J. Dunlop appeared very surprised.

N. Miller asked why they still had the older Dodge vans, which are very rickety. She noted that other companies were no longer using that model.

J. Dunlop stated that the vehicles are going to be used until they can be replaced. She stated that there was no timetable for replacements.

IC White explained that that model is still being used by other vendors.

IC White asked when the MBTA would be purchasing new vehicles.

M. Hulak stated that yes, the MBTA is in the process of purchasing new vans. They are working closely with MassDOT for the purchase. He was unable to be specific about the date of arrival.

IC White thanked Ms. Dunlop for her comments.

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

Victor Herrera, General Manager for the Joint Venture, presented no written report.

He was available for questions.

N. Miller asked that problems regarding the computer software or other problems be discussed.

M. Hulak said that this is not just a Joint Venture issue; all the vendors are experiencing some difficulty. He stated that OTA is

working very closely with their software vendor StrataGen to clear up problems.

D. Sisco stated that she needed guidance for travel to MetroWest. **Kim** from OTA offered to assist her with her plans.

IC White asked if JV had rehired any of the drivers that were laid off.

V. Herrera said layoff of drivers had nothing do with lack of service.

IC White thanked Mr. Herrera for his comments.

Veterans Transportation (VT)

John Tuttle, Operations Manager, presented no written report.

He was available for questions.

IC White asked how the fare increase was affecting VT.

J. Tuttle stated that VT did experience a decline at the start of the PS. He stated that the company is gradually returning to its normal ridership of 3,000 trips per day; the number at present is 2,900 trips per day. He stated that the weather would be a deciding factor.

K. Piccard said that there are a couple of ways to look at the recovery of the numbers after they dropped with the fare change on July 1st. 1) Are the numbers getting back to where they were before the change? 2) Are the numbers getting back to the rate of increase and the trajectory of what the numbers would be had there been no change? She believes that both numbers should be kept in mind.

J. Tuttle explained he was unable to answer that, but did say that VT is still very busy and they have not laid off any drivers. And the

impact has not been as great for them as it has been for other vendors.

IC White thanked Mr. Tuttle for his comments.

Open Discussion

E. Frith asked if there is a rule requiring a bus operator should wait at the bus stop if the operator sees someone, particularly a person with a disability.

L. Haile stated that is not true. Operators are trained to pick up persons at the official bus stop.

Announcements

IC White stated that the Bus Recertification training class at the Charlestown garage will take place on October 30 and November 13. Those who wish to participate should telephone 617-222-5454 to register.

The meeting ended at 3:05 pm.

