

# Transit Advisory Committee

## January 2022

### Abbreviated meeting summary

#### Attendance

**Members**                    **Present** (14) John Attanucci (Chair), Saul Tannenbaum, Bill McAvinney, Matthew Coogan, Kristiana Lachiusa, Arthur Strang, Melissa Zampitella, Peter Septoff, Jackson Moore-Otto, Casey Berg, Carl Rothenhaus, Katherine Rafferty, Sylvia Parsons, Devin Chausse

**Absent** (2) Kelley Brown, Jim Gascoigne

**City staff** (3)                Andrew Reker (CDD); Patrick Baxter, Adam Shulman (TPT)

**Others** (11)                Eric Burkman, Jay Jackson, Olivia Mobayed (MBTA); 8 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 5:30 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 – 14 members were present, 2 were absent.

#### Presentation: MBTA Transit Signal Priority

AR introduced Eric Burkman and Jay Jackson from the MBTA Transit Priority Team. They presented a slide show on the following points:

- Background on the transit signal priority team
  - Vision
  - History
- Overview of the transit signal priority technology
  - Transit signal priority strategies
  - Strategy for the “next gen” of Transit Signal Priority
- Challenges of a transit signal priority program for the MBTA
  - Many municipalities in the MBTA region
  - Data collection and analysis
- Information on TSP projects in Cambridge in the pipeline

TAC members asked the following questions, MBTA or City staff responses are found below the question, in italic text.

- Does the city have a road map on the prioritization of transit signal priority measures?  
*The city is working on a transit priority implementation plan with prioritization. Signal priority and bus lanes are also complementary so the focus should be on what makes sense to provide the best benefit for transit riders.*
- Can you give us an idea of how much signal priority alone is helpful without a dedicated lane?  
*Generally signal priority alone is not helpful for locations of delay in Cambridge. Transit signal priority without dedicated street space is generally helpful for low-frequency services in areas where congestion is not particularly severe. Typically, these places are further away from the center of the region.*
- Could you explain what it means to “wait” for the NextGen TSP?  
*For the City, we are waiting for the MBTA to finalize the development of a technical specification that the City could then use when purchasing equipment or for contractors to do work on the City’s behalf. In conversation with the MBTA, we expect that the MBTA will provide a final specification by spring 2022. The City would then be able to use the specifications in summer. Given the length of time that it has taken for the MBTA and the City to identify a next generation technology that works, it would have been beneficial to install legacy devices as a short-term measure when the participatory budgeting money was originally granted. At that time, it was expected that the process to procure a more comprehensive solution would take approximately a year.*
- A comment: What other measurements could be used to measure bus travel. Are there factors like dwell time, excess dwell time from cumbersome fare collection? Could the MBTA ask drivers about particular locations or their favored technical approaches?
- How soon is the road map going to be released?  
*The MBTA and John Attanucci (in his role as part of the MIT Transit Lab) both responded, “soon!”.*
- Other locations for TSP like on the Green Line branches? I’m concerned about the GLX trains that will use the street-running sections of the E-branch in Boston.  
*The MBTA is working with Boston to update the signal equipment in that corridor to be able to have transit signal priority.*
- Does the MBTA update schedules when these technologies are implemented?  
*Yes, as part of the general work of service planning. The MBTA regularly reviews if buses are travelling according to the schedules. If buses are making trips faster than expected, then schedules would be adjusted to reflect the new travel times.*
- A comment: The city should be aware of and calculate the amount of delay that bus passengers have experienced in the delay in implementing transit signal priority.

AR opened a short public comment period for members of the public that wanted to ask questions or make a comment on the MBTA presentation. One member of the public asked if this technology would be able to resolve some of the failing intersections in Cambridge.

## Discussion: TAC Work Plan

AR then transitioned to a presentation on the TAC's annual work plan. AR invited the committee to share feedback on priorities and modifications. The presentation included the following information:

- Ideas of focus areas for the TAC

AR then opened the floor for discussion. After an initial conversation with virtual “hand raises”, the TAC generally only used the “raised hand” for new ideas. Members of the Transit Advisory Committees offered the following comments for discussion:

- How can we bring in more people and more voices? If our role is to inform the city, there are many transit riders that are left out, based on the demographics of our committee – predominantly white and male. A lot of expertise is found amongst the people who ride transit regularly. Also, how can we balance technical meetings with outreach?
  - Manage the comment better (Mid-meeting comment was appreciated).
  - Younger voices are good
  - Concrete barriers that people experience in regular city outreach
  - Meeting people while they travel
  - Accessibility for many improved with meetings being online – maintain some kind of virtual presence for future meetings
  - A ridership outreach committee could be fun – going from station to station or location to location
- Alternative to the streets and infrastructure committee – a regional focus – beyond Cambridge, would be good.
  - Grand Junction transit
  - Capacity constraints on the Red Line
  - Regional rail in general, for example, rebuilding mid-route commuter rail stations to have faster boarding/alighting
- Concern on the process of getting clearer, better feedback with TAC – I would hate to make a suggestion as a volunteer and then for the suggestion to sit on the shelf or not get a response
- A recommendation to have better structured report backs from the subcommittees to get more focused movement

## City, MBTA, + TAC Updates

AR skipped these updates in order to conclude the meeting with public comment. These updates were posted online to the Transit Advisory Committee website.

## Public comment

Two people made comments during the end-of-meeting comment section.

The first commentor spoke to a concern regarding the citywide discussion on changing required parking minimums and maximums. The commentor also encouraged the advisory committee to view themselves primarily as advocates rather than solely providing advice.

The second commentor offered appreciation for the technical information presented at the meeting. In addition, they spoke to a concern about conflict between the amount of development in the Kendall Square and East Cambridge areas with the capacity of the transportation system to support the mobility of up to 75,000 people.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:09 PM

## Version Information

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Approval: 2/3/2022 Unanimously with 10 votes