

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PTAC)  
WEDNESDAY JUNE, 25, 2014 @ 7:00 PM  
ROOM 408, BROOKLINE TOWN HALL  
333 WASHINGTON STREET 02446

**NOTES (approved 7-24-14)**

7:00 PM CALL TO ORDER, APPOINTMENT OF NOTE TAKER AND APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES FROM MAY 21, 2014

PTAC members present: Deborah Dong, Sherry Flashman, Abby Swaine and Linda Jason (note taker)

Also present: Scott Englander (liaison to Transportation Board), Michael Izzo (Operations Manager, Bridj bus service), Chuck and Linda Swartz (Centre St. residents), Craig Bolon (Brookline Beacon), Stephen Ault (Shailer St. resident), John Harris (Osborne Rd. resident), Linda Lally (MBTA planner) and Carey Goldberg (Williams St. resident).

5/21/14 Minutes approved, after small error corrected, by unanimous vote.

7:05 P.M. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA

Nick Schmidt has been proposed as a new member of PTAC. Abby will contact him to further explore with him the possibility of joining the Committee.

7:10 P.M. DISCUSS IMPRESSIONS OF & NEXT STEPS FROM JUNE 12 BROOKLINE "COMPLETE STREETS" FORUM.

Scott Englander reported that the Mass Public Health Association has requested that municipal leaders sign onto a letter urging Secretary Davey to issue funding for towns that are certified under the "Complete Streets" standard as required by the Transportation Bond Bill signed into law in April. Brookline Selectmen approved a resolution authorizing them to sign on. Scott also reported that there will be more discussions with Brookline CAN, the Green Caucus and the Selectmen to move forward this process of getting Brookline certified.

7:18 DISCUSS ANY OBSERVATIONS BY PTAC MEMBERS OR OTHERS ON THE INAUGURAL BROOKLINE OPERATIONS OF "BRIDJ," A NEW ON-DEMAND SHUTTLE SERVICE OPERATING WITH A TEMPORARY TOWN PERMIT. ALSO DISCUSS THE PROCESS AND TIMELINE BY WHICH PTAC WILL SUBMIT COMMENTS TO THE TRANSPORTATION BOARD IN ADVANCE OF BRIDJ'S APPEARANCE BEFORE THE BOARD IN SEPT/OCT FOR LICENSURE.

Chuck Swartz of Centre Street expressed concern that there was no notification of residents of Centre Street before the bus service, which originates there, began. Chuck described the 10 trips a day which are taking place from Centre Street and moving either via William or Shailer Streets to Harvard Street or to Winchester Street in order to continue on their way. The most concerning factor is the size of the vehicles being used as they are much too large to be making the turns and traveling on those small streets. This was especially worrisome when children were walking to school. The number of large buses being used has now been reduced. Mr. Swartz had no complaints about the smaller vehicles but was not sure how his neighbors felt about a bus service now operating on their street. He strongly recommended that the service be moved to Harvard Street.

Abby Swaine of PTAC stated that she was not sure whether the Town's issuance of a temporary jitney license to Bridj required notification of abutters, and that PTAC as a non-regulatory body relied on the town Transportation Department to follow required procedure.

Linda Swartz reported that because the Bridj vehicles use the first block of Centre Street for their staging area, people who normally park there in the morning are forced to park further along Centre Street causing further intense parking. The buses are also so tall that they are interfering with the trees on Centre and the smaller streets.

Linda Jason, PTAC member, reported her observations. On June 2, when Bridj service from Coolidge Corner began, only large buses were in use at Centre St. On June 25, 3 sizes of buses were observed there: the 54-seat bus was only half full, and took "scary" turns proceeding from Fuller to Winchester to Beacon streets and thence downtown; the 27-seater departed for the Seaport area; and a 13-seater went to Kendall Square.

Carey Goldberg also reported that the large tourist-type buses were not appropriate to the small streets such as William and Shailer.

Stephen Ault also opposed the use of large buses on Centre and the smaller streets, terming them an imposition on the neighborhood. He urged PTAC to petition the MBTA to increase service instead of encouraging reliance on more expensive private service. He stated that Bridj buses idled in excess of the 5 minute state limit. He said a commercial parking permit holder complained that the buses were occupying spaces designated for commercial permit parking. Mr. Ault wondered how the decision to award even the temporary permit was authorized and by whom?

Abby Swaine of PTAC verified that the 5 minute idling limit is state law, enforceable by local police and EPA, and passed to Mike Izzo a copy of the law and regulations.

John Harris proposed that Bridj consider using the TJ Maxx parking lot as a staging area rather than Centre Street.

Mike Izzo, Operations Manager of Bridj, thanked the Town of Brookline for authorizing the temporary permit and allowing Bridj to provide a service to the Brookline community. The Bridj system is still being refined as to stop locations, hours, trips and vehicles that are used. Bridj is planning to add other origin points in Centre Street and has been in discussion with the Transportation Department on alternative locations for trip origination, including using Harvard Street at Shailer, where there is an MBTA bus stop, after road work is completed. Bridj ensures that buses idle as little as possible and that vendors are aware of the 5-minute limit. Multiple vendors (Academy, and DPV) are used for the various sized vehicles which include 60 seat buses, and smaller 27 and 13 person vans for the 10 trips made per day. Mr. Izzo estimated that no more than 200 people are using the service daily. He stated that Bridj officers check in with Todd (Kirrane, Transportation Administrator) every 1-2 weeks to discuss issues, and last spoke with him 1.5 weeks ago.

Abby Swaine, PTAC member, said that Bridj buses should not dwell too long in MBTA bus stops, in order to preserve access for public transit buses that need to pull completely into designated stops and maintain a schedule.

Linda Swartz of Centre St added that on Farmer's Market day (Thursday, when the Centre Street parking lot is unavailable) Bridj buses occupied two desirable spaces near the corner of Centre and Shailer, and that the big buses become entangled with tree branches.

Sherry Flashman, PTAC member questioned Linda Lally about the MBTA's opinion about the Bridj service. Linda Lally reported that the MBTA is already way beyond its capacity and welcomes others providing service to locations that the T can not now serve.

**7:40 DEVELOP A RECOMMENDATION TO PRESENT TO THE TRANSPORTATION BOARD ON OBTAINING PUBLIC FEEDBACK REGARDING THE POTENTIAL TO REROUTE THE RTE 51 MBTA BUS TO SERVE MORE POPULAR & POPULOUS DESTINATIONS.**

PTAC is examining potential changes to Rte 51 bus service as part of an effort to respond to comments aired at PTAC's 2011 public hearing at the Baker School, during which more transit service to South Brookline generally and more service connecting north and south Brookline was requested.

PTAC viewed maps provided by the Brookline Planning Department, which showed concentrations of residents within ¼ mile walking distances of existing Rte 51 bus stops, as well as within ¼ mile of likely stop locations where the route to be moved west of Putterham golf course. The current route potentially serves 4620 riders where the alternate routes being suggested could provide service to 7110 riders. A

model was used to determine potential users but basically it is solely a population survey rather than a ridership demand survey.

Ms. Lally verified that the MBTA has no ability to increase the frequency, hours, or days of Rte 51 service. The MBTA already provides a “spur” to Route 51 at the end of the school day to serve BHS students. She stated that the MBTA can survey the riders on the current route regarding how revising the route might affect them, but that a rider survey would provide no information on potential new riders on either of the proposed alternative routes. She showed PTAC a sample rider survey and will send electronic samples to Abby later, who will work to draft a possible Rte 51 rider survey to consider at the July PTAC meeting.

There was general consensus that while a Beverly Road route would have the advantage of serving the Baker School, it might be viewed as a problem by Beverly Road residents and Baker School parents, because of pickup/dropoff logistics at the school and traffic congestion. However, PTAC should not simply drop the possibility without obtaining public input. The alternative to Beverly Road would likely be W. Roxbury Parkway/Newton Street, which PTAC sees as less desirable in terms of walkability to bus stops and lack of sidewalks.

A number of alternatives were suggested for trying to assess demand for moving the current route. A survey could be distributed at the Putterham library, at the Baker School, and among S. Brookline high school students. Since reaching the intended audience via surveys can be difficult, PTAC could hold another public meeting instead or in addition, and advertise it via leaflets on the Rte 51 bus, and in the Putterham library and businesses, and Temple Emeth and via emails to neighborhood associations, Town Meeting Members, Baker School and BHS PTOs and other groups. One option discussed was circulating a link to an online survey, similar to what was done recently for Coolidge Corner (the link appeared on business-sized card made available by merchants). The advantage of an online survey is that more detail could be included.

Linda Jason agreed to ask the Town Clerk whether a survey could be included with water bills when they are mailed. Abby Swaine will ask Andy Martineau in Planning for a list of online neighborhood associations, who could survey their readers/members, and about the town’s overall experience with surveys and survey mechanisms. With that information, Abby will draft a survey that could be sent by PTAC or the Town to residents.

Linda Lally pointed out that bus schedules are changed in December and in late March so a decision with regard to changes would have to be made approximately 30 days before those dates (Nov 1 and Feb 21).

8:30 DISCUSS CONTENT OF LETTERS TO BE DRAFTED FOR THE  
TRANSPORTATION BOARD TO SEND TO THE MBTA REQUESTING 1)  
CONSIDERATION OF ALLOWING FREE LINE-TO-LINE TRANSFERS BETWEEN

SUBWAY BRANCHES FOR MORE FLEXIBLE ONE-WAY TRAVEL, AND 2) NEXT STEPS AND TOWN/MBTA ROLES PURSUANT TO APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS BY TOWN MEETING TO STUDY TRANSIT SIGNAL PRIORITIZATION FEASIBILITY FOR THE C LINE. DRAW UPON A LETTER PREVIOUSLY DRAFTED BY TRANSPORTATION BOARD MEMBER CHRIS DEMPSEY RE TSP.

1) Linda Lally reported that she was told by MBTA that the ticket/toll machines can NOT be reprogrammed to recognize that a fare has already been paid, thereby allowing free access for line transfer. PTAC noted that this position differed from that reported by Paul Regan of the MBTA Advisory Board in his May 21, 2014 report to PTAC, i.e., that free Charlie Card transfers were technically feasible. After some discussion, Ms. Lally agreed to resubmit this question within MBTA. Scott Englander agreed to draft a letter from the Transportation Board requesting that the MBTA look into this possibility.

2) The funds for the study have been approved and the Town is ready to partner with the MBTA to do the study. Dave Barker is the technical person at Mass DOT who will have to determine the technological feasibility of C trains communicating with traffic lights. Abby will contact Dave Barker to start the process of drafting a letter to the MBTA to begin the study, after checking with Todd Kirrane on the status of Town-MBTA communications on this matter.

9:15 OTHER BUSINESS: PLAN FUTURE MEETING DATES & TOPICS: BROOKLINE CAN'S AND COUNCIL ON AGING'S "AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES" AGENDA; PTAC MEMBER RECRUITMENT; POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPING A TRANSIT MASTER PLAN.

The next meeting was scheduled for July 24. The agenda will include:

1. Discussion of contents of draft letter regarding Transit Signal Prioritization.
2. Hear clarification regarding MBTA's position on "line to line" transfers, and determine PTAC response.
3. Review drafts of long and short (rider) versions of a potential Bus 51 survey, and hear feedback regarding town survey ability and experience.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:25.