

# SOUTH ACTON TRAIN STATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## MINUTES

**7:30 PM THURSDAY, 21 JUNE, 2018**

**ACTON TOWN HALL ROOM 126**

**Meeting called to order: 7:30 PM**

**Present:** David Martin (Chairperson), David Wellinghoff, R Luke Evans  
Also present, Board of Selectman Liaison, Jon Benson  
[In lieu of attendance, Corey York, Town Engineer, Submitted attached update]

### **1. Comments from the Public**

Members of the public expressed concerns about the paucity of parking for Acton commuters at or near the South Acton station, especially in light of the new Maple St parking lot, currently reserved for carpooling on the south side of the tracks.

Ben Patterson expressed the stressfulness of morning commutes, especially regarding the early express (7:02 AM) where one needs to have arrived before 6:50 AM simply to secure a parking spot. He voiced doubts about the viability of carpooling given the complex schedules of commuters who need to either leave or return at differing times.

Bill Newsham had been parking in the new Maple St lot after its completion until the carpooling signage was put in place... but is now a bit disconcerted since he now sees no cars parked in the lot day after day.

Weihua Li stated his thoughts about the lack of available parking for Acton commuters and wondered about the possibility of decreasing metered spaces in favor expanding those for Acton residents.

(?) Li (no relation) expressed her views that the new carpool lot was a good idea but likely unworkable given the ongoing and variable demands of working parents.

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David Martin, chair, responded by providing some background about the new Maple St lot, by relating how commuter parking demand has far exceeded current capacity for years, and then by describing ongoing challenges to meet commuter needs in general.

First, David indicated the Maple St lot is *not* owned by the Town, was created by the Mass Department of Transportation (MDOT) for the benefit of the Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT) bike path, and the land is owned by the MBTA. The Town runs the lot.

## **Comments from the Public (continued)**

As an experiment, SATSAC thought the lot could be used for carpooling. This thinking was premised on the belief that, if successful, the 25 new carpooling spaces could potentially free up an additional 75 spaces in the main parking lot. This experiment does *not* eliminate any existing commuter parking spaces.

Should this experiment prove unsuccessful, then the result would be to convert most or all the 25 new parking spaces into dedicated reserve spaces. ‘Reserve spaces’ is the Committee’s preferred option to avoid traffic trolling for open spaces on the south side of the tracks... out of respect for residents living along Maple St.

David also stated any new program often takes longer periods of time to become effective... commuter habits tend not to change overnight (for instance, the current shuttle program took a couple years to take hold). The carpool experiment, however, is anticipated to be evaluated by the Committee sometime this coming autumn.

Over the years, and up to the present, other Acton residents have called for building a parking deck in the main parking area, which might add approximately 90 additional spaces. Approximately 10 years ago, this was the primary reason for the creation of this Committee. Capital costs and historic aesthetics were the primary issues then.

## **2. Notes from the Chair**

This evening the first public meeting for a possible North South Rail Link is being held in Boston. Should this become reality, commuter options would be enhanced considerably.

A breakfast truck is now operating in the main commuter lot. (One member of the public remarked this service was a welcomed addition).

## **3. Town Projects Update – Landscaping study**

Landscaping is being planned to replace dead plants (almost 50%) from previous efforts a couple years ago. The purpose of this landscaping is not only to beautify the area but also to create a privacy barrier between station property and nearby residences.

## **4. Station Site & ARRT Terminus – Lighting and other issues**

Installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations is in process. Conduits have been installed and footings for the EV units should be completed soon... after which installation can be completed. Eversource will then hook-up the power.

Installation of WiFi capability is in process. Electricians will soon install necessary conduits that IT will need for installation of their equipment.

## **5. Parking Lots & Issues – Carpool parking, additional parking study, etc.**

So far, no applications have been received for the carpool program, though there have been inquiries. Discussion focused on more ways to promote the carpool program, e.g., placing brochures describing the program on the windshields of cars parked in the lot.

The chair is reaching out to the MAPC for a traffic lot study.

Along with the Green Advisory Board, the Town hired Beacon Integrated Solutions to assist with the concept of placing solar carports in the main commuter lot. In a few weeks, the Town will talk with consultants about potential next steps.

The main commuter lot will be repaved sometime in July over a weekend to minimize commuter disruption. After repaving, work crews will lay out new pavement markings, which might include converting some parallel spots into angled parking as a way to increase parking. Final paving will wait until discussions on a potential parking deck or adding solar carports to the main commuter lot are resolved.

Verizon finally removed the old utility pole located in the middle of the new sidewalk along the north side of Maple St. The town is still waiting on Verizon to move a wire from a temporary utility pole at the Railroad Street parking lot.

Discussion focused on possible parking locations. One suggestion concerned the use of the River Street property for additional parking. However, at a recent sparsely attended public meeting, no expressed interest in expanded commuter parking was evident.

The discussion essentially wrapped up by discussing the need for increased shuttle locations across Town, especially in Acton Center, where commuters not only can drive and park but also in densely populated neighborhoods where one can simply walk to convenient pick-up points. Members expressed that these thoughts might represent the best long-term solutions toward meeting increased commuter parking needs.

## **6. Review & Accept Prior Meeting Minutes**

No minutes were presented for review and acceptance.

## **7. Future Meetings, and Calendar Events**

Tentative future meeting dates of July 19<sup>th</sup> and August 23<sup>rd</sup> were suggested.

## **8. Meeting Adjourned: 8:45 PM**

Respectfully submitted,

R Luke Evans