

Transit Advisory Committee

September 2022

Abbreviated Meeting Summary

Attendance

Members (14) **Present** (11) John Attanucci (Chair), Carl Rothenhaus (Secretary), Bill McAvinney, Casey Berg, Jim Gascoigne, Katherine Rafferty, Katherine Rafferty, Matthew Coogan, Melissa Zampitella, Peter Septoff, Sylvia Parsons, Saul Tannenbaum

Absent (3) Arthur Strang, Jackson Moore-Otto, Devin Chausse

City staff (2) Andrew Reker (CDD); Adam Shulman (TPT)

Others (7) Josh Weiland (MBTA); 6 members of the public

Note: CDD = Community Development Department; TPT = Traffic Parking and Transportation Department; MBTA = Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, BNRD = Bus Network Redesign, RX = Rider Experience,

Welcome and committee introductions

Andy Reker (AR) began the virtual meeting at 5:32 PM 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.

Carl Rothenhaus (CR) then conducted a roll call of the members of the TAC – 11 members were present and 3 were absent. CR conducted a roll call vote to approve the meeting minutes for the July 2022 meeting. The committee voted 10 in favor and 1 present to approve the meeting minutes.

Presentation: Bus Reliability and Improvement Opportunity Study

AR then introduced an upcoming city study called the Bus Reliability and Improvement Opportunity Study.

Previously, the City of Cambridge collected data on locations of bus delay and unreliability. The City also partnered with the MBTA, other state agencies, and grant-making organizations to implement bus priority when opportunities arise. One example of this is the now-implemented bus priority on Mount Auburn Street west of Harvard Square. This has been and will be an integral part of the implementation of the BNRD. The study aims to look at bus reliability and improvements more holistically.

AR shared a draft of the study's purpose, desired outcomes, and process and asked for feedback from the TAC.

- Study purpose is to improve all aspects of bus trips – especially opportunities to improve bus reliability and speed with a focus on overall RX
- An outcome of this study is to establish a ranked list of streets where implementing bus lanes and signal priority is important
- In order to do this, the study will have a community engagement process. The main concern is being able to communicate this highly technical work in a way that the greater Cambridge community can understand.
- The city will collect feedback on community members’ priorities for bus improvements – and project staff will rank street and street segments and prioritize based on feedback from community and data collected.
- The city plans to use an online survey as well as focus groups for underserved communities.
- The end goal is that the City will Identify a network of “transit streets” i.e. streets that currently have transit on them and those that could in the proposed Bus Network Redesign. The city will then score these transit streets based on certain evaluation factors.

AR explained some the evaluation factors under consideration. These factors will be assigned a scale and later a weight and then scored and ranked. The factors to be evaluated are:

- Service Frequency i.e., the average number of buses per hour.
- Access to Destinations i.e., the of commercial districts, facilities, schools within 1/8th mile of a route.
- Unreliability i.e., how many seconds of “unreliability” during rush hour
- Passenger Delays: The City will examine studies done on delays from 2014, 2018, and 2022 to find locations with persistent passenger delay issues
- Demographics i.e. the percentage of bus riders who identify as people of color or belonging to low-income household along a route.
- Street Width, which will be a crucial factor in whether the city can put in a bus lane as the MBTA has strict width requirements.
- Priority for new or enhanced service i.e., a street segment proposed on the Bus Network Redesign or identified as a priority on the Cambridge Better Bus Outreach Initiative

TAC members asked the following questions. City staff responses are below the question in italic text.

One member asked what a “street segment” is.

- *A “street segment” is a section of street occupied by the same number of bus routes.*
 - For example, the 75 Bus to Belmont Center runs along 3 street segments. The first segment runs from Harvard Station to the Concord Avenue & Huron Avenue intersection, where the 74,75, and 78 buses run together. The 75 then runs along a second “street segment” without any other bus lines accompanying it through Huron Village, then south of Fresh Pond by the Golf Course, then onto Grove Street, and Bright Road to the intersection of Concord Avenue and Bright Road. The final street segment is the section of Concord Avenue from Bright Road to

the line's terminus at Belmont Center where the 75 and 74 run together along the same segment of road.

One Member asked how many street segments were found in Cambridge.

- *Sixty to sixty-five*
 - The member suggested that there be a meaningful “spread” between segments, that racial and class justice be a significant factor in deciding where bus priority is ultimately implemented, and that priority be given to communities that have been neglected in the past.

One member commented on how operations and RX are affected by how the network infrastructure is designed and distributed to each type of service. The member emphasized that staging operations matter and named Alewife and North Station as locations where infrastructure and allocation could be improved.

- *The city agreed staging operations matter*
- *The city also pointed to adequate bathrooms for drivers and riders at stations as an often-overlooked aspect of RX and operator comfort*

One member said that it will be difficult to get a “score” because the city is trying to weigh too many things at once and recommended a more simplified process. He suggested that the evaluation factor “Passenger Delays” be a primary focus and added that several evaluation factors, such as service frequency are already “baked into passenger delays” and therefore are not needed as a separate factor.

One member suggested that queue jump lanes could be implemented in locations where MBTA bus lane width requirements would prevent the implementation of a bus lane, circumventing the MBTA's requirements. If passenger delay happens in locations where a bus lane is not possible, queue jump lanes should be prioritized.

One member commented that in West Cambridge street segments could have overlapping *destinations* that may be covered by other routes. Two lines on separate street segments may serve the same destination within 1/8 mile of the route. The member was concerned that this could bias the data in some way.

The same member also commented that the same street segment could serve various demographics so looking at who specifically is served by different segments along the length of the segment matters.

One member suggested that the “volume of people served” should be factor.

- *The city replied that volume is indirectly covered by other evaluation factors*

One member commented that priority will be especially important in places where there are a lot of other things going on such as Kendall and Central square

One member suggested the City not ask the public for feedback about bus priority on streets where there is not enough width or space to implement it.

- *The city stated that this was their plan*

City staff would like members of the TAC to participate in the outreach efforts.

Public Comment

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

One commentor expressed concern about what consultant groups are working with the city on this study.

- *The consultant groups are: McMahon and Kleinfelder*

One commenter expressed that there are currently significant delay on the 47 and 69 bus routes

Discussion: Membership updates

AR then shared that this would be the last meeting for Saul Tannenbaum (ST).

Members expressed their support for him in his endeavors and thanked him for his hard dedicated work on the committee. ST shared that it had been a privilege to serve on TAC and that he knew nothing about transit coming in and that this committee has taught him a lot.

AR then introduced that another member would be leaving: Chair John Attanucci (JA). Members expressed their support for JA in his endeavors and thanked him for his hard dedicated work on the committee. The committee will miss him for his deep technical knowledge on transit.

JA's parting words were to "keep up the good fight" and that he will continue to monitor the Committee's effort on the BNRD and other projects, but will have to resign as the committee's chair.

City, MBTA, + TAC Updates

AR presented upcoming meetings for the TAC, including:

- Next Transit Advisory Committee meeting is Thursday, October 6th, 5:30 p.m. Likely topic is MBTA Bus Network Redesign.
- The Status of In-person meetings is TBD
- Next joint meeting of Transit Advisory, Bicycle, Pedestrian Committee is Wednesday, September 28th, 5:30 p.m.

AR presented other updates, including:

City projects

Inman Square reconstruction is still in progress.

- The Public Plaza, the two intersections, separated bike lanes, queue jump lanes, and floating bus stops will be completed in November. The transit aspects will be completed soon but the parkland areas may take longer.

Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO) projects

- Garden Street CSO
- Brattle Street CSO
- Porter Square CSO

Belmont, Huron, & River St. are about to begin construction

- River Street reconstruction project will have a construction meeting TBD

Grand Junction Multiuse Path project in final design phase

Concord Ave Signal Priority project design & procurement phase

Data Collection on Mass Ave4 - Harvard to Alewife Brook Pkwy

Broadway, Main, Third finalizing designs

MBTA projects

The Bus Network Redesign:

- In mid-October the MBTA wants to publish a revised network map and have a public meeting on the subject.
 - A member stated that the timeline is too quick and does not allow for the T to adequately engage with the public.
 - *The city encouraged that the member, given his position, write a formal letter to the MBTA expressing his position on the issue, and that it appears they need to have better public input*
 - Several other TAC members agreed the timeline is too fast, one stated it was “ridiculous”.
- Another member expressed that it seems that the MBTA does not care about public input and that the proposed timeline is out of step with the number of bus drivers currently available. The member suggested that the MBTA knows the implementation is a disaster and that the MBTA’s solution is just go through with it and deal with the fallout.
 - *The city expressed that there is the possibility that they are just voting on drafts and not what actually will be implemented, and to not assume the worst.*
 - The participant from the MBTA stated that whatever goes through will have 125% of current service and will be rolled out over 5 years. The 27th vote will not cause a finite and immediate switch.

AR presented that real-time signage would begin to be implemented

- One member recommended that the MBTA put these signs on platforms
 - *The city agreed, the right sign in the right place matters, also opened the possibility for a meeting on wayfinding and bringing in the people who worked on signage to the committee.*

Green and Orange Line will reopen Sept 19th.

- The Green line to Medford will open in November

One member asked about the possibility of affects from the national railroad lockout/strike

- *No, MBTA will not be affected by the national strike/lockout if it occurs.*

Public comment

- A member of the public asked about signage at the Lechmere station.
 - *The city wanted more specifics on what signage at the station and also stressed that there are many things that are still incomplete at Lechmere such as the bike cage.*

Meeting was adjourned at 6:51 PM

Version Information

Draft: 9/22/2022, CFR

Approval: Expected at 11/3/2022 meeting