

Transit Advisory Committee

January 2021

Abbreviated meeting summary

Attendance

Members	Present (11) John Attanucci (Chair), Kelly Brown, Devin Chausse, Mathew Coogan, Jim Gascoigne, Jackie Jones, Bill McAvinney, Sylvia Parsons, Katherine Rafferty, Arthur Strang, Saul Tannenbaum
	Absent (6) Joseph Beggan, Kristiana Lachiusa, Margaret McKenna, Robert Ricchi, Alexander Taylor, Melissa Zampitella
City staff (4)	Cliff Cook, Bailey Werner, Andrew Reker (CDD); Adam Shulman (TPT);
Others (3)	3 members of the public

Welcome and committee introductions

Andy Reker (AR) began the virtual meeting at 5:32 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. AR then welcomed the members of the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) and public and conducted a roll call – 11 members were present, 6 were absent. TAC members introduced themselves.

Presentation: MBTA Forging Ahead

Melissa Dullea (MBTA) [MD] presented a number of updates on the MBTA Forging Ahead process:

- Changes to bus service preservation of hours of service after midnight on weekdays and some route suspensions were not enacted, in Boston and Melrose in particular
- Changes to rapid transit service keeping Heath Street service on the Green Line “E” branch, preservation of hours of service after midnight on weekdays, and less reduction in frequency on the Blue Line
- Changes to commuter rail preservation of a number of lines of service on weekends, though, weekend service will be suspended on Commuter Rail lines in Cambridge, some preservation of hours of service in late nights on weekday evenings
- Implementation timeline
 - March 14 – most changes on the rapid transit network, bus route suspensions, in general
 - June 20 – additional bus changes, however, unclear because of CARES Act II apportionment
 - Later – GLX-related proposals

MD then presented a high-level summary of the service proposals for March 2021. These were shared only for routes in Cambridge.

- 1 – Peak and evening reductions, midday increases
- 47 – Short-turns to Longwood are removed
- 67 – Peak hours only
- 68 – Suspension
- 70 – Weekday reductions, midday additions
- 71 – Peak reductions, off-peak, Saturday and Sunday
- 73 – Peak reductions, off-peak, Saturday and Sunday
- 77 – Peak reductions, off-peak, Saturday and Sunday
- 79 – Suspension
- 85 – Suspended middays

TAC members asked:

- Some recent news reports indicate that relatively small part of the CARES Act 2 is going to be used to service restoration? *Will have to find some more information after the meeting.*
- Some of the other proposals – 64, 74, 75, 62/76 – when will they be implemented? *The remainder of the proposed are expected to be implemented in June though those decisions will not be made until later.*
- Is the Cares 2 Act funding included? *These proposals were developed before Cares 2 was approved; however, the MBTA is unclear what it means specifically. The MBTA postponed a number of changes to find out about Cares 2, and vaccine/vaccination and other public health restrictions. We are trying to answer the questions of how is travel going to be changing as part of the financial recovery from the pandemic? In addition, future of transportation, post COVID remains unclear, too.*
- Additional opportunities to chat with MBTA decision makers above Melissa's pay grade? *Yes, City staff will work on that, but also ask that TAC members speak as individuals.*
- In my opinion, "banking" Federal monies is really problematic when the intention is for the funds to be used to maintain pre-pandemic service.
- It's hard to see the MBTA say that causality between service and ridership runs from people relying on the service to the MBTA adding more service. Today, people rely on service when it is frequent.
- I would advocate that the MBTA experiment with free buses now since they have federal funding to replace potentially lost revenue.
- I'm concerned that the MBTA is saying it will measure ridership where in some cases the MBTA is not providing a bus to ride. *To a certain degree, talking to employers and institutions when they plan to welcome back employees. The MBTA is also using location-based service data through StreetLight to see how other modes of transportation comes back*
- From my own experience in transportation demand management – the best time is when people come back to work or at the time that people make an important life decision. The service has to be good enough when people begin going back to work or school. The other critical moment is when congestion comes back – we need transit to be frequent at that point

- Can we dissuade changes in March? *No.*
- Can we dissuade other changes, in summer? *Yes.*

City Updates

AR presented a number of updates for the City including:

- Proposed dates for joint meetings of the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Advisory committees
- Development projects soon to be reviewed at the Planning Board
- Bus priority projects at the City
- Ongoing MBTA and statewide projects including the Commonwealth's Bond Bill

Public comment

A member of the public made the following comments:

- Anti-homeless bench bar and armrest installations at MBTA stations – The member of the public was unsatisfied by the response at council
- My MBTA pass became demagnetized I would advocate for a free replacement immediately
- Challenges with bus operations on the Route 83 – uncomfortable feeling that riders experience that the bus will tip over at Russell Field as the bus enters the parking area at the park

Meeting was adjourned at 7:01 PM

Version Information

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Approval: 10/6/21 Unanimously with 9 votes