

Transit Advisory Committee

December 2024

Abbreviated meeting summary

Attendance

Members	Present (7) Bill McAvinney, Secretary Carl Rothenhaus, Devin Chausse, Jackson Moore-Otto, Melissa Zampitella, Peter Septoff, Katherine Rafferty Absent (3) Arthur Strang, Jim Gascoigne, Makayla Comas
City staff (2)	Andrew Reker, Nika Lea Tomicic (CDD)
Others (10)	Sanja Stegich (MBTA); 9 members of the public

Note: CDD = Community Development Department; TPT = Traffic Parking and Transportation Department; MBTA = Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority; TSP = Transit Signal Priority; BNRD = Bus Network Redesign; BRT = Bus Rapid Transit; GLX = Green Line Extension.

Welcome and meeting summary approval

Nika Lee Tomicic (NLT) began the hybrid meeting at 7:02PM by welcoming members of the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC), members of the public and presenters. NLT gave a tour of the virtual space for people joining by application and telephone and shared ground rules for virtual and in-person meeting participation.

Secretary Carl Rothenhaus then conducted a roll call of the members of the TAC – 7 members were present, 3 were absent. He then conducted a roll call of the meeting notes for November 2024. The committee unanimously approved the November meeting notes.

Presentation: Fare Engagement on GLX

AR turned the meeting over to personnel from the MBTA to present on the new fare engagement program on the GLX.

The goal for the MBTA is all door boarding at all Green Line, and Silver Line stations, and at all bus stops. There are many advantages to all door boarding over just boarding from the front door, including reduced dwell time and improved rider experience.

Part of getting to all door boarding is the introduction of the Fare Engagement Team:

- The fare engagement team:
 - o Is still in development and being tested out
 - o Is an interactive process with community organizers, riders, and constituents
 - o Will center fairness and equity rather than enforcement, and prioritize assistance over fare engagement

- Will ensure riders have paid for their trips as well as perform other duties such as customer service, wayfinding and educate riders about new ways to pay, like the income eligible reduced fares
- Are 16 Bilingual individuals – the MBTA is currently looking to hire people who speak Vietnamese and Chinese (two languages that are very common in the greater Boston area that they hope fare engagement representatives will be able to speak to better assist riders)
- They will carry a new device that will be able to check fares – the MBTA is currently acquiring this device from vendors
- The fare engagement team are not: cops, nor do they have any sort of arrest power

The full fare engagement team will be rolled out very slowly for a number of reasons

- This will allow for an extensive education and testing period
- The training for fare engagement is extensive so that the team are seen as helpful hands rather than enforcers

So far there has been an 113% increase in fare validation at GLX stations since the fare engagement team started. The majority of the GLX riders thought that fares were free – based on the infrastructure that is there.

NLT then turned the meeting over to members of the TAC who asked questions. Responses from the city are in italics.

One member noted how the MBTA currently uses two forms of fare collection devices, one for Charlie cards, and another for credit cards, why, and will the new readers be able to take Charlie Cards?

It will be able to take Charlie Cards in the future, that is the plan. Next spring 2025 is the goal. Right now the T is working with two different vendors working in tandem – old fare vending machines, and the contactless version – the T wants these two systems to be able to talk to each other. In addition the current fare boxes are not compliant with up to date monetary security and need to be updated. A new fare vending machine is debuting at tufts.

Another member of the TAC asked what cities the MBTA is modeling its all-door boarding system after

The MBTA listed BART, DART, MUNI, LA, Seattle, Portland OR, Philadelphia, and several western Canadian cities as cities where they attempted to look for inspiration. The problem is that the MBTA's peer agencies rely on police departments to enforce fare collection, but the MBTA does not think dressing the fare engagement team like cops would be helpful. The MBTA does not want to deploy fare enforcers. The MBTA also looked to European cities for inspiration and found more of the same harsh fare enforcement regimes that the MBTA does not want to copy. A lot of what the MBTA wants to create will have to be built from scratch. She also stressed that some of these authorities have paused their fare enforcement.

The discussion turned then to the metrics of success: What is the MBTA's metric for success? What percentage of people paying is the MBTA looking for?

Again, the MBTA stressed, this is not about fare enforcement. About 3% of people would rather get arrested before paying a fare. MBTA does not want to crack down on these people, what they want is that people get the expectation and those who would pay, and can pay, do pay. The goal is a behavioral change to accommodate a new form of boarding not a crackdown on free riding.

Another member asked about how the fare engagement team will interact with the transit ambassadors.

Transit ambassadors are at gated stations, the fare engagement team will complement the transit ambassadors at ungated stations and will ride on revenue vehicles. In addition, fare engagement staffers are full time MBTA employees unlike transit ambassadors who are vendors. The MBTA does not have any plan to expand fare engagement to the red, orange, and blue lines at this moment.

Another member asked why the rollout for fare engagement on buses will take so long?

The timeline is long because there are so many people involved, and it involves numerous parties outside of the MBTA. It involves rolling two fare systems into one and a rollout of a new tech to check fares with handheld devices. Until the MBTA can engage all forms of fare payment, the MBTA does not want to enforce anything. Before the MBTA rolls this out the bus, the MBTA wants to learn lessons from the green line and the silver line. To cover all of the green line, the silver line, and the bus it will take a ton of staff, a ton of training, and the time it takes to get the budget to cover all of it.

For further inquiries check out the fare engagement landing page MBTA.com/farechecks

Discussion: Mass Ave North Project

AR reintroduced the walk that the TAC took in October and took questions and comments from the TAC.

A member asked why at Wendell and Shepherd Street the bus stops are before the light rather than after.

The city wants to keep the left turn pockets for pedestrian safety, which means the stops have to stay on the before the intersection side.

Multiple members shared their encouragement to make as many of the lanes 24/7 as possible.

There was a discussion between a member of the TAC and the city about curb extensions

The city has heard that they want the corridor to be more “neighborhood like”.

One member asked about overnight parking:

The city wants to find a solution for overnight parking due to parking enforcement personnel starting their day after morning rush hour begins. Right now, the city has bus lanes that go from 10PM to 9AM, which hurts overnight parking, and residents are unhappy about that.

One member said that they thought that overall, the design was good.

Presentation: City and TAC project updates

Nika Lea Tomicic (NLT) presented upcoming meetings for the TAC, including:

- Holiday potluck, Wednesday December 11th
- Thursday January 9th will be new TAC meeting

NLT presented updates on MBTA projects:

- BNRD phase 1

Public comment

AR opened a short comment period for members of the public.

- Member of the public who lived in the Porter Square area was excited about the changes coming to the area.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30PM

Version Information

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