



MBTA ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

December 05, 2023, 10:30 AM

- A. Call to order:** Mayor Thomas P. Koch (Quincy) called the meeting to order with 36 member communities represented, present and voting at 10:30 AM. The Chair led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance, and a Moment of Silence for those in uniform keeping the peace around the globe.
- B. July 18, 2023 Meeting Minutes:** The draft meeting minutes having previously been distributed, Alan Castaline (Brockton) moved to approve the minutes as presented. Josh Ostroff (Natick) seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 36 yes, 0 no, and 1 abstention (Whitman).
- C. MBTA Chief Operating Officer Ryan Coholan:** The Chair introduced Ryan Coholan, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the MBTA to address the Board. Mr. Coholan began his transportation career as a locomotive engineer, and he still maintains a locomotive engineer's license. As COO of the MBTA, Mr. Coholan is responsible for the operation of all MBTA modes. He was appointed COO by General Manager Philip Eng in September 2023. Mr. Coholan introduced his Chief of Staff, Deirdre Habershaw. Ms. Habershaw noted that she is a Boston resident, public transit user, and urban planner by training.

Following these introductions, the Chair recognized members for questions:

- Ira Novoselsky, Revere City Councilor, had multiple questions about bus stops in his district.
- J. Ostroff asked what the MBTA Advisory Board and its members can do to be helpful in the Authority's efforts to tell its story to those in power. R. Coholan suggested that the Advisory Board and its members have perhaps the best understanding of the issues facing cities and towns, and that this makes Advisory Board members the best placed to create meaningful change. Mr. Coholan asked Advisory Board members to be his eyes and ears and keep him and his office abreast of issues in municipalities. D. Habershaw followed up that

the Authority especially needs help right now with diversions. Ms. Habershaw continued that cities and towns, via Advisory Board members could help by alerting the Authority of upcoming road projects and other such plans that may affect MBTA services.

- Dan Albert (Marblehead) asked about bus stops in Marblehead, and about what the Authority can do to explain the MBTA Communities Act. R. Coholan answered that since the town controls the rights of way in Marblehead, they can suggest changes to bus stop locations to the Authority. If the Authority agrees, and the new locations meet MBTA standards, then the stop can be moved. Regarding the MBTA Communities Act, Brian Kane noted that the MBTA Communities Act has almost nothing to do with the Authority, that the Authority is not requesting zoning changes, nor enforcing any. B. Kane continued that Advisory Board hosted a meeting on this topic last year, and that this recording is available online.
- Robert Scherer (Ashland) noted that there was recently another death in Ashland along the Commuter Rail tracks, the 3rd death in 5 years- 2 suicides and 1 accident. Mr. Scherer asked what resources are available to the Town to help prevent any further such incidents, any safety reports that can be shared with the town, and any other information that might be helpful. He also thanked the Authority for the improvements to the nearly completed Ashland Station. R. Coholan answered that the issue of mental health and the MBTA is such a challenge. He noted that in his career as an engineer, he has had to deal with passenger strikes. He further noted, that the Authority has close working relationships with the Samaritans, Volpe Center, Operation Lifesaver, and other such agencies working to reduce suicides via transit. Mr. Coholan continued that the MBTA has piloted what have since become industry best practices for Commuter Rail safety, including a recently successful pilot project in Abington. Infrastructure improvements such as 12-inch LED lights, improved striping, and other such betterments can lead to discernable reductions in fatalities along rail rights-of-way. Other members provided Mr. Scherer with suggestions or resources they were aware of to help prevent suicides.
- Susan Barrett (Lexington) asked about bus service levels, in Lexington and

elsewhere, and when communities can expect a return to pre-Covid levels of service? She also noted that Red Line service disruptions, speed restrictions, and other such interruptions have been difficult to manage for Lexington residents. D. Habershaw answered that current bus service is not what the MBTA wants it to be, but that recent wage increases and training improvements have helped bring in more bus operators and at a faster rate. She continued that there are internal challenges that remain, but that the T is committed to overcoming them. She asked for improved municipal coordination.

- Andy Reker (Cambridge) mentioned that he and the City of Cambridge welcome Mr. Coholan's appointment as COO. He asked what Mr. Coholan's sense of public outreach is currently, and how it might improve specifically to cities and towns. R. Coholan answered there seems to be an internal and external consensus that the T has improved in recent years, and that it is getting better. He noted that the results of recent shut downs have resulted in the reduction of slow zones, and that the 2024 track plan aims to build and expand on this success.
- Bruce Leichter (Harvard) asked about the EV charging stations in Littleton, when they will be repaired and how the Authority can ensure that proper maintenance can be achieved in the future for such infrastructure. R. Coholan noted that finger pointing internally is not helpful, and that the T needs to get much better about the installation, maintenance, and preservation of infrastructure such as EV chargers.
- Lenard Diggins (Arlington) asked what lessons from commuter rail operations can be transferred to heavy and light rail operations? R. Coholan answered that at Commuter Rail, top-down decision making was largely done away with, and that everyone working on trains had a say in success. This is something that is transferable to rapid transit.
- Duncan Allen (Needham) noted that the bottleneck of South Station, Downtown Crossing, and Park Street remains, and that communications-based-train-control (CBTC) may not be the best solution for this bottleneck in the future. He asked what can be done to improve headways in this part of the Red

Line and systemwide. R. Coholan noted that the ongoing and planned track work is essential to reducing headways on light and heavy rail. D. Habershaw added that Red Line headways should be shortening soon as track conditions improve.

- Dave Stephenson, president of the union representing locomotive engineers asked about earned sick time for his members.

D. Executive Director’s Report: In the interest of time, this item was skipped.

E. Adjournment: With all business transacted, the Chair requested a motion to adjourn. J. DePriest (Chelsea) moved to adjourn, which Todd Kirrane (Worcester) seconded. This motion was approved unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 11:29 AM

Note: These minutes were approved by vote of the MBTA Advisory Board at its March 12, 2024 meeting.

Attendees

| | | | |
|------------|----------------|------------|---------------|
| Abington | Alex Hargerty | Framingham | |
| Acton | Dan Martin | Franklin | |
| Amesbury | | Freetown | |
| Andover | | Georgetown | |
| Arlington | Lenard Diggins | Gloucester | Greg Verga |
| Ashburnham | | Grafton | |
| Ashby | | Groton | |
| Ashland | Rob Scherer | Groveland | |
| Attleboro | | Halifax | |
| Auburn | | Hamilton | |
| Ayer | | Hanover | |
| Bedford | | Hanson | |
| Bellingham | | Harvard | Bruce Leicher |
| Belmont | | Haverhill | |
| Berkley | | Hingham | Joe Fisher |
| Beverly | | Holbrook | |
| Billerica | | Holden | |
| Boston | | Holliston | |
| Bourne | | Hopkinton | |

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| Boxborough | | Hull | |
| Boxford | | Ipswich | |
| Braintree | | Kingston | |
| Bridgewater | Michael Dutton Bob Rulli | Lakeville | Lia Fabian |
| Brockton | Alan Castaline | Lancaster | |
| Brookline | | Lawrence | |
| Burlington | | Leicester | |
| Cambridge | Andy Reker | Leominster | |
| Canton | | Lexington | Susan Barrett |
| Carlisle | | Lincoln | |
| Carver | | Littleton | |
| Chelmsford | | Lowell | |
| Chelsea | John DePriest | Lunenburg | |
| Cohasset | | Lynn | |
| Concord | Mark Howard | Lynnfield | |
| Danvers | | Malden | Yem Lip |
| Dedham | | Manchester | |
| Dover | | Mansfield | Brendan Roche |
| Dracut | | Marblehead | Dan Albert |
| Duxbury | | Marlborough | Meredith Harris |
| East Bridgewater | | Marshfield | |
| Easton | | Maynard | |
| Essex | | Medfield | Gus Murby |
| Everett | Eric Molinari | Medford | Breanna Lungo-Koehn |
| Fitchburg | | Medway | |
| Foxborough | | Melrose | |
| Merrimac | | Sharon | |
| Methuen | | Sherborn | |
| Middleborough | | Shirley | |
| Middleton | | Shrewsbury | |
| Millbury | | Somerville | |
| Millis | | Southborough | |
| Milton | | Sterling | |
| Nahant | | Stoneham | |
| Natick | Josh Ostroff Morgan Griffiths | Stoughton | |
| Needham | Duncan Allen | Stow | |
| Newbury | | Sudbury | |
| Newburyport | | Sutton | |
| Newton | David Koses | Swampscott | |
| Norfolk | | Taunton | Shauna O'Connell |
| North Andover | | Tewksbury | |

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| N. Attleborough | | Topsfield | |
| North Reading | | Townsend | |
| Northborough | | Tyngsborough | |
| Northbridge | | Upton | |
| Norton | | Watertown | |
| Norwell | | Wayland | |
| Norwood | | Wakefield | |
| Paxton | | Walpole | |
| Peabody | | Waltham | |
| Pembroke | | Wareham | Alan Slavin |
| Plymouth | | Wellesley | |
| Plympton | | Wenham | |
| Princeton | | West Boylston | |
| Quincy | Thomas Koch Frank Tramontozzi | W. Bridgewater | |
| Randolph | | West Newbury | |
| Raynham | | Westborough | |
| Reading | | Westford | |
| Rehoboth | | Westminster | |
| Revere | Ira Novoselsky | Weston | |
| Rochester | | Westwood | Steve Olanoff |
| Rockland | | Weymouth | Owen MacDonald |
| Rockport | | Whitman | Dan Salvucci |
| Rowley | | Wilmington | |
| Salem | | Winchester | |
| Salisbury | | Winthrop | |
| Saugus | Mike Serino | Woburn | Tina Cassidy |
| Scituate | | Worcester | Todd Kirrane |
| Seekonk | | Wrentham | |