

Transit Advisory Committee

June 2022

Abbreviated meeting summary

Attendance

Members	Present (10) John Attanucci (Chair), Kristiana Lachiusa (Vice Chair), Carl Rothenhaus (Secretary), Bill McAvinney, Casey Berg, Devin Chausse, Jackson Moore-Otto, Peter Septoff, Saul Tannenbaum, Sylvia Parsons. Absent (5) Arthur Strang, Melissa Zampitella, Jim Gascoigne, Katherine Rafferty, Matthew Coogan
City staff (2)	Andrew Reker; Adam Shulman (TPT)
Others (9)	Andrew McFarland (MBTA), Melissa Dullea (MBTA); 7 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 5:32 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 –10 members were present; 5 members were absent.

Presentation: Bus Network Redesign

MBTA staff presented on the Bus Network Redesign. Melissa Dullea and Andrew McFarland introduced themselves to the advisory committee. The MBTA then presented an overview of the Bus Network Redesign (BNRD).

The MBTA described the BNRD as one of several initiatives MBTA is undergoing to maximize benefits to riders along with bus priority and upgrading the bus fleet and facilities.

The MBTA laid out 5 goals for the BNRD:

- Equity
- More frequent service in busy neighborhoods
- More all-day service
- New connections to more places (including non-downtown centers)
- A simpler and easier to use network

The MBTA then laid out the basic features of the BNRD:

- 25% bus service hours relative to pre-covid levels
- 70% increase in weekend service
- 275,000 more residents would be near high frequency service
- 200,000 more residents would gain access to fast and frequent service to Longwood Medical Area (LMA)
- High frequency service has been redefined to every 15 minutes or better.
- 50% of bus routes are classified as frequent
- The 15 high frequency corridors today would be increasing to 30 corridors.
- Cambridge would go from having 5 high frequency routes to 10 high frequency routes
- The plan would take 5 years to implement. Phase 1 in 2023 and phase 5 in 2027.

The MBTA then presented the proposed BNRD map and highlighted the routes in Cambridge. A summary of key points are as follows:

- The T101 would intersect the Orange Line, Green Line, and Red Line, and connect Kendall, Charlestown, and Medford Square.
- The T39 Bus would go from Forest Hills in Boston to Porter Square
- The T73, T71, T66 have minimal changes if at all.
- 69 bus stays but is rerouted to reflect the GLX.
- The 68 Bus is reduced to peak only service
- The 74 bus would no longer operate.

TAC members had a number of comments and questions. MBTA staff responses are below the question in italic text.

- A member stated that he liked the simplification of service. The member thought that the 55 route was wonderful. He is not sure that the west Cambridge community will be sold on just the colors. He suggested that showing service as trips per time period will help. Some of the cuts in Arlington and Belmont, Watertown, and Somerville will also affect Cambridge as people commute to and from those cities. He hopes that the increase of frequency in areas leading to the 25% increase overall does not result in a corresponding decrease in places such as Massachusetts Avenue in Arlington and Concord Avenue in Cambridge and Belmont.
- A member asked a question about renumbering routes.

The MBTA decided that changing the route number would result in empty "slots". By Keeping the route numbers same as today, it would reduce confusion and costs on things such as new signage.

- A member asked if the MBTA considered having the T39 connect to the green line at both ends (in Medford and in Boston) rather than Porter Square.

The MBTA answered that they ran a number of models to decide where the T39 bus could end. The MBTA determined that there would not be enough demand to justify ending the bus in Medford. Ending the bus in Porter Square best fit and met the expected demand.

- The same member also expressed interest in extending the T96 to Harvard instead of ending in porter.

The MBTA took the consideration into account and noted the many mid frequency routes that serve the area.

- Another member thanked the T for putting together this initiative. He expressed concerns that the T39 may be too long to stay on schedule and asked if the route will continue with articulated busses.

The MBTA articulated that the bus operators think that the T39 may be too long. The MBTA also stated that they may consider truncating the line to Union Square once development in the area is further along. The MBTA did not know at the time of the meeting if they will keep the articulated busses as the MBTA will determine the type of bus for each route after the new route map is finalized.

- Another member asked about how the rolling implementation will happen.

The MBTA has not finalized how they will implement the new routes and when. The biggest factor in implementation being operator headcount. In addition, the MBTA does not want to strand riders by putting a route into service without making sure the other lines in the affected area are re-routed accordingly. In addition, accessibility issues will need to be addressed by the MBTA and state and local governments on roads where busses have never run.

- Another member asked about staffing for more dispatchers and supervisors.

MBTA answered that they want to hire more field staff.

- Another member asked about metrics of success for the MBTA.
- Another member asked about trip counts for each route that is proposed.

The MBTA responded they are not looking at trip counts and instead are looking at revenue miles. The MBTA made this decision because longer routes decrease bus trips because people are not using multiple bus lines to get from place to place.

Public Comment

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

- One member of the public commented that they were joining from the place where the 83 bus starts and ends. They stated a desire to take a bus from Alewife Station to Arsenal Mall Watertown, and Mount Auburn Cemetery. He believed that this would be beneficial as these are areas that will be further developed in the coming decade. He also stated that 83 bus a very difficult location for layovers near Alewife.
- The member of the public also commented that the 68 bus should have service increased from the proposed level because of those who use it to get to the Main Branch of the Cambridge Public Library.
- Another member of the public had a major concern about the proposed removal of the 74. They stated that resulting service level would reduce the service to the Finch

affordable private housing and would negatively affect the low-income communities of color that live along the Concord Avenue routes.

- Another member of the public was terribly upset about the 75 and 74 being reduced to a half hour headway. The 15-minute headway on Concord Ave by Spinelli Place will go to a 1 bus an hour headway.

The MBTA responded that the 78 is staying at its same levels of service. They stated that the materials show that a bus every hour or better does not mean just 1 bus an hour.

City, MBTA, + TAC Updates

AR presented upcoming meetings for the TAC, including:

- Upcoming TAC meetings
 - City project committee voted to meet on the 15th to discuss bus priority prioritization for city streets.
 - MBTA project committee will draft an outline of a comment letter on June 22
- The next TAC meeting is Thursday July 7th
- The next Joint meeting of TAC, BC, and PC will be July 20th

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

- Inman Square Reconstruction
- Belmont Street
- Huron Avenue
- South Mass Ave Bus Priority
- River Street
- Grand Junction Multi-use Path
- Concord Ave Signal Priority
- Cycling Safety Ordinance projects.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

The committee conducted a roll call vote to approve the meeting minutes for the May 2022 meeting. The committee voted 8 in favor and 1 present to approve the meeting minutes.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 PM

Version Information

Draft: 6/30/2022 CR

Approval: