

MBTA 2008 PMT Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting August 23, 2007

The sixth meeting of the PMT Stakeholder Advisory Committee was held in the MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150, on August 23, 2007 from 12 – 2 PM.

Attendees:

Phil Beaulieu, Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA
Clinton Bench, Central Transportation Planning Staff/Boston Region MPO
Marc Breslow, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Kay Carson, MassRIDES
Paul Christner, Boston Transportation Department
Joe Cosgrove, MBTA Development
Kathy Cox, MBTA Office for Transportation Access/Fixed Route
Kate Fichter, Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works
Chris Hart, Adaptive Environments
Ben Haynes, Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA
John Hersey, Central Transportation Planning Staff/Boston Region MPO
Ulla Hester, MBTA Advisory Board
Carol Joyce-Harrington, MBTA Office for Transportation Access
Maureen Kelly, Central Transportation Planning Staff/Boston Region MPO
Barbara Lucas, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Elizabeth Moore, Central Transportation Planning Staff/Boston Region MPO
Ron Morgan, MBTA Planning
Bob Rizzo, MBTA Office for Transportation Access/The RIDE
Mark Siegenthaler, Department of Housing and Community Development
Karen Wepsic, MBTA Rider Oversight Committee
Nigel Wilson, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Sue Wolfson, University of Massachusetts at Boston

Meeting Highlights:

- In compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), the MBTA identified 80 Key Stations for accessibility upgrades. Upgrades have been completed at 74 of those stations, are underway at five stations, and are planned for one. Improvements are also underway and/or planned at several non-key stations.
- Under an agreement with the Boston Center for Independent Living, the MBTA has committed to \$122 million in accessibility improvements.
- One-third of the MBTA's bus fleet will be equipped with bicycle racks by September. The bike rack program will be expanded throughout the system. All buses procured in the future will have racks.
- The MBTA is working to expand the amount of bicycle parking available at transit commuter rail stations.
- Gary Talbot, the MBTA's new Assistant General Manager for Systemwide Accessibility, discussed the MBTA's goal of systemwide accessibility and challenges the agency faces as it moves toward that goal.

- Improving accessibility requires providing vertical access to stations and redundant elevators that can be used as back up if other elevators fail.
- Accessibility at bus stops needs to be improved. Existing problems include inadequate space at stops (due to obstructions), poorly marked stops, and illegally parked vehicles that force buses to stop in the street.
- The MBTA's paratransit service, The RIDE, provides door-to-door transportation for customers who are unable to use the fixed route transit system. The RIDE operates in 62 towns.
- The RIDE has been seeing double-digit growth in paratransit use. Over 1,000 people apply per month for certification to use it. Approximately 66,000 people are eligible now, with average daily usage of the RIDE at almost 5,000 trips.
- MBTA is interested in encouraging paratransit riders to try using the fixed route system.
- A barrier to convincing paratransit riders to try the fixed route system is the fear among those customers that if they switch, they will lose their certification to use paratransit. Education is needed to address this problem.
- The MBTA has a pilot program underway to implement way-finding signage at Alewife Station, which could later be applied to other stations.
- Members reviewed changes to the PMT evaluation methodology and criteria and made recommendations for additional changes.

Meeting Notes

MBTA ADA Accessibility

Joe Cosgrove, MBTA, provided an overview of the MBTA's accessible stations and the steps being taken to make the transit system more accessible to persons with disabilities. Accessibility features include elevators, escalators, ramps, mobile lifts, mini-high platforms.

Key Station Program

In 1990, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which guarantees equal access to persons with disabilities. The MBTA then implemented its Key Station Program to begin upgrading the nation's oldest transit system to comply with the ADA. The MBTA identified 80 Key Stations, which are those stations that have above average ridership, provide intermodal connections, or that are near centers of commerce.

So far, the MBTA has upgraded 74 of the 80 Key Stations. The following Key Stations remain to be upgraded:

- State Street on the Blue Line (under construction)
- Kenmore, Copley, and Arlington on the Green Line (under construction)
- Government Center on the Green and Blue Lines (planned)

Accessibility improvements are also underway at the following non-key stations:

- Maverick on the Blue Line
- Longwood on the Green Line D-branch
- Waltham Station on the commuter rail

Accessibility improvements are planned for the following non-key stations:

- Wollaston on the Red Line
- Symphony, Hynes, and Science Park on the Green Line
- Littleton/Route 495, Auburndale, and Sharon on the commuter rail

Vehicles

The MBTA bus fleet currently has 270 high-floor buses with lifts and 768 low-floor buses with ramps. The MBTA is ordering 155 more low-floor buses. All commuter rail coaches are accessible at 99 accessible stations. All Red, Orange, and Blue Line vehicles are accessible at 49 stations. On the Green Line, there are 85 low-floor cars and 114 high-floor cars that are accessible at 26 stations. On the Mattapan-Ashmont Line, 10 high-floor cars can be boarded via mobile lifts at two stations.

The RIDE

The MBTA's paratransit service, The RIDE, provides door-to-door transportation for customers who are unable to use the fixed route transit system. The RIDE operates in 62 communities. There are 228 lift-equipped vans and 225 sedans in The RIDE's fleet. The RIDE uses four vendors to provide service.

Boston Center for Independent Living Agreement

Under an agreement with the Boston Center for Independent Living, the MBTA has committed to \$122 million in accessibility improvements. The MBTA will upgrade elevators and escalators, as well as, educate MBTA personnel and the public about disability issues, monitor and maintain systems for ADA compliance, provide alternative means of access if regular service is disrupted, and consistently provide automated stop announcements.

Bicycle Accessibility

One-third of the MBTA's bus fleet will be equipped with bicycle racks by September. Buses with racks operate out of the Charlestown garage (230 buses), Lynn garage (84), and Albany garage (16). Racks will be installed on the 155 buses that the MBTA has on order. The bike rack program will be expanded throughout the system. In future procurements, all buses will have racks.

Karen Wepsic, MBTA Rider Oversight Committee stated that bus drivers need more education about how to use the racks. J. Cosgrove pointed out that drivers are not allowed to leave their seats to load bicycles; customers must load their own bicycles.

At rapid transit stations, 1,445 parking spaces for bicycles are available. At commuter rail stations, 689 spaces are available. The MBTA is working to expand the amount of bicycle parking by working with the Boston Region MPO and Metropolitan Area Planning Council, which run a program that works with communities to increase bicycle parking. The MBTA also works with bicycle advocacy groups to make MBTA services more convenient and accessible to bike users.

Discussion on Accessibility

Gary Talbot, the MBTA's new Assistant General Manager for Systemwide Accessibility, was introduced. G. Talbot sits on the United States Access Board, which sets the federal accessibility standards for the nation. He noted that the Key Station Program was

designed as a “band-aid” approach to initially address non-accessibility at important transit stations. The intent of the Program was to ensure that key stations were upgraded and then other station upgrades would follow. Under the law, doing nothing to improve accessibility is not an option for transit providers.

He described challenges that the MBTA faces as it moves forward to improve accessibility. Those challenges include providing vertical access to stations and redundant elevators that can be used as back up if other elevators fail. The MBTA has been successfully operating its elevators; 98-99% of elevators are operating on any given day.

He stated that his goal is to make the whole transit system accessible. He explained that if a station is designated as a Key Station all the ADA guidelines apply (i.e., the station and at least one car on each train must be accessible). Unfortunately, there are some areas, such as street stops on the Green Line, that the MBTA might not be able to make accessible because a raised platform could not be put on the street where cars travel, and even the low-floor cars are not accessible using the ramp at street level. Clinton Bench, CTPS/Boston Region MPO, noted that work on the Green Line D-Branch this summer will result in low-floor cars being operable on the line.

G. Talbot noted that, to use the Green Line, he (as a person using a wheelchair) must really plan ahead to be sure his trip will be accessible. The MBTA now has a Web-based trip planner and a pamphlet that helps customers determine where accessible stations are located.

K. Wepsic stated that the MBTA’s buses are all accessible, but not all bus stops are accessible due to illegal parking and other factors. G. Talbot added that there are “islands of accessibility” in the system and that problems on the bus system remain including, inadequate room at stops (due to obstructions), poorly marked stops, and illegally parked vehicles that force buses to stop in the street. The MBTA is working on legislation regarding fines for illegally parked vehicles. The MBTA is also working with the Massachusetts Commission for Human Rights to review bus stops in the MBTA’s operating area (175 cities and towns).

G. Talbot noted that the MBTA is interested in encouraging paratransit riders to try using the fixed route system and making the system more attractive to paratransit users. He reiterated that providing vertical access is key to attracting customers with disabilities. Ben Haynes, ACCT, noted that a barrier to convincing paratransit riders to try the fixed route system is the fear among those customers that if they switch, they will lose their certification to use paratransit. Education is needed to address this problem. Bob Rizzo, The RIDE, stated that the MBTA is not taking a punitive approach to customers and that they would not lose their certification.

Kate Fichter, EOT, raised the issue that connectivity for users with disabilities (or those with baby strollers) is difficult in the Downtown Crossing area. For example, to get from the Red to Orange Line by elevator requires going through Macy’s. G. Talbot pointed out that some elevators were designed to meet the bare minimums of the ADA law. In new construction, elevators and other accessibility features should be designed to accommodate multiple users, for example, persons with disabilities, bicyclists, and people

with baby strollers. Buses are another example of where better design could be advantageous for various users. Buses should comfortably accommodate wheelchair users and people with strollers, and still provide room for people to move in the aisles.

K. Wepsic raised the issue of poor signage in the transit system. G. Talbot noted that signage is a part of the overall way-finding issue. Problems for travelers with disabilities include lack of signage and lack of announcements on transit vehicles to send customers in the proper direction. The MBTA has a pilot program underway to implement way-finding signage at Alewife Station, which could later be applied to other stations. The MBTA is updating its internal way-finding document.

B. Haynes reported that he, Janie Guion, and others met with Lieutenant Commander O'Connor to discuss the issue of vehicles that park in the path of buses. Agreements are being worked out with local police in the 175 municipalities the MBTA serves to ticket and tow illegally parked vehicles. B. Haynes also noted that work has to be done to encourage communities to remove obstructions, such as newspaper dispensers, that inhibit passengers from entering/exiting buses. A meeting has been proposed to work with the 62 municipalities served by The RIDE to get cooperation on snow removal from curb cuts, illegal parking, and other factors that interfere with the path of travel.

Barbara Lucas, MAPC, stated that it would be interesting to do a pilot project to raise awareness about disability issues. Mayors or town selectmen might commit to spending a day going about their daily business in a wheelchair or using other mobility devices. G. Talbot described his experiences working at General Motors and Disney where he ran such programs for executives. If done correctly, such programs can be effective (at Disney, for example, the program resulted in the doubling of the company's accessibility budget), but he warned that participants should be made aware that spending one day using mobility devices will not allow them to know exactly what it is like to have a disability. As October is Disability Awareness Month, it might provide a good opportunity to educate people on the subject. B. Haynes added that if such a program is conducted, it should be in a controlled environment to ensure that no one gets hurt.

Marc Breslow, EOEEA, asked about the number of bicycle racks at each station. C. Bench noted that that information could be obtained from the MPO's "Mobility Management System" report.

B. Lucas asked B. Rizzo what is needed to improve The RIDE service and how those needs might be addressed in the PMT. B. Rizzo stated that encouraging paratransit customers to try using fixed route service is a goal. The RIDE has been seeing double-digit growth in paratransit use. Over 1,000 people apply per month for certification to use the service. Approximately 66,000 people are eligible now. The increase in applicants is due to an aging population. The elderly are among The RIDE's largest demographic.

The MBTA is required to provide paratransit service for every eligible customer who requests it, so it is important to make the fixed route service as usable as possible for persons with disabilities. The MBTA's switch to low-floor buses has improved accessibility, but problems still exist. Some customers, for example, have been able to get on a bus, but not off.

Education is needed to address the perception that some paratransit users have that they will lose their eligibility for paratransit if they switch to fixed route service. While the MBTA has no intention of denying customers service, other transit agencies in the U.S. have denied service to those who switch to fixed route.

G. Talbot said that addressing problems at bus stops is the biggest issue when it comes to encouraging fixed route usage. Low-floor buses (as opposed to those equipped with lifts) are advantageous because they reduce bus dwell times at stations, however, these buses are not effective for picking up passengers when buses must stop on the street rather than at the curb.

B. Haynes added that educating people would be a key factor in convincing people who currently use the RIDE to have confidence that they will not get stuck on the fixed route system.

Proposed Evaluation Methodology and Criteria

C. Bench described the changes made to the PMT evaluation methodology and criteria at the recommendation of SAC members. He indicated that the evaluation criteria for system preservation projects have not yet been added. SAC members were asked to review the changes (see attachment with changes highlighted).

In a discussion period, members made the following comments and suggestions:

- K. Wepsic stated that maintenance costs should be estimated along with capital and operating costs for each project. J. Cosgrove noted that routine maintenance expenses are captured in operating cost estimates.
- Sue Wolfson, UMass, stated that potential operating cost savings resulting from capital improvements should be considered.
- B. Lucas stated that the “expansion” and “enhancement” categories should be separate. If the MBTA is not going to consider expanding the system, that should be stated explicitly in the PMT and the PMT should list the projects that will not be undertaken, she said. J. Cosgrove explained that the MBTA is going to consider expansion and that the state has been playing a larger role in funding and setting transit priorities.
- Nigel Wilson, MIT, agreed that the “enhancement” and “expansion” categories should be evaluated separately. He noted that the criteria do not address disability issues and questioned whether a project that was worthy from the perspective of improving accessibility would compare favorably with an expansion project using the criteria.
- N. Wilson also stated that the “fairness” criteria are opaque and difficult to understand.

The next Stakeholder Advisory Committee is scheduled for Thursday, September 27, 2007 from 12:00 - 2:00 PM in the MPO Conference Room, 10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150.

2008 Program for Mass Transportation

Process for Determining Preferred Mobility Strategies

Identify Potential Mobility Solutions

- **Compile list of mobility challenges**
Each mobility challenge identified during the public process will be categorized by corridor and theme and stored in a database for ease of reference.
- **Develop problem statements**
Groups of mobility challenges will be summarized in the form of a limited number of “problem statements.” In some cases, these statements will be corridor-specific, while in others they will reach across corridor lines.
- **Compile list of potential solutions**
For each problem statement, potential solutions will be identified [that further system preservation, service enhancements, and system expansion](#). Solution concepts will be drawn from various sources, including the Commonwealth’s transportation agencies, the 2003 PMT, the ongoing 2008 PMT public process, the Boston Region MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), [the MBTA State of Good Repair Database](#), and other sources.

Determine Measurable Targets For Each [GoalObjective](#)

For each 2008 PMT [goalobjective](#), a specific target for the year 2030 will be identified. In the case of quantitative [goalsobjectives](#), such as those relating to travel speed, ridership, and environmental impacts, it will be easier to identify measurable targets. However, qualitative targets will also be identified for other [goalsobjectives](#), such as those relating to service coverage, safety, etc. [With respect to system preservation in particular, the PMT will assume a goal of achieving a state of good repair in 25 years.](#)

Assess Potential Solutions

- **Screen potential solutions**
Each of the potential [service enhancement and system expansion](#) solutions identified to address problem statements will be screened to ensure that they are technologically feasible, fiscally reasonable, [and consistent with MBTA operations service standards/goals, and generally acceptable to the affected communities](#). Solutions that meet these screening criteria will be advanced to a more detailed assessment. In addition, the commonwealth’s legal

commitments will be considered at this stage to identify solutions that must be part of the PMT's final set of mobility strategies.

- **Apply evaluation criteria to potential solutions**
Each of the potential solutions advanced from the previous step will be measured according to applicable evaluation criteria that are linked to the PMT goals and objectives. In the case of service enhancement and system expansion solutions that have a direct operational impact, one set of evaluation criteria will apply. Service enhancement and system expansion solutions pertaining to customer support and safety will be evaluated separately, as will all system preservation projects. Each criterion will have a unit of measurement appropriate to the corresponding objective.
- **Estimate cost of potential solutions**
For each of the potential solutions identified, including system preservation needs, estimates will be made of both operating and capital costs, where applicable. In addition, a consolidated annual cost will be calculated in 2008 Dollars. In some cases, these estimates will be drawn from existing feasibility studies or the MBTA's State of Good Repair Database, while in other cases they will be based on a unit cost database. With this information, the cost effectiveness of achieving the estimated level of benefit associated with each quantitative evaluation criterion will also be calculated.

Define Comprehensive Mobility Strategies

- **Summarize performance of potential solutions**
The results of the evaluation of all potential solutions to a given problem statement will be shown together, but solutions will not be ranked at this stage.
- **Identify proposed groupings of solutions**
For each problem-corridor and systemwide mobility challenge statement, preferred groupings of solutions – mobility strategies – will be identified with the intent of meeting the targets for each PMT goal in at the most cost-effective manner.
- **Estimate combined impacts of proposed solutions mobility strategies**
The proposed set of solutions mobility strategies for all problem statements all corridors and systemwide mobility challenges will be evaluated as a whole to determine whether the defined targets for PMT goals will be met. If they are not met, additional iterations of this and the previous step may be performed.
- **Estimate combined costs of mobility strategies**
Cumulative operating and capital costs, as well as consolidated annual costs, will be identified. The cost effectiveness of achieving the estimated level of benefit associated with each quantitative evaluation criterion will also be

calculated. Additional iterations of this and the previous two steps may be performed if it appears likely that the PMT goals can be met at a lower cost.

- **Identify incremental milestones for each strategy**

After the comprehensive set of mobility strategies are confirmed to meet the targets for each PMT goal, specific solutions within each strategy will be ordered according to their urgency, effectiveness, and estimated cost. The extent to which each goal is achieved at incremental stages of the 25-year plan will also be identified.

PMT Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria for the 2008 PMT are divided into two primary categories for service enhancements and system expansion. The first category applies to proposed mobility solutions that have a direct impact on the conveyance of customers throughout the system. The second category applies to customer support and safety solutions. Within each category, evaluation criteria include both qualitative and quantitative measures that correspond to the PMT goals and objectives. They are listed below in a similar order to and grouped in a similar fashion as these goals and objectives. Cost effectiveness is an additional factor that will also be applied across these criteria. In particular, the annualized cost (capital and operating) per unit benefit for each measure will be calculated and considered in the development of proposed mobility strategies.

Service Enhancement and System Expansion Evaluation Criteria – Customer Conveyance

Coverage**System Configuration**

- Elimination of Transfers/Minimization of Transfer Time
- Improvements to Interconnectivity Between Modes (including fare collection)
- Improvements to station access
- Expansion of transit access to geographical areas underserved by transit

Expediency

- Improvements to service frequency *
- Reduction in travel time
- Reduction in automobile travel time advantage *
- Expansion of transit access during time periods poorly served by transit

Safety, Reliability, and Comfort

– Enhancements to customers' personal safety

- Improvements to reliability of service
- Expansion of capacity where and when crowding occurs

– Provision of amenities where customers access service

- Improvements to vehicle comfort and passenger circulation

~~—Enhancements to vehicle and station cleanliness *~~

Fairness

- Rectification of Structural and/or Operational Transportation Barriers Faced by environmental justice areas of concern
- ~~Provide greater Cumulative extension of~~ benefits ~~than to burdens in~~ environmental justice areas of concern at a level commensurate with or greater than any burdens.
- Expansion of accessibility for persons with disabilities
- ~~—Enhancements to responsiveness and courtesy of employees *~~
- ~~—Improvements to safety and security training for operators *~~

Customer Information

~~—Improvements to navigational tools~~

- Improvements to reliability and quality of stop announcements *
- ~~—Improvements to availability of schedules *~~
- Improvements to availability of real-time service performance data *

Traffic Congestion and the EnvironmentRegional Transportation Impacts

- Number of transit riders served
- Number of new transit riders served
- Change in transit mode share for the regional network
- Reduction in regional emissions

Land Use Impacts

- Consistency with local plans that promote coordinated, transit-oriented development and ~~S~~support of sustainable land use patterns
- Consistency Contribution to attainment of with-MPO land-use goals ~~planning objectives~~
- Support Contribution ofto brownfield and infill development

Service Enhancement and System Expansion Evaluation Criteria **– Customer Support and Safety**

- Enhancements to customers' personal safety
- Provision of amenities where customers access service
- Enhancements to vehicle and station cleanliness *
- Improvements to responsiveness and courtesy of employees *
- Improvements to safety and security training for operators *
- Improvements to navigational tools
- Expansion of schedule availability *
- Provision of customer information in languages other than English *

* indicates criterion not included in 2003 PMT