



GMNC Monthly Meeting
October 7 2019 6:30-8:00pm
Mildred Community Center

Meeting Minutes

I. Council Members Present

Janae Tooley, Vice Chair
Matthew Skelly, Secretary
Ruby James Saucer
June Joseph
Cynthia Brewington-Beckford

II. September Meeting Minutes unapproved – Quorum not present

III. Presenters

a) Caroline Koch Vanasse, Transit Planning, Better Bus Project, MassDOT

- Bus carries one third of MBTA ridership, MBTA is really focused on improving the bus service
- Over the past 30 years the population the buses serve has changes drastically, but the bus service has not grown to meet it
- MBTA is using cell phone data to better understand how people are moving across the region, then using that data to develop metrics to analyze service
- MBTA believes that trip time, frequency, reliability cost, and comfort are important factors toward ridership, but that they're different for different people.
- Cell phone data is based not on individuals, but on larger demographic data – however seniors are underrepresented in the cell phone user database
- Data suggests that in the early morning people are largely going locally, to downtown, Newton, and LMA – in the evening it's much more local
- Demonstration projects (open suggestions from Sept 24 – Oct 4) and hopefully trying the ideas in late 2019. Mattapan ideas include transit priority for Route 28, 31, 32 and new connections to Universities and LMA
- Next steps will be demonstration project identifications, continued outreach, developing metrics

Q: How do you go about connecting with the 65+ group?

A: Outreach group led by Rep. Holmes, working to identify large groups and places to go

Q: Why is bus ridership declining?

A: Longer ride times, congestion, unreliable service, and the redesign aims to improve the service for everyone

Q: I was at Forest Hills waiting for the bus, three 21s went by, three Wolcotts went by, when one 31 came, everyone tries to pack onto it, but then three 31s come all at once all stacked together. Some of the higher ups need to ride the bus to better understand these issues

Q: The bus drivers seem to have a different schedule than us, and we need to get rid of the ghost buses!

A: MBTA customer technology department is working on trying to eliminate the ghost buses, but it's a tough problem

Q: Has there been any progress made with the cashless fare system?

A: MBTA is still working on trying to get that running

Q (Rep Holmes): We should be trying to come up with new ideas for the bus,

b) Lindiwe Rennert, Policy & Planning Division, BTM

- New for BTM to have its own transit planning team
- Presentation will cover the project mission, survey results, early action items (implemented between now and the spring of 2020), and discuss ongoing related projects
- Project limits are from Mattapan Square in the south to the intersection with Warren Street in the north. BTM is running an additional Warren Street project, which can work differently, but will work together.
- "The Blue Hill Ave. Transportation Action Plan (TAP) seeks to improve quality of life for corridor users as well as improve the City's current state of transportation related equity by reimagining [the corridor]."
- Severe safety concerns with crashes on Blue Hill Ave. One of the highest crash corridors in the city
- Travel time from Mattapan Square to downtown has increased from 45 minutes in 2016 to over an hour today.
- Community outreach has indicated a desire for better connections to LMA
- BTM has hired a big team to do this, including a person dedicated to this project, who was just hired last week.
- Lots of awesome improvements in Mattapan in recent years: Neponset River Trail, Mattapan Square beautification, new Bluebike Stations, Agestrong getting new benches, Fairmount line improvements
- Over a dozen City of Boston departments working together on this effort
- Survey findings:
 - 589 responses, 71% local residents
 - 56% reported feeling that cars drive too fast on BHA
 - Double parking is a major problem
 - 43% of respondents said they knew someone who's been in a crash
 - Morton Street was reported as the most dangerous feeling intersection
 - 75% want more trees and greenery
 - 54% want real-time bus arrival displays
- Other outreach results:
 - Wayfinding isn't good enough
 - "The Avenue should function like an Avenue" like in NYC where all the signals are coordinated
 - Should be a great place to display art all the time

- Should be a fun place for people of all ages
- Better street lighting
- Top transportation challenges:
 - Overcrowded buses
 - Inconvenient weekend bus schedules
 - Unreliable bus service
 - Poor bus etiquette
 - Vehicle traffic/congestion
 - Bus fares are too high
- Improvements coming:
 - New Benches
 - Tree Planting
 - Replace the Banners
 - Sidewalk Murals
 - Replace the existing trashcans
 - Expand the City's PaintBox Program
 - Speed Feedback sign at Walk Hill
 - Upgrades to the American Legion Intersection
 - Sidewalk and Ramp Improvements
 - Pedestrian Crossing Retiming at Intersections
 - Safety Signage Campaign "Drive like your mom's in the crosswalk" "Blue Hill Safe"
 - Curbside Regulation Changes
 - Street Repaving from Dudley all the way to the Milton boarder
 - Activation of transit signal priority
 - Bike box at Warren Street
- Other projects:
 - Plan Mattapan
 - Repaving of Blue Hill Avenue
 - Franklin Park Masterplan
 - Traffic Signal Upgrades

Q: Mattapan Library Arts Committee is talking about putting a statue out in front of the library

Q: Are the trash cans going to be the solar ones? The big belly trash cans? Will they be able to take recycling?

A: We'll check with public works to see what are available

Q: Major crash location at Ellington, no protection at this intersection, what's the plan?

A: No new geometry yet, but a lot of feedback around the vicinity of Old Road, and it may be appropriate to change the geometry.

Q: Coordinated signals sound great, but how will they manage speed?

A: We have the ability to change the way the lights work

Congestion is a major issue, but so are speeds, how?

Why corridor users in mission statement?

c) Julia Wallerice, Program Manager, Boston Program Manager, Institute for Transportation & Development Policy (ITDP)

- Mission is to promote sustainable transportation
- World wide company
- Really big on bus rapid transit (BRT) – everything but the choo choo!
- BRT requires 1.9 miles of dedicated lanes
- Needs dedicated right of way, busway alignment, usually down the middle of the road
- Dedicated BRT moves much, much more people in the same amount of space than you can with cars
- Offboard fare collection is very important
- All doors open and everyone can board at once
- Stations are huge, heated, and usually branded
- Cost comparison between BRT and light rail is difficult to say for sure, but a rule of thumb might be seven times more affordable
- Boston does not have BRT, but we do have a ton of dedicated bus lanes
- Lots of places in greater Boston have been piloting elements of BRT
- We're all about moving people, not cars.
- BRT cuts down on variance, which is really helpful for people planning their trips
- On average, these pilots saved riders about 5 minutes, but riders reported feeling like it saved 15-20 minutes, so people really liked it
- Could BRT work for Boston, and if so, where?
- MAPC says that racial inequity is a big problem with our current bus system
- Five prime corridors for BRT in Boston, including Dudley to Mattapan
- BRT in Mattapan could cut the travel times in half
- BRT can help with air quality, too
- BRT success story in the Pulse project in Richmond, VA

Q: Why was BRT shot down when it was previously proposed?

A: Came down to process, and community buy in. The way it was presented to the community didn't work, it felt like it was too top down, and we had to return the money to the federal government. We're hopeful that this time whatever happens will be because it's what people want.

Q: The 28X project didn't do a good job of listening to its planners. There's not enough buses delivering people to the Fairmount line.

A: Goal of BRT is to have a one-seat ride, but should be used in concert with other bus lines

Q: What would happen to the existing bus stops?

A: The bus stops would be more spaced apart, but they're not really express. They move from stop to stop more quickly, though. When you do BRT, you do the whole system

Q: How is the construction of a new BRT systems? How do they impact the City?

A: It's a major undertaking, major infrastructure, and different cities handle it differently. A lot of the time there's a lot of incidental work that happens at the same time.

Q: Has there been a study of who uses BRT? Is it different ages, commuters, etc? What would the need in Boston be?

A: Could be anything, really. CTfastrak in Hartford carries a lot of commuters, but in Mexico City it's more like people getting around the inner core.

Rep Holmes: We know the demand is there, but now we need the money. We used to have the money, but we lost it

IV. Working Committees – No updates this month.

IV – Wrap Up Announcements

- Tshirt winner!
- Allentza Michel – Mattapan open studios on October 26 and 27. Neighborhood walking tour on Saturday, Jazz brunch from 11-1:30, many other events
- Rep. Holmes – B-3 Haunted House on October 29, please give candy to Cynthia. Shout out to Kayla, a young member who's interested in getting involved
- Roudnie Celestin – Resident only parking program will be revamped