

Transit Advisory Committee

September 2024

Abbreviated meeting summary

Attendance

Members **Present** (6) Arthur Strang, Carl Rothenhaus, Melissa Zampitella, Peter Septoff, Makayla Comas, Katherine Rafferty

Absent (4) Bill McAvinney, Devin Chausse, Jackson Moore-Otto, Jim Gascoigne

City staff (2) Andrew Reker, Nika Lea Tomicic (CDD)

Others (6) Annie Arguello (MBTA), Ed Luna (MBTA), Tara Kamal Ahmadi, Olivia Mobayed (MBTA), two members of the public (1 virtual, 1 in person).

Note: CDD = Community Development Department; MBTA = Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority; TSP = Transit Signal Priority; BNRD = Bus Network Redesign; BRT = Bus Rapid Transit; BC=Bicycle Committee; PC=Pedestrian Committee

Welcome and Committee Introductions

Nika Lea Tomicic (NLT) began the hybrid meeting at 6:03PM by welcoming members of the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC), members of the public and presenters. NLT gave a tour of the virtual space for people joining by application and telephone and shared ground rules for virtual and in-person meeting participation.

Carl Rothenhaus then conducted a roll call of the members of the TAC – 6 members were present, 4 were absent. He then conducted a roll call of the meeting notes for July 2024. The committee unanimously approved the July meeting notes.

Presentation: MBTA BNRD

AR turned the meeting over to personnel from the MBTA on the upcoming bus network service changes in December.

The MBTA will be advertising these service changes through three phases of communication and through several avenues including:

- Vehicle and in station announcements
- Targeted ads at rail and bus stations
- T-Alerts
- Updating maps, schedules and signs (including adding a new clock icon that will show routes with more frequent service)
- Press-briefings
- Staffing outreach events in Cambridge, Everett, East Boston, Somerville & Revere

- Community Engagement – roundtables to reach out to riders and communities where they are.
- A website for updates: mbta.com/BNRPhase1

The presenters then turned the meeting over to members of the TAC who asked questions. Responses from the city are in bullets.

One member asked, what portion of ridership will do something different after phase 1 is implemented?

- Passengers on the 86 will have to transfer to the 109 in Cambridge
- There are two other route changes outside of Cambridge

Another member asked, how will wayfinding apps like Google know about these changes?

- The MBTA will share this info in time

Another member asked, will GTFS pathways be updated on day one of Phase 1?

- Expectation that the GTFS data will be updated along with the changes. The MBTA made no promises, but if they can update it on day of launch, the MBTA will do that.

The same member asked what the timeline was for MBTA subcontractors, such as Block by Block, to be informed of the changes.

- More detailed information on the service changes will be shared with them as early as October.

The city asked: *Will there be new branding besides just the clock icon?*

- Key frequency branding will be the clock icon and lines will be highlighted in yellow on maps
- T-prefix did not make it since the chosen color and iconography were easier to understand

Another member asked, how will the 104 service changes effect the SL6 plan?

- Routes changing in BNRD have been already identified by the MBTA, what is occurring now is the implementation of said changes.
- 104 could affect decision making on where to put SL6, but any changes would be years down the line.

A final member asked about training on these changes in the affected bus garages

- 90% of effort is training drivers in Charlestown – 109 and 104 have the biggest changes and are based out of that garage.
- BNRD will not hold back new operators being onboarded
- In between Phase 1 and Phase 2 there will be several seasons of service where service will be fine-tuned to new traffic patterns post-Covid and consider crowding on the line.

Public comment:

- A member of the public asked: What were the tradeoffs of truncating the bus line to Harvard?

- 109 will have higher frequency service and that in turn will increase ridership – the MBTA does not have a figure, but it will increase.
- The tradeoffs on ridership of the BNRD were assessed as a whole, so analyzing a specific change to a specific line is hard.

Presentation: City and TAC project updates

Nika Lea Tomicic (NLT) presented upcoming meetings for the TAC, including:

- Next meeting will be Thursday Oct 10th.
- The following will be November 7th
- The next Joint meeting of the TAC, BC, and PC will be September 18th

Future meeting topics may include:

- Alewife bridges
- Mass Ave partial construction

TAC will put out a call for new TAC members in September through October. They will be sworn-in in November and orientation will be in December.

NLT presented updates to several projects in the city including:

- Aberdeen Ave @ Mt Auburn reconfiguration
 - New crosswalks/crosswalk islands in the spring
- Concord Ave TSP still ongoing
- Huron Ave Reconstruction is complete
- Real Time Transit Screens
 - City staff figuring out a new strategy
 - Gone out to bid 4-times but no good candidates for the program
- New bus stop shelter installation in Kendall Square – should be installed by end of October

AR then presented further projects including:

- The bus stop improvement program
 - This summer, high school interns canvassed MBTA bus stops and collected data on:
 - Condition
 - Amenities
 - Measurements
 - This data was combined with 2019-2023 ridership data
 - Data will be used by the city to analyze where to provide added bus stop amenities and fix things that are broken or in poor condition.
 - AR then shared the statistics that the interns found on bus stop benches and shelters.
 - Concord Ave has seen increased ridership in accordance with development in the area.
 - One member of the TAC asked more about why Concord Ave has experienced increased ridership (city response in italics)

- *Could be residential, could be commercial ridership, unsure, further data gathering needs to occur. The city will be looking into this.*
- Another member of the TAC asked about how rider data was collected?
 - *Cambridge uses the stop-by-stop ridership data provided by the MBTA*
- Another TAC member asked about data collection on shade at bus stops since people often look for shade whilst waiting for the bus
 - *The city recognizes that leaning against hot metal bars is not helpful during the hot summer months*
 - *The city explained that a member of the public is looking at analyzing tree canopy effect on bus stops throughout the day.*

NLT presented updates on MBTA projects

- Track Improvement Program
 - Still ongoing in Cambridge
 - Red Line shutdown removed 6 speed restrictions between Kendall and JFK.
- Income-Eligible Reduced Fare Program rolled out 9/4
 - Eligible passengers can sign up online or at the Charlie Service Center downtown.

Public comment

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

- A Member of the public asked more about how the researcher will be looking into shade at bus stops. She was encouraged to hear the city was treating trees as a positive thing.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:20PM

Version Information

Draft: (9/17/2024) CFR

Approval: