

# Transit Advisory Committee

## September 2021

### Abbreviated meeting summary

#### Attendance

##### Members

**Present** (8) Kelley Brown, Devin Chausse, Mathew Coogan, Bill McAvinney, Sylvia Parsons, Katherine Rafferty, Alexander Taylor, Saul Tannenbaum

**Absent** (8) John Attanucci (Chair), Jim Gascoigne, Jackie Jones, Kristiana Lachiusa, Margaret McKenna, Robert Ricchi, Arthur Strang, Melissa Zampitella

##### City staff (2)

Andrew Reker (CDD); Adam Shulman (TPT)

##### Others (12)

Debby Galef, Sandy Goldberg; (Pedestrian Committee); Eric Burkman, Wes Edwards, Olivia Mobayed, Josh Weiland (MBTA); 5 members of the public

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

#### Welcome and committee introductions

Andy Reker (AR) began the virtual meeting at 5:36 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 conducted a roll call of the members of the Transit Advisory Committee – 8 members were present, 8 were absent.

#### Presentation: South Mass Ave Bus Priority Project

AR introduced Wes Edwards (WE) and Eric Burkman (EB) from the MBTA. WE and EB work on transit priority projects. AR then presented a slideshow and the engineering concept plans for a bus project on South Massachusetts Avenue. The presentation included the following information:

- Background on the previous South Massachusetts Avenue Corridor Safety Improvements (SMACSI) project
- Related projects in the same sections of Massachusetts Avenue
- Elements of the current South Massachusetts Avenue Bus Priority project
- Required changes to extend dedicated bus lanes
- Preview of the dedicated bus lane concept design drawings

Members of the Transit Advisory and Pedestrian Committees had the following comments and questions:

- Outdoor dining means a section of the bus lane will not be installed. How long will outdoor, in-street dining stay?
- Is there a way to keep the outdoor dining and also install a dedicated bus lane?
- Left-turn (Albany to Mass Ave) is challenging from my own experience. Are you concerned about the operations of that intersection?
- I remember there being a TSP project in participatory budgeting. Where has it gone?
- Pilot- free-fares.?
- Get rid of cars, you could have both
- To the extent that people are making sacrifices, how is the MBTA helping the situation.

AR then turned over the presentation to WE. WE shared some information on the MBTA's thinking about pursuing a project with more bus priority in the medium to longer-term.

- Massachusetts Avenue is a corridor that could be transformed to prioritize transit, pedestrians and cyclists.
- What could we do that bring Boston, MassDOT, other agencies on board

WE then turned over the presentation to EB. EB introduced the concept of center-running bus lanes, or a transitway. EB showed images from the following locations in the Boston region that have recently begun planning for center-running bus lanes:

- Boston – Columbus Avenue
- Boston – Blue Hill Avenue
- Lynn - Lynnway

Members of the Transit Advisory and Pedestrian Committees had the following comments and questions:

- What's the minimum width of a corridor where you can do this?  
For example, the curb to curb width on Columbus Avenue in Boston is 70 feet. On Columbus Avenue, a bike facility was not included and parking was retained in the corridor. For the MBTA, pursuing transformative changes will be more significant than the type of dedicated side-running bus lanes that we are pursuing on Massachusetts Avenue in the short-term.
- Comment: Creating better boarding conditions that make a step-up much less prominent is really important for older passengers. Thank you!
- Given Cambridge's requirements to build separated bike lanes, does the MBTA believe that this type of center-running busway is feasible?  
We have done some initial feasibility work. We think that there are some potential designs which would allow for a center-running busway, but, would require some design tradeoffs.
- Given the budget challenges that the MBTA faces, could you explain why the MBTA is putting this much effort and financial resources here, instead of, additional service?

The MBTA struggles to continue to operate service in a region where the streets are heavily congested. For example, in one of the renderings, there are about 50 cars shown and several buses. One bus has the same amount as all the cars shown on screen. These projects make sense for the MBTA from the perspective in that we are able to maximize the service we run

## Public comment

A member of the public made the following comments:

- It is difficult to participate when the public comment period does not happen at the times in the agenda.
- Agree with the points about the project, would recommend engaging with staff at MIT who teach about public transit.
- What in this project allows for further modifications, if they become necessary again?
- Concerns with the challenges of adding a senior pass to the CharlieCard and, if it doesn't work correctly, potentially needing to add cash value to a CharlieCard.

Given that the presentation went over the allotted time, AR previewed future dates for the TAC and Joint Meetings of the Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Advisory committees. AR also announced that the City will begin advertising soon for 2-year terms for membership on the transportation committees.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM

## Version Information

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Approval: 11/3/21 Unanimously with 6 votes