

# Transit Advisory Committee

## April 2025

### Abbreviated meeting summary

#### Attendance

**Members** **Present** (18)

In-person participation (7): Andrew Zhou; Arthur Strang; Bill McAvinney; Jackson Moore-Otto; Matt Martin; Matthew Kramer; Miles Robinson;

Remote participation (11): Katherine Rafferty; Devin Chausse; Pete Septoff; Craig Tateronis; Annalisa Bhatia; Melissa Zampitella; Keisha Greaves; Ian Hatch; Matthew Mccomiskey; Sandhya Ramakrishnan (Left at 6:45 p.m.);

**Absent** (5)

**City staff** (2) Andrew Reker, Nika Lea Tomicic (TD)

**Others** (3) 3 members of the public

**Note:** TD = Transportation Department; MBTA = Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority,

#### Welcome and Committee Introductions

Andy Reker (AR) began the virtual meeting at 6:02PM by welcoming members of the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC), members of the public and presenters. AR gave a tour of the virtual space for people joining by application and telephone and shared ground rules for virtual meeting participation.

NLT then conducted a roll call of the members of the Transit Advisory Committee – 18 members were present, 5 were absent. The committee then approved the meeting minutes for the March 2025 meeting, with 16 voting yes, and 1 member voting present.

AR turned it over to discussion of the TAC implementation plan.

#### Discussion – TAC Implementation Plan:

AR indicated that a summary of feedback to the TAC was sent to all members, with physical options available to those in-person. Many suggestions were made for the TAC Implementation plan, and AR led a conversation to finalize and confirm the plan.

- Bill McAvinney: Is the TAC Implementation Plan a representation of everything that should/could be focused on or everything the committee is actively working on?
  - o AR: Depends on the committee, but the scope of the Implementation Plan has grown over time. The current Implementation Plan is what has worked for the last few committees, but with the new membership entering, we can reevaluate what the implementation plan may represent to the TAC.

AR then began going over proposals to the TAC Implementation Plan, noting that there is feedback both on the structure of the plan but also made note of the significant number of suggested additions.

AR ended the screenshare to allow for the committee to go over the Implementation Plan feedback summary point by point.

### General Suggestions

re: **Sandhya Ramakrishnan** – City staff is currently working on evaluating the mobility impacts of the most recent zoning update

re: **Ian Hatch** – AR gave the floor to Ian to describe his suggestions:

- How can we judge the efficacy of our engagement with the MBTA? How can we make our advocacy more effective?
  - o AR opened the floor to members of the TAC who have been here for a while to respond
  - o **Jackson Moore-Otto:** Efficacy and focus are important; there are two buckets of engagement, one where the MBTA is giving us updates, and one where the TAC is providing feedback. We should be building relationships with the MBTA and keeping track/record of prior engagements and promises of the MBTA made in their presentations to TAC, just like the TAC has done with bus priority.
    - Arthur Strang agreed
  - o **Bill McAvinney:** In prior engagements, members of the MBTA have given us direct contact information, which the committee can take advantage of.
  - o **Devin Chausse:** Two things in past where TAC has effectively engaged with the MBTA: the shuttle busses during the Red Line shut downs and the 72, 74, 75, 78 bus line configuration.
  - o Katherine Rafferty: MBTA presence alone at TAC meetings has been effective, as it provides a direct line for Cambridge/TAC to air concerns, questions, and grievances.
  - o AR: MBTA members in the past have indicated positive feedback to attending TAC meetings, as it helps them receive nuanced feedback from riders directly.
- Should the TAC focus on a smaller but more specific set of priorities, to maximize our collective efforts?
  - o AR: Pause this conversation to take a look at Matt Martin's suggested restructuring of the Implementation Plan.

### Implementation Plan Structure

**Matt Martin (MM)** presents their suggestions for the structure of the implementation plan, with the reasoning that they noticed that many lines on the current Implementation Plan seem related to each other, and that it was sometimes difficult to grasp from the plan what the progress or status of certain items were.

MM suggested that it may be more effective to group items in the implementation plan by 6-7 categories.

- Transit Network and Service: Projects related to the actual mechanics of the system itself.
- Wayfaring and Signage: Projects related to navigation, navigation-related accessibility.
- Transit Priority Lanes & Signals: All projects regarding redesigning of roads and major transit corridors.
- Stations and Shelters: All projects related to public-facing user buildings.
- Facilities and Infrastructure: All projects related to non-public facing buildings.
- Fares: Projects related to how users access the system.
- Policy and Finances: Broader projects related to the financial health of the MBTA.

Additionally, all line-item projects have a set “Status” column, helping to more clearly identify which related projects are advancing, and might help us identify when some related projects advance over others.

- **Ian Hatch:** Very cool, should we add a column listing which directly responsible individual/organization we should contact about each line-item project?
- **Arthur Strang:** Good idea, should we list the impact of each of the line item projects, which one help reduce cars, which ones help accessibility, etc.?
- **Bill McAvinney:** List is very MBTA oriented, loses some of the distinctions of what projects are specifically Cambridge city related, can the list be moved to a Google Sheet?
  - o **AR** states that setting it as a accessible Google Sheet may run into issues complying with the Open Meeting Law – regarding updates to the sheet potentially constituting a “meeting” of the TAC.
- **Bill McAvinney:** It should be clear on the sheet which projects the TAC is actively working on.
  - o **AR** notes similar feedback made to that effect.
- **Jackson Moore-Otto:** Notes how much the plan seems like an MBTA plan, states that is good and helps align our goals with our transit partners; also suggests a column stating which member(s) are actively working on each project.
- **Miles Robinson:** Potentially as a means to prevent us spreading ourselves thin, assign one member to one goal.
- **Patrick Delaney:** Notes difficulty on reading the original TAC implementation plan, and notes how this suggested plan makes it a lot easier to grasp and understand the goals of the TAC, suggests that we could have an non-editable but suggestable Google Sheet that allows comment but does not violate the principles of the Open Meeting Law.
  - o **AR:** Open comment on the sheet also probably gets close to violating the Open Meeting Law, but we can post a “more accessible” version.
- **Andrew Zhou:** The suggested new chart also makes it more accessible to see the TAC objectives and goals for the public.
- **Katherine Rafferty:** It's a great document.
- **Arthur Strang:** The City Council can put up committee meetings that public cannot comment on, could we say that weekly we update the Google Sheet?
  - o **AR:** No, it'd be difficult for the TAC members to commit to actually meeting every week and meeting quorum in order to actually update the sheet.

AR then summarizes suggestions members made about the chart, such as new columns to indicate what committee priorities are, what committee members are actively working on/are the directly responsible individual for each project, what transit partners we can engage with for each project, as well as a date to state when each project was updated. AR then asks for more thoughts on whether or not the committee should have a column for *prioritization* of the TAC on the sheet.

AR asks **Bill McAvinney** how we should structure that

- **Bill McAvinney** states that all projects that are actively being worked on should be physically moved to the top of the sheet;
- **Matt Martin** suggests that a separate tab be made to show active projects, in order to keep the full list preserved,
  - o **Jackson Moore-Otto** agrees.
  - o **Omriqui Thomas** suggests to use a column to show what is actively worked on, and then the second tab could use a Excel/Google Sheet formula to automatically update the list.
- **Patrick Delaney** should list our next steps to keep the TAC accountable
  - o **Annalisa Bhatia** this column should include an expected date on when the TAC may update/receive update on a project

**Annalisa Bhatia** also mentions that we should avoid making the chart too large due to how hard it may be to keep up with updates to project. AR mentions that most likely the chart at its current cadence is updated once a quarter to once a year, suggests that if the committee finds it important that can be worked on.

**Bill McAvinney** also notes that a significant amount of the committee's agenda is not driven by the committee itself, but in reaction to the plans of transit partners such as the city, state, and MBTA.

AR notes that the committee still has 6 pages of modifications to go through, and that the committee should move on with regards to the remaining time in the committee. AR suggests a specific proposal about the restructuring of the TAC implementation plan be brought to a vote.

#### **Vote on the Restructured TAC Implementation Plan:**

1. Set up a separate tab to show what are the active priorities of the TAC
2. Show which members of the TAC are actively working on
3. Having a column with an up to date of when we expect new updates

Ian Hatch motions to adopt, Annalisa seconds.

The committee approves the new structure to the TAC Implementation Plan with 18 members voting yes, and 5 not in attendance.

AR then suggests to discuss the proposed additions to the TAC Implementation Plan.

#### **Proposed Additions to the TAC Implementation Plan**

AR gives the floor to **Keisha Greaves (KG)**:

KG notes difficulty using transit as a wheelchair user, namely with the lack of accessible resources, vehicles, and information; and that more can be done by the city to make the city

more accessible. States that Cambridge has been quite friendly to accessibility needs, but can be doing better. AR mentions that city staff can take on many of these proposals themselves.

AR gives the floor to **Arthur Strang (AS)**:

AS notes that new updates in Harvard may cause difficulty with our existing transit routes, and that there are additional routes that are either not served or underserved, such as from Cambridge to Longwood, Allston, etc. Also notes how we need to focus our transit to work in-hand with the potential new housing development.

AR gives the floor to **Matt Martin**:

The TAC needs to request status updates on multiple projects previously listed, as well as can push for assistance on the rollout of the new MBTA Go application, as well as evaluate new projects related to accessibility in the city.

With that, AR concludes the review on the TAC Implementation Plan due to time, suggesting that a deeper conversation on these improvements can be made in the next meeting.

## TAC Officer Elections:

Chair of the TAC

**Keisha Greaves:** Running for chair to bring an accessibility voice to the height of the committee, Greaves also serves as a chair on another committee regarding accessibility in Cambridge. Notes that it's scary to access the MBTA or the city as a disabled individual and would like to focus the TAC on those efforts.

**Jackson Moore-Otto:** Wants to focus on elevating the TAC to improve its vision. Career is in transit, previously worked with the DOT and as a representative of Transit Matters. Focused on efficacy, and breaking down blocks to the committee's progress.

Vice-Chair of the TAC

**Matthew Kramer:** Wants to help assist in the administrative work on the committee; such as helping to schedule meetings and getting in contact with related stakeholders.

**Matthew Mccomiskey:** Prior work on another municipal human rights committee, wants all committee members to be heard.

Secretary of the TAC:

**Andrew Zhou:** Focused on trying to make the efforts of the TAC as visible and clear to the general public.

While votes are being tallied, AR gives floor to NLT for City Updates.

## City, MBTA, + TAC Updates

NLT presents on updates from the city and state:

### CITY PROJECTS

1. **Mass Ave Partial Construction:** April will have the Working Group 4 Meeting

2. **Mass Ave Planning Study:** MAPS is ready to show final recommendations in a community meeting on April 10<sup>th</sup>

## MBTA PROJECTS

1. 77 buses are increasing frequency on weekdays in the mid-day, and increases on the weekend
2. 105 bus frequency increased
3. Bill McAvinney notes that 1 Bus is receiving more buses
4. Route 77 will stay the same structure but will now be every 15 minutes or better, approx. 9 minutes during rush hours
5. Bus lanes have led to faster travel times, Harvard-bound is 31% faster, Arlington-bound is 40% faster; Cameron to Churchill has gone from 4-5 minutes to 45 seconds
  - a. Travel time variability has gone down, Cameron-Churchill variability has gone from 4 minutes to 22 seconds
  - b. Motorists have experienced some minimal negative transit impact, after installation in Nov-Dec 2021, travel times are longer but by less than 1 minute
6. **Red Line:** Travel times are updated every day, shorter 4 car trains are being added during weekday rush hours, weekend trips are shifting for better reliability
7. **GL B Branch:** Service terminates at Lake Street from April 11-13 for updates to BC yard
8. **Spring Service:** MBTA is evaluating the potential for ridership for an infill station on the Fitchburg Line at Alewife
9. **Red Line Shutdown:** Ashmont branch is shutting down from April 10-30 for 21 days, with shuttle trains being used, work is on Ashmont crossover
10. **CIP Public Comment:** MBTA proposed FY 2026-2030 CIP is open for public comment
  - a. AR – The city is preparing its own document to respond to the CIP, recommends that members individually look at and respond to the CIP themselves.

NLT presented upcoming meetings for the TAC, including:

- April 16<sup>th</sup> - Combined Transit Meeting on Jerry's Pond and Zoning 101
- May 1<sup>st</sup> – TAC Meeting

AR went on to review other updates for the TAC, including:

AR: Very heartwarming to see the enthusiasm of the committee and that the committee is fully staffed for the first time in a while.

Results of the TAC Elections:

- **Chair:** Jackson Moore-Otto
- **Vice-Chair:** Matthew Kramer
- **Secretary:** Andrew Zhou

Questions from TAC Members:

**Bill McAvinney:** Where do the 4 car trains stop?

- **Omriqui Thomas:** At the front, they are doing this in order to both help with the maintenance on the old 1970s stock and to help get new rolling stock out there.

## Public comment

No members of the public chose to speak during this time.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:36PM

## Version Information

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