

Transit Advisory Committee

October 2021

Abbreviated meeting summary

Attendance

- Members** **Present** (9) John Attanucci (Chair), Arthur Strang, Jim Gascoigne, Katherine Rafferty, Kristiana Lachiusa, Matthew Coogan, Melissa Zampitella, Sylvia Parsons, Saul Tannenbaum
- Absent** (6) Kelley Brown, Alexander Taylor, Bill McAvinney, Devin Chausse, Jackie Jones, Robert Ricchi
- City staff** (4) Andrew Reker, Kelsey Tustin (CDD); Patrick Baxter (TPT); Kara Falise (DPW)
- Others** (6) Olivia Mobayed (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 5:34 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. Kelsey Tustin (KT) then conducted a roll call of the members of the Transit Advisory Committee – 9 members were present, 6 were absent.

Presentation: Huron Avenue Traffic Analysis

AR introduced Patrick Baxter (PB) from the Cambridge Traffic Parking and Transportation Department. PB gave a presentation on the Huron Avenue traffic operations analysis. The City conducted this traffic analysis as part of the Glacken Field project. The presentation included the following information on the project:

- Design objectives that the City developed based on public feedback
- Elements that improve conditions for bus riders
- Analysis of the source of transit and traffic delay on the corridor
 - Intersection of Huron Ave with Aberdeen Ave was the location of the most delay
 - Intersection of Huron Ave with Fresh Pond Parkway was also a location of delay
- Alternative analysis at Huron Ave + Aberdeen Ave
 - Modify and optimize signal timing during peak hours
 - Require pedestrians to request a pedestrian crossing signal instead of automatic operation
 - Install a dedicated bus queue jump lane for eastbound buses approaching Aberdeen

- Conclusion: modifying and optimizing signal timing during peak hours has the most benefits and resolves the most concerns for bus delay
- Alternatives analysis at Huron Ave + Fresh Pond Parkway
 - Add a dedicated bicycle crossing phase for “diagonal” movement from northwest to southeast corner of Huron Ave / Fresh Pond Parkway intersection and install a dedicated bus queue jump lane for eastbound buses approaching Fresh Pond Parkway
 - Existing concept that was shown previously
 - Conclusion: Continuing with existing design

Members of the Transit Advisory Committees had the following comments and questions (City staff responses are found in italics and after the vertical bar):

- Concern about lane markings on the parkway | *City staff will convey these comments and concerns to the Department of Conservation and Recreation*
- Concern about coordination between signals for Aberdeen and Fresh Pond Parkway | *City staff will calibrate the signal timing so that the two signals are coordinated*
- Concern that pedestrian actuation for the western crossing across Huron Avenue is desirable | *The new plans would maintain the existing condition, where*
- Concern about parking in the neighborhood at certain times, especially on segments of the road without restrictions |
- Concern that public transit is less prioritized than other modes and transparency is lacking

Discussion: Follow-up on the Route 47 TAC proposal

AR transitioned to the topic of the TAC’s proposal to change the routing of Route 47. AR restated the MBTA’s negative opinion from the last TAC meeting. The MBTA’s opinion were based on the follow-up analysis. AR asked the TAC if they would prefer a follow-up presentation at the November meeting.

TAC members expressed the following:

- Concern that improvements around Central Square wouldn’t be observable to the Fenway area
- Concern around route reliability and level of service to Cambridge riders
- Request for MBTA to present further data to the TAC, including how the change will impact reliability
- Concern that perception of the MBTA is negatively impacted due to complicated system
- Consider if the TAC should develop a bus network plan to pinpoint the sections of road that are vital to bus performance

The TAC decided to invite the MBTA back to present at the November meeting.

Discussion: Fare Vending Machines and Sales Locations

AR then transitioned to a review of the MBTA’s fare vending machines and sales locations. AR presented the following information:

- Summary of the MBTA’s sales location map and survey

- Fare sales location map – reviewed locations of TAC members interest

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

- Concern that the new system will be difficult to understand for new riders
- The MBTA should not collect fares and the system should be tax-funded
- Concern that parts of the community are not represented on this committee
 - Methods to gather their input on sales locations should be considered, such as canvassing at high-traffic bus stops
- Concern that there are not enough sales locations around Cambridgeport. Trader Joes location and around Pearl Street should be considered
- Will the sidewalk-level vending machines be coordinated with bus priority?
- Suggestion to add wayfinding along the route to assist with the transition
- Suggestion that there should be consistency for the type of retail sales location, such as all grocery stores or convenient stores

AR summarized some of the key points:

- Specific suggestions for key locations
- Gather input from riders in neighborhoods that are not represented on the committee
- The retail sales network should be consistent with a particular type of location

City, MBTA, + TAC Updates

KT presented updates for the City, including:

- Belmont Street on hold
- South Mass Ave + North Mass Ave in final design
- North Mass Ave finalizing designs for implementation by November
- Progress on River Street Reconstruction
- First Street + Second Street Corridor accepting comments and reviewing at 10/13 Bicycle Committee Meeting

KT also presented a number of updates on MBTA projects, including:

- GLX purchased 24 new trolleys
- Red Line Transformation progress
- Bus Network Redesign ongoing outreach and upcoming meeting 10/27
- SLX new survey + feedback

KT also presented updates on the TAC, including:

- Interviewing potential new members
- Upcoming meetings

Public comment

A member of the public made the following comments:

- Agreement that the city prioritizes certain modes of transportation over transit

- MBTA's COVID-19 automated announcements on the red line are too loud and frequent. Can the volume of these announcements be adjusted?
- Concerns around 83 bus proximity to raised sidewalks and potential for bus tipping over
- The deadline should be pushed out for North Mass Ave

Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM

Version Information

Draft: 10/22/2021 AR, KT

Approval: 11/3/21 Unanimously with 6 votes