

# Transit Advisory Committee

## April 2024

### Abbreviated meeting summary

#### Attendance

**Members** (10)      **Present** (9) Jackson Moore-Otto, Carl Rothenhaus, Devin Chausse, Melissa Zampitella, Peter Septoff, Makayla Comas, Bill McAvinney, Jim Gascoigne, Katherine Rafferty

**Absent** (1) Arthur Strang

**City staff** (1)      Andrew Reker (CDD);

**Others** (3)      Katie Calandriello (TransitMatters); 2 members of the public

**Note:** CDD = Community Development Department; MBTA = Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority;

#### Welcome and committee introductions

Andy Reker (AR) began the virtual meeting at 5:30 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 then conducted a roll call of the members of the TAC – 9 members were present, 1 was absent. He then conducted a roll call of the previous meeting minutes for January and February 2024. The committee unanimously approved of the previous meeting minutes.

#### Presentation: TransitMatters Bus Report

AR turned the meeting over to Katie Calandriello (KC), a project manager at TransitMatters. TransitMatters is a member-based advocacy organization. KC stated that she was presenting data from a report on the slowest and most bunched bus lines in the MBTA bus network. The inspiration was based on similar work in New York City measuring that city's slowest and most bunched bus routes. She believes that this study will help the MBTA and cities decide where to focus efforts at bus priority and operational changes. Some highlights are:

- The slowest and most bunched bus line in the entire MBTA bus network is the 1 bus. The bunching rate is 17.7% (which means that more than 1 in every 6 buses is bunched with another).
- Other Cambridge buses that are slow and bunched are the 66 and 70 bus lines. The particular reasons why these lines bunch exist primarily outside of Cambridge.

KC shared what other cities do to deal with the problem of bus bunching. Bus bunching is where bus operations strictly follow a schedule no matter the amount of delay that a single bus

experiences. This means that sometimes a bus that is very late according to the schedule leaves at the same time as a bus that is “on time”. This contrasts with bus operations that maintain a specific amount of time between bus departures.

In Los Angeles, Austin, and Honolulu bus rapid transit (i.e. BRT) is headway managed. That means that bus operations focus on maintaining the time between bus departures instead of following a strict schedule. The MBTA already does some level of headway management on the heavy rail and light rail lines, so she believes adapting headway management for the bus network would be feasible. Furthermore, the MBTA already has the technology to do headway management for buses using a program called Skate.

The bus data analysis showing “bus bunching” are also now live on TransitMatters’s Data Dashboard.

KC explained that headway management and all-door boarding will improve operator experience. All-door boarding is where riders can board at any door. This can include payment before entering the bus stop platform, after entering the bus just inside all doors, or showing a proof of payment when asked. Both of these also mean that operators will likely see improvements to their work. Headway management means that operators will feel reduced pressure to “catch-up” to travel to a specific location on their route at a specific time and are focused on driving according to the time between buses. All-door boarding means focusing less on observing and potentially enforcing payment and more about riders boarding and exiting buses safely.

One member of the TAC asked if slow correlated with bunched?

- No. There are busses that are slow and bunched, like the 1 and the 66. There are busses that are fast but bunched, such as the ones that run on the center running bus lane on Columbus Ave. Finally, there are slow, local routes that are not bunched at all such as the 55 and 85.

Another member asked if longer bus routes make it harder for buses to adhere to schedules and if TransitMatters had an opinion on long versus short routes.

- TransitMatters does not like the reduction of longer distance express bus service – they want a more total bus network of local and long-distance bus service. And no, with proper scheduling, headway management and dispatching. It is possible to keep buses on time.

AR opened the meeting to comments from the public relating to the presentation on the Bus Report

## Discussion: TAC, MBTA and City Updates

Next TAC meeting – Thursday, May 2, 2024

The committee discussed the format for this next meeting and for future meetings and decided that they wanted to have more hybrid meetings. The committee decided that the next meeting will be online with the June meeting being with hybrid support pending that a suitable venue can be found.

AR listed possible upcoming topics for the TAC

- North Cambridge Car House
- Bus Network Redesign
- Alewife bridges over the Fitchburg Mainline
- Automated Fare Collection 2.0/Fare Transformation
- MBTA wayfinding and e-Ink signage.

AR then gave updates on various city projects with updates including:

- Mass Ave partial construction
- Mount Auburn at Aberdeen Avenue – signals done, lane changes coming soon
- Concord Ave TSP
- Huron Ave and Cushing Plaza
- Belmont Street Reconstruction
- Real Time Transit Screens
- Bus shuttles for Red Line closures

The TAC discussed the Bus Shuttles

- Multiple members stressed that the MBTA needed better wayfinding and text around what the alternative routes are and how to use them.

Members also suggested:

- MBTA give riders flyers with information to shuttle riders.
- more low-floor busses or increased information on their locations.
- Update on accessibility improvements at the commuter rail platform.
- Express shuttles that skip stops to keep things moving and passengers getting to destinations quicker

## Public comment

- AR opened a short comment period for members of the public.
  - o One member of the public stressed the safety concern that the Mt. Auburn at Aberdeen Street reconstruction poses to those who are temporarily low vision coming out of the adjacent eye doctor. She suggested that the city come by and touch base about the reconfiguration of the bike lanes and intersection.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:04 PM

## Version Information

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Approval: