



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

October 23, 2024

5:30 p.m.

VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM

Present: Rama Balakrishna (Chair), Zhengyu Huang, Paula Walsh, Chris Brandon

Absent: Andreas Kinzlmaier

Select Board Representative: Jim Snyder-Grant

Invited guests: QinRui Pang-Engineer, Town of Acton. (Joined 6:20 pm)

1. Opening

Chair Rama Balakrishna opened the meeting at 5:34 p.m.

2. Regular Business

- A. Approval of Meeting Minutes – Deferred until the next meeting.
- B. Council on Aging Update: None
- C. Select Board Update: Jim Snyder-Grant shared several updates:
 - a. Taxi program has run out of money. In an effort to keep the program running until November 1st, funds are being diverted from other transportation funds.
 - b. Town manager has created a small task force of staff tasked with solving day to day transportation problems. Laura Ducharme, the town's Social Worker has been doing some of this for a while and is part of the task force. If a resident contact Town Hall with queries on how to get from point A to point B, this task force can help identify available services. There have not yet been any announcements about this service but information will soon be available to the public.
 - c. The hours when the COA van is running has been extended to 4 pm, 3 days a week to accommodate seniors interested in attending afternoon programs at the COA. There is still no plan to extend service on Tuesday evening when the center is open until 7 pm when many desirable activities are scheduled.
 - d. Town Manager, John Mangiaratti, has had some positive interactions with the LRTA, including the return of the repaired electric van and the possibility of one of their bus routes extending into Acton. Currently, there is a bus stop in Littleton on Great Road that according to Chris, one Acton rider has been connecting with. An extension of that route into Acton would significantly increase riders' options.
 - e. Electric van update: the van was provided to the town by the LRTA but upon arrival was found to have several issues that needed to be repaired before it could be put in service. The van has now been repaired and returned to the town and is available should it be needed to substitute for another van being serviced or if the town wishes to extend the CAT route to 2 buses. Discussion included questions



about how long a charge lasts (approximately 100 miles), where recharging would occur (new fast charge stations located at corner of Main St and Great Road) and how long a recharge would take.

- f. Way finding signs: the town is actively working on having a consistent branding for signs around town. This is a different initiative from the Bike Trail signage that will be uniform regardless of which town users are in.

D. Bicycle Update: Nashoba Greenways continues to be on hiatus due to a staffing shortage.

E. Sidewalks:

- a. Piper Street: recent emails from Stow Street residents have raised questions on what the timing is for getting a sidewalk. Some residents were questioning why the town sent notices to Piper Road residents looking for feedback on sidewalks when no resident concerns about Piper had been raised. The sidewalk prioritization spreadsheet initially created in 2008 was reviewed to determine if the prioritization was the reason. It was determined that Piper Road had a higher prioritization rate than Stow Street taking into consideration the resident density, lack of site lines due to curves, blindspots, collector street status, and had been entered onto the sidewalk spreadsheet prior to Stow Street.
- b. Sidewalk Spreadsheet: Rama spent time reviewing and explaining the criteria included in the 2008 spreadsheet and the revised 2017 data collection form created by the former Sidewalk Committee before it became part of the Transportation Advisory Committee. For example: State roadway classifications include Interstate, Arterial, Collector and Local, some having subgroups and all of which use volume for classification. For example, the three road classifications that apply to Acton Streets are Arterial (over 8,000 cars per day), Collector (between 2,000-8,000 cars per day), and Local (less than 2,000 cars per day). Other criteria included were site lines, vehicle speeds, shoulder depth less than 2 feet and proximity to amenities (trains, shops, schools, etc). In addition, TAC members noted several projects still in pending status that had actually been completed. Engineering will be asked to update the spreadsheet.
- c. Stow Street: The section of Stow Street (Robbins to Maple) (55) that recent emails from residents identify as problematic had a significantly lower prioritization rate than Piper Road (110) or Stow Street (Maple to Martin) (70). In addition, the Robbins to Maple section of Stow abuts Wetlands which cannot support a sidewalk. It may be useful for Engineering to reach out to residents and explain the hindrances and offer alternatives to increase pedestrian safety such as speed bumps, reduced speed, and increased police presence). Rama will send an email to Town Manager and Engineering outlining the concerns and asking for input. Note: the previous plans for renovating Stow Street between Maple and Martin are on hold due to renovations occurring at the Old Richards property next to the train station.
- d. Data updating: Given it has been 16 years since the prior evaluation of Acton Streets, it may be useful to reassess at minimum Piper Road and Stow Street. Some of the data TAC can fill in but other data (vehicle volumes) will require



Engineering to assess. According to QinRui, Engineering only has a single counter which is currently in use and is then scheduled for Coleman Street. The counter is not used in the Winter months due to the potential damage to the casing either by the cold temperatures and/or from plows. The earliest the counter can be scheduled for Stow Street would be in the Spring. QinRui will update TAC when the count is completed.

- e. Taylor Road: QinRui described the work completed at the property located at the corner of Taylor and Minot. The homeowner approved the sidewalk going around the tall trees at the border of the property. Thus the roadway will be enlarged on the opposite side to compensate for the sidewalk depth. The gravel base has been created but paving cannot occur until the Spring 2025. Pedestrians can walk on the gravel base in the meantime.
- f. During the Winter, there will be a lot of planning happening in addition to the survey information being collected. Physical activity on most projects will resume in the Spring.
- g. Complete Streets: QinRui plans to bring in a Complete Streets consultant and plans to have them attend a near future TAC meeting.
- h. Prospect Street: QinRui asked if TAC had a preferred Sidewalk/Roadway concept as presented at a prior meeting. TAC previously stated the majority preferred Option 1 which included the two-way street with a single, wider sidewalk for bikes and pedestrians. Rama will send an email formalizing support of the Option.

F. Acton Transportation Action Plan: Travis Pollack from MAPC has previously offered to assist TAC in formulating a plan and potential funding but asked to put this on a back burner until the Summer. Rama will reach out to him again and find out if he's available yet to assist in working on this.

3. New/Special Business:

A. Citizen/Member Concerns:

- i. Dispatcher issue: Paula Walsh shared an anecdotal experience with the TransAction dispatchers. After successfully scheduling several van trips to the Senior Center, she tried to schedule a van appointment to the Acton Woman's Club on Main Street but was placed on a waitlist due to a heavy schedule already in place. She was assured that according to company policy, she would either receive a voicemail confirming the van trip or a phone direct phone call explaining why the van appointment could not be arranged. Neither occurred and no van showed up. It's nice when TAC receives reports on van ridership but we should also be tracking how many people are turned away and denied services. The town manager is the current point person for transportation and Rama will email him with the issue and ask if he would be willing to attend a TAC Meeting along with TransAction administration to discuss the ridership and the numbers of people



being denied service as well as the poor adherence to the protocols currently in place.

B. Next meeting: Due to the Thanksgiving Holiday, TAC cannot meet on its usual fourth Wednesday so the meeting will be moved forward to Wednesday November 20, 2024 at 5:30 pm via Zoom.

At 6:51 pm, A motion to close the meeting was made by Paula Walsh and seconded by Chris Brandon. Roll call was done, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Acronyms:

ADA= Americans with Disability Act

ARPA= American [COVID-19] Recovery Program Act

Boston MPO= Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization, the part of MassDOT that disburses federal transportation funds

BAG= Bicycle Advisory Group (formed January 2021)

CMAQ= Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality

COD= Commission on Disabilities

COVID= Novel Coronavirus 2019 causing a worldwide pandemic in 2020

CTPS= Central Transportation Planning Staff, within the Boston MPO, within MassDOT

**Landline= a signage and way-finding project to connect communities by bike and pedestrian, by MAPC and MassTrails of MassDOT.*

MAGIC= Minuteman Advisory Group on Inter-local Coordination, which is our 13-town subregion of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council

MAPC= Metropolitan Area Planning Council

MassDOT=Massachusetts Department of Transportation

MBTA= Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

NRG=Nashoba Regional Greenways Coalition

SATSAC= South Acton Train Station Advisory Committee

TAC= Transportation Advisory Committee

TMA= Transportation Management Association