

Transit Advisory Committee

June 2021

Abbreviated meeting summary

Attendance

Members	Present (17) John Attanucci (Chair), Jim Gascoigne, Jackie Jones, Katherine Rafferty, Alexander Taylor, Saul Tannenbaum, Devin Chausse, Kelly Brown, Melissa Zampitella
Absent (0)	Margaret McKenna, Robert Ricchi, Joseph Beggan, Arthur Strang, Kristiana Lachiusa, Bill McAvinney, Sylvia Parsons, Mathew Coogan
City staff (2)	Andrew Reker (CDD); Adam Shulman (TPT)
Others (6)	Caroline Vanasse (MassDOT); Olivia Mobayed, Melissa Dullea (MBTA); 4 members of the public

Note: CDD = Community Development Department; TPT = Traffic Parking and Transportation Department; MassDOT = Massachusetts Department of Transportation; MBTA = Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

Welcome and committee introductions

Andy Reker (AR) began the virtual meeting at 5:32 PM by welcoming members of the TAC, members of the public and presenters. AR gave a tour of the virtual space for people joining by application and telephone and shared some ground rules for virtual meeting participation. AR then welcomed the members of the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) and public and conducted a roll call – 17 members were present, 0 were absent.

Presentation: Service Restoration

Melissa Dullea (MBTA) [MD] presented a number of updates on the service restoration process, especially about the buses and rapid transit:

- This summer, MBTA are prioritizing restoring routes that have “stranded” riders where no bus service currently exists as a result of the service cuts.
 - Second priority are routes where some duplicate service, for example, Routes 62 and 76 are partially duplicative and Routes 79 and 84 duplicate Routes 77 and 78.
- This fall, MBTA are planning to prioritize adding frequency to routes that they expect to have additional ridership from commuters. E.g. Route 351.

TAC members asked or commented on the following:

- Request for more detailed information for the schedules in June would be helpful – rather than “trips added or lost” but number of trips during service periods, like “peak” or midday.
- Request that the MBTA used the resources on the combined routes (like the 78/84) be used to increase frequencies
- Request that the MBTA schedule a public engagement to hear ideas from the public about how to restore service in the fall where the T is expecting to add frequency
- Has the MBTA had difficulty of finding new drivers – CRTMA has experienced this recently, for example
- Reconfirming how MBTA may be able to bring back service and how it will respond to more traditional “peak” hours
- More information on how service will be restored with GLX opening – *MBTA responded by saying that there’s no additional changes expected with GLX opening. Previous plans had indicated combining Routes 88 and 90 in response to the GLX, but, the MBTA will not follow through on this proposal.*

Presentation: Bus Network Redesign

Caroline Vanasse (MassDOT) [CV] presented a background on the Bus Network Redesign.

Some points that CV made:

- The pandemic made it very clear for all, that bus riders, in particular, are important to the region. In addition, buses are flexible and are resilient to critical changes in the region.
- The vision of the project is to create competitive bus service that adapts to change in this region
- To achieve that vision, this project is focusing on key corridors like Mass Ave, getting good public input and analysis to inform changes, and designing a bus network that engages and relates to the rapid transit network
- This is a blank-slate redesign and we are first trying to understand all travel in the region (not just current transit trips). To do that, we’re using location-based data to understand how people travel. As we develop a network vision, the Bus Network Redesign will roll-out implementation over 3-5 steps beginning in calendar year 2022.
- The next questions we want to talk to the public are:
 - Does our data match where you travel?
 - How does the public evaluate tradeoffs between different network strategies?
 - Comments and questions on a future bus network vision map

TAC members asked or commented on the following:

- Do you have any pandemic-related insights that are going to be helpful with this process? *Midday service demand was much more than expected during the pandemic, we expect to add more midday service in the new network. We are also excited by the data we now have available on non-work-based travel in this project.*
- Currently, travel on buses are short trips to rapid transit or the neighborhoods around rapid transit stations. This means that there are not a lot of bus-to-bus transfers. Will the TAC have opportunities to make suggestions? *We’re starting with a blank slate approach and are looking at the network as a whole*
- Are you planning to add new resources in this initiative? Meaning more bus operators or more vehicles? *We are planning for zero new resources in the first stage, but, in future*

years (i.e. after 2023), we would provide additional service with more bus operators and/or more vehicles.

- There's a lot of MBTA initiatives – Better Bus Project, regular changes, service restoration, Bus Network Redesign – as a request, would you be able to make it less confusing about what the MBTA is actually doing? *Thank you. We're trying to find a niche in terms of our communications – the Better Bus Project will be our umbrella to talk about all buses*
- Location-based services data tells you a lot about how people traveled in the past. Municipalities are approving a lot of new development which may change travel patterns.
- Existing riders are being accounted for in this, how are you learning about riders that may not be using the system today? *Location-based services data should tell us more about all travel (transit, bike, auto, walk, etc.) and this will help us figure out if some of these trips could be ones that transit tries to compete with.*

Public comment

A member of the public made the following comments:

- Concern that drivers on the 77 complain of not enough time for their previously normal break time as fewer drivers area expected to cover reduced rates.
- City Council Hearing at 2 p.m. this afternoon on Envision Alewife had commentary on “connectivity” (bridges, tunnels, bike paths, etc.), but little on actual transit, including remarks like those about deficiencies 74-78, etc. City Councilor Patty Nolan was chairing this “Neighborhood and Long-Term Planning Committee.”

Meeting was adjourned at 7:28 PM

Version Information

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