

Meeting Notes

Date: September 13, 2018, 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

Place: Conference Room 1, 10 Park Plaza, 2nd floor

Notes Taken By: Rail Vision Team

Project Name: MBTA Rail Vision Advisory Committee – Meeting 2

ATTENDANCE

Advisory Committee Members

- Chairman Joseph Boncore
- Senator William Brownsberger
- Representative Carolyn Dykema
- Representative Daniel Ryan
- Mayor Dan Rivera
- Jim Aloisi, TriMount Consulting
- Stephanie Cronin, Middlesex 3
- Rick Dimino, A Better City
- Ben Forman, MassInc
- Peter Forman, South Shore Chamber
- Helena Fruscio Alstman, EOHED
- Michael Lambert, Brockton Area Transit
- Paul Matthews, 495 Partnership
- Jesse Mermell, Alliance for Business Leadership
- Chris Osgood, City of Boston

- Travis Pollack, MAPC
- Susanne Rasmussen, City of Cambridge
- Lucas Santos, Representative Moulton's Office
- Charlie Ticotsky, T4MA

MassDOT/MBTA

- Scott Hamwey, MassDOT
- Mike Muller, MBTA
- Alexandra Markiewicz, MassDOT
- Jody Ray, MBTA

Consultant Team

- Kristine Wickham, VHB
- Theresa Carr, VHB
- Nancy Farrell, RVA
- Stefan Ruel, Steer

This document summarizes the discussion at the September 13, 2018 MassDOT/MBTA Rail Vision Advisory Committee meeting. All references to slides relate to the presentation, which has been posted to the [project website](https://www.mbta.com/projects/rail-vision) at <https://www.mbta.com/projects/rail-vision>.

WELCOME

Nancy Farrell, RVA, team member and meeting moderator, welcomed the members and in particular, introduced the new Advisory Committee members, Mayor Dan Rivera of Lawrence; Mike Lambert, representing Ray Ledoux, Brockton Area Transit (BAT); and Lucas Santos, representing Congressman Seth Moulton.

N. Farrell outlined the meeting agenda which consisted of: a presentation on the Evaluation Framework; presentation and discussion of the Tier 1 Service Concepts; and if there is sufficient time, an introduction to Tier 1 Models. The public is welcome to make comments or ask questions at the end of the meeting.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

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M. Muller, MBTA Project Manager, introduced the steps of the Evaluation Process (see slides 3-9). The team has developed a set of ideas or service concepts that meet one of three desired outcomes – reducing travel time, increasing service frequency, or improving system connectivity. The range of unique service concepts varies in terms of cost and complexity to implement, but each is being evaluated for each of the commuter rail lines and for the service as a whole as part of the current Tier 1 Evaluation process, using a series of sketch tools. The sketch tools in operation for Tier 1 include ATTune, a scheduling and operations tool; RDM, a ridership analysis tool; and an operating costs model. The team is currently engaged in the Tier 1 evaluation.

This evaluation will develop packages of concepts on a system-wide basis that are called service alternatives. Up to eight service alternatives will be analyzed next year. Each service alternative is expected to comprise several service concepts described above, grouped as packages. M. Muller emphasized that not all service concepts will make sense for all of the lines, and some service concepts might not make sense for any of the lines. The Tier 1 evaluation will help assess the effectiveness of the service concepts.

S. Hamway reminded the committee members of the work of Focus40, which is now available for review and comment. Focus40 classifies investments into commitments through 2023 and major priorities through 2040. It also imagines “Big Ideas” and highlights “Priority Places,” which can be a lens for evaluating alternatives. In essence, Focus40 looks to Rail Vision for big ideas and the next set of service priorities for Commuter Rail.

M. Muller described the three sketch level models the team is using to analyze potential train operations, cost their implications and assess the impacts of the concepts on land use. He listed:

- ATTune – scheduling model that will show what train operations are possible at a high level given certain investments
- Operating Cost Model – calculates operating cost implications of transit investments
- Regional Dynamic Model (RDM) – dynamic sketch model that calculates ridership estimates for different types of investments

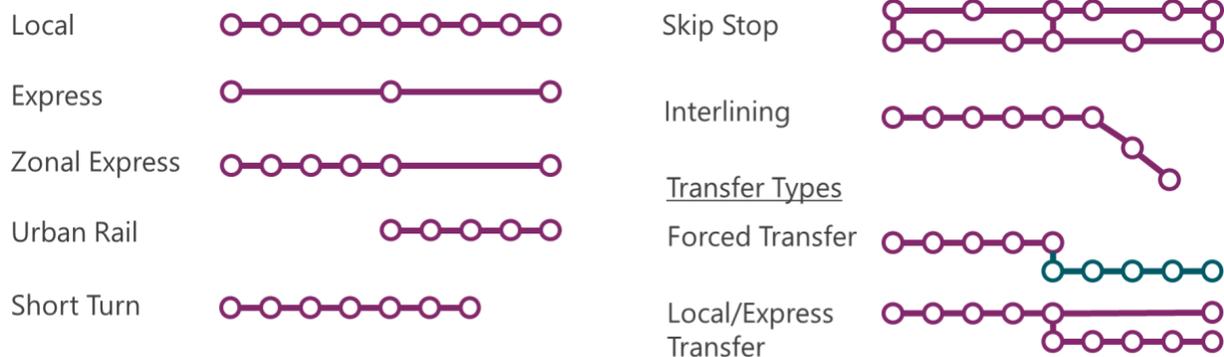
M. Muller noted that the operating cost model is using actual Commuter Rail data. By early next year (2019) the project will be ready to forward up to eight service alternatives into the Tier 2 evaluation. The Tier 2 evaluation, to be conducted in the first half of 2019, will employ the traditional RTC model to assess train operations, the CTPS model to evaluate ridership effects, and the RDM model to evaluate land use effects for the eight alternatives.

- J. Aloisi asked what kind of fare structure is assumed. M. Muller clarified that the current fare structure is assumed for the Tier 1 analysis. S. Hamway added that the reason for this is there is a parallel process underway to analyze fares. It is possible that when entering the Tier 2 evaluation and looking in more detail at concepts such as the North-South Rail Link and Urban Rail, sensitivity testing might be done for a different fare structure.

TIER 1 SERVICE CONCEPTS

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Before presenting the service concept ideas, S. Hamwey described a set of diagrams, shown below, which are used in the maps to indicate a variety of service possibilities:



S. Hamwey showed a series of Service Concept maps (slides 14-21) for Urban Rail; Express or Zonal Express; Skip Stop Service; and Interline Service with New Transfers to Rapid Transit. He and M. Muller emphasized that while each of the concepts is shown on a separate map for presentation purposes, the eight service alternative packages the team is developing will be a mix of strategies. They appear as pure concepts just to be introduced to avoid presuming how concepts will be paired on each line.

Urban Rail

Urban Rail provides frequent, all-day service connecting higher density stations in the inner core. It permits timed transfers with traditional commuter rail or Zonal Express service to outer stations. S. Hamwey asked the committee if the concept is proposing the right corridors and the right extents of service. Is Urban Rail worth the investment if it requires more transfers or increases travel time to some locations?

The diagrams in slide 14 and 15 show the Urban Rail concepts. This concept includes coordinated transfer points and possible segments where Urban Rail would be explored.

- Paul Matthews asked whether Urban Rail merely duplicates existing MBTA rapid transit service. W. Brownsberger noted that even in areas of potential overlap (e.g., Riverside to Yawkey on the Framingham/Worcester Line) the Green Line is already over capacity and wouldn't be able to serve additional ridership.
- J. Aloisi suggested that he would like to see all-day service to and from the ends of the lines, not just in the inner core, such as to Worcester, Haverhill, and Lowell. This type of service would help deal with some of the major congestion areas in Greater Boston. S. Hamwey clarified that more frequent all-day service is being explored but does not lend itself to being shown on a map.
- D. Ryan said Urban Rail might get more use and serve more demographics, as many residents of inner core communities see Commuter Rail as a solution just for long-distance trips. He suggested that the Committee should be mindful of equity and economic issues: wealth in downtown is stratified between wealthy and poor; where more parity can exist in the suburbs.

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- J. Aloisi referenced the report produced by A Better City laying out Transit Growth Districts. He would like to see an overlay of the service concepts with what we know about growth trends, with transit growth centers. Land use is an important factor. D. Rivera noted the extent of the Urban Rail being explored, saying that data/numbers would be needed to help understand where the concept is most effective.
- R. Dimino said it is helpful to look at the growth centers and the service to Gateway Cities. He would also like to see the future West Station incorporated in the planning.
- S. Rasmussen suggested that Alewife Station should be incorporated as it is a large growth center. She supports including West Station, and perhaps Sullivan to Kendall across the Grand Junction.
- B. Forman asked about equity as a measure. S. Hamwey said that the goal of the urban rail concept was to provide high frequency service within the higher density inner core, regardless of demographics characteristics.
- C. Osgood supports including West Station and looking at the potential for connecting Hyde Park Ave. along the Providence Line.
- R. Dimino voiced support for exploring a connection using the Grand Junction to connect West Station with Kendall Square.
- H. Fruscio Alstman said she would like to see all Commuter Rail run more frequently, not just service in the inner core. S. Hamwey explained that increasing frequency systemwide does not lend itself to mapping, so this presentation does not have a map illustrating that concept.

Express or Zonal Express

This map set incorporates two concepts:

- *Express service* makes few if any stops between terminal points. It would be combined with local service through coordinated transfers. The map shows Express stations (key transfer points) in green (slide 16).
- *Zonal Express* provides local service from an outer to an intermediate stop, and Express service to the inner core. Other service begins at the intermediate stop and provides local service to the core. Zonal Express could also provide express service from an outer to an intermediate stop, and local service to the inner core.

Either Express or Zonal Express is compatible with other service concepts such as Urban Rail and Interlining, but is not compatible with Skip Stop service. S. Hamwey asked if the Express Stations are in the right locations. Is reducing travel time from high ridership, outer stations desirable if it requires a transfer for those traveling to and from stations with lower ridership?

S. Hamwey listed examples of Express stations, such as Anderson/Woburn; Framingham on the Worcester line; Littleton on the Fitchburg line, etc. Now the service is basically suburban to the core, but the intent of this service is to provide service to match demand in both directions, including trips from the core to the ends.

- C. Dykema suggested too much of the orientation is focused on east-west and shouldn't be. She gave an example of a firm with its research and development facility in Framingham, and staff

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traveling from residences or other company locations in the inner core to the west. S. Hamwey agreed and clarified that the intent was to provide more frequent service in both directions (inbound and outbound) and that the green dots are intended to represent destinations as well as origins.

- B. Forman said there is a tension between locations with higher paying jobs and transit that works better in more distant locations. He asked about service to locations such as Westborough, Quincy, and JFK/UMass. S. Hamwey stated that this concept explores seamless transfers, that transfers if designed correctly are not bad but can be used to provide seamless and efficient service.
- P. Matthews suggested looking at a station's infrastructure and capacity: Framingham would be more likely to host Express service now, while a station like Littleton might need additional facilities. He asked about the capital needs to address the first and last mile.
- M. Lambert said the analysis has to look at employment, transit connections, job growth, and parking to understand the best locations for the green dots.
- S. Cronin said it will be important to understand how to increase usage of less well-used stations.
- J. Ray was asked if zonal express is added, will there be a time savings. J. Ray said it would depend on the line.
- J. Mermell supports overlaying future projections on the concepts. It's important to understand change and how difficult it would be to implement one solution given uncertainty about the future. M. Muller said it would depend on the type of change – whether it's infrastructure or a vehicle versus a schedule difference.
- R. Dimino remarked that it's important to test the corridors – what are the travel time savings, what are the land uses along the corridor? S. Hamwey agreed that this is being assessed. R. Dimino also stated that it might be useful to connect to Brockton for the southeastern area of the state, or Randolph.

Skip Stop Service

S. Hamwey said that Skip Stop Service provides service equivalent to what exists today at each station but reduces overall travel times by having more trains operating along the corridor, each "skipping" stations to provide service at select stations (for example, every other station). The tradeoff question for this service is: is it acceptable to require a transfer to reach some intermediate stations?

S. Hamwey reviewed the map and indicated that the node locations, which are often the same high-ridership stations denoted with a green dot on the Zonal Express map, offer transfer opportunities for riders looking for intermediary stations. The aim of this service is to reduce travel time without impacting frequency.

- D. Rivera stated that this concept looks complicated to execute. J. Mermell asked where the skip stop service was in operation. S. Ruel from the consultant team said that although it is not as common as Zonal Express, agencies operate skip stop service in the U.S. and Europe.
- T. Pollack said he assumes the routes are operating the same way in both directions (inbound/outbound). This was affirmed.

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- R. Dimino said that some of these locations will depend on capacity and running time and ridership. What is the capacity of the rapid transit system, if more transfers result at stations like Forest Hills, can the Orange Line take on the additional capacity needed?
- S. Rasmussen said the issue with transfers is how good they are: are they quick and easy. European systems seem to have figured out how to accomplish transfers that are essentially painless. S. Hamwey said to make this service work, it will be necessary to identify places for a second platform or third track.

Interline Service and New Transfers

S. Hamwey explained that Interline Service increases service capacity in the core by pairing service lines, allowing connections to the core via connecting stops to rapid transit service so that commuter rail trains do not need to terminate at North or South Station. He asked committee members to consider a tradeoff question: how important is it for all trips to come into North or South Station if not doing so results in more frequent service and improved connections to the rapid transit network? (See slides 20 and 21.)

S. Hamwey noted that this map does several things: it shows lines that could be paired; it shows potential connection points between commuter rail and rapid transit; and it includes major projects in the core such as the North-South Rail Link (NSRL) and South Station Expansion (SSX). He explained the service with an example: some trains would take riders to a rapid transit station, such as riding the Fitchburg line to Alewife, then taking the Red Line to the core. The large dots on the map show stops connecting with rapid transit, some with short turns; and some without. Yellow lines show potential conversions to an alternate form of reliable transit; one is depicted from Forest Hills to Needham Heights, another connects Malden Center and Reading. These lines would be more responsive to local trips and local land use densities.

- J. Aloisi observed that it looks like a mix and match. He suggested that a connection from Old Colony to Fairmount, for example, could be a significant connection. He suggested that it might be an expensive service. Would it be electric? S. Hamwey said very possibly this would be Urban Rail which could use Electric Multiple Units.
- W. Brownsberger asked how a connection would work from the Newburyport/Rockport line to Wonderland, for example. How far is that connection? S. Hamwey said these could be up to $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, in which case a people mover might be a solution in that location, while in other places, the commuter rail is close to the rapid transit station.
- R. Dimino asked whether Porter and Alewife would both remain open for commuter rail stops. He asked about the nature of the connections at Alewife, Broadway, and Wonderland, and suggested adding Chelsea (with a Silver Line connection). S. Hamwey said the team didn't look at every possible location where a connection could be made to rapid transit, and welcomed suggestions.
- R. Dimino said he would like to see data for Porter, Chelsea and other transfer points that might make good connections to jobs. He suggested that interlining might be phased in after testing some strategies. S. Hamwey agreed, with the likelihood of at 10-15 year horizon. J. Ray said a pilot program might make sense to test turning Old Colony Line trains on weekends at Braintree.
- W. Brownsberger asked if the Fitchburg trains would turn at Alewife. S. Hamwey said that could be a possibility for some trains to turn at Alewife, particularly if riders can transfer to an improved Red Line service. D. Rivera said this is an interesting idea that could allow for more service along

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any of the given rail lines. W. Brownsberger would like data on Red Line ridership today. J. Ray said there is an unused right of way at Alewife (which is now a bicycle and pedestrian path). S. Rasmussen noted this is a popular bike path. She would like to see more land use data both for Alewife and Porter Square, where a major rezoning effort is underway.

- H. Fruscio Alstman suggested that rebranding would be appropriate for that kind of service so that residents of the area see it as more of an extension of the rapid transit network (such as an extra red line). C. Osgood suggested there are comparable two-seat ride options in other places, such as the NY system, and are already employed in Mattapan.
- D. Ryan suggested that Commuter Rail is underused because people don't think about riding it on weekends or to make reverse trips, for example, to amusement parks, for Halloween in Salem and as leisure rail.
- S. Cronin observed that this map is a bit of a mash-up, including the NSRL, perhaps sending a mixed message. M. Muller agreed that these show a variety of service options compiled on one map. There are a number of issues to consider as the alternatives are developed, including land use; first and last mile options; Complete Streets implementation. B. Forman said it would be useful to think about how to incentivize communities in the corridors to step up and partner on these issues, particularly first and last mile travel.
- D. Rivera asked if station consolidation would be on the table. S. Hamwey confirmed that yes, once more data and findings were available this would be considered.

W. Brownsberger and others expressed interest in learning more about the modeling and how the concepts will be developed. S. Hamwey said the team can set up an optional workshop for those who want to "see" inside the process. The team intends to present the results of the analysis at the November Advisory Committee meeting. In December, the plan is to discuss and confirm the eight service alternatives that would be carried forward into the Tier 2 analysis next year. R. Dimino said that a number of constituencies will want to weigh in and to be careful in setting out the timeframes. He suggested that the members will want more time to provide thoughtful deliberation. H. Fruscio Alstman asked what was being asked of the committee – are they providing input, picking the eight, somewhere in between? S. Hamwey clarified that input is sought from the Advisory Committee. He noted that the MBTA needs time to build out the models in light of the timetable for the operator procurement; any short-term additions have to be prepared by the end of 2019. That means taking the eight alternatives to the public in January 2019. W. Brownsberger suggested building in more time for discussion by the Advisory Committee through additional "optional" meetings. L. Santos said the alternatives should be aspirational, reflecting the type of service provided in Europe. The data should talk to riders and reviewers. S. Hamwey responded that this is consistent with the team's approach. One of the issues is how to package the alternatives based on the data. J. Aloisi asked to see what assumptions are built into the model. S. Cronin said she is hoping for some big ideas: the alternatives should outline how to get people out of the city and address first mile/last mile issues.

S. Hamwey asked the members to look at the Tier 1 evaluation process (slide 5) again. The modeling will provide significant data to support the evaluation of numerous service concepts at a high level, including ridership and operational feasibility. Additional questions will be answered at a more refined level in the Tier 2 analysis.

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S. Hamwey noted that there was not going to be sufficient time to go into the agenda items regarding ATTune and RDM at this meeting. The staff will reach out about an optional meeting to review the modeling.

PUBLIC COMMENT

N. Farrell noted that the presentation will be posted on the project website and the team will let the members know when it's available. She asked if there were any comments or questions from the public.

J. Strunkin, 495 Partnership, said the concepts have to consider jobs outside of Boston, as well as recreational opportunities. L. Santos said the service should be more like Parisian rail. The process should be to look at each goal and work backwards toward an aspirational future. S. Hamwey said that comparisons between the MBTA system and Paris's are complicated by the significant differences in urban scale and density.

S. Hamilton, MASCO, congratulated the team on an ambitious project. She asked if the materials could be made available on line before the meeting and/or at full size. She suggested that constituents have to be part of the conversation, and not necessarily from the perspective of Downtown or existing service users. MASCO represents the Longwood Medical Area, one of the largest employment centers in the state. The goal should be to serve the people first and the system second. Ruggles Station is the 4th largest in the system by ridership and carries the largest number of Medical Area employees. Ruggles is not a station that should be skipped. She hopes that the recommendations will be oriented toward the kind of system the region needs.

S. Hamwey thanked the committee members for their participation.