

Transit Advisory Committee

December 2022

Abbreviated meeting summary

Attendance

Members **Present** (6) Arthur Strang, Melissa Zampitella, Carl Rothenhaus, Sylvia Parsons, Katherine Rafferty, Devin Chausse

Absent (6) Jackson Moore-Otto, Jim Gascoigne, Peter Septoff, Casey Berg, Matthew Coogan, Bill McAvinney

City staff (1) Andrew Reker (CDD)

Others (3) Josh Weiland (MBTA); 2 members of the public

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

Welcome and committee introductions

Andy Reker (AR) began the virtual meeting at 5:31 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 (RA) then conducted a roll call of the members of the TAC – 6 members were present, 6 were absent.

AR then introduced a fun question to start the meeting, asking members what animal they feel like today. Animals stated included: Sloth, Cat, Bird, Shrew, Sea Turtle, Arctic Fox, and Bumble Bee.

Discussion: TAC-Endorsed Implementation Plan

AR presented updates on the TAC-Endorsed Transit Strategic Implementation Plan. The TAC last reviewed the Plan in December of 2021. Two items were presented for discussion. The first topic was items to add. Many existing items are or are nearing completion – such as projects involving Inman Square – thus, these items would be removed from the plan.

- One member wanted to include equitable bridges crossing the Fitchburg mainline at Alewife to the Plan.
- One member wanted to convene a meeting on signage/wayfinding and find out about how the MBTA thinks about these things
 - *The MBTA responded that the MBTA has people who focus on signing and wayfinding and who would gladly come to the TAC to talk about these things.*

- Members of the TAC wanted more signage and information about when your train or bus is leaving rather than signage on where to go and how to get there.
- On member remarked that several office buildings in Cambridge have wayfinding signs, but thinks there could be more.
 - *The City stated that many of these signs are getting to the ends of their life and are becoming less and less dependable.*
 - *The MBTA stated that with a lot of their projects, especially with new technologies (such as office building wayfinding signs) often the hard part is rolling them out for the long term. The MBTA would rather a system that works long term and is less flashy than a flashy new technology that is unreliable or only has a short usable lifespan.*
- One member agreed with the City that the TAC was on top of the MBTA, and should continue to be, regarding plans for the north Cambridge bus garage.
 - In regards to a wider discussion on trolleybus infrastructure: *the MBTA is working to get the overhead power wires out of street. The next big milestone is the retrofit of the North Cambridge carhouse.*
 - *MBTA is currently, as part of the Belmont Street, Huron Avenue, and North Mass Ave projects, are working to remove the trolley wires and poles.*
- One member said that learning more about station condition assessments would be helpful. She stated that this could be an opportunity for the TAC to tell the MBTA where and what to work on next.
 - Members reflected on bad station lighting, being rained on whilst waiting for trains on underground platforms, the poor condition of the park street stairways, and the central square “forever” puddle.
- One member stated that a general upkeep focused meeting may be useful
- Members then engaged in a discussion on Charlie Cards
 - One member expressed her concern with the operation of the Charlie Card store,
 - Another member agreed and reflected on the crisis of Charlie card expirations during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - *The MBTA stated that both getting new cards and renewing those cards can now be done entirely online.*
 - One member advocated for a contactless fare system and stated his pleasure of using the NYC MTA without an MTA card. The member also suggested the MBTA look into producing specialty cards for special occasions like DC does.
- One member expressed her encouragement for Cambridge businesses to give their employees Charlie cards.
- Another member remarked that we need to overcome the convenience and monetary hurdle for people to easily use the T.
- The same member suggested that every new project in Cambridge should look at the barriers for using the T and charging people to drive/park.
 - *In some of the city’s processes they evaluate barriers to using transit (physical and otherwise)*
- One member asked about increasing the sales locations for Charlie cards and hopes the City and MBTA will work with corner stores to provide Charlie cards.
 - *The city already does this in a select number of Cambridge businesses.*
 - *City would gladly invite the project manager for this to the TAC to talk about this program.*

Second, TAC members discussed which items to remove or modify.

- One member stated that due to the finalization of the proposed BNRD route map, to reframe the TAC's push for crosstown service in a way that reflects the present transit vocabulary.

Public Comment

There were no public comments during this comment period.

City, MBTA, + TAC Updates

AR presented upcoming meetings for the TAC, including:

- Next meeting is Jan 5, 2023
- Next Transit Advisory, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Joint Committee for December will be more of an end of year "get to know you" meeting.
- Still seeking a chair and vice chair

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

- Inman square reconstruction is almost complete
- Beginning the 28th of November, the 69 began two way operation through Inman Square
- Route 83 began serving the new bus stops
- The 69 bus will get a head start signal'
- Public art in Inman Square will include a large deer in the new plaza.

December 8th – the river street reconstruction project will have a pre-construction meeting at the amigos school.

MBTA announced that the Green Line Extension to Medford-Tufts station will open on Dec. 12th. First inbound GLX train will leave Medford at 4:45 on 12/12.

Public comment

There were no public comments during this comment period.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:42 PM

Version Information

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