

Meeting Notes

Date: January 31, 2020
10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

Notes Taken By: Lynn Transit Action Plan Team

Place: YMCA

Project Name: Lynn Transit Action Plan
Advisory Committee – Meeting 3

ATTENDANCE

Advisory Committee Members

Senator Brendan Crighton
Fred Hogan, City Council Ward 6
Mayor Thomas McGee
Andrea Baez, YMCA of Metro North, Lynn
Colin Codner, Lynn Area Chamber of Commerce
Tonia Scalcione, EOHED
Staff Member from Congressman Seth Moulton's
Office
Kathleen Paul, Mass Senior Action
Rich Avery, Community Development
Bill Bochnah, representing Jim Cowdell, Lynn EDIC
Amanda Dooling, North Shore Community College
Representative Daniel Cahill
Kurt Gaertner, EEA
Robert Stilian, Lynn Traffic Commission

MassDOT/MBTA

Alexandra Markiewicz, MassDOT
Doug Johnson, MassDOT
Eric Burkman, MBTA
Tom Quattromani, MBTA

Consultant Team

Essek Petrie, VHB
Kristine Wickham, VHB
Michael Gordon, VHB

Other

Rosa Bentley, MSAC
Alan Cloutier, WorldTech
Aseem Deodhar, Northeastern University
Fuyang Sun, NEV
Dulce Gonzalez, Senator Crighton's Office
Andrea Gayle, Bennett, DAV
Julie DeMauro, City of Revere
Charlie Patsios, Lynnway Assoc.
Briana Carlson, The Procopio Companies
Stefan Wuensch, MBTA Rider Oversight

This document summarizes the discussion at the January 31, 2020 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](#).

Meeting Notes

WELCOME

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

PROJECT UPDATE

Markiewicz gave an update on the project since the second Advisory Committee meeting. She also stated that between January and June, the team will be finalizing alternative concepts and building out a planning document.

SURVEY RESULTS

Markiewicz walked through results of the public input survey. The team received over 1,000 responses. Results were similar to what has been found across the system – frequency and reliability are top priorities. For non-riders, expanding coverage was also important. Lower income households use local buses more, while higher income brackets use more of a mix of the bus, subway, and Commuter Rail. Fare cost was the top reason for lower income households not using the MBTA more, while preference for driving was the top reason for higher income households.

EXISTING CONDITIONS FINDINGS

Markiewicz noted that the team confirmed that trip-making behavior is largely local. Markiewicz described transit competitiveness ratios, and noted that the transit-to-auto travel time ratio is fairly high between Lynn and a number of neighboring communities, but is lower for travel between Lynn and Boston, where congestion is higher. The team will use this data to identify gaps in the existing transit network.

Comments from the Advisory Committee:

- Tonia Scalcione asked if the data included all modes together. Markiewicz confirmed that this data source covers all modes, including driving, transit, walking, biking, or any other mechanism for travel. Findings for Lynn were similar to other communities.
- Representative Cahill asked if this data included TNC data. Markiewicz noted that the location-based survey data uses cell-phone data, so it would include TNC data. He stated that he has access to TNC data, so could provide that to the team.

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Markiewicz described a number of connections between existing conditions and potential improvements. These include:

- The majority of trips from Lynn are local, but connections to Boston are also important;
- The Commuter rail garage has capacity for additional vehicles but the current service may not be able to absorb additional riders during the peak period;
- Existing bus routes serve most of the high demand destinations, but off-peak bus frequency is lower;
- Some corridors experience high levels of delay; and,
- There have been recent efforts to expand access to CharlieCards in Lynn.

OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIES

Markiewicz described the purpose of the Lynn Transit Action Plan, framing a vision for mobility in Lynn with a focus on moving as many people as possible, rather than on maximizing the movement of vehicles.

Markiewicz then described ongoing MBTA and MassDOT initiatives related to Lynn that would be included in the plan. This included the commuter rail transformation, with the MBTA's Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB) identifying the Newburyport/Rockport Line as a candidate for improvements as part of an initial phase. She also noted that the MBTA is procuring a design consultant to develop a rehabilitation program for the station and garage. There is also an ongoing fare study, and the Blue Line Feasibility Study will be conducted as a separate effort.

Comments from the Advisory Committee:

- Senator Crighton noted that a fare reduction was also included as part of the FMCB recommendation for Phase 1 service. He asked what came out of Monday's FMCB meeting. Markiewicz noted that there will need to be more work related to electrification, access, and some other key items coming out of the Rail Vision. She noted that the MBTA will be hiring staff as part of the implementation of Rail Transformation.
- Mayor McGee noted that the Rail Vision improvements would be a game-changer to the region.
- Colin Codner asked about the impacts of moving towards a high-frequency service would mean for freight usage on the corridor. Markiewicz noted that this line not as frequently used for freight as some other segments in the region, but that agreements with other rail users may need to be revisited as part of the process.

Markiewicz noted that the Lynn Transit Action Plan is evaluating the market demand and catchment area for ferry service, as well as how to measure the success of service and how it will complement other modes of transportation. MassDOT and the City have been coordinating on the procurement of a ferry boat, with the RFP closing in February.

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- Senator Crighton asked about who would operate the ferry. Markiewicz noted that Mayor McGee is on a water transportation council that is looking at this regionally. The council is discussing different operating models.
- Mayor McGee stated that he thinks the MBTA should run ferries, but that they are looking at other models. He compared the potential Lynn ferry to the Hingham service on the south shore.

Markiewicz gave background on the Bus Network Redesign, which is evaluating how to change the bus network to better reflect the travel needs of the region. In the shorter term, Markiewicz noted that bus lanes are the quickest way to improve service for riders, with low costs and flexible implementation. Bus lanes support improvements in travel time and reliability. She stated that parking impacts are typically well absorbed by side streets, and that retail impacts might be overstated. There have been multiple successful bus lane projects implemented in the region, including in Boston and Everett. Markiewicz then walked through the bus lane implementation process. Bus lanes typically require approximately 12-feet of dedicated space. Design and implementation is coordinated between the City and the MBTA, and can potentially be supported by MBTA funding. Any project would include public engagement.

Markiewicz then described the three ideas for proposed bus lanes in Lynn that the team has considered to date: Western Ave, Common St, and Route 1A.

WESTERN AVE/ROUTE 107

Markiewicz stated that Western Ave has high ridership and provides an important connection to Boston and Salem, as well as the MBTA Lynn Bus Garage. The proposed bus lane would be bi-directional and would save up to 12 minutes per bus trip during the peak periods. Markiewicz noted that the team conducted a parking study monitoring parking every hour from 6AM-7PM, and found that side streets could absorb any parking impacts on Western Ave.

Comments from the Advisory Committee and Public:

- Councilman Hogan noted that he has received a number of complaints about off-street parking already, with people parking on side streets and getting onto buses. Markiewicz said that this was also the experience in Roslindale, and there are ways to work address this issue, including encouraging bus riders to park in other locations including the Lynn Garage and boarding buses there.
- Senator Crighton asked how bikes and buses would coexist. Markiewicz said that it would work well on this type of segment, where the speeds are lower. Eric Burkman responded that the average speed of a bus with stops is similar to the average speed of a bike on flat roads – there’s only a conflict for a short period of time until the bus stops. He noted that Livable Streets Alliance did a survey and found that bike users feel more comfortable in a shared bus/bike lane than they do without protection.

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- Councilor Chakoutis (Ward 5) added a similar comment on parking on Common St. with churches. She also asked what would happen with funerals. Markiewicz noted that this would be discussed with funeral homes as part of the outreach for the project. Burkman noted that there is no physical separation, so buses could always pull out into general traffic in the event that a vehicle is blocking the bus lane.
- Representative Cahill asked if bus lanes have to be dedicated all-day, or if they could be peak only. Markiewicz noted that they are easier to enforce all-day, and that reliability benefits are compounded throughout the day to allow more reinvestment into the service.
- Robert Stilian from the Traffic Commission noted that he receives a number of calls related to Common St. parking, particularly related to the churches. He noted that there are also challenges at the rotary.

COMMON STREET/MARKET STREET

Markiewicz stated that Common St side streets could also absorb any parking impacts on Western Ave. Burkman added that the concept would take a general travel lane on North Common to maintain the existing parking. South Common would need to be integrated with the Northern Strand Project.

ROUTE 1A TO WONDERLAND

Markiewicz stated that a bus lane on Route 1A would not have parking impacts. It would provide benefits for connecting between Lynn and Wonderland. There is also significant development planned in the area, so bus lanes would benefit that development by providing improved bus service to residents. The proposed bus lane would use a center-running concept, to avoid conflicts with right turns and curb cuts.

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

- Codner noted that for the Lynnway concept requiring pedestrian crossings could potentially add time to the red lights on Route 1A. He asked if that would have traffic impacts during rush hour. Markiewicz stated that these are existing crosswalks, so pedestrian cycles are likely already programmed. Burkman added that the platforms provide a pedestrian refuge at the end of platforms, so that pedestrians do not need to cross in a single phase, which could actually shorten red light times.
- Julie DeMauro presented a concern that the future development at the River Works is far enough away from Route 1A that people might not use bus service due to the distance. Markiewicz noted that the alternative of running buses into the development would lengthen the bus trip. Implementing this project before developments are complete would allow those projects to better plan around the transportation assets.
- Kathleen Paul asked if wheelchairs would be able to use the Lynnway facility. Markiewicz confirmed that anything built would be ADA-compliant.
- Stefan Weunsch asked about other choke points on Route 1A in Revere, and asked if the narrow-gauge right-of-way could be used as a bus lane. He asked if that was in the picture. Markiewicz noted that continued coordination with Revere will be critical to make the connection to Wonderland.
- Charlie Patsios, the developer of the River Works site, provided a few comments. On the electrification of commuter rail, he stated that the major electrical feed to Lynn goes through his property, so the MBTA could take advantage of that feed. On Route 1A, Patsios noted that his plans were approved through the MassDOT permitting process, and that their plans would need to be coordinated. He noted that bicycles are not using the Lynnway. He also said that one of the biggest issues on the Lynnway is the water infrastructure, which may need to be addressed before reconstructing the roadway above it, and Lynn Water and Sewer may need federal and state assistance to make the improvements. Patsios also suggested that the ferry service could add a stop at the fishing pier parcel, with dredging from the Army Corps of Engineers, and reduce the total travel time. Patsios also noted that his site will have a helipad, that could provide additional transportation options.
- Kurt Gaertner stated that there has been considerable coordination between the Northern Strand team and MassDOT. The section on Western Ave and Common St is part of the on-road portion, and the two projects have been coordinating.
- Codner stated that Western Ave is the most congested area and would require the least amount of work to implement. He asked how long it would take to get a bus lane up and running. Markiewicz stated that this depends on public process, and that if everybody were on board today, it could be implemented in the summer. Burkman said that projects can be done as quickly as 6-9 months, depending on the public process.

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- Codner also asked how moving to a bus lane ties in to bus shelters. Markiewicz commented that the MBTA is thinking about all the shelters systemwide, and that this could be incorporated into the bus lane facility where it is feasible. The sidewalks would need to be ADA accessible, so it would need to be looked at on a case-by-case basis.
- Codner also asked if there are any models where buses have equal priority as emergency vehicles (where regular traffic pulls aside when an emergency vehicle needs to use the roadway). Markiewicz noted that the frequency of buses might create more challenges but Transit Signal Priority could be analyzed. She noted that bus lanes do allow emergency vehicle use, which can improve response times.
- Paul stated that the Lynnway is dangerous because of speeding. Markiewicz said that this is a concern, and the center running lanes would narrow general travel lanes and help reduce speeding on the corridor.
- Dulce Gonzalez wanted to make sure that there is enough outreach for the public meeting, especially for those that would be affected by parking removal. Markiewicz noted that there would be outreach for the public meeting to stakeholders through various means including through Advisory Committee members to their constituents, and there would also be other opportunities for feedback in addition to the public meeting.
- Paul asked the project team to reach out to neighbors, supermarkets, libraries, schools, and churches, in English, Spanish, and other languages.
- Weunsch stated that one of the problems with the ferry service was the last mile connection to the ferry. He noted that moving the ferry terminal closer to the busway would be a better connection than the existing location. Markiewicz said that the team is looking into different options, but moving the terminal could be difficult, so the team will focus more on closing the last mile at the existing location.