

# **ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA**

The Central Transportation Planning Staff of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's Department of System-Wide Accessibility and Office for Transportation Access, prepared this brochure for AACT.

## **WHAT IS AACT?**

AACT is an advisory committee that provides advice and recommendations to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) on transit accessibility in the Boston area. Its membership includes people with disabilities, seniors, and representatives of human services agencies.

## **WHAT IS ITS HISTORY?**

### ***SNAC is established – 1975***

An advisory group called the Special Needs Advisory Committee (SNAC) was established in 1975, first as a subcommittee of the Joint Regional Transportation Committee (JRTC) of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, and later as an independent member of JRTC (which is now called the Regional Transportation Advisory Council). The purpose of SNAC was to provide advice and recommendations to the MBTA on improving accessible transportation services in the Boston area for individuals with disabilities and for seniors. SNAC was instrumental in improving the limited paratransit services (door-to-door, demand-responsive services) that existed at that time—only one private contractor provided service, and the service area was limited to some sections of Boston and Brookline. SNAC also worked to improve the accessibility of the MBTA's fixed-route transit services (services with a set route and schedules: buses, rapid transit, commuter rail, and water transportation).

### ***THE RIDE (paratransit) is established – 1977***

As the demand for paratransit services increased, it became necessary for the MBTA to contract with more than one vendor for paratransit services and to expand the geographical area served. In 1977, THE RIDE was established. Between then and 2008, the geographic area served by paratransit has increased to 62 cities and towns, covering an area of 729 square miles.

### ***SNAC becomes AACT – 1988***

In 1988, the function of the group changed, so its name was changed from "SNAC" to "the Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA" (AACT). While SNAC was a subcommittee of JRTC, AACT was a separate advisory committee that worked directly with the MBTA and participated in JRTC as a voting member.

As the demand for accessible transit increased—not just for paratransit services, but also for the MBTA's fixed-route services—AACT, working with the MBTA, began to focus more attention on improving accessibility to fixed-route services, making it possible for many of AACT's constituents to start using those services.

### ***AACT's increased role***

Beginning in the 1970s, first SNAC, and later AACT, entered into several legal agreements with the MBTA in conformance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and subsequent federal legislation that culminated in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. (The ADA extends civil-rights protections that prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities.) Each agreement, called a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), gave AACT the right to participate more fully in the MBTA's evaluation and decision-making processes. Today, in addition to being a voting member of JRTC's successor, the Regional Transportation Advisory Council, AACT has a vote on the MBTA committee that selects THE RIDE contractors, and also actively participates in the planning and assessment of transportation services, including the selection and evaluation of vehicles, equipment, and services.

## **What has AACT accomplished?**

In its 30 years of existence, AACT has developed a productive working relationship with the MBTA, with the goal of safe and efficient accessible transportation for passengers throughout the MBTA's transportation service area, as required by the ADA. AACT works with the MBTA to improve paratransit service, called THE RIDE, which is a door-to-door, lift-equipped, demand-responsive shared service, and also to increase the accessibility of fixed-route services, so that the disability and senior communities have more transportation options.

### ***Some specific accomplishments include:***

#### **THE RIDE:**

THE RIDE service is currently available for approved applicants in 62 cities and towns in the MBTA service area. Four private firms provide service to registered RIDE customers under contract to the MBTA. Of the approximately 55,000 people who are currently eligible for THE RIDE, about 28,000 are active users. When SNAC was founded, in 1975, there was only one contractor, and only some sections of Brookline and Boston had paratransit service.

#### **Fixed-route services:**

- Accessible-design elements for MBTA stations and vehicles, including visual and tactile warning strips on platforms and improved station signage
- Mini-high platforms, mobile lifts, and low-floor vehicles on the Green Line
- Accessible, automated fare gates
- The Stop Announcement Monitoring Program
- The MBTA's Key Station Plan, in which AACT played an important role, is almost complete: 74 of the 80 designated stations, most located at the end of a transit line or near transfer points or major attractions, have been modified to be accessible, and work on the remaining stations is progressing.

## **What is AACT doing now?**

### **AACT contributes to the MBTA's transit accessibility by:**

- Meeting once a month to provide a forum for people with disabilities, seniors, and representatives of human services organizations to address transportation concerns with representatives of the MBTA

- Participating on committees that advise the MBTA on its policies, transportation programs, and services. Among them are: the MBTA Program for Mass Transportation (PMT), MBTA Rider Oversight Committee (ROC), Water Transportation Advisory Council (WTAC), and THE RIDE Appeals Committee
- Participating as a member of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (RTAC)
- Monitoring the program that ensures that MBTA and contractor personnel, including paratransit (THE RIDE) and fixed-route personnel, are trained in disability etiquette, sensitivity, and appropriate assistance techniques
- Monitoring the MBTA's paratransit services and accessible fixed-route services
- Participating regularly in Personnel Training Programs for all modes of service to enhance employee awareness and sensitivity

**AACT advocates for the following:**

- American Sign Language interpreters available upon request at all AACT meetings
- All AACT meetings located on or near an accessible transportation route
- Information prepared in accessible formats
- More reliable public address systems in stations and vehicles
- Accessible, automated fare gates
- Accessible design elements in MBTA stations and vehicles
- Improved station signage

**How can I get involved in AACT?**

Anyone who's a member of the disability or senior communities, an ally of those communities, or a representative of a human services agency that serves those communities may participate in AACT.

AACT members are all volunteers and attend meetings without any requirements. However, they need to meet attendance requirements to maintain their eligibility to vote. In addition to voting on policy issues and positions regarding MBTA services and facilities, members elect a Board of Directors every two years. These officers represent the interests of AACT's constituency on many MBTA committees, as well as MBTA planning and design groups.

***When are the meetings?***

AACT meetings are usually held on the fourth Wednesday of each month, from 1:00 to 3:00 PM, in downtown Boston.

***Where are the meetings?***

At the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, 2nd-floor conference rooms. A photo ID is required to access the conference rooms.

***How do I get there?***

The meetings are accessible using THE RIDE, and also by MBTA buses #43 and #55. The New England Medical Center and Chinatown stations on the Orange and Silver lines are nearby, and both are wheelchair accessible. The Green Line's Boylston and Arlington stations are also nearby, although they are not yet

wheelchair accessible (at the time of publication, Arlington Station was undergoing a major renovation that included the installation of elevators).

***How do I request a sign-language (ASL) interpreter or other communication aid at an AACT meeting?***

Call 617-973-7507 (voice) or 617-973-7089 (TTY) from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, or e-mail [AACT@ctps.org](mailto:AACT@ctps.org), at least 15 days in advance of the meeting.

**How do I get more information about AACT?**

***Look us up on the Web***

Go to [www.bostonmpo.org](http://www.bostonmpo.org). Under *About Us*, in the left column, click on *AACT* to get information about AACT, meeting minutes, and a calendar of upcoming AACT meetings and related events.

***What are other ways to get information or to be added to the mailing list?***

***Call:***

617-973-7507 (Voice)

617-973-7089 (TTY)

617-973-8855 (Fax)

***E-mail:***

[AACT@ctps.org](mailto:AACT@ctps.org)

***Write to:***

AACT Coordinator

c/o CTPS

10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150

Boston, MA 02116-3968

**How do I contact the MBTA?**

***For questions about THE RIDE (paratransit)***

***MBTA Office for Transportation Access (OTA)/THE RIDE***

OTA is a department within the MBTA's Operations Directorate. It oversees THE RIDE program, which is the MBTA's paratransit service for ADA-eligible customers who cannot use public fixed-route transportation all or some of the time due to a physical, cognitive, or mental disability.

To find out more about THE RIDE program or to request an application, offer comments on the program, or give a compliment or complaint regarding RIDE service, e-mail [theride@mbta.com](mailto:theride@mbta.com), or call OTA, Monday–Friday, 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM, at one of the phone numbers listed below.

800-533-6282 (Voice, toll-free)

617-222-5123 (Voice)

617-222-5415 (TTY)

617-222-6119 (Fax)

***You can also download an application:***

Go to the MBTA's website, [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com). Click on *Accessible Services/THE RIDE*. Click on *THE RIDE*. Scroll down. Click on *Download THE RIDE Application*.

### ***For general MBTA customer support and feedback***

#### ***Customer Support Services Center (CSSC)***

Contact the CSSC for travel information or schedules, or to express comments, commendations, or complaints. You can contact them via [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com): select *Customer Support* and then *Customer Comment*. You can also call one of the following phone numbers: Monday–Friday, 6:30 AM to 8:00 PM; or Saturday and Sunday, 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM:

800-392-6100 (Voice, toll-free)

617-222-3200 (Voice)

617-222-5146 (TTY)

*Comments, compliments, or complaints regarding the MBTA's RIDE program, which is the transportation program for ADA-eligible customers, should be directed to the Office for Transportation Access (OTA).*

### ***For information about reduced-fare CharlieCards***

- *Senior Charlie Card*
- *Blind Access CharlieCard*
- *Transportation Access Pass (TAP) CharlieCard (for people with disabilities)*

These passes are for MBTA's fixed-route services. (MBTA fixed-route services are services that run on a regular schedule and have a fixed-route: buses, rapid transit, water transit, and commuter rail services.) For more information, check the MBTA's website, [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com), or call one of the following numbers, Monday–Friday, 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM:

800-543-8287 (Voice, toll-free)

617-222-5976 (Voice)

617-222-5854 (TTY)

617-222-3259 (Fax)

### ***For information about elevators, escalators, and wheelchair lifts***

To find out what equipment is currently in service, call one of the following numbers:

800-392-6100 (Voice, toll-free)

617-222-2828 (Voice)

617-222-5854 (TTY)

*Or go to the the MBTA's website, [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com). Click on *Rider Tools* and then *Service Updates*.*

### ***For general information about MBTA accessibility programs and services MBTA Department of System-Wide Accessibility (SWA)***

SWA was established in 2007. It oversees the MBTA's efforts to increase the accessibility of programs and services throughout the MBTA service area. To contact SWA, call 617-222-3200. To find out about specific accessible services, go to the MBTA's website, [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com), and click on *Accessibility Service*.

## **How do I contact the MBTA Transit Police?**

617-222-1000 (Voice)

617-222-1200 (TTY)

## **MBTA police emergency number**

617-222-1212 (Voice)

This brochure is available in accessible formats upon request.

November 2008