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**Clinton Bench:** We will get started in two minutes. I'd like to give everyone a chance to get to their seats.

Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to this first listening session of the Governor's Commission on the Reform of Community, Social Service, and Paratransit Services in the Commonwealth. My name is Clinton Bench and I am Deputy Director of Planning for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. I am here representing Secretary Richard Davey, who is one of the co-chairs of the Commission.

We are going to start with an opportunity for each of the Commission members to introduce themselves and very briefly identify themselves – who they are and with whom they are affiliated. Then we will have an opportunity to hear a little bit about what the Commission is about. But before any of that, I just wanted to first to ask if anybody needs the services of an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter. We have an interpreter at the front of the room. Anyone wishing to do so is more than welcome to take a seat in the front of the room and make it easier to see. The interpreter can also assist members of this audience who wish to make an official statement in ASL.

We also have a person who is available to provide Spanish language translation. I will introduce her. She is Beatrice. I will ask Beatrice to stand up and simply state that she is available to provide translation services in Spanish, and ask anybody to raise their hand if they need those services. (Beatrice, would you like to go ahead and just say in Spanish that you are available to help with translation if need

I don't see anyone raising their hand, but we will be sensitive to anyone coming in later. We have somebody near the sign-in table who will let us know if translation services are needed. Thank you

Beatrice for being here and thank you also to the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority for hosting this session today.

Also, one more item before we do those introductions. I just want to give a quick safety briefing on this room. The emergency exits for this room are located to the left, behind the Commission members. If you are sitting in the audience seats, it would be in the front, right corner of the room. There are emergency exits at either the far left or right in the back of the room. There is a defibrillator located at the front desk where you came in. Restrooms are at the back of the room if you are part of the audience. If you go to the back of the room to the left, you will find accessible restrooms – women's room on the right and men's on the left. I believe that covers our brief safety briefing. Are there any questions regarding the safety of the room?

I will just pass this microphone around and ask members to quickly introduce themselves. Start with Catherine.

**Catherine Mick:** Hi, my name is Catherine Mick. I am the Chief Administrator Office for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. I am here today representing Secretary JudyAnn Bigby who is co-chair of this Commission. Thank you.

**Jini Fairley:** I am Jini Fairley. I am the Director of Community Services at the Metrowest Center for Independent Living in Framingham. I am also one of the two paratransit users on the Commission.

**Thomas Cahir:** I am Tom Cahir. I am the Administrator of the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority. I have a real interest in working with the Commission to create efficiencies, a buzz phrase across agencies these days, but creative efficiencies. I look forward to the hearing testimony today.

**Anne Hartstein:** Thank you. Good afternoon everyone. I am Anne Hartstein, Secretary of Elder Affairs. I am really glad to see so many people here and to get their feedback. I also want to mention that Sandy Albright, my Undersecretary, is here. You may see her in other hearings when I am not able to make it. I thank her for covering, and again, welcome.

**Will Rodman:** My name is Will Rodman. My day job is heading the Boston office of a consulting company called Nelson Nygard. For the last 30 something years, I have provided help to states and many paratransit agencies all across the country in the areas of paratransit and human services transportation including Massachusetts. In fact, I helped shape the paratransit service here at MVRTA not too many years ago. So, it's nice to be here and thank you very much for coming.

**Michael Lambert:** I am Michael Lambert. I am here representing Jonathan Davis, the General Manager of the MBTA.

**Mohammed Khan:** I am Mohammed Khan, the Administrator of the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority in Fitchburg. I am involved with ADA and human service transportation almost all over the State.

**Judith O'Connor:** Hello. My name is Judith O'Connor, and I am the Executive Director of the Millbury Council on Aging. Millbury is outside of Worcester. I am very, very active in paratransit. We provide many rides for both the elderly and the individuals with disabilities and I would like to see that continued and accelerated.

**Denise Karuth:** My name is Denise Karuth. I am the second consumer member on the Commission. I am the former Chair of the Governor's Commission on Accessible Transportation under Governor Michael Dukakis. I live in Northampton, Massachusetts. But I lived, for 18 years, in the Boston area. So I have used both fixed-route and paratransit services in the Boston area and in western Massachusetts, as well as intercity bus provided by Peter Pan. I used every form of accessible transportation except for commuter boat. Someday I will get there.

**Clinton Bench:** Thank you for your patience. Part of the – you may wonder what we are doing up here. We have a wired microphone, just like the olden days, I guess. We do want to make sure that we are using the microphone for any of our comments, but more importantly for your comments. We do ask that you be respectful of the fact that folks who are attending today have various abilities in terms of hearing and that it really is important that any comments that are made be made into the microphone so that everybody has the opportunity to hear the comments as well as one another. So I will just ask Commission members if they would like to make a comment or ask a question after someone has spoken to raise your hand, and I will pass down the microphone to you.

Okay. So, again, welcome to those who have just come in. This is the first listening session of the Governor's Commission on the Reform of Community, Social Service, and Paratransit Services in the Commonwealth. I apologize for repeating myself, but I think since we have a number of people come in, I just want to quickly go over where the emergency exits and bathrooms are again.

I will give these instructions based on if you are sitting – seating facing forward as an audience member. The emergency exits are located to the front of the room up the front right and also at either of the two back corners. There is a defibrillator at the Librarian's desk near the main entrance to the library. There are accessible bathrooms in the back right corner of the room. When you enter the corridor, the women's room will be on the right and the men's room on the left. I don't think I mentioned before, too, we do have some additional assisted listening devices, the type that will allow for a little bit of amplification of what we are saying in the room. If you do need one of these assistive listening devices, please raise your hand and we will be happy to bring it over to you and show you how to use it if you don't already know how to. Is there anyone that needs one? Okay. Nobody is raising their hand.

I do want to ask that if you want to say something for the record today that you need to sign in. I will be bringing up the sheet of people's names to the front and will call on you from that list. So please head to the back of the room to sign in, or if you would rather not get up, just raise your hand and we will bring the sheet to you. Is there anybody that didn't sign in that wants to speak? If so, raise your hand please. Okay, I don't see anyone raising their hand.

So – some ground rules.

First, I just want to state very briefly the purpose of the Commission. It was created by Governor Deval Patrick through Executive Order 530 in April 2011, earlier this year. The purpose of the Commission is to address a couple of key issues. One is to conduct a comprehensive review of all demand-responsive services, paratransit services, Americans with Disabilities Act complementary paratransit services provided by the MBTA and other transit authorities, and social services transportation being provided throughout the Commonwealth as well. Also, we have the purpose of providing detailed recommendations for reform and the introduction of efficiencies in the provision of paratransit, community and social services transportation in the Commonwealth.

In just a few moments I will talk to you about the questions that we would like for you to address when you are making your comments. But first, I want to just throw out a few ground rules as I said before. Only one person may speak at a time. Again, this is just to be respectful of those who have different abilities with respect to hearing. It's much easier if only one person is speaking at a time and speaking into the microphone. Even if you think your voice is going to carry over the crowd, please don't ask to just stand up and shout. Please wait until the microphone is brought to you. We don't have a terribly huge crowd today, so what I am going to ask is that people keep their comments to a reasonable length. We are going to time the comments so that if somebody is reaching three minutes, we will give you a warning and we would like you to not really go past four minutes or five minutes at the maximum because we really do want to respect everybody's time and make sure everybody has a chance to speak. We also want to be able to leave by 5:00 PM because I know some people may have arranged rides to pick them up at 5:00 PM. So, be respectful of each other's time. Keep your comments focused on the overarching goals of the Commission. There are other platforms for comments. We will host five more listening sessions. Your comments will be carefully considered whether they are presented at a listening session, via e-mail; through our website; or over the phone. All of our information is available on a flyer which we can hand you. The flyer is available in several alternative formats. For those with speech disabilities, if you need a little bit of extra time to make your comments, we will certainly allow for that. We are also happy to provide some staff to repeat what you said, if for some reason you feel like it wasn't clear.

Finally, what would we like you to talk about today? Of course you can talk about whatever you like as long as it's pertinent to those goals that I mentioned before. But, here are a few thoughts for you – I'll give you three: (1) Are there any service improvements, modification that could be made to maintain or enhance current service levels and delivery method while achieving efficiencies and cost savings? If so, please describe them. (2) Are there any reforms, initiatives or improvements to paratransit services that will enhance the quality, customer service, or efficiency of the services? If so, please describe them and please understand too that part of the idea of efficiencies is not just about saving money, but also about making sure that we can preserve and expand the services available with respect to paratransit and other demand-responsive transportation for the foreseeable future. The demand for services is increasing and we want to ensure the same level of service will be available in the future. Efficiencies are not always about cutting, but sometimes about making sure that we preserve the programs we have set up. Finally, (3) Are there potential modifications, if any, to existing eligibility processes utilized by

The RIDE, regional transit authorities, and human services agencies, and of course, describe those as well.

I will now ask, Joe Costanzo, Administrator of the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority, to briefly welcome us. He will speak no longer than anyone else. He wants to welcome us and tell us about the services he provides in the Merrimack Valley. Are there any other questions by the way?

**Woman in the Audience:** Do you have an agenda for this meeting?

**Clinton Bench:** No. There is no . . .

**Woman in the Audience:** In paper form?

**Clinton Bench:** There is no printed agenda. The only agenda, think about the goals I mentioned and if you want to answer some of those sample questions I just gave you, feel free, but you can answer however you wish.

**Joe Costanzo:** Thank you, Clinton. On behalf of the Chairman of the Advisory Board and other members of the Advisory Board, welcome to MVRTA, welcome to the City of Lawrence. I'd like to make a few remarks about the services we offer. I will be around after the meeting if anyone has any specific questions.

We are unique . We are not like the MBTA. We have self-selecting membership. It is voluntary to join and all members do not accept services. We are publicly-funded and we are affected by the ups and downs and catastrophic decline of funding as you will learn through the state. It is difficult to maintain the services that we presently offer.

We provide fixed-route services . . . 23 routes from Greater Lawrence all the way to Newburyport. We have been providing fully-accessible fixed route service since 1998. All of our buses are equipped with state-of-the-art GPS systems so we can keep track of what the drivers are doing. Fixed-route service is fairly basic. We operate at 30 minute intervals during peak hours and 60 minute intervals in off-peak. We operate on Saturday at 60 to 90 minute frequencies, and no Sunday or holiday service is provided. Our ADA service complies with all the requirements of the ADA. We have two components of that. We have ADA service and non-ADA complementary paratransit. Our ADA service complies with ADA requirements operating during the same hours and covering the same geographic area as the fixed-route. Presently the ADA fare is \$2.00 one way while the fixed route fare is \$1.25 one way.

The non-ADA complementary paratransit is for seniors 60 and over. Less than ADA service, the service operates only Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM. Fares work on a zone system. There are three (3) different zones, the longest being from Lawrence to Newburyport.

We have Ring and Ride, a non-ADA service. No application is required. Ring and Ride is available roughly from 5:00 AM until 6:00 PM and provides mobility opportunities for any resident of those communities to use the service within the service area. In fact, many of the communities that actually have the opportunity to pick their own service area so it's right sized for their particular needs. We have

seen our ADA service increase about 14 percent since fiscal year 2007. We don't see that slacking up as the years go forward.

And, briefly, I will describe the hiring process for the van service. The applications are filled out on the premises. The General Manager reviews the applications and does interviews and standard background checks, including , Homeland Security requirements and a Registry of Motor Vehicle check. When a driver is hired, he/she has three weeks of classroom and vehicle training, three weeks of supervised driver training, and then a 12-week probationary period. Any time during the 12-week probationary period that a person doesn't meet our standards, the person is cut loose.

E-Z Trans provides 200-250 trips per day. This past summer we were very fortunate to receive a number of fully-accessible vans and minibuses from the Mobility Assistance Program administered by MassDOT. With the cooperation of local Councils on Aging, we were able to develop a cooperative plan to utilize those vehicles in transporting elders living within our member communities. In addition, we received a New Freedom Program grant, covering the period of 2011 through 2013. This grant will be used to provide much-needed long-distance medical service from member communities to the Boston hospitals and satellite facilities in the North Shore. The service, which started in February, is growing incrementally. Individuals utilizing the service are asked to pay \$8.00 per trip – a fraction of the actual cost.

In 2004 we conducted the first Merrimack Valley Transportation Study for the region and found that in many of our communities, population over 65 years would grow more by 200 percent by 2035; in a more recent update of that study, with the assistance of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, we found that the number holds true, and in many communities will probably be even greater.

Questions of service delivery for the elderly – that is the 800-pound gorilla that we have to face in this region, statewide, and across the country. We will do our best to try to serve it. The final comment -- I think improving transit services for everyone, improves services for everyone. I think that's it from my perspective. I know your focus is on paratransit. Once again, if the fixed-route is improved, service is improved for everybody. With that, I will turn the microphone back over.

**Clinton Bench:** Thank you Administrator. Okay. We have a sign-in sheet that was just passed to me. I am going to call people by name in the order that they signed in. If you choose not to speak, that's fine. Just raise your hand and say, "Go on to the next person." I think Heather (in the pink shirt up in the front to the left) is going to be keeping time. So what I am going to ask her to do, as I said before, at three minutes, Heather, can you either say "three minutes" or make a noise?

**Heather Hume:** I can make a noise.

**Clinton Bench:** So you will hear a noise when it hits three minutes, and that will be a signal to go ahead and wrap up your comments. There will be a second noise when you hit your limit. If your comments are still incomplete and we have time at the end, we will come back to you. But again, some people have rides at 5:00 PM and we want to make sure that their time is respected. So first, also could we have someone who will pass the microphone around?

Okay. First on the list is Beatrice Guzman. Actually, you were here to provide translation services. Did you want to make any testimony as well? Thank you

Next is Steve Celli. If I am pronouncing that wrong, I apologize. We will bring the microphone to you.

**Steve Celli:** Thank you, Deputy, and welcome to the entire Commission. Basically, I represent a provider. We have contracts with both the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority and the Cape Ann Transportation Authority. I am not sure that this is really a service improvement, but I just wanted to say that one of the things we have to keep track of is that the cost of providing contracted services goes up over time and if we are to maintain the same quality and level of service, we are going to have to incorporate those cost increases in our pricing structure. I applaud the recent contracts over the last couple of years where cost considerations have been added, but we are at a flat line again. This is a consideration as you are looking forward to the way that services are delivered to human service agencies. When our costs increase, it becomes more challenging to keep our vehicles well-maintained and to ensure top-quality, well-trained driving staff. That is my testimony for today.

**Clinton Bench:** Dr. Michelle Forlizzi.

**Dr. Michelle Forlizzi:** Thank you. I understand that there is a possibility, within the MBTA, that in-person functional assessments will be done for individuals to assess their ability to either take The RIDE or take public transportation. My question, basically, is who will be part of that assessment? Will that assessment be reviewed for individuals – and then should this process be used, will there be any type of training through the MBTA for individuals to teach them how to take the public transportation?

**Clinton Bench:** I am going to hand the microphone over to Mike Lambert, who is representing General Manager Davis. If we don't answer your question fully, we will be more than happy to get you more information later. Just leave your name with one of the staff members.

**Michael Lambert:** Hi. Once again, I'm Michael Lambert, Special Assistant to the General Manager, and I will answer briefly so we can continue to go around the room with public comments. We can talk further later if you want. We are in the early stages of planning what the in-person assessment will look like. We are talking to other transit authorities throughout the country. Almost all of them have implemented a system like that in order to determine eligibility, and so this is the direction the T is moving in. We have a public meeting coming up October 3 in Downtown Boston at the Transportation Building to take in public comment directly on that issue and to lay out the different ideas and themes and issues we are dealing with. So I invite people to go on our website to find out more about that or contact me directly at the T.

**Clinton Bench:** The next person who has signed in, very hard for me to read this name – but Tom – it's just very hard to read the last name. So if there is – there is only one Tom signed in. So is there a Tom who would like to speak? Please raise your hand. Okay. Seeing no Toms, we will move to what I believe is Matt – would you like to speak?

**Matt:** No I didn't. I'm just observing.

**Clinton Bench:** Okay. That's fine. Next on our list is June Cohen.

**June Cohen:** I am June Cohen, the Executive Director of the Northeast Independent Living Program which is an independent living center that covers the Merrimack Valley area. One of the important things that I think you need to hear and think you will hear across the Commonwealth from independent living centers is that for us, we are very small grassroots nonprofit organizations funded with Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission dollars and our whole purpose and mission is designed around four core services to enable folks to be able to live independently in their communities. Those four core services are critical. They are information referral; peer counseling, skills training – that is the heading under which we do a lot of work navigating the system of transportation so that people will be able to stay in their communities and live and work in their community; and advocacy is the fourth if you were counting. So those are four core services that I think some folks may not know about. The independent living centers are small so many may not know them well. You will hear more about them, as they are closely aligned with the Aging and Disability Resource Consortium – the ADRC.

So, the important thing that I wanted to share is to be aware, as you go across the Commonwealth, that the independent living centers are working with individuals to help them navigate these vast systems of getting access and access to services – whether it's health care or whether it's transportation. These are the vital services that individuals need to have in order to continue to live in their communities and not in an institution or nursing home.

So one of the things really important around transportation that I really want to highlight is that over 50 percent of employees of independent living centers have a disability; over 50 percent of the Boards of Directors have a disability. These workers need to get to work, and many depend on paratransit. Access to transportation for persons with disabilities may be the difference for that person working and contributing back to their community. So I want to speak really importantly to that issue of service improvement and to reinforce the fact that 70 percent of people with disabilities living in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are unemployed. If Massachusetts wants to be a model employer of persons with disabilities, transportation will be a key element in its success. My second thought about transportation and employment is that employees do not always work 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. They just don't. Jobs don't run so neatly between those hours of 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM. And remember that when you apply for transportation and get the service, you need to allow for a half hour window in which an individual must be ready for pick-up.

So, I have folks who depend on this to be employed, and if they must attend a meeting before or after normal hours, what happens to the staff person? There is no flexibility in their schedules.

I hope you will consider these points as key in your decision making regarding service improvements to after-hours service for employees. Thank you.

**Clinton Bench:** When you speak about after-hours services, do you find that there is a particular period where it would be most useful to be able to expand services for persons with disabilities to get to work? Is it generally early morning that you are noticing the problems, or weekends? Just thoughts on that real quick.

**June Cohen:** I would say, correct me if I am wrong here from my team, 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM – later in the day – is the critical point. Early in the day, with the use of PCAs, is not as important. It's too hard to get there too early. So, it's both ends of the spectrum, but if I had to vote, I vote in the later part of the day. Seeing some nods from my group.

**Will Rodman:** And weekends?

**June Cohen:** Yes, and weekend for social and recreational activities. It is important for employees to be able to participate in cookouts and events hosted by the agency in an effort to be part of the community. Social events are very important and do not happen just in the period of 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

**Clinton Bench:** Does anybody have comments on that? Feel free to make that part of your comments. Thank you, Ms. Cohen. The next person is Joe Bower. We will bring the microphone to you.

**Joe Bower:** My name is Joe Bower and I represent a program of the Northeast Independent Living Program, the Northeast Recovering Learning Community, which works with people recovering from psychiatric disabilities or extreme states. These are, in many cases, hidden disabilities. People who live and work in our communities, who are not visibly disabled in any way in some cases have had conditions attached to their participation in paratransit. However, more recently, in some cases with public transit authorities, now simply having a diagnosis of a psychiatric disability, which limits a person's ability to ride public transit – such as a phobia or experience of trauma which impacts a person's ability to be comfortable in crowded situations or the like, it's now sufficient to qualify a person for paratransit without having to give a lot of details behind the person's personal situation. But it's not as cut and dry or easily visible as say a person who has a physical disability or a sensory impairment, or something of that nature.

I am very anxious to see the accessibility of paratransit preserved for all folks with psychiatric disabilities who are not able to use the fixed route, traditional, regular public transportation and who require paratransit to work, to go to school, to participate in community life, and to have the same access to paratransit as do people with more obvious disabilities who do not have to – quote, unquote, - make a case for their right to this service because paratransit for them is every bit as much of a life line to the community and to full community integration as for other groups. Thank you very much.

**Clinton Bench:** The next person who signed in is Jim Lyons. Please raise your hand if you would like to speak.

**Jim Lyons:** Thank you. I am Jim Lyons. I am the Community Advocacy Director at the Northeast Independent Living Program. I work with June and Joe. I think that they have stated, you know, some of the issues very well and I wanted to add, embellish that with just a couple of additional points.

The first one is the good news. We work very well, in my experience, with the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority. When we have had problems, we are able to contact them directly and

without any to-do. We are able to work out the issues and get everybody who is involved together – and that has been a good experience in general.

The first thing I wanted to request – we have, on several occasions, provided ADA and disability awareness and sensitivity training for drivers of both the Merrimack Valley and Lowell Regional Transit Authorities. It's been a long time since we have done that. We provide some consulting for organizations on compliance and understanding of ADA, that is very beneficial for our people, for everyone in general, and we would like to get that going again. I think the outcome was wonderful. It's been a while, and in fact, our Mobility Assistance Program bus has a wonderful new driver through the help of Joe Costanzo and Sandra Brown and their staff – which is one example of the things that we can accomplish through a cooperative partnership.

The Independent Living staff, most of us who have a disability ourselves, are qualified professionals who do the training. I think we are best-suited to provide these trainings for bus drivers and administrative staff and everyone else involved. It gives us an opportunity to get to know one another better, in a way that rarely happens so that we can work as colleagues. We have been able to assist drivers with a number of issues which were problems for them but everyday living issues for us. So trainings and other methods of achieving those partnerships would be wonderful.

Another suggestion is that JARC and New Freedom Program funding be used to develop programs that are mutually beneficial. In the past, providing a local match was a problem. I suggest that the President's jobs program could work cooperatively with those other programs to help people to find jobs. Thank you very much.

**Clinton Bench:** Thank you. The next person on the list is Shea Goodman. (Ms. Goodman said that she did not wish to speak.) The next person on the list is Will Briere.

**Will Briere:** How is everybody today? It's nice to be here. For me, actually, this issue is very personal because as June Cohen said just a moment ago, I am actually one of those employees who uses the service every single day. I work full time and am actually here representing our Transition to Adulthood Program. I work full time. I have been working with NILP for the past five years. I think it's a great service. But there are some things that I think need to change, such as the zoning regulations. It's because of the ADA that I am actually able to get to work. I live in Lowell. I use the Lowell Regional Transit Authority on occasion to get to the train station, particularly when the weather is bad. There are some occasions, most of the time actually, I don't. I roll across the park and I get there that way. But there are some times when I wish that E-Z Trans service could actually take me home or pick me up from my house. I live 20 feet literally from the train station, and sometimes that makes it difficult, in snowstorms and so forth, and I am always told that they can't pick me up because they can't do it. It's a rule in the regulations. So, that's probably one of the major things that I would like to see changed. As June said, I would like there to be better regulations for people to be able to go out and do whatever. Like, I know that a lot of transit authorities say that if you have to go to the doctor, or you have to go to work, that usually takes precedence, but what if somebody wants to go to a Red Sox game or to a play?

I know that The RIDE service runs until 1:00 AM. I have been using these services since I was 14 years old. It's what made me independent, so please work with us. Thank you.

**Denise Karuth:** Thank you so much for your testimony. I have a question. When you said that the regulations prevented you from being picked up, you mentioned that you live by the station. You are talking about inclement weather? Do you mean that because you are asking for a trip on the same day that you haven't scheduled for previously?

**Will Briere:** What I mean is if for instance, if I didn't schedule a trip and it is snowing outside, as I said, I have to through a park to get to the bus because I have to go to the train station. The transit – E-Z Trans service will not pick me up at my house. I have to meet them at the train station and there is – there might have been actually only one occasion where they actually made an exception to pick me up because of that. But there have been a lot of times when if the weather is inclement, they won't do that. But I did actually make – because I have ---because I am very familiar with the system and the service disruption notices and that is probably my number one fear, is that I am always worried about because I work full time. I am sometimes up against the gun because sometimes, I can't get there in five minutes because, you know, I have to get ready and, you know, I do the best I can but sometimes, we are all human and we make – sometimes it just doesn't work out. So I just wish that the zoning regulations could be eased up a little bit.

**Denise Karuth:** Now, I know one option, when you say zoning, you mean because you are crossing borders?

**Will Briere:** Can I speak or do you want me to take the microphone again?

**Denise Karuth:** Either that or I can repeat what you say. You said yes, that is part of the problem?

**Will Briere:** A lot of times, if the weather is bad, I take the Lowell Regional Transit Authority to get to the train station, but sometimes, it would be a lot easier for instance, sometimes I am using that service on that bus for instance, if I –

**Denise Karuth:** Let me repeat what you are saying. My memory is only this long. You said you have to take the Lowell Regional Transit Authority to reach the bus or the train.

**Will Briere:** Correct.

**Denise Karuth:** And especially when the weather is bad, in the sense you haven't made the reservation, you can't get the trip.

**Will Briere:** I mean for everybody, because I only live 20 feet from the train station. So it seems more economical and easier, for instance, for MVRTA to be able to pick me up from – just go to my house rather than wait for me at the train station because I have that window that I am always up against.

**Denise Karuth:** You said because you live so close to the train station, it would be so much easier if they could just pick you up at your house rather than wait for you at the train station, because you get caught up in the 5-minute window.

**Will Briere:** I do. I get caught up and a lot of times, there is that, you know, they say they give you a half hour window, but once they get there, they say we only wait for you for five minutes and I have to say, you know, that the – the MVRTA has been fantastic. There has been a lot of times I missed the bus and made an agreement with them, too, that if I do miss my ride, I will just take the fixed-route bus which I do. I do use them all, to get to a variety of places. I go to the DeMoulas in Methuen, and they will come pick me up. You have to make arrangements, but it would just, you know, have certain things that would make it easier and would make a lot of people who maybe are thinking about work but are afraid, it would just make it easier for them to say, “Yes, I can do it.”

**Denise Karuth:** Right. Again, to repeat, you said that many times they have been fabulous, but you do sometimes get caught up in that five minute window. You can’t always make it in five minutes. And, there would be times, when if they could be more flexible, it would be fabulous.

**Will Briere:** Because I am always up against the MVRTA service disruption notices.

**Denise Karuth:** Because you are up against the service disruption notices.

**Will Briere:** Correct. And if I get five or six disruptions, I won’t be going to work for a couple of weeks, and I don’t think June would appreciate that.

**Denise Karuth:** Right.

**Clinton Bench:** I will hand the microphone over to Jini, and after she asks her question (your name is Will, right?), if you could be sure to answer her question but also, could you just repeat what you said about service disruption notices and maybe just describe what you mean by a service disruption notice, but you can do that when we give you back the microphone after Jini asks her question, too.

**Jini Fairley:** Will, I understand your frustration. I transfer between two RTAs to go to work at an independent living center as well. At first I didn’t understand what you meant by zoning, and then I realized what you meant. It’s exactly what I go through. Slightly different – I don’t live 60 feet from one of the pick-up places. What you describe are some of the things that we are considering and looking at. I understand the five minute window as well. Even at work when they are coming to get me, I really have to set a ten-minute alarm to start closing down my computer and getting out of the building because after ten minutes all hell breaks loose. I understand that. It’s something the MVRTA can look at, but it’s tricky when you travel between two RTAs. It’s a money thing. It’s distance. It’s time. And sometimes, there can be intercity or interdistrict relationships that might make it work for you. We have seen that with our RTA, the MetroWest RTA and the MBTA. So something to think about, possibly, for your situation.

I read a more specific description of Joe Costanzo’s remarks today. I did notice the “disruptions.” I work with people who have to appeal some of those disruptions quite a bit in the MetroWest RTA in

particular, and I understand that. I couldn't tell you how many are no-shows or late arrivals or late whatever adds up to a suspension but that is a very serious issue for someone who goes to work and I understand that.

The other thing I didn't understand is that ADA complementary paratransit has no priorities. There is no priority -- that person is going to the doctor, so she goes first, and that person is going to work, so she goes next or vice versa, and that other person is going to get her hair done, so she should be last.