

Meeting Notes

Date: October 02, 2019
3:00 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.

Place: North Shore Latino Business
Association

Notes Taken By: Lynn Transit Action Plan Team

Project Name: Lynn Transit Action Plan
Advisory Committee – Meeting 2

ATTENDANCE

Advisory Committee Members

Senator Brendan Crighton
Alberto Calvo, North Shore Latino Business
Association
Sezan McDaniel, representing Representative
Peter
Capano
Bill Bochnah, representing Jim Cowdell, Lynn EDIC
Mayor Thomas McGee
Rick Jakious, representing Congressman Seth
Moulton
Andrea Baez, YMCA of Metro North, Lynn
Colin Codner, Lynn Area Chamber of Commerce
Amanda Dooling, North Shore Community
College
Pam Edwards, Mass Senior Action
Jonathon Feinberg, New Lynn Coalition
Gordy Hall, Lynn Business Partnership
Natasha Soolkin, New American Association of
Massachusetts
Ned Shinnick, Lynn Police Department
Kurt Gaertner, EEA
Lisa Orgettas, Disability Resource Center
Kathleen Paul, Mass Senior Action

MassDOT/MBTA

Alexandra Markiewicz, MassDOT
Kat Benesh, MBTA

Consultant Team

Kristine Wickham, VHB
Michael Gordon, VHB
Brendan Linard, VHB

Other

Bob O'Brien, City of Revere
Julie DeMauro, City of Revere
Pat Gentile, NSCC
Meaghan Hamill, Mayor's Office
Frances Martinez, North Shore Latino Business
Association
Don Walker, City of Lynn OECD
Steven Levy, 350
Jeff Weeden, Lynn Housing Authority
Sgt. Thomas Holland, Lynn Police Department

This document summarizes the discussion at the October 2, 2019 MassDOT/MBTA Lynn Transit Action Plan Advisory Committee meeting. All references to slides relate to the presentation that has been posted to the project website.

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WELCOME

Alexandra Markiewicz, MassDOT Project Manager, welcomed the members of the Advisory Committee as well as the members of public in attendance. A. Markiewicz expressed that questions were welcome throughout the presentation, and that there would be additional time for questions at the end of the meeting.

INTRODUCTIONS

A. Markiewicz asked each member of the Advisory Committee (AC) to reintroduce themselves and their organization. Additionally, Bob O'Brien from Revere introduced himself and said he was happy to have the chance to be there, as transportation issues from Lynn affect Revere as well. He also mentioned that Lynn and Revere both face similar challenges in dealing with congestion passing through their cities between Boston and points north.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

A. Markiewicz gave a presentation on the recent developments in the Lynn Transit Action Plan. Before discussing findings, A. Markiewicz briefly recapped the purpose of the Lynn Transit Action Plan, as well as the goals and objectives of the study. The presentation included a refresher on the "3 Es": Equity, Economic Development and Environment, which frame the goals of the effort.

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

A. Markiewicz detailed the recent efforts in stakeholder outreach. These efforts have included stakeholder briefings with a number of groups, such as the New Lynn Coalition and the YMCA, among others. A. Markiewicz emphasized the meeting with MBTA bus operators, as they among others have detailed knowledge of the system. Some concerns raised by bus operators included private vehicles blocking bus stops as well as issues with bus stops not being striped as long enough.

The presentation then went into detail on the public input survey that the team is currently distributing throughout Lynn. A. Markiewicz noted that there have been around 420 responses to the survey already, and that teams had been out administering the survey in person.

Comments from the Advisory Committee:

- A representative from the Mass. Senior Action Council asked how much outreach has been done in languages other than English, since speakers of many different languages live in Lynn. A. Markiewicz noted that the survey is available in six different languages. She also noted that, while most responses had been filled out in English, around 6% were in Spanish.
- Mayor McGee asked where the surveys have been conducted in person so far. A. Markiewicz answered that they have had teams stationed at Central Square as well as two of the farmer's

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markets in the city. She also noted that teams will be stationed at some of the schools and shopping centers in the coming days and weeks.

- Mayor McGee suggested that it would be helpful to use the school committee to send the survey out to the 17,000 students in the system, and that he could help to reach out to the committee. He also mentioned that many of the churches in the area would be good places to conduct the survey.
- Natasha Soolkin mentioned that the health center would be a good location to conduct surveys as well, especially to reach different language speakers.
- Jonathon Feinberg of the New Lynn Coalition said that his group was having an election event on October 30th, and that this could be an option to promote the survey.
- Frances Martinez of the North Shore Latino Business Association mentioned that they were hosting a block party on the evening of October 8th, and that this would also be an opportunity for survey outreach.

A. Markiewicz thanked everyone for their comments and said they would be incorporated into the discussion around the outreach plan.

CONTEXT AND UPDATES SINCE JUNE

A. Markiewicz gave a brief overview on the other relevant initiatives and plans, including the Congestion in the Commonwealth Report, the Transportation Bond Bill, and the Better Bus changes that were implemented on September 1st. She also focused attention on the Rail Vision study, which is looking into the demands and costs of higher frequency rail service in the region. A. Markiewicz said that she would dive deeper into the Rail Vision findings before the end of the presentation.

EXISTING CONDITIONS FINDINGS

A. Markiewicz introduced a new dataset that is being used to study existing conditions in Lynn, the Location-Based Services (LBS) dataset. This dataset uses information obtained from mobile devices to provide origin and destination data for trips beginning or ending in Lynn. According to the LBS, A. Markiewicz said, 85% of trips on a weekday beginning in Lynn end somewhere in the North Shore. 63% of Lynn-based trips end in Lynn.

Comments from the Advisory Committee:

- Rick Jakious asked what the total number of trips per day the LBS data is showing. A. Markiewicz replied that it is roughly 300,000 trips per weekday. She also clarified that these are any sort of

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trip, not just commuting trips. If you walk to the corner store, or even if you walk across a particularly large building, this would be included in the data.

- Mayor McGee asked for context on the data, as 85% of 300,000 is a very large number. A. Markiewicz noted that while it is indeed a high number, it isn't necessarily an outlier when looking at other towns in the region.
- Colin Codner asked what the definition of the North Shore being used was. He noted this is a concern as lots of people have different ideas of what the North Shore is. A. Markiewicz stated that it included any town bordering Lynn. She said that she is open to using a different definition of the North Shore based on input from the Advisory Committee.
- Kurt Gaertner asked if the data could be broken down by mode. A. Markiewicz replied that this is not really possible. She said it is possible to try to do it by speed, but due to congestion issues, buses and cars may often be travelling at the same speed as pedestrians and bicyclists, so this wouldn't be entirely accurate.
- J. Feinberg asked if the team had data on where Lynn residents work. A. Markiewicz said they did not have this information on hand, but that it was something that could be looked into.
- Senator Crighton said he believed the data is indicative of the lack of easy access between Lynn and Boston. Lynn residents, he said, take more local trips because it is too difficult to make the trip to Boston.
- B. O'Brien mentioned that he was more concerned about the trips that neither start nor end in Revere but pass through Revere. He said he believed Lynn had a similar problem with commuters from the North passing through Lynn and asked if the LBS data had information on this. A. Markiewicz stated that the data just gives trips that begin or end in Lynn.
- R. Jakious commented that the decisions of the Lynn Transit Action Plan could drive behavior, so it's important to think about the results we want to achieve and how to allow that to happen. He agreed with Senator Crighton that it isn't that Lynn residents don't want to go to Boston, it's that it's too difficult to get there.

A. Markiewicz took this opportunity to move forward in the presentation and ask the AC what the priority should be for the group. She noted that the group could take a mobility focus and make transit, biking, or walking more attractive for the shorter trips that Lynn residents currently take. She also mentioned that the group could adopt a goal of access and make it easier for Lynn residents to get to and from Boston.

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Comments from the Advisory Committee:

- Kathleen Paul said a goal should be focusing on access not to Boston, but to Salem. She said that currently, it is too difficult to get there, especially for ambulances. She mentioned that there could be a bus lane that ambulances could use as well. A. Markiewicz mentioned that there is information later in the presentation on a potential bus lane on Route 107.
- A. Markiewicz returned to the presentation to go over some additional data, including origin/destination data from the MBTA. She stressed that the data bears out that mid-day trips are high for Lynn.
- Mayor McGee mentions that he had recently visited the Fiscal Management Control Board (FMCB) and asked for them to look at commuter rail in Lynn, stressing the need for shorter headways and express trains.
- Lisa Orgettas asked how the data captures who is walking. A. Markiewicz replied that they aren't able to parse that out, as the data is not mode specific.
- C. Codner said that the data at hand is not very useful without a comparable. He asked what that comparable would be for the 600 daily commuter rail trips. A. Markiewicz replied that Salem has roughly 2,000 daily trips, though that is one of the busiest stations in the system.
- R. Jakious said that it is impossible to decouple transit from housing. He said he believes that more housing stock is desperately needed in Massachusetts and that where transit improvements are made could determine where that housing is built. He also said the group should look at how to get people into Lynn. Using the General Electric factory as an example, he said that transit needs to be able to connect people to jobs in Lynn.
- J. Feinberg said that he has been talking to business owners that say their customers have trouble getting into Lynn. He also said that the group should not lose focus on rush hour commutes and that he is concerned about delay at these times.
- K. Paul brought up the potential to bring back ferry service. She said that having the ferry could get cars off the street and it would be a good option for many Lynn residents to get to Boston without having to worry about parking.
- Alberto Calvo asked if any of the data bears out an overcrowding issue on the buses. He said that he hasn't seen overcrowding, but that someone he knows pointed out the overcrowding issue on

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the 111 bus in Chelsea. A. Markiewicz answered that the 111 is one of the most used bus routes in the system and that none of the routes in Lynn have similar issues to that.

- Senator Crighton asked whether or not the LBS data is the main focus of the existing conditions process. He wondered whether there is other data out there, and asked what had previously been used. A. Markiewicz replied that the LBS data is a new approach, but similar data has been used for the bus network redesign in Los Angeles. She said it's more comprehensive data than previously available, but there is context from other datasets. Mayor McGee then asked whether there would be data incorporated from other studies. Kristine Wickham said that the data is being used, but the focus is on what the AC is saying – the data is there to color in and give context to the needs of the community.
- Gordy Hall asked if there is data on how many seats are available on the commuter rail when they stop at Lynn. C. Codner echoed this concern, saying that when he took the commuter rail for seven years, he would get a seat once every two weeks or so. A. Markiewicz said that while they didn't have data on the exact number of seats available, but they did know that the trains are often at or near capacity.
- A. Calvo said cost could also be an issue for the commuter rail in Lynn. He said Lynn is a lower-income community and that the fare price could be prohibitive for many.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES FOR ANALYSIS

A. Markiewicz moved forward to present some transit strategies the LTAP could potentially analyze. The first was the Western Avenue (Route 107) bus lane. She introduced the idea behind the lane and detailed the congestion and delay issues affecting buses in the corridor. She mentioned the potential travel time savings from the bus lane, while noting that either travel lanes or on-street parking would need to be taken in places to accommodate the lane.

Comments from the Advisory Committee:

- Mayor McGee said that in addition to looking at the extents of the bus lane, they should evaluate stop spacing as well. He said that the lane could be active during rush hour as a starting point before being evaluated for expansion. A. Markiewicz said that it was up to the group how they wanted to implement it, they could look at rush hour, but they could also look at all day. Mayor McGee said that with the business parking there, he prefers the limited time approach. K. Wickham pointed out that the issue with that approach becomes enforcement.
- A. Calvo asked what the investment would be for the bus lane, and how easy it would be to make changes. A. Markiewicz replied that it could be as simple as just paint. Kat Benesh clarified that

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there are many different models for lanes and they range from very cheap and flexible to more permanent options.

- Mayor McGee said they'd like to use the Everett lane as a model. It can be a quick, easy start, and then evaluated further from there.
- L. Orgettas raised the concern that a bus lane would hurt small businesses by making it hard to park on the street. Mayor McGee stressed that this concern would be a major part of the discussion.
- C. Codner said that part of improving the bus is not just reducing delay, but adding capacity as well. He said that if capacity does not come along with the improved reliability, there will not be a shift in modal usage. A. Markiewicz noted that the bus lane could potentially create a slight increase in capacity by allowing buses to be turned around more quickly, but that longer-term conversations need to be had around capacity. She noted that the Bus Network Redesign project is part of that. C. Codner said that at present, the trade-off between commuter travel time and small business parking is a tough one, but if more people were using the bus, it would be a different conversation.
- J. Feinberg said it was important to look at the comparative feasibility of the Route 107 bus lane versus adding capacity on the commuter rail line. He said he would like the group to prioritize economic development in downtown Lynn in the creation of a transit village around Central Square station.
- A. Markiewicz took this opportunity to bring up another potential strategy for analysis: improvements to commuter rail. She shared the latest findings from the Rail Vision project, detailing the six proposed alternatives that would affect commuter rail service in Lynn.
- Mayor McGee said he would like to look at a different type of service at Lynn with a different piece of equipment, namely DMUs or something similar. He favored Alternative 6 from Rail Vision with intermediate steps. Alternative 6 is the most comprehensive overhaul, and includes increased service, station improvements, and urban rail service to all stations along the Rockport/Newburyport Line. He noted that while he is open to different ideas, his preference is a rapid transit-style line between Lynn and Boston, with Lynn serving as the bridge between north and south. A. Markiewicz noted that anything requiring new vehicles would be a longer process as the procurement timeline is lengthy.
- R. Jakious said that improvements should be made with urgency, as Lynn has some of the region's most congested corridors, pays everyone else's tolls, and things will only get worse with traffic from Suffolk Downs. He said 10 – 20 years for improvements is not soon enough.
- Mayor McGee said that the DMUs are available to readily buy. Lynn is at an urgent state and something has to be done now.
- Senator Crighton noted that he went with a group to the FMCB last week. He said that he wants the community to have a voice there and encouraged members of the public to make their voices heard. He stated that his preference for rail is subway fares and 15-minute headway service.

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- C. Codner said that there is power in momentum. He stated that he wants to encourage the AC to build momentum. He asked what are the steps we can take tomorrow to get the ball rolling. Ideas he pitched included one extra train, one stretch temporary bus lane. He said he wants the AC to find the initial steps.

At this point, A. Markiewicz asked for final questions or comments from members of the AC.

- A. Calvo said the group should look to find the greatest impact at the least cost. He also stated that he wants to look at the issue of access, which involves cost. He said that the voices in the survey should particularly be heard.
- F. Martinez said that the community needs to be more involved. She noted that more information about the project should be out there. She said that there is a Spanish language newspaper in Lynn, and that someone from there should be at the AC meeting.
- J. Feinberg said he wanted to look into covered bus station to improve conditions for riders and potentially boost ridership.
- K. Gaertner said that, along with the transportation changes, there needs to be some consideration of concurrent land use changes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A. Markiewicz invited public comment.

- B. O'Brien said that Revere fully supports the priority of more frequent and affordable transit service. He added that the impact of affordability could be as big as frequency, and that together, each could be even more impactful.
- Patricia Gentile said that North Shore Community College school had 3,000 students and that many of them commute by transit, particularly in the mid-day and afternoon period. She said 80% of the students work, and a majority of students go to school part time. They heavily use bus and rail and they need to be able to parse out that ridership.
- Steven Levy said that he gets the impression that the study would emphasize cost. He said that better transit, however, would increase real estate value, improve incomes and more. He wondered if there have been any efforts to measure what these positive impacts would be.
- Pam Edwards from Mass. Senior Action Council said that she has been working with the state on transportation for 30 years. She said they need to look at the whole picture instead of piecemealing. While there are new bus lanes in Everett, there is also a casino generating a lot of traffic. She said that all of the transportation system should get investment and that it is worth the money. A. Markiewicz responded that there are concurrent efforts such as Rail Vision and the Bus Network Redesign going on that are looking at a bigger picture. She said not everything can be solved through the Lynn Transit Action Plan but there are adjacent improvements to be made.