

RAPID TRANSIT COMMITTEE MINUTES (DRAFT)

A. Call to order: Chair Matthew Moran of Boston called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM

B. Briefing on Diversions and Shuttle Bus policy by MBTA officials: Kat Benesh, MBTA Chief of Operations Strategy, Policy & Oversight gave the briefing along with Rachel Morse, MBTA Director of Transit Policy. K. Benesh outlined the history of diversions and surges requiring alternative bussing since 2018, and noted that despite this experience, the diversions planned for 20204 are an order of magnitude greater than anything tried before. In planning for such diversions, the Authority adopted new Alternative Service Standards:

- Maximize the amount of infrastructure that can be completed during each diversion including:
 - increase the number of access points including more track pads
 - Shorten power sections
- Digital playbook for diversions
- Alternative Service Standards:
 - Service Availability: Utilize parallel services as often as possible
 - Frequency & Span of Service matching: Start and end alternative service at the same time as the T service being diverted, and operate it at headways as close to the diverted T service as possible.
 - Levels: Plan to move 70% of the ridership as on the diverted T service.
- Accessibility: Alternative service must be 100% accessible, and low-floor buses are preferred.

- Customer Information: Communicate with municipalities and stakeholders at least 2 weeks before beginning a diversion, and at least 60 days prior to a major surge.
- Fares: No concessions on fare policy. Fares will not be higher than the diverted T service.

Ms. Benesh continued that diversion planning is complex, requiring the coordination of multiple internal and external parties. The goals for diverted service are:

- Increase use of MBTA resources
- 100% accessibility
- Improved coordination with municipalities to reduce journey time and increase accessibility. Ms. Benesh noted that the Authority has good coordination currently with Boston and Cambridge.

Following this presentation, Ms. Benesh took questions from committee members facilitated by the Chair.

- Jay Monty of Everett noted that the future proofing in the approach is great, and that understanding the effect of diversions on existing service is important. He wondered if the Authority considers the downstream effects of diversions, and if the Authority will consider increasing capacity on routes also effected by diverted service? K. Benesh noted that this question gets at one of the hidden challenges of diversions, and necessitates a broader discussion of increased resources for bus transportation.
- Susan Barrett of Lexington suggested that a consistent approach to fares is needed across all diversions, and across all modes. K. Benesh responded that no free paratransit trips are provided during diversions, and that the

Authority expects each of its customers to pay a fare at some point on their journey. Rachel Morse (MBTA) added that every diversion is different, but that the general principals are the same across all diversions. She also noted that no compensation is provided for sub-par service.

- David Koses of Newton asked what happens if a utility or other 3rd party closes a street during a planned diversion, necessitating alternative service for the alternative service? K. Benesh noted that utilities and others do not always coordinate appropriately with the Authority or municipalities. She continued that she hopes cities and towns will alert the Authority of known disruptions when they coincide with diversions.
- Andy Reker of Cambridge suggested that better coordination between the Authority and all municipalities was needed. K. Benesh agreed that communication can always be improved. M. Moran added that a standing meeting of this committee or another MBTA Advisory Board committee related to diversions may assist with improved coordination. All parties agreed.

C. Discussion and possible action to commission independent research on the topics of Statewide Paratransit consolidation and/or Cost of Commute.

Brian Kane (Executive Director) presented the proposed topics. He noted that new Board policy required committee endorsement before the expending of funds on independent, 3rd party research. He seeks committee endorsement via cote on the two topics presented. The statewide paratransit consolidation topic would consider looking at the current statewide paratransit system and note what deficiencies may be present for customers, and what, if any, efficiencies, and cost shifting/savings can be

generated by improved coordination. The cost of commute topic would consider what, if any, effect the combined cost of parking and fares may have on ridership, especially from further-out communities near terminal stations on both commuter rail and rapid transit. Following this, the Chair facilitated the discussion. M. Moran noted that the Cost of Commute topic may be a better fit for the Commuter Rail Committee. Susanne Rasmussen of Cambridge suggested that a problem statement or additional context would help her understand more of what these reports are needed. Lenard Diggins of Arlington suggested that the topics may be better researched by MPOs around the state. M. Moran noted that he would be willing to move forward with the paratransit study, and asked if there was a motion to approve it. John DePriest of Chelsea moved that the Rapid Transit Committee authorize the Executive Director to seek bids via a public procurement to commission independent research on the topic of the advantages and disadvantages of statewide paratransit coordination. L. Diggins seconded this motion, which was approved unanimously. B. Kane noted that he will bring the cost of commute topic to the Commuter Rail Committee for its consideration.

D. Consideration of future topics for committee meetings and briefings by the MBTA. B. Kane noted that the agenda includes a list of potential topics for the committee to consider at future meetings. He asked committee members to please review the list, and communicate with him about which topics may be worth considering in the future, or any other topics worth considering. L. Diggins suggested that the committee consider the cause of service slow zones. M. Moran suggested that one meeting be considered on bus topics such as better bus, BNRD, facilities etc. J. DePriest stated that

Chelsea would enjoy a discussion of the Red/Blue Connector and the Silver Line Extension program. S. Barrett suggested a briefing on fare transformation, and how members can help advocate for more revenue for the MBTA.

E. Old Business | New Business | Meeting Frequency | Next Meeting: There was no discussion.

F. Adjourn: With all business transacted, and at the request of the Chair, Alan Castaline of Brockton moved to adjourn. J. DePriest seconded this motion, which was approved without objection. The meeting adjourned at 10:57 AM.

Attendees:

Arlington	Lenard Diggins
Boston	Matthew Moran
Brockton:	Alan Castaline
Cambridge:	Andrew Reker
	Susanne Rassmussen
Chelsea	John DePriest
Everett	Jay Monty
Newton:	David Koses
Westwood:	Steve Olanoff

MBTA:

Kat Benesh	Chief of Operations Strategy, Policy & Oversight
Rachel Morse	Director of Transit Policy

Advisory Board Staff:

Brian Kane	Executive Director
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