

**DISABILITY COMMISSION
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

Meeting Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81008934107>

Wednesday October 20th 2021
5:30-7:00p.m.

Meeting Agenda

- Meeting Called to Order
- Introductions
- Approval of September Minutes
- Project Presentation – Green Line Symphony Station
- Department Presentation - Department of Mental Health, **Patricia Cadet**
- Chair’s Report – **Olivia Richard**
- Member Spotlight
- Commissioner's Report – **Kristen McCosh**
- Architectural Access Report – **Patricia Mendez**
- Announcements
- Old Business
- New Business
- Public Input
- Adjournment

Meeting Minutes

Attending:

Zary Amirhosseini
Jerry Boyd
Paul Caron

Elizabeth Dean-Clower
Alice Fisher
Wesley Ireland
Dusya Lyubovskaya
Carl Richardson
Olivia Richard

Absent:

Juan Carlos Ramirez-Tapia
Kyle Robidoux
Yardley Sanchez

Meeting called to order:

5:33pm

September Meeting Minutes:

Motion to approve was made by Carl, seconded by Dusya. The motion passed unanimously.

Votes Taken

Approve and send the letters to Councilors - Jerry motion, Paul second, no discussion, unanimous approval.

Meet with USDOL - Paul motion, Carl second. Discussion - Jerry noted that the Board should spend time preparing and setting out goals. Andrea Patton of the Mayor's Commission offered to meet with the Board to describe how the Commission's meeting with USDOL went, to help prepare any materials, and to schedule the meeting with USDOL's IGR representative. After discussion, unanimous approval.

Other Decisions Made

None.

Issues Discussed

Project Presentation: MBTA Green Line Symphony Station

- Angel Peña - Peña opened the presentation, offering background on the Green Line Transformation project in general. He noted that Level 0, conducted over 2 years, brought the Green Line to a state of good repair through safety improvements. This included renewing 20% of the track and

improving 18 intersections. Now, stations are being reconstructed in order to make stations fully accessible. Will work on 20 stations over the next 5 years.

- Desiree Patrice - Provided detail on Symphony Station. The station was first constructed in 1940. It is the last underground station on this line. The work includes new elevators, raising platforms, improving stairs, egress, and areas of refuge, adding new accessible restrooms, and upgrading lighting, fixtures, and signage.
- Elevators will be entirely independently operated, meaning if one is down for service, all others will still operate. Above ground, at least 6'8" of clearance will exist around the headhouses on the sidewalks. Sidewalks will be reconstructed in concrete, with the exception of the headhouse outside the privately owned Horticultural Hall. Brick pavers there, which will be replaced.
- Ben Frison - Frison described the work being done at the station and its connection to Symphony Towers. He described the accessible ramps that will be installed, committed to work with the City to remove snow, and described the accessible restrooms being built with push button access. Bollards protecting the headhouses from the roadway will be installed such that an accessible path of travel for pedestrians will be maintained.
- In the stations there will be yellow tactile warning strips along the entirety of the track, new signage and wayfinding with Braille, and new variable message signs. Accessible restrooms will have push button, hands free doors. New security updates, including cameras throughout the station.
- A member of the team detailed the construction plan and impacts. They described the two potential construction timelines that were considered, one which would not require full station closure but would last 3 years, and another that would close the station but only take 1.5 years. The second option was chosen for a more timely completion of work. Pedestrians' and cyclists' path of travel will be maintained and police details will guide traffic.

- Accessible shuttles will be offered, and buses #39 and #1, which operate along much of the route, will continue to run.
- Peña concluded by describing how the GLT team has been working with stakeholders such as the Symphony and Northeastern University, and how they will work to keep the public informed. Measures include weekly email updates that people can sign up for, a dedicated project website, a dedicated email address - GLT@mbta.com - and future planned public meetings.

Questions from the Board

- Member Richardson- asked whether the brick being replaced at the Horticultural Hall is wirecut, and for clarification as to whether the lower level plazas as Symphony Towers will be replaced with concrete or brick.
- Multiple Members of GLT Team - answered that the lower levels at the Symphony Towers plazas will be replaced with concrete on the public side. Regarding the private residence side, Patrice commented that the team will make best efforts to adopt Member Richardson's suggestion of wirecut brick for a smoother travel surface.
- Judd Galloway clarified that yes it is wire cut brick at Horticultural Hall, and that any impacted bricks will be replaced in kind, aka as wire cut.

[NOTE: video recording of the meeting cut out briefly due to a technical issue. Notes taken manually during the meeting means includes missing content in these minutes.]

- Member Ireland - is the width of the right of way/path of travel changing at all as a result of the construction?
- Galloway - responded that yes, the width is changing on all sides. Slightly more narrow because of the elevator and electrical boxes. In several locations going from 8' to 7'4". He noted that the team chose the hydraulic elevators to keep the impact small and to maintain sidewalk widths.

- Member Lyubovskya - asked for clarification about access to the both on the side of Symphony Hall and across the street -- specifically, wanted to know if the elevators will be accessed by stairs or ramps?
- Galloway - clarified that there will be 4 elevators, all of which will have a sidewalk surface level. For example the Symphony Towers elevators will open on the sidewalk on Mass Ave. There will be stairs and a ramp to the businesses, or to the stairs down to the station. But riders will not need to go down to that lower level to access the elevator.
- Member Boyd - asked for information about the shuttle bus system that will be in place during construction, and about the target date for the station bypass to begin.
- Frison - responded that they expect bypass to begin in summer 2023. The station will be closed for 1.5 years, and shuttles will run between Northeastern and Prudential stations. Riders will request a shuttle from the Transit Ambassador at one of those stations. Similar to what's happening at Brookline Hills right now.
- Member Boyd - noted that he has heard from others with mobility disabilities that that system doesn't always work very well, that station personnel are not always around, the shuttles can take a long time, etc., and that continuous shuttles would be better. He requested that the team work with SWA to provide the best option possible.
- Peña - Promised to take this suggestion to meetings with Customer Experience and System-Wide Accessibility, and notes that more public meetings will take place before construction begins.

Public Input

- Question from Shana Gibbs, resident of Roslindale and employee at Northeastern - she asked about information access for members of the

Deaf/Hard of Hearing community at the stations. She asked if there has been consideration of including text to speech for station announcements on screens? Or video ASL for repeat messages?

- Galloway - noted that the Customer Experience and Technology Departments are piloting video screens in elevators and on platforms. Offered to connect with them and ask if they are planning for ASL messages.
- David Viera - asked about whether the buttons in the elevators will be backlit and if not, why this is not possible.
- Galloway - Noted that they are not in the MBTA design standard because they are vandal prone. Those types of buttons break more easily and more often, resulting in taking elevators offline, preventing access.

MA Department of Mental Health - Patricia Cadet

- Cadet described DMH's work to serve children, youth, and adults. As a tertiary agency, they contract to providers to provide services that are not available elsewhere.
- DMH work is divided into regions, Cadet works in Metro Boston. Office is located at 85 E Newton St Boston, MA
- Residents can apply for DMH services by going to mass.gov and searching for "Department of Mental Health." The results will include the application for services. Anyone can fill out the form, including a patient seeking services, provider, family member, or other guardians. Accept online and paper submissions.
- Eligibility is based on specific qualifying diagnoses, that creates functional impairments in multiple domains, and has lasted for at least one year or is expected to last at least one year. Qualifying diagnoses are: schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, post traumatic stress disorder, and personality disorders.

- One common diagnosis that does not qualify someone for services as a standalone diagnosis is ADHD. Other common diagnoses that do not qualify as the primary cause of a person's functional impairment include substance related / addiction disorders, traumatic brain injuries, or neurodevelopmental disorders. Many of these diagnoses qualify residents for services from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).
- DMH meets with the applicant, family, and other care providers to determine what is needed & whether DMH or another agency has those services.
- Cadet then described Children, Youth, and Family (CYF) services DMH offers including: parent support programs for all families including non-DMH registered clients, Therapeutic After School Programs, case management, intensive therapeutic care services provided both in-home and in community-based settings, acute inpatient hospital-based treatment, and Intensive Residential Treatment Programs.
- Adult services provided include: community clinical services which are community-based (including symptom management, skill building, peer support, etc.), Program of Assertive Community Treatment or PACT, which includes psychiatric treatment and in-home services, peer-run Recovery Learning Centers (which are not limited to DMH clients), clubhouses which help with independent living skills and community building, case management, short-term respite services, and homeless services.

Questions from the Board

- Member Amirhosseini - noted that MassGen patients who are DMH clients seem to have trouble locating COVID testing and vaccination, and asked whether DMH provides these services.
- Cadet - responded that DMH doesn't provide tests or shots directly, but have been sharing resources.

- Member Lyubovskaya - asked how DMH helps people who don't qualify for DMH services, but might for others like DDS.
- Cadet - responded that DMH staff have regular meetings with DDS staff, as well as other agencies like DCF, especially when people are on the cusp. Staff coordinate to determine the availability of resources the client needs.
- Member Lyubovskaya - asked whether transportation is provided to the youth community centers named.
- Cadet - responded that DMH does not operate transportation, but that the operators of the centers do provide transportation options.
- Member Dean-Clower - asked whether Cadet had an estimated number of people receiving services, and whether there have been changes during the course of the pandemic. Also asked whether DMH has returned to providing in-person services.
- Cadet - noted that during the height of the pandemic a lot of check ins were done by phone. DMH is trying to increase face to face interactions. Pre-COVID, adult services saw people weekly or biweekly, and 80% of people were met on that timeframe. The lowest during the pandemic was 45% but it's improving.
- Member Ireland - Assuming you have data on demographics like race, gender, and disability? In terms of the diagnoses that are not eligible for DMH services, like neurocognitive issues for example from TBI --if they have that and one of the mental health diagnoses will they still get services?
- Cadet - yes. If they have a primary eligible diagnosis, secondary diagnoses would not render someone ineligible. If DMH is unable to provide services for some reason, DMH will find a referral.
- Chair Richard - noted that from personal experience she understands that the line between DMH and DDS is pretty concrete, people only get services

from one or the other, but that's not the reality for most people. And that in practice, DDS picks up a lot of the people that DMH denies.

- Cadet - replied that DMH works hard to collaborate so that person gets what they need, constantly meeting with DDS to discuss individual cases.

Questions from the Public

None.

Member Spotlight: Dusya Lyubovskaya

In a new practice, Member Lyubovskaya talked briefly about herself and her background. She noted that she has experience advocating at the local, state, and federal level for people with disabilities. Her hobbies include horseback riding and swimming. She's a part-time student and works in the medical field.

Chair's Report: Olivia Richard

- Early voting starts on October 23rd, runs through October 29th. Highly recommends early voting - no lines, no hassle, can pick where you go.
- Mentioned the Mayor's Executive Order on "Mass & Cass." City is promising that they won't remove tents if the person doesn't have a place to go. It shouldn't be the kind of clear out that has been seen in the past. But it will be tense. Technically tents are banned, and the City of Boston has always had the right to remove them, but the City is saying they won't unless there is another bed available.
- Please reach out to us about sidewalks and curb cuts in your neighborhood. Send pictures and needs to disability@boston.gov. You can also submit to 311 if it needs immediate attention.

Commissioner's Report: Kristen McCosh

- Civic Engagement - Municipal Election is in 2 weeks. The City has implemented Accessible Electronic Voting. More info at boston.gov/election. Ballot drop boxes across the City for absentee ballots. Do not need an excuse to request a vote by mail ballot. Early voting runs October 23-29, and you can vote at any open location. If you vote on November 2nd, that is only in-person at your local polling place.
- The Board's letter to Secretary Walsh was sent, and the Board has been invited for a meeting with DOL staff.
- Letters were drafted to be sent to the Mayoral Candidates. Given the situation with Mayor Janey serving as Acting Mayor, the transition will be short and the new Mayor will be inaugurated 2 weeks after the election.
- State Bills at the MA Legislature - one makes bicyclist fines similar to automobile fines, and one that would allow cities and towns to have electric scooters, provides a definition and allows use but does not set regulations. Rather, allows municipalities to set those regulations
- Open Positions - the Disabilities Commission has 3 open positions, one for an in-house ASL Interpreter, an Outreach and Engagement Specialist, and an Accessible Parking Program Manager position.
- National Disability Employment Awareness Month Events - Mass Rehab virtual "internship," and a Pathways to City Employment virtual panel with human resources staff representing the major City agencies that host their own website in order to explain searching and applying for jobs.
- Curb Ramp Settlement - Commissioner McCosh had described in detail at the August meeting. The consent decree was finalized by the court this week.
- Outdoor Dining - ending soon, but Commission continues to be involved with thinking through how a permanent program could work.

- Bike Outreach Plan - grant funding was extended through December 2022. Commissioner met with Bikes team at Boston Transportation Department to work through their videos.
 - Member Boyd is still interested in assisting with those videos.
- Substance Use Disorder Executive Order - Mayor Janey issued an EO declaring SUD a public health emergency and has put together a centralized staff to respond to the unsafe situation at Mass & Cass to focus on protecting people, getting people housed, making sure they have safe conditions.
- The RIDE - The RIDE has recently sent notices to users that they are reverting to their former software provider because under the new contract that has been in place for a year has not been satisfactory.
- Community Access Monitor Training - Patricia Mendez of the Commission has organized CAM training for members of the Board.
- Captions Hearing - as previously mentioned, this hearing is scheduled for November 9th at 2pm. During the pandemic, critical information was disseminated primarily through Mayoral press conferences on TV. People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing had no access to this information if they were out in public because public-facing televisions rarely have captions enabled. Board Member Ireland suggested an ordinance requiring businesses to turn captions on. Commissioner McCosh researched other cities that have done this. Now the City Council is having a hearing to discuss the issue.
- Sophia Wang of Councilor Flynn's office joined to present on the logistics of a City Council hearing to prepare folks who may be interested in attending.

Architectural Access Report – Patricia Mendez

- Skipped as Mendez was unable to attend.

Announcements

- The disability issues survey that the Board produced with BCIL was sent to mayoral candidates, both of whom replied. BCIL tweeted out the responses.
- Member Dean-Clower - regarding the RIDE, R-TAG wasn't made aware until it was well underway, but now we're meeting weekly with the RIDE. We got some input, but so much in flux.
- Member Caron - thanked Commissioner McCosh for her continued support of and advocacy on behalf of residents with mental illness.

Old Business

None

New Business

- Approving letters to the Councilors. See Votes Taken.
- Meeting with US Department of Labor. See Votes Taken.

Public Input:

- Sherraine Diaz - regarding the captions issue: can be hard to be fully accessible online. ASL often unavailable through MCDHH, so we have to use private vendors and the cost is astronomical. Do want accuracy in captioning, so use CART. She noted she is from the West Indies and has an accent, so words don't always come up correctly on the automatic captions. In terms of requiring closed captions, she noted that more work needs to be done in terms of getting Zoom to work on better tech, get the state to invest in more ASL interpreters, and more to achieve true accessibility & full access.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Carl, seconded by Zary, and the motion was carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:34pm.