

MEETING NOTES
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PTAC)
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2018 @ 7:00 PM
BROOKLINE TOWN HALL, ROOM 408
333 WASHINGTON STREET, BROOKLINE MA 02446

7:00 CALL MEETING TO ORDER AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 14, 2018 MEETING.

Present (PTAC): Abby Swaine, Linda Jason, Jane Gould, David Saltman, Mary Rose Fissinger, Casey Uy.

Present (Transportation Board): Nancy Moore.

Guests: David Trevett (Pedestrian Advisory Committee); toward end of meeting: Jules Milner-Brage.

Nov 14 meeting notes approved unanimously.

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

None.

7:15 BRIEF REPORTS FROM PTAC MEMBERS ON: DEC 13 MBTA BETTER BUS PROJECT MEETING ON BUS STOP AMENITIES, AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE WORK ON BENCHES IN THE PUBLIC WAY.

Dec 13 MBTA Better Bus Project Meeting: See notes at addendum, which were sent to PTAC prior to this meeting and reviewed. Discussion:

- Essentially, the survey and meeting amounted to “crowdsourcing” content for the MBTA’s next shelter contract, due out Spring 2019; we also expect to be contacted directly for input.
- Would be nice to know more about how Cambridge funds their bus shelters. Not clear how much in the way of bus stop amenities MBTA is prepared to fund themselves, but get the impression they want municipalities to proactively fund a lot themselves.
- Not clear from the meeting presentation that riders actually do value benches over shelters.
- Access to stops during snow season is more important than furniture.
- A follow-up email from MBTA indicated that the Better Bus Project staff will issue a proposal by the end of January regarding updating and modernizing “some routes” to attain more frequent, reliable service. PTAC will address any aspect pertinent to Brookline. The MBTA will hold several open houses on the project at various locations (none in Brookline) between Jan 31 and Mar 4.

PedAC work on benches and how it could coordinate with PTAC’s:

- David Trevett: PedAC member (and Age-Friendly Cities Committee co-chair) Frank Caro approached PedAC, DPW and other bodies proposing increased Town investment in benches. Frank is proposing creating a Town committee on benches, because currently they seem to not be any body's explicit responsibility. At a recent Age-Friendly Cities Committee meeting, DPW Commissioner Andrew Pappastergion asked where benches are needed; Frank send him a list for Beacon St east of Coolidge Corner; Andrew agreed and asked for a list for west of Coolidge Corner.
- Discussion: Should there be a more systematic way of prioritizing bus stops and other areas for new benches, so limited Town funds don't get spent on lower- versus higher- need locations? Should the Town have an inventory of benches in/along the public way, including who installed them (Town, MBTA, property owner, etc), and materials (wood, metal, etc) in order to better maintain them and identify areas of need?
- For now, PedAC will serve as the coordinating body on benches.

7:30 FINALIZE LETTER REGARDING PTAC'S BUS STOP SURVEY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BENCHES, SHELTERS AND SIGNAGE FOR SUBMITTAL TO THE TRANSPORTATION BOARD.

We reviewed the final draft letter and suggested minor edits, which Abby and David Saltman will finalize asap and submit with attachments to the Transportation Board. Abby and Nancy will ask Todd to put approving this letter on the February TB meeting agenda.

Each PTAC member responsible for attachments specific to a bus route will insert photos of priority stops into the description of the routes. Spreadsheets specific to each route will be rendered more easily readable.

Once the TB sends the letter & attachment describing PTAC's findings and requests to the MBTA and relevant Town boards/committees and staff, PTAC will ask Todd Kirrane to schedule a meeting with MBTA to discuss implementation & funding specifics.

8:15 DISCUSS POSSIBILITY OF WORKING WITH THE MBTA'S BETTER BUS PROJECT ON EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL FOR DEDICATED RUSH HOUR BUS (/BIKE?) LANES IN BROOKLINE.

PTAC member Mary Rose Fissinger shared some research into Arlington's pilot of bus-only lanes. Some key points:

- One-time funding from the Barr Foundation, and tech assistance from the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy and Stantec supported the pilot. According to MassDOT policy, the Town could use state Complete Streets funding for this purpose.
- Pilot area was eastbound .2 mile section of Mass Ave that serves 3 bus routes carrying 100K riders/day. Chosen from entire Mass Ave corridor.
- Pilot period was one month (Oct 9-Nov 9), M-F, 6-9 a.m. Planning started in April, & involved a lot of meetings with stakeholders & community.

- The parking lane was used for the dedicated bus lane; 2 eastbound travel lanes were untouched. A MAPC study determined that parking demand was low during those hours. Bikes were allowed in bus lane.
- Cones, paint and signage were used to identify the temporary exclusion of other vehicles. Some trucks, such as garbage compactors, may have been allowed access.
- Project also involved relocating one stop on the far side of an intersection, and helping buses get through the intersection by installing a queue jump and transit signal priority (TSP).
- Before & after surveys of bus riders indicated high satisfaction. At least some measurable trip time improvement was obtained. No lasting increase in trip time for other vehicles was detected (per Waze data).
- The TSP and queue jump changes have been made permanent, and it seems Arlington may make the rush-hour bus lane designation permanent too.

Discussion:

- Should Brookline consider piloting a bus/bike -only rush hour lane on the Route 66 (Harvard St), perhaps in a stretch where curb extensions (which interrupt parking lanes) are not present, or at a location (e.g., Coolidge Corner) that experiences considerable delay?
- Would even temporary removal/relocation of handicap parking spaces be subject to special review?
- Would need to identify worst areas of delay along the route, and analyze potential gains/costs of pilot, including bus rider travel time, driver travel time, parking demand, and Town staff time.
- Another approach to expediting bus travel that PTAC has discussed before is “bus bulbs,” which extend the platform/stop out into the parking lane such that it meets the bus in the travel lane. While bus bulbs require the bus to stop in the travel lane and thus obstruct other traffic, they can reduce the amount of the parking lane needed for bus access, and save bus travel time otherwise needed to pull into and out of a stop.

Next Steps:

- Mary Rose will ask Everett MA about their experience with bus-only lane pilot.
- Linda will informally assess apparent early-morning parking demand along Harvard St.

8:45 OTHER BUSINESS

Todd Kirrane reported to Abby via email that, subject to final approvals, Brookline will be participating in the MBTA’s YouthPass program, and that the Transportation Dept will administer it.

I-90 Allston Interchange Project: PTAC asked guest Jules Milner-Brage if advocates are happy with the “throat” design just announced by MassDOT. Guus Driessen reported to Abby via email that the Task Force, which he monitors on behalf of Brookline, will resume meeting on January 23.

Abby related that the Brookline/Newton TRIPPS (Transportation Resources, Information, Planning & Partnership for Seniors) program was not awarded a third round of funding by MBTA. It seems to be continuing anyway for the meantime.

Next scheduled PTAC meeting (2ND Wednesdays, bimonthly): March 13. Topic ideas include an update from the School Dept on utilization of the new BHS / South Brookline school buses.

9:15 ADJOURNED

ADDENDUM:

INVITATION: Dec 13 MBTA Better Bus Project Meeting Invitation & Notes

(Came to PTAC via Todd Kirrane)

From: Edwards, Wesley [mailto:wedwards@MBTA.com]

Sent: Wednesday, December 05, 2018 7:25 AM

Subject: FW: MBTA Better Bus Stops Invitation

Dear municipal partners,

Apologies for those who did not receive this invitation earlier, but I wanted to make sure all of you saw this workshop invitation to pull together municipalities and the MBTA to discuss the future of bus stops across the transit network. With our current shelter contract to expire in 2019, we want you to discuss what transit agencies across the world have been implementing to improve customer's experience while standing on a curb waiting for a bus, and have you help us rethink what amenities we should be considering here.

The workshop will be held on Thursday, December 13 from 9 am until 11 am at the MBTA offices, 10 Park Plaza, 2nd Floor, Conference Room 4 in Boston. The specific focus of the workshop will be the bus stop experience of our customers and the impact bus stop improvements are likely to have on service reliability, improving customer experience and total ridership. Please find the invitation attached (original email invite below)

RSVP and Survey: <https://goo.gl/forms/tFtXvVkgMuvA0eH83>

Wes Edwards

Sr. Director of Operations Planning and Outreach

MassDOT Rail & Transit Division/MBTA

617-222-6280

wedwards@mbta.com

MEETING NOTES by Abby Swaine:

For Brookline, Todd Kirrance, Abby Swaine & Mary Rose Fissinger attended.

See “Bus Stops and Amenities” PDF for meeting agenda & most content, especially slide 2 (agenda), 8 (what have riders said?), and 10 (why now?).

Nuggets from Kirk Hovenkotter’s presentation (TransitCenter, “From Sorry to Superb...”):

Bus riders want dignity, shelter & info.

There are too many bus stops; better to focus on locations that are population & work magnets.

Bus stops are in bureaucratic limbo between transit authorities and their towns/cities.

Need clear agreements between authorities, property owners on responsibilities.

Minneapolis: safe street crossing is more important than the stop itself.

Discussion:

Arlington did temporary art installations at several stops as part of a BRT project. Tegin (Cambridge): be wary of maintenance demands.

MBTA is trying to profile the needs of different types of riders.

MBTA envisions placing slim-line fare machines at high ridership bus stops.

Cambridge relies a lot on JCDecaux for shelter snow clearance, but has to push them to achieve real accessibility.

MBTA: maintenance will continue to be a big emphasis in the new shelter contract they issue.

PATI is currently addressing the 200 worst stops, with 80 slated for accessibility modifications in 2019.

Cambridge: advertising is a political issue in Cambridge too. Randolph used to be opposed to advertising on shelters; now they’re not, but want it to be tasteful.

Cambridge has use its own funds to install bus arrival countdown signs, which run on solar power. See it as an equity issue—not everybody should have to have smartphones.

MBTA will seek cities/towns’ feedback on the draft MBTA JCDecaux shelter contract, which expired and is going back out for renewal in the Spring.

Boston: it can be challenging to fit stops into overall streetscapes and the pedestrian experience.

MBTA is taking a more modular approach to stop/amenities configurations, to suit street conditions.

Benches are more important to riders than shelters.

MBTA has a pretty good working relationship with MassDOT; if there's a stop issue on a DOT road, MBTA can help deal with it.