

Transit Advisory Committee

December 2021

Abbreviated meeting summary

Attendance

Members **Present** (9) John Attanucci (Chair), Arthur Strang, Saul Tannenbaum, Melissa Zampitella, Jim Gascoigne, Peter Septoff, Jackson Moore-Otto, Casey Berg, Carl Rothenhaus

Absent (7) Matthew Coogan, Kristiana Lachiusa, Devin Chausse, Kelley Brown, Bill McAvinney, Katherine Rafferty, Sylvia Parsons

City staff (3) Andrew Reker, Kelsey Tustin (CDD); Adam Shulman (TPT)

Others (2) Olivia Mobayed (MBTA); 1 member 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 5:36 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, 7 were absent.

Introductions: New TAC Members

AR asked new and current members to briefly introduce themselves. Members provided their connections to Cambridge and interest in transit, as well as their favorite wintertime activity. The new members of the TAC are:

- Casey Berg
- Jackson Moore-Otto
- Carl Rothenhaus
- Peter Septoff

Discussion: TAC-endorsed Implementation Plan

AR then transitioned to a review of the TAC-endorsed Implementation Plan. AR asked the committee to share feedback on priorities and modifications following the discussion. The presentation included the following information:

- An overview of interrelated plans and documents:
 - The Transit Strategic Plan, which the TAC helped to develop, was completed in 2015 and includes broad goals and objectives

- The Implementation Plan identifies the most important priorities for the city to work on for the coming year
- A Project Work Plan offers details around timelines, partnerships, and action items for specific projects
- There are 7 goals of the Transit Strategic Plan, including:
 - 1. Serve all trips – Identify and prioritize gaps in the network
 - 2. Expand funding – Advocate for more and find ways to use existing funds
 - 3. Improve service efficiency – Ensure reliability + quality with increased capacity
 - 4. Expand service – Advocate for new + better routes and longer service hours
 - 5. Improve usability, access, safety – Improve rider experience + amenities
 - 6. Improve outreach and participation – Increase effective + frequent outreach
 - 7. Resiliency and adaptation to climate change – Address infrastructure improvements to related challenges like flooding and excessive heat
- The TAC's role is to provide advice by recommending specific actions, which are placed into specified categories
- AR provided updates since the previous review in March

AR then asked for comments from the TAC regarding additions, deletions, and modifications to the implementation plan. Members of the Transit Advisory Committees offered the following feedback:

- Concern that the strategic plan does not explicitly mention equity
- Suggestion to make planning for the Mass Pike rebuilding + closure a higher priority item, even though it is several years away
- Request for clarification on the location and terminology of the Alewife Route 2 off-ramp
 - *AR responded by showing on a map where the implementation took place, and pointed out the 'jug handle' location for potential future implementation*
- Suggestion to make GLX bus service planning a higher priority
 - *AR responded by clarifying the details of the current discussion and explained that there could be a new Lechmere-Kendall route, or at least a trial route. He also mentioned that the city's First-Second Street study would help address some of these items.*
 - Jim Gascoigne (JC) went on to clarify that the EZ Ride is the current service on First Street, but only operates at peak hours. Right now due to funding and hiring challenges, it wouldn't be able to operate all-day.
- Suggestion to focus on working with the MBTA and MassDOT to alter the new design for the Mass Ave bridge, which currently does not include bus-priority infrastructure. The design should at least include bus queue jump lanes at the end of the bridge.
 - *AR responded by noting that the city is working on this*
- Suggestion to encourage employers to offer a parking cashout as an incentive to bring commuters back on the T. The FHA released a report which includes a toolkit for cities to push employers to do this type of program, which would likely work well for Cambridge
- Suggestion to prioritize finding ways to use existing funding and push for review of KSTEP and GLX refund, which should be used for transit as it was originally intended. Request for public participation for how the funds can be used for transit in the short term

- *AR responded that the Cambridge contribution to the GLX was not entirely from the city, so the city won't receive the full amounts included in media reports. The refund will also take place at the close-out of the project which will be after some time. But, city staff will report back on the progress toward determining what to do with the refunded funds.*
- *Adam Schulman (AS) noted that there will be even more funds available for transit improvements in Kendall*
- Concern that next steps and the TAC's ability to advocate are unclear. Request to have a city staff member explain the process to the TAC
- Suggestion for city staff to draft a revision to the PTDM ordinance so that transit is a higher priority
- Suggestion for the TAC to start planning for a fare-free bus pilot like some surrounding municipalities have started to do
 - *AR responded that the Mayor of Cambridge is discussing ideas for a fare-free pilot with the Mayor of Boston*
- Comment that equity would be achieved if everyone, not just those who are employed, had access to transit
- A clarifying question was asked about if EZRide could hire more drivers to add service
 - A member responded that hiring and retaining drivers is a challenge right now, but this shouldn't be an excuse to reduce service. Some solutions may include increasing driver salaries or altering shift hours.
- There was agreement with previous comments regarding parking cashouts, discussing fare-free transit pilot, and increasing salaries for bus drivers
- A member asked for clarification on the acronyms that have been used
 - *AR explained those that have been used, and noted that there will be follow-up materials with a list of acronyms and definitions*
 - *AS explained the difference between PTDM, which is a law, and TDM*
- Concern that participation in PTDM is non-residential, so new apartment buildings are not covered by PTDM
 - *AS responded that large apartment buildings would need a permit*
- Request for simplified language to better understand the different policies, ordinances, and acronyms
- A member explained the TDM concept, which tries to move more people with the existing supply of modes

City, MBTA, + TAC Updates

KT presented updates for the City, including:

- North Mass Ave – Installation of bike and bus lanes has begun. Outbound is complete, and inbound depends on weather and temperature over the coming weeks. April 2022 is the deadline to install.
- South Mass Ave – Designs are finalized, but implementation has been delayed by the MBTA due to administrative and implementation complications. April 2022 is the deadline to install.

- MassAve4 Outreach (Waterhouse-Roseland and Beech-Dudley) – Pop-up community meetings were held in November. Overview video is available on the website and feedback survey is open

KT also presented updates on MBTA projects, including:

- Route 2 Alewife Off-ramp - MassDOT has installed a red bus queue jump lane at the off-ramp to Alewife. This is intended to expedite transit service

KT went on to review updates for the TAC, including:

- Responses to the survey that was distributed to TAC members for feedback on scheduling meetings for 2022 revealed preference to meet Wednesday or Thursday for 90 minutes, and no clear preference for start time
- Upcoming orientation dates will be sent to TAC members. December is not a good time for orientation due to scheduling conflicts amongst members

Public comment

There were no public comments during this meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:09 PM

Version Information

Draft: 12/02/2021 KT

Approval: 01/13/2022 Unanimously with 14 votes