

**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING NOTES**

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**Date, Time & Place:** September 2, 2015, 5:30-7:30 PM  
Second floor conference room, City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway

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**Attendance**

Committee Members

John Attanucci, Devin Chausse, John DiGiovanni, Karen Dumaine, Charles Fineman, Robert Fitzgerald, Jim Gascoigne, Marcus Goodwin, Doug Manz, Jeremy Mendelson, George Metzger, Susan Pacheco, Katherine Rafferty, Rob Ricchi, Simon Shapiro, Saul Tannenbaum, Alexander Taylor, Ritesh Warade

City of Cambridge

Tegin Bennett and Cleo Stoughton (Community Development), Adam Shulman (Traffic, Parking and Transportation)

*5 members of the public were present. Philip Groth (MBTA) was present.*

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**Committee Introductions and Administrative Business**

- Nomination and election of officers: the following Committee members were nominated for officer positions: John Attanucci (Chair), Katherine Rafferty (Vice Chair), Devin Chausse (Vice Chair), and Charles Fineman (Secretary). All candidates spoke briefly about their qualifications. **The Committee voted unanimously to elect all candidates.** Rafferty and Chausse will serve as co-Vice Chairs.
- **The Committee voted unanimously to approve the August 2015 minutes.**

**Announcements and Regular Updates**

- The Committee discussed thoughts sparked by their July tour of the MBTA Operations Control Center, especially regarding bus operations.
  - Saul Tannenbaum commented that there was no active monitoring of bus operations in Central Square or really in Cambridge in general using cameras.
  - There is concern that, due to limited resources system wide, MBTA staff are unable to manage bus operations in real time and in detail. For example, a driver of a bus that is early or late may not receive explicit instructions from dispatchers about how best to slow down or speed up service.
  - In addition, busy bus service centers like Central Square may not have adequate staff on hand to monitor bus operations.
  - Drivers are expected to be the eyes and ears of bus operations but could benefit from direction by those with access to more information in real time.
  - There are opportunities for enhanced monitoring and management of bus routes. For example, an MIT study looked at active management of Route 1 and found that service improvements (i.e., with more even headways) was dependent on multiple factors (including, for example, compliance of drivers and supervisors). The Committee also discussed the use of improved technology to make decisions about bus operations using real time information. Committee members noted that this technology exists but 1) the systems are complex and personnel (e.g., bus drivers) would need to be specially trained and 2) equipment may need to be upgraded, both of which would require increased resources.
  - The Committee discussed the fact that Cambridge likely has the second-highest ridership in the MBTA service district and therefore should have the ability to advocate for improved technology, training, etc.

At each Committee meeting, the City will provide short updates on a number of ongoing projects.

- TransitScreens: The City is looking into installing TransitScreens at four additional locations: Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, the City Hall Annex (344 Broadway), Cambridge Hospital, and 5 Western Avenue. The City is continuing to receive feedback about current screens.
- Kendall Square Mobility Task Force: The next meeting will take place on September 8, 2015, from 4-6 PM at the Cambridge Innovation Center.
- Transit Strategic Plan – Tegin Bennett reported that the strategic plan would be on the next Council agenda and that she would provide the committee with more information.
- MBTA Service Delivery Policy – Tegin Bennett reported that she participated in a workshop held with the MBTA Advisory Board members. Her main comments related to weighting rather than selecting between priorities and ensuring they were more performance oriented.
- MBTA Program for Mass Transit: This process may be moving along further in September. In response to a question by a Committee member, Tegin Bennett explained that the process has usually resulted in a “wish list” of service and improvements, relatively unconstrained by the Commonwealth’s current fiscal resources; however, there may be increased pressure during this iteration to come up with a reasonably-priced list. The Committee urged the City to advocate that the PMT process be transparent.
- Green Line Extension: In light of recent cost estimates and the possibility that the project will be altered, potentially very significantly, the Committee discussed some of the factors affecting the outlook for the project. The public comment period for ideas about the project is September 9. The Committee discussed:
  - Which portions of the project are already underway and which portions are at risk of being canceled or altered.
  - Potential reasons for cost overruns.
  - The extensive public process that has already been completed for the project.
  - The potential for delay or cancellation and subsequent costs, economic and otherwise, to surrounding communities and the Commonwealth.
  - The specific impact on the design and timeline for Lechmere station,
  - How the City and Committee can best advocate for timely completion of the project. The Committee discussed writing a letter to Secretary Pollack in support of the project.
  - Sources of funding for this and other large projects (e.g., benefit districts, value capture, statewide gas tax) and positive and negative impacts of these funding structures
  - Federal funding that has already been secured for the project and would be lost if the project was canceled.

**The Committee voted unanimously to write a letter to Secretary Pollack in support of the project.**

### **Public Comment**

- James Williamson noted that the public comment period should begin at the time specified on the agenda. Committee members suggested moving the initial public comment period to the start of the meeting. He requested a status update about the distribution of MASCO M2 shuttle tickets. Adam Shulman responded that the Finance Department is working on providing tickets at City Hall. He noted that bus operations could be improved if MBTA bus drivers could communicate directly with one another. He requested an update on the reconstruction of Beacon Street in Somerville. He commented that TransitScreens should be placed in additional non-City buildings.

### **Review Work Plan**

The Transit Strategic Plan contained a Work Plan, which is intended to be a living document. Due to time constraints, the Committee opted to discuss the Work Plan at a later meeting.

### **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to Supplement Transit Service**

John Attanucci presented on student Michael Gordon’s research that indicates that PPPs can play a role in increasing transit capacity when public agencies face fiscal, institutional, and infrastructure constraints. Presentation slides are posted on the Transit Advisory Committee website. Attanucci described a few potential opportunities for increased private sector involvement in public transit:

- Increase service through existing private operators by increasing public access to existing private routes, expanding private routes (for example, implementing a Sullivan-Lechmere-Kendall-Kenmore route), or consolidating private routes

- Contracting service of different types of vehicles (e.g., smaller vehicles)
- Subsidizing capital and/or operating expenses for private operations in exchange for a service improvement
- Contracting vehicle maintenance and storage while continuing to use agency operators.

Discussion of this topic included:

- Concern that PPPs could evade the public process that is part of the MBTA's (for example) service planning process and also result in deterioration of service as they did historically.
- Funding for increased service, including that provided by private companies and developers.
- Differences between the EZRide service provided by the Charles River Transportation Management Association (TMA) and other TMAs—for example, in the Seaport District of Boston. One difference is the City's Parking and Transportation Demand Management program, which helped incentivize employers to contribute to EZRide service. Another difference is that MBTA service is better in the EZRide service district than it is in the Seaport District.
- The possibility of installing smart card readers on TMA or other private shuttles to allow for Charlie Card integration
- MBTA service planning principles, such as not eliminating existing bus service.
- The importance of increasing public access to services such as EZRide and the MASCO M2 shuttle.
- Next steps for the Committee.

#### **Final Public Comment**

- Mike Stanley commented that he is proposing an alternative transportation system, which he is calling TransitX, and to visit [TransitX.com](http://TransitX.com) for more information.

**Adjourned at 7:30pm**