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## MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL

### Housing and Community Affairs (HCA) Meeting July 8th, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Present: Wendy Lam (HCA co-chair), Julia Nickel (HCA co-chair), Julie Valastyan (Eastgate), Caroline Cochran (GSC Off-Campus), Albert Chang (Ashdown), Jason McKnight (ResLife), Michelle Sander (HCA), Amanda Zangari (Ashdown), Karan Mistry (Ashdown), Po-Ru Loh (S-P), Rob Wang (EECS), Leonid Chindelevitch (Math), Raj Ghosh (Tang), Todd Schenk (Transportation and Dining Committee Rep), Kevin McComber (GSC), Nan Gu (GSC), Alex Chan (GSC).

Meeting start time: 6:10pm

#### 1) MIT Graduate Student Dental Plan updates:

-Draft of the dental survey will be finalized by next week. Institutional Research will help administer the survey. Scheduled to run from August 15<sup>th</sup>-September 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### 2) Transportation Updates

##### *a) Stop sign at Albany St./Pacific St. intersection:*

Wendy will meet with Sarah Gallop (Community Relations, MIT), Kelley Brown (senior project manager, MIT), Larry Brutti (Operations Manager, Transportation and Parking at MIT) next week. Start with internal discussion before approaching city. Lots of studies on the hazards multi-way stop signs explained here (<http://www.troy.mi.gov/TrafficEngineering/Multiway.htm>). However, Wendy thinks that the unusually high volumes of pedestrian and bicycle traffic through this intersection should be enough to warrant a stop sign. Wendy will look into the possibility of hiring an independent agency to conduct a road safety audit (RSA). Rob suggested getting a quote and getting the RSA done before approaching the city.

Alternative suggestions to slow vehicular traffic at intersection: yellow blinking light, cones, painted crosswalk. General consensus is that the intersection was much safer when temporary stop signs were there last year (during construction of Ashdown).

##### *b) Daytime Northwest Shuttle and EZ Ride*

In 2007-08, EZ Ride was rerouted, and a stop was added in front of S-P. This was in response to complaints of overloaded shuttles from NW residents, and also to the expected increase in ridership with the building of new Ashdown.

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2009: two graduate students in Civil Engineering supervised by John Attanucci co-wrote a masters thesis on how to improve area bus services. Their goals: 1) reduce the Parking and Transportation impact on the carbon emissions associated with MIT, and 2) improve the route efficiency of MIT shuttles and EZ Ride (reduce redundancy, improve headways, improve reliability of service).

Analyzed data collected from various sources (including 2008 Commuter Habit Survey, ridership counts for MIT shuttles, and GPS data from NextBus). Made the following recommendations to improve MIT Daytime shuttle performance: 1) an extended Boston Daytime route, 2) a more efficient Tech Shuttle route, and 3) utilize EZ Ride in place of NW Shuttle.

Overall outcome: a more efficient, green system. By cutting the NW shuttle, funds would be freed up to pay for an extra Tech shuttle bus.

EZ Ride: MIT recently renewed a 7-year contract with EZ Ride. MIT contributes 20% or roughly \$300K/year. Larry Brutti - working with EZ Ride and predicts that the switch will happen in January 2010.

-Insists that the switch will not happen unless EZ Ride is willing to 1) change the route and 2) add stops in front of each of the NW dorms. Need city to approve route change first, but thinks it shouldn't be a problem.

-Important to note that it won't be a COMPLETE switch, because EZ Ride runs only during peak periods on weekdays (6:20am-10:20am, 3pm-7pm). Will need to run a NW shuttle in between those periods.

Although the overall system will be optimized, this change will disproportionately affect graduate students.

-GSC conducted survey of NW students in June.

- high response rate from SP and Ashdown residents
- majority of students are satisfied with current NW service
- most students are not in favor of the switch because EZ Ride at its current state is not a feasible replacement for NW.

-Still many other major concerns that were not addressed by thesis. Capacity issues? EZ Ride's adherence to schedule? Handicapped students? Inclement weather?

Meeting with EZ Ride and L. Brutti next week. Will discuss possibility of delaying switch in order to conduct a more comprehensive study. Need to install GPS to track on-time performance of EZ Ride. Way to count alightings along with boardings, and get actual data on peak capacity? Also still need to test whether proposed routes are operationally feasible.

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In an ideal situation, we would want to keep the NW shuttle as it is, since people are satisfied, but if the switch were to happen, we will try our best to make it as seamless as possible, and that the most important features of the NW shuttle and its route are retained. Want same service, even with a different bus. If residents of NW have any concerns/complaints about the current EZ Ride, important to let us know ASAP so that we can forward them to Charles River TMA.

### 3) Open Floor

#### - *Ashdown Dining:*

Leonid explained his proposal to bring back Ashdown Dining this fall:

1) Increase the prices, which were too low.

2) Get people to commit to some kind of plan to eat there a certain number of times monthly... up-front risk-hedging to reduce subsidies and provide certainty.

Leonid mentioned concerns from Ashdown about not having the Hulsizer Room available for activities. Leonid suggested making other space in other NW dorms available for Ashdown to hold events.

- Albert: concerned that the quality and variety of food was not as good as expected.

- Amanda: Need about 200 people to break-even at \$8/meal... but getting less than 100. 70 people a night on average.

- Karan: Thirsty Ear is no longer serving food.

- Alex suggested looking at survey data collected by David Dalrymple in 2008.

- Todd: could offer a la carte as an option. 1-2 nights/week.

#### -*Reroute Cambridge East Saferide to stop at Inman Square*

Julia: Inman Square is underserved in the evenings (Kendall to Inman via Cambridge). 68, 64, 85 not running all the time. A lot of Cambridge East shuttles running empty.

- Suggestion 1: extend Saferide Cambridge East to Prospect/Cambridge and Twin City Plaza.

- Suggestion 2: Service to Twin City Plaza of interest to MIT students? May be useful to make case for service earlier in the day.

Next steps: talk with Larry Brutti (how much would this increase running time? Currently 5-8 minutes slack), get data on where people live from Urban Studies department and RentMonkey.

- Wendy: purpose is to get people home to where people live. Extension to Inman good idea, to Twin City Plaza less so.

Hour headway operational?

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- Alex: Get data of how many people live there. Impact of longer run?
- Michelle: important to keep Saferide running every 30 minutes for students who work late.

*- Information distribution during orientation:*

Wendy suggests passing out information packet (containing info on various resources at MIT – MIT Medical, Police, Transportation, etc.) to incoming students early in the semester. PDF version on GSC website and possibly emailed to all grad students at the beginning of Fall.

Ideas: Postcard with URL? Fridge magnet? Keep ideas coming and forward to Wendy.

Meeting adjourned: 7:15 pm