

# Transit Advisory Committee

## May 2025

### Abbreviated meeting summary

#### Attendance

##### Members

##### ***Present*** (14)

In-person participation (5): Andrew Zhou, Arthur Strang, Bill McAvinney, Matt Martin, Matthew Kramer

Remote participation (11): Craig Tateronis, Peter Septoff, Patrick Delaney, Annalisa Bhatia, Nick Lessin, Katherine Rafferty, Keisha Greaves, Sandhya Ramakrishnan, Jim Gascoigne, Omriqui Thomas, Matthew Mccomiskey

##### ***Absent*** (7):

Clyve Lawrence, David Rangaviz, Devin Chausse, Ian Hatch, Jackson Moore-Otto, Melissa Zampitella, Miles Robinson

**City staff** (1)      Andrew Reker (AR)

**Others** (5)      Aseem Deodhar, Greg McNally, Ed Luna (MBTA); 2 members of the public

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

#### Welcome and Committee Introductions

Vice Chair Matthew Kramer (MK) began the virtual meeting at 6:02 p.m. by welcoming members of the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC), members of the public and presenters. MK gave a tour of the virtual space for people joining by application and telephone and shared ground rules for virtual meeting participation.

The Secretary then conducted a roll call of the members of the Transit Advisory Committee – 14 members were present, 7 were absent. Omriqui Thomas asked about attendance on the previous meeting notes, and clarified a point made in the previous meeting notes.

The committee then approved the meeting minutes for the April 2025 meeting, with all 14 members voting yes.

#### Presentation: North Cambridge Carhouse by MBTA

Greg McNally (GM) began by thanking members of the committee and then introducing the project location and team. GM mentions a typo with the presentation, that the Prime Contractor and Developer are swapped [this is corrected in the version posted to the TAC webpage by city staff.]

GM then reviewed the scope, budget, and schedule of the project. Then, GM discussed challenges that have been encountered with the project. GM showed photos and renderings of the project area, design, and progress on construction. Finally, GM showed renderings of the completed facility.

TAC members had the following comments and questions. Presenter responses are below the question in italic text.

A member asked what the plan would be if a bus were to break down in the bus navigation space.

*GM said that the maintenance team and MBTA would move it out of the way and ensure a safe condition.*

A member asked several questions about the dry water system, first to clarify what it was, then whether there are concerns about battery fires and water and finally asking why the dry water system was chosen for this site.

*GM explained that the dry deluge system is a sprinkler system in the gantry with no water – when the fire department arrives, they are the one to provide it with water. He also said that studies have shown water is the most effective means of putting out electric battery fires and said that this system was chosen because of discussions with the Cambridge Fire Department.*

One person asked how the capacity of the new space compares to the past and how flexible it will be going forward.

*GM said that there are currently 20-25 buses needed to serve the routes serviced by the facility, so space is not an issue but said he would check in going forward.*

Someone asked whether the electrical components pictured in the slides are set up.

*GM said that the main electrical switchgear is in the process of being manufactured and tested, but some components are in storage.*

Someone asked whether any of the procurement is coming from China.

*GM said not for facilities but was not sure about buses.*

A person asked whether the MBTA anticipates any issues with service upgrades in the future as they relate to Eversource.

*GM said the facility is set to be efficiently powered with redundancy, so they don't anticipate any issues.*

GM thanked the members and expressed hope that the next presentation will be of a completed bus house.

## Presentation: Bus Network Redesign by MBTA

MK then introduced Aseem Deodhar from the MBTA Bus Transformation Office. Aseem Deodhar (AD) thanked the committee for the opportunity to present and began by describing the department they work for with relation to the Bus Network Redesign.

AD then reviewed the previous Phase 1 of the Bus Network Redesign and the initial results on ridership and overall customer testimony seemed positive. AD discussed the outreach for the Bus Network Redesign.

AD presented on bus priority work including a new law that authorizes camera-based enforcement of bus lanes and bus stops and new major corridor projects in the system.

AD then reviewed plans for a bus circulation study in Longwood Medical Area including the BNR proposal and study timeline, with recommendations expected in Winter 2026.

AD shared about the next phase of Bus Network Redesign including the following changes:

- The focus will be on rolling out continual changes
- Focusing on Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan
- Routes changes focus heavily on gaining the most improvement with the minimal adjustments and to defend and protect existing transit priority

AD shared specific proposals or planned changes:

- 14 routes are planned to be promoted to frequent bus routes, including 2 that are not considered key bus routes
- Increased frequency and/or span for 5 other routes
- Route changes will be rolled out incrementally, depending on operator headcount, focusing on changing routes that will help set up bigger and more complex changes in 2026 and beyond
  - o These routes will advance and develop independently – they will have separate timelines and operating/capital plans

AD mentions that planning has begun for the redesign of more difficult changes in 2026, with much that can change as more is learned:

- 16/17/18 will receive improvements, with 16 to become a frequent route
- 22 will become a frequent route with better service to Longwood Medical area
- 113 becomes a new route following the proposed SL3 extension
- 47 becomes a frequent bus route, connecting Union Square in Somerville through Central to Ruggles
  - o The Broadway section of the 47 will now be covered by the 42
    - The Nubian/Ruggles connection will then be serviced by many other bus routes
  - o The 91, a low-frequency one-seat route will be discontinued and replaced by a transfer between the more frequent 109 + 47
- The CT2 is to be discontinued, consolidating into an improved 85 which will extend to Assembly
  - o This is part of a retiring of the “CT” name as a means to simplify the bus routes
  - o No stops are planned for McGrath Highway, although this may change with relation to future redevelopment of McGrath Highway

TAC members had the following comments and questions. Responses are below the question in italic text.

A member asked what has been done on the automated camera enforcement, and what the separation is between the MBTA's responsibilities and the city's.

*AR and AD directed this person to contact information for the team responsible for automated camera enforcement, which is included in the presentation. Some else asked if automated cameras be used to determine where police enforcement should occur, and AR said this was a question for the city.*

A member asked if, when considering bus network redesign routes, there is consideration for the private bus routes across the city.

*AD said that conversations and feedback have been requested from these organizations. Ed Luna (EL) (MBTA) said they are not sure about the study itself, but in the future, we will be coordinating with third-party/private bus companies. One member said that EZRide has been working with the MBTA, and has also been able to increase its own service – there is an upcoming study for service impacts to private shuttles and bus systems. AR said that this also came up in discussions with the city, and notes from both the city and TAC have been made about the loss of a direct connection from Central to the Orange Line/Sullivan Square. He also said that the shuttle study has been brought to city council, and can be shared with the TAC.*

A member asked if the MBTA has enough bus drivers to implement these future routes.

*AD said that the MBTA expects 140-150 new bus operators. EL said that hiring is going strong; it's less of a question of "will we have enough drivers" but more "when will we have enough drivers"*

A member asked if existing drivers made comments on the Bus Network Redesign?

*EL said that operators like the 104, but they've had issues with the 109 roll-out. The most serious bit of feedback is some operators are confused about a new railroad crossing on the 104 – this has been handled but is a point to think about for the future. Other than that, there has not been any major comment from existing operators*

A member asked how messaging will change with regards to BNR routes now being rolled out individually instead of in singular phases?

*AD said that routes with frequency improvements don't require much outreach as the route itself is not changing. EL said getting out of large releases of routes let us perform our outreach more specifically and closely with those on the route itself – previously outreach needed to be very general to cover everything, now the MBTA can tailor messages and outreach to be specific and "surgical."*

## City, MBTA, + TAC Updates

Andrew Reker (AR) presents updates from the city and state:

### CITY PROJECTS

1. **Mass Ave Planning Study:** Last public event held, final report to be published soon
2. **Kendall Bus Shelter:** Work was paused in winter, installation will begin soon, complete within 2-3 months

3. **Red Line Closures:** Braintree branch between JFK/UMass and Braintree on May3-4 and May 31-June 1

## **MBTA PROJECTS**

1. Covered earlier in the meeting

AR discussed future meetings:

- June 4<sup>th</sup> – TAC Meeting

No agenda currently for the June 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, discuss whether the meeting should be cancelled or some other activity held; alternatively, a follow-up on the implementation plan

- May 14<sup>th</sup> – Tentative Joint Meeting

No planned presentations for that meeting, very likely to be cancelled.

## **Public comment**

No members of the public chose to make a comment at this time.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:27PM

## **Version Information**

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