

MEETING MINUTES

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PTAC)
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2016 @ 7:00 PM
PUBLIC HEALTH BUILDING, DENNY ROOM
11 PIERCE STREET, BROOKLINE MA 02446

7:00 CALL MEETING TO ORDER, APPOINT NOTE TAKER, AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 14, 2015 MEETING.

PTAC members present: Abby Swaine (Chair), Deborah Dong (note taker), Linda Jason, and Jane Gould (nominated).

Also present: Scott Englander (liaison to Transportation Board), Cynthia Snow (Chair, Bicycle Advisory Committee), Shalini Sen (MBTA planner), Clint Richmond (TMM Precinct 6), Mike Stanley (Transit X), Meredith L. Mooney (Director of Government Policy, Boston University).

Minutes from December 14, 2015 meeting approved.

7:05 TAKE PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA.

Mike Stanley gave a brief introduction of Transit X (www.transitx.com), a Boston-based company seeking to develop a low-cost, privately funded mass transit (fixed-fare, fixed-route) system of small (up to 4-person) pods that travel suspended from elevated guideways (thus leaving a small footprint). Their envisioned impact for Brookline would be potential replacement of the B Green Line and adding routes along I-93 and I-90. Transit X will be applying for a grant from the US Department of Transportation's Smart City Challenge for a one-mile pilot, and is asking for letters of commitment from local towns and cities before the February 4th USDOT deadline. He asked that PTAC review his proposal from a municipal standpoint and provide a support letter, which he estimates would entail 10 pages of paperwork and four hours of time. Abby offered to review the USDOT grant information and Transit X's proposal. Scott stated that under this timeframe neither PTAC nor the Transportation Board could provide a recommendation, but that Mike can directly approach the Board of Selectmen.

7:15 DISCUSS MISC MBTA ISSUES: BROOKLINE REPRESENTATION, NEW FARE POLICY AND PROPOSED FARE CHANGES, WINTER READINESS, ETC.

BROOKLINE REPRESENTATION

Brookline has been trying to open a more consistent conduit for communication with the MBTA to ensure a venue to air community concerns. Brookline has had a representative, Richard Leary, on the MBTA Advisory Board (AB), but most of the AB's powers, including fiscal matters, have been moved from the AB to the MBTA Fiscal and Management Control

Board (FMCB) and the AB has been inactive of late. Shalini Sen reported that the AB still makes recommendations to MassDOT and the MBTA. Abby reported that she reached out to Paul Regan, Executive Director of the AB, Richard Leary, and Tegin Bennett, Cambridge Transportation Planner and Chair of the Boston Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) for their input. Abby learned that the AB will be meeting on January 11th and two more times in 2016. Paul will plan to attend a PTAC meeting (possibly February's) to provide an update, and Richard will likely still represent Brookline on the AB. Tegin has offered to partner more with PTAC.

NEW FARE POLICY AND PROPOSED FARE CHANGES

The MBTA FMCB released the Fare Policy and proposed Fare Changes on January 4th. [Note: Reports are available on the MBTA website at http://www.mbta.com/about_the_mbta/board_meetings/fmcb/ under "Presentations."] Ten public meetings will be scheduled, but some concern changes (e.g., proposed new Commuter Rail schedules) other than fares. PTAC will follow up to see if any public meetings will be scheduled in/near Brookline and whether/how to advertise them, and will consider at PTAC's next meeting whether to comment, which would need to be done via the Transportation Board (TB). Comments would likely be due by the end of February. [Follow-up: Meeting schedule is at http://www.mbta.com/about_the_mbta/public_meetings/ with the closest meeting for Brookline on February 2nd. Paul notified Abby that in about mid-March, the FMCB will vote on the MBTA's budget, including fares, for the fiscal year beginning July 1st.]

Abby called attention to the MBTA Fare Options FY17 chart (handout). The only increase that seems to be potentially significant for Brookline users is for student monthly passes, which would rise from \$26 to \$32 (23%). The senior/TAP monthly pass would rise less, from \$29 to \$32. (The MBTA is trying to make student and senior/TAP discounts the same.) Monthly LinkPasses (bus + train) passes would rise from \$75 to \$82.50, and bus passes would rise from \$50 to \$58, under the 5% scenario. (The 5% increase scenario is much more likely to be adopted than the 10% scenario.) Individual rides would not rise, or rise negligibly. The MBTA is trying to put more of the burden of raising fare revenue (required by the legislature) on the monthly passes. This is accomplished by raising the price of passes to the point that a rider has to use his pass more times in a month to "break even." The MBTA's "break even" points are distinctly lower than those of comparable transit systems, so raising the "break even" point modestly should not be a burden to riders or discourage them from using the T.

PTAC members discussed possible considerations and concerns. Scott asked about other revenue sources for the T. Abby reported that the MBTA is trying to increase fare revenue not only by raising fares, but by improving fare collection and increasing ridership. Fare revenue is just one piece of the MBTA's strategy to balance its budget; others include internal cost control, other sources of revenue (e.g., advertising), and potentially trimming low-ridership, high-costs services (no specific proposals at this time, other than eliminating late-night subway/bus service and some weekend commuter rail trips). At a December public hearing Abby attended, the MBTA noted that increasing ridership is not as viable an

option for Boston as it is for NYC, as the MBTA is essentially a commuter service and full during peak hours, whereas the MTA serves many NYC residents who have no vehicles, at all hours of the day. Jane asked about the costs and subsidies of the different types of services. Deb asked about whether there were potential disproportionate impacts on populations that cannot afford fare hikes. Single-ride Charlie Ticket and cash local bus fares would actually go down under the 5% increase scenario. MBTA says they would like to introduce means-tested fare discounts, but doesn't have the ability yet.

Abby will advertise the proposed monthly pass increases to the PTOs and to TRIPPS. PTAC members will review the T's reports, and at least Abby will attend the Feb 2nd hearing. PTAC will discuss at its next meeting whether to try to submit comments to the MBTA by the February 12th deadline.

WINTER READINESS

In late December, the Town received the MBTA's response to the TB's letter regarding Brookline's suggestions and pledges for improving winter resiliency. The letter named Randy Clarke, Assistant General Manager for Engineering and Maintenance, as the person for the Town to contact to discuss the plan. Todd Kirrane will be contacting him, and Abby has offered him PTAC representation at the meeting. Shalini reported that she met with Randy, who has offered to make a presentation of the T's overall readiness plan, which involves a process of municipalities making storm-related requests to MEMA. Shalini suggested Randy could talk to the DPW rather than PTAC for the process for emergency requests. Linda thought that while Todd could meet with Randy to discuss of planning and programming matters, the Town needs names of MBTA contacts for dealing with more routine winter topics. Shalini thought that Randy would have the names of those at the MBTA to contact for such matters. Abby will pursue this with Todd.

Abby reported that Frank Caro is requesting assistance in asking the MBTA to clear snow and ice from its right of way on Beacon Street intersections to permit safe crossings for pedestrians. He provided photos of the intersection of Charles Street and Beacon Street after the December 29th snowfall. The intersection is protected by a traffic light, and was cleared for motorists but not for pedestrians. Frank reported that the pattern of snow clearance after the December 29th storm was identical to that for last winter. Abby will follow up on this as an example of what can be discussed between the MBTA and the Town.

8:00 DISCUSS AND APPROVE DRAFT RECOMMENDATION TO THE TRANSPORTATION BOARD ON BROOKLINE ROLE AND TRANSIT INTERESTS RE: MASSDOT I-90 ALLSTON INTERCHANGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PROPOSAL

Abby attended MassDOT's December 8th public meeting on the project proposal. Three designs are proceeding for Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review in the late Spring or early Summer, with the designs focused on the viaduct and not on ramifications for or access to/from surrounding areas, nor potential improvements other than those directly related to the viaduct. MassDOT has assembled a Task Force team consisting of residents, business owners, and other local stakeholders with the goal to work

through all details associated with the project. Task force members represent their specific neighborhoods', groups', or organizations' concerns in addition to informing community members of upcoming project announcements. PTAC, as well as the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC), believe that now is the time for Brookline to have a representative on the Task Force to better understand the impact and opportunities for Brookline and to provide input before this becomes a missed opportunity. Abby, with input from Cynthia Snow, drafted a letter to the TB requesting that they (a) ask MassDOT for a seat on the project Task Force, (b) send a letter (with follow-up) to MassDOT stating Brookline's interests in achieving optimal (bus, pedestrian, and bike) accessibility through the project area, and (c) host a public meeting in Brookline with presentations from MassDOT and authors of alternative designs. Abby noted that Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis of Howard/Stein-Hudson (MassDOT's appointed contact person for the project), has offered to provide staff to give a presentation at a public meeting, and that Harry Mattison and Galen Mook have also offered to do the same for their alternative designs.

Abby drafted the letter to the TB, which was reviewed and approved by PTAC this evening with minor revisions. Cynthia will provide additional feedback on behalf of the BAC after getting BAC input on Jan 11. Clint suggested that PTAC request to be added to the next TB meeting agenda and provide the letter as background info. Abby will finalize and send the letter to the TB. [Follow-up: Abby sent the request, the letter, and background information to Josh Safer of the TB on January 12th.]

PTAC members and meeting attendees briefly discussed their project concerns/considerations. Meredith Mooney of Boston University (which has two Task Force members) said that she was happy to hear of Brookline's interest. She reiterated BU's support of bicycle and pedestrian access, but also its concern regarding potential traffic congestion on BU's campus from bus access (even from bus-only roads, especially since those might be made available to all vehicles in the future, as happened in South Boston). She suggested Malvern Street for any bus access. Scott asked how the area would be accessed from the Longwood area and if it would be a variant of the 66 bus route with impact on traffic limited to crossing Commonwealth Avenue. Cynthia suggested St. Paul and Babcock Streets would be better bike connectors and that better access to the Charles River is needed. Abby reported that Harry Mattison has suggested Malvern, Babcock and Agganis Way as possible access roads, but that elevation gains are an issue. PTAC members discussed who could be the Brookline representative on the Task Force (possibly someone from Complete Streets or a TB member).

8:30 AGREE ON NEXT STEPS ON BEACONSFIELD D LINE STOP ACCESS & SAFETY PROPOSAL BY CHUCK GOLDSTONE

Linda reported that she walked around the Beaconsfield stop and Waldstein Park, as well as around the Fenway stop as a comparison (as a Green Line stop with a longer walkway and overhead bridge). She confirmed the very indirect pedestrian path that currently exists between the stop and park, and that a walkway linking the two initially looks feasible. Her concerns are if a new walkway were opened up under the bridge, that children could possibly enter the track area, and that a barrier or additional fencing should be added.

Abby reported that she received initial feedback from Todd Kirrane, and his first concerns are any MBTA restrictions on walkway width & slope, ADA factors, and expense. He believes that the Town would have to fund the work to add a walkway and that it may be expensive since it would have to be done during scheduled non-operating hours overnight, since that is the only time the MBTA allows work in the vicinity of tracks. Todd has also asked Erin Gallantine, Parks & Recreation director, to provide feedback. Shalini provided Abby with MBTA contact information regarding right-of-way restrictions (Bryan Gubbins, Program Director for Real Estate & Facilities) and ADA guidelines (Laura Brelsford, Assistant GM for System Wide Accessibility). Linda offered to coordinate appointments and meetings between the Town and the MBTA, with contact information that Abby will forward, and to keep Chuck Goldstone in the loop.

8:45 OTHER BUSINESS, PLAN WORK, AND SET AGENDA TOPICS FOR FEBRUARY MEETING.

TRIPPS: Linda reported that she attended the December 17th meeting of Frank Caro's group TRIPPS (formerly STRAITS). They have hired Kerri Ann Tester as Program Director. TRIPPS is looking for volunteers to provide transportation and to staff committees for creating a resource guide, reapply for grants, work with the elderly to connect them with transportation services, to provide driving and ride shares, to write articles, and to recruit seniors to participate in the program. TRIPPS' next meeting is scheduled for March and Linda will continue monitoring their progress.

Climate Week Panel: Cynthia reported that the BAC is sponsoring a Climate Week Panel to be held on Saturday, April 2nd, 2:00 to 4:00 at Hunneman Hall, and asked if PTAC would like to co-sponsor the panel. PTAC voted to co-sponsor. Scott will be on the panel for Complete Streets. Scott, Cynthia and Abby will discuss who can participate on the panel from the public transit realm. Also, Mike Stanley expressed strong interest in having Transit X participate in other Climate Week activities and will follow up with Cynthia.

PTAC appointments: Scott will seek to add Jane's appointment and Deb's and Sherry's reappointment to PTAC to the next TB meeting agenda.

Next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 8, 2016. [Note: Cancelled due to winter storm and rescheduled for Monday, February 22, 2016.]

9:00 ADJOURN.