

**BayLines**

**Summer, 2016**

***BayLines***



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**From the Editor  
by Bob Hachey**

Welcome to the Summer 2016 issue of *BayLines*. We decided to try something new for at least the next few issues. We want to feature a topic of importance to BSCB members. The featured topic for this issue is paratransit. I would like any member who has an idea for a featured topic for a future issue to contact me. In addition, I would like to begin a "Letters to the Editor" column in the next issue. Letters can be either comments regarding past topics that appeared in previous issues of *BayLines*, or any other topics that you believe would be of interest to our readers.

**President's Message  
Good Days, Sunshine  
by Brian Charlson**

Yesterday I took a walk on the Watertown Braille Trail, or that is what I call it. This is a 1/8<sup>th</sup> mile loop located near the banks of the Charles River near the bridge that crosses the river at Watertown Square. I was one of 18 members of the Charles River Chapter of BSCB who, using the steel cable stretched between polls as our guide, enjoyed a wonderful spring day and one another's company.

Just the day before, Sweet Water Pool Company came to my house and started the one-week process of opening my swimming pool. We count on the pool to host the annual BSCB Barbeque and the Charles River Chapter pool party. This year, a Watertown community project to assist elders and people with disabilities to keep up with spring cleanup, helped me get things up-to-snuff for the season.

Of course, Kim and I (for those who do not know, Kim is the President of the American Council of the Blind and my wife) finished registering for the ACB annual convention, held this year in Indianapolis Minnesota during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July week. This is an event that draws ACB members from around the country to see what is new in terms of products and services of interest to those who are blind or visually impaired; to listen to speakers on a variety of topics such as changes in special education, and how to improve your chances in getting a job as a person with a disability; and, the successful outcomes of negotiations with governmental and private entities to assure the accessibility of their products and/or services.

Lest you think that it is all work and no play, attendees will also have opportunities to go fishing, take a hot-air balloon ride, visit museums and much, much, more.

I know that this sounds like a commercial, and in some ways it is, but more than that, it is a reminder that BSCB and ACB are communities of individuals who enjoy and benefit from association with each other. We learn together; we play together; we share concerns and share successes together. We are a community. Yes, there is much more to each of us than just our vision loss, but we do not shy away from the fact that we are people who share the vision loss experience. We benefit from hearing how others have found employment, raised a family, cleared the snow, and planted a garden.

During my earliest days as a blind person, I only knew a very few blind people and thought that my blindness made me an outsider. Because of my association with the ACB and its affiliates, I now know that I am a valued member of a community. A community that is as diverse, as educated, and as accomplished as anything I could have wished for.

I want to thank each of you for being a part of that community. You make me laugh with your jokes and stories; you make me reach to become more than I am; you make me proud to be a member of the Bay State Council of the Blind.

## **2015 BSCB Convention Highlights by Bob Hachey**

The 2016 BSCB convention took place on the weekend of March 4 through March 6 at the Marriott Hotel in Burlington. There were four presentations on Friday afternoon.

The first presentation was led by Steve Dresser and Frank Ventura and was entitled, "Amateur radio and the blind." Steve began with a brief history of amateur radio. Radio is defined as any wireless broadcast from point A to point B. Steve told us that amateur radio preceded traditional radio. The first amateurs built their own radio sets. Given today's much more sophisticated equipment, this is no longer the case. In addition, the development of the internet has increased options for radio amateurs.

Next, Frank discussed why people might want to communicate. Reasons include the desire for social contact as well as being of tremendous assistance in times of emergency such as storms, fires, and earthquakes. When the power goes out and phone lines are down, amateur radio is the best (and sometimes only) means of communication during these types of emergencies. The term ham was coined by navy officials as a derisive term to describe how some amateurs like to ham it up at the microphone.

Before 1934, the world of radio was a sort of free-for-all including amateurs, the military, and others. The Federal Communications Commission was created in 1934 to regulate radio, both

professional and amateur. Amateurs must now be licensed. There are a number of license levels. The higher you go, the more privileges you get. For example, a beginner's license allows for only local broadcasting while a more advanced license allows the amateur to broadcast worldwide and even to the International Space Station.

Frank and Steve then described the various types of antennae and radio sets. Antennae range from a 4 to 6 foot wire to more elaborate ones that can be as tall as you want them to be. A repeater is basically a device that amplifies transmissions and allows local broadcasters to increase their range. Groups of amateurs will often get together on a repeater at a predetermined date and time for group conversation. Steve demonstrated using a small antenna, a portable radio, and a repeater to make contacts. For long distance worldwide communication, a larger desktop type radio is required. Many amateurs will install radio sets into their cars.

The next topic was accessibility. The set that Steve was using has a built-in speech chip that will identify the current frequency. Steve told us that the Kenwood brand radios tend to have the best accessibility features. They can speak frequency, signal strength, and menu options. Some radios can be made accessible by connecting them to a computer that already has speech. A new Kenwood portable radio that a beginner might buy will cost approximately \$400.00 including the cost of the speech chip. Some radios are made accessible via beeps rather than speech. There are less expensive brands of radios on the market, but, as with anything, you get what you pay for. Frank told us that there are good deals to be had on EBay and Amazon for these radios.

Frank then told us a bit more about licensing. The beginner's license is called a technicians license. He assured us that the test

is easy to pass. There are radio clubs in most urban and suburban areas. For more information on accessible radios, go to [www.icanworkthisthing.com](http://www.icanworkthisthing.com). Steve suggested that anyone interested in becoming a radio amateur should either contact a ham who is a friend, the American Radio Relay League, or reach out to the American Council of Blind Radio Amateurs, an ACB affiliate.

The second presentation was entitled “Apple Music” and was led by Jim Denham and Frank Ventura. Apple Music is an iPhone app that gives the user access to a wide variety of music. It is a monthly subscription service with two options: \$9.95 for individuals and \$14.95 for a family plan, which allows up to six people. Apple Music will also work on an iPad or an Apple TV. To sign up for Apple Music, double tap the music option on your iPhone and follow the prompts. When I signed up, you could get it free for the first 3 months. You can use the search function or ask Siri to play you a song. You can ask Siri to play a song title by a specific artist, or you can ask for something like the number 1 song for 2015. You can also tell the app what types of music you like and it will present you with selections that fit those types you have chosen. These selections can be found under the “for you” tab and will include existing albums by artists that you will probably like as well as play lists that Apple has created. Once you find something you really like, you can add it to your library which can be accessed via the “my music” tab. Any songs or albums you have purchased through the iTunes store will also be found under this tab.

The “connect” tab is a social media function that allows you to follow your favorite artists. The final tab is called the radio tab. Here, you can find internet radio stations based upon either a genre of music or an artist. Here, I’ve found some interesting stations designed to accompany an exercise program. I’ve been an Apple Music subscriber for almost a year and it very rarely lets



me down. I've found many varieties of music including rock, R&B, jazz, classical, new wave, and even movie sound tracks.

Our third presentation was led by ACB Board member Jeff Bishop and was entitled "ACB Technology." Jeff first introduced us to ACB's iPhone app, ACB Link that is free from the Apple Store. The purposes of ACB Link are facilitating communication between the national office and the ACB membership, an easy way to listen to ACB Radio and to help spread the word about ACB to the general public.

The first tab in the app is the "home" tab, which connects the user to all sorts of information about ACB including the ACB website, the ACB Radio website, and the ACB mini mall. The second tab is the "affiliates" tab where the user can find information about all of ACB's state and special interest affiliates. This is a good way to reach out to affiliates and to point potential members toward appropriate affiliates. Third is the "Radio" Tab where the user can find ACB Radio streams and the ACB Link tutorial. The user can access both live streams and podcasts from ACB Radio. Fourth is the "about" tab where you can adjust the app's settings. Jeff told us that ACB Link will be updated and enhanced on in the future.

Jeff then told us about a new feature of ACB Radio's interactive stream called in demand where listeners can listen to shows at their convenience. He then briefly introduced us to the ACB Radio staff which is headed by Larry Turnbull. The staff includes our very own Brian Charlson and Rick Morin as well as Debbie Hazelton, Jeff Bishop, and many more. Finally, Jeff encouraged us to get involved with ACB Radio.

Our fourth presentation was entitled "State of Accessibility in Health Care Services" led by Marsha Davis, Manager, Assurance Homecare. Home care is the title used for healthcare services provided in the home. These services range from personal care,

shopping, and transportation to nursing care provided after surgery. Some insurance companies such as Medicaid will pay for what they deem medical care such as nursing but will not pay for the nonmedical care such as shopping. Other insurance companies will pay for all of these services. We will all likely need home care services at some point either after surgery or in the case of aging or a chronic illness, which does not allow us to leave the home. Assurance Home Care provides the full range of these services. Most insurances will require a physician referral if home care services are to be covered. In Massachusetts, home care providers must have background checks and up-to-date licensing. The patient has the right to choose their home care provider.

Friday evening featured meetings of BSCB's two special interest affiliates: Guide Dog Users of Massachusetts and BSCB Students. In addition, for the first time, we had a hospitality suite hosted by Gerry Goodwin. The hospitality suite afforded members the opportunity to gather together for refreshments and fellowship.

As usual, Saturday, March 5 was filled with many presentations. We began by recognizing and thanking all of our sponsors. BSCB is grateful to all of our individual and corporate sponsors. These sponsors helped to defray organizational expenses for this convention. President Brian Charlson expressed his appreciation for all of the sponsors. He informed us that sponsors covered 100 percent of our expenses for our 2015 Fall Conference. He then thanked ACB Radio and the Talking Information Center for broadcasting our convention. He asked for a moment of silence in memory of former president Marcia Dresser who passed away last fall. He then gave our two diamond sponsors an opportunity to say a few words. They were BSCB member Gerard Boucher, and Dr. Aron Shepard and Ed Garland of Vanda Pharmaceuticals. Diamond sponsors each donated \$1,000.00 to BSCB. Dr. Shepard described the work that Vanda has been doing in the

area of non-24, which is a sleep disorder prevalent among totally blind persons. The ability to see light helps to regulate the body's clock or circadian rhythm. Since totally blind persons absorb very little or no light, they tend to have problems staying in sync with the 24-hour day. Through years of extensive study of blind persons, Vanda has developed a drug that helps to synchronize the body clocks of totally blind persons. To learn more about Vanda's work, go to [www.non-24.com](http://www.non-24.com).

Next came our keynote address given by Jeff Bishop. Jeff resides in Tucson, Arizona and is an Information Technology Analyst for the University of Arizona. He is also ACB's newest board member. Jeff shared with us some of the goings on of the ACB Board and the national office. Jeff thanked Melanie Brunson for her many years of service to ACB as both Director of Advocacy and Governmental Affairs and Executive Director. He then praised Anthony Stephens, who replaced Eric Bridges when he became Executive Director on a very well done legislative seminar. This was Jeff's first time on Capitol Hill advocating for our issues. Attempts were made to garner federal funding for low-vision devices; the Cogswell-Macy Act; the Marrakesh Treaty; and the delay on the part of the Obama Administration in implementation of federal web accessibility standards. For more details on these issues, see the *ACB Forum*. In addition, archives of the 2016 Legislative Seminar are available on the ACB Radio website.

Next, Jeff updated us on structured negotiations. ACB has reached a settlement agreement with the General Services Administration regarding accessibility of the sam.gov website, which is used to procure contracts with the federal government. ACB also settled with the Denny's Restaurant chain to make their website and SMART phone apps accessible. The taxi lawsuit relative to discrimination against guide dog users in the Washington DC area is moving forward. Rite Aid now has talking

prescription labels. ACB's Facebook and Twitter pages are experiencing healthy growth. ACB Radio has a new program entitled "Affiliates in Action" which features our many state and special interest affiliates. Jeff is working closely with the National Office staff to upgrade ACB technology. His expertise in this area is proving to be an asset to ACB. Jeff and Eric are working with Microsoft on problems with Windows 10 such as an inaccessible web browser and an inaccessible PDF reader. Jeff is hopeful that we will see progress very soon. He believes that, despite current problems, Microsoft will continue to make accessibility a top priority. Jeff then issued a challenge to BSCB to reach out to other affiliates in an effort to make them, and ACB as a whole, a stronger organization.

We next had reports from the Nominating Committee, the Resolutions Committee and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee. There were no amendments to the BSCB Constitution this year. Chris Devin who chairs the Constitution and Bylaws Committee invited any interested members to contact him if they would like to join this committee. Chris can be reached at 617-472-0308. Bob Hachey, Resolutions chair read a resolution to be considered during the business session; similarly, DeAnn Elliot, Nominating Committee chair reported on its recommendations for the upcoming elections.

Our next presentation was a special treat. It was entitled "BSCB Throughout the Years" and it was led by charter BSCB members Chris Devin, Kathy Devin, and Charlie Crawford. This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of BSCB, which was founded in 1976. Charter members are those who founded the organization. Kathy, Chris, and Charlie regaled us with history and anecdotes from the early days of our beloved organization. BSCB was born on June 27, 1976 at the Lennox Hotel in Boston. This date also happened to be the 96<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the date of Helen Keller's birth. However, before that date, our presenters along with others had

formed the Blind Leadership Club (BLC) back in 1971. At that time, the Blind Leadership Club was primarily a social organization. Most of that group had attended Perkins together. The BLC formed a music committee, which provided entertainment for local nursing homes. BLC also had a weekly radio show broadcast on WBUR. The BLC wanted to do more advocacy because they were concerned about things like lack of transportation options and high unemployment among the blind. They decided they wanted to be affiliated with a national organization. Charlie, along with Frank and Terrie Pacheco, attended an NFB convention in 1976 and decided that the NFB and BLC would not be a good fit. BLC leaders next met with Durward McDaniel, one of the founding members of ACB. At this point, the BLC transformed into BSCB and became an ACB affiliate. The first convention was held in Brookline. At that point, BSCB had around 35 members. This grew to around 70 members by the mid-1980's. BSCB got an infusion of new energy when Kim and Brian Charlson moved from Oregon to Massachusetts. Membership was up around 200 by 1996. Charlie told a good story about how, in 1976, BSCB advocated for a bill in the State House that would outlaw discrimination in the area of employment. Barney Frank helped gain many votes for this bill which had apparently passed, but, due to some sort of problem with printing, the bill died when the legislative session ended. BSCB did not give up and this bill was eventually passed. Karen Crowder and Bonnie Adams who were also around during BSCB's early days were in attendance at the 2016 convention and had a few words to say about our history.

On Saturday afternoon, we heard from the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office regarding consumer protection. Our presenters were Janice Fahey, Kim McDonald, and Rose Miller from the Consumer Advocacy and Response Division. This branch of the Attorney General's Office protects consumers against illegal and unfair business practices. Janice specializes in

vulnerable populations and Rose specializes in public utilities issues. Rose warned us against scammers who come to a consumer's door promising major discounts for those willing to switch to a new utility company. She told us about other scams in which the scammer calls the consumer on the phone with the "good news" that you've won money, or the "bad news" that you owe back taxes to the IRS. In general, if you didn't reach out to an organization that calls you with issues like these, they are scams. If you suspect you've been contacted by a scammer, you should contact the Federal Trade Commission at 877-382-4357; their website is [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov). You may contact the Consumer Advocacy and Response Division at 617-727-8400.

Rose also described the "grandparent" scam in which a caller claims to be your grandchild and that they are in trouble and need you to send money as soon as possible. Janice advised us not to answer the phone if we don't recognize the number. Other scammers are looking for personal information such as social security numbers, which aid them in identity theft. To avoid identity theft, we should regularly check our bank and credit card accounts as well as credit reports. Victims of identity theft should first file a local police report. At this point, if you are contacted by anyone claiming to be a bank to which you owe money, you should contact that bank to verify that claim. You may also want to put a freeze on your credit by contacting one of the three credit reporting companies; they are Trans Union, Experian, and Equifax.

Our next presenter was Paul Saner, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB). Saner informed us that the governor is seeking to combine the financial and administrative functions of many state agencies. He also gave us a budget update. Saner believes that MCB is in good shape for the next fiscal year. He told us that regulations implementing the newly passed Work Force Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

would be out this June. WIOA will create a renewed emphasis on students and younger consumers in transition from school to employment. WIOA will require that MCB spend at least 15 percent of Vocational Rehabilitation funding on this population. This will also mean fewer resources available for working adults who are no longer in school. MCB is hoping to be able to provide services to those who are visually impaired as well as those who are legally blind. The Commissioner has worked with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to revive the Braille Literacy Advisory Council. He is hopeful that the newly formed Perkins Business partnership will provide increased employment opportunities for blind and visually impaired residents of Massachusetts. Lastly, the Commissioner informed us that beginning in 2018, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs will be providing funds for the Talking Information Center. MCB's internship program continues to grow and Saner informed us that most participants in that program eventually find employment.

Saturday afternoon concluded with a BSCB business session. We first passed a resolution stating our belief that blindness services should continue to be provided by a separate and distinct Commission for the Blind. The full text of this resolution appears at the end of this article. Finally we held BSCB elections. The following officers were elected: President Brian Charlson, First Vice-President David Kingsbury, Second Vice-President Frank Ventura, Secretary Jerry Berrier, and Treasurer Rick Morin. Jim Denham and Rose Miller were elected to serve on the BSCB Board of Directors. Chris Devin was thanked for his many years of service to the BSCB Board of Directors.

Saturday evening was taken up by our traditional banquet, which was a wonderful time for all of us to share fun, fellowship, and a good meal. President Brian Charlson was our emcee. Charlie Crawford was our banquet speaker this year. Charlie began with a heartfelt tribute to Marcia Dresser. He said in the immortal

words of Bob Dylan that Marcia remained “forever young.” He asked that BSCB continue to work toward a world that is better for all of us. Charlie also spoke of his work with the Equal Rights Center in Washington DC and on the Accessibility Advisory Committee to Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Next, we presented BSCB awards. Sharon Strzalkowski chaired our Awards Committee. Carla Burke received the BSCB Outstanding Service Award. Burke manages a service entitled Visually Impaired Technology Assistance at the Library (VITAL) at the Harwich Brooks Free Library. Upon losing her vision in 2003, Carla quickly discovered the importance of technology to persons who are blind and visually impaired. She also noticed that technology training was hard to find on Cape Cod. That spurred her on to create the VITAL program. Each new participant in the program is matched with a volunteer trainer. They work on everything from keyboarding and the use of screen readers to training in the use of portable readers and SMART phones. Burke has written grants that allow the VITAL program to continue to grow. The services of VITAL are provided free of charge to interested persons. She is now working to expand this program to other libraries.

Larry Raymond and the Memorial Foundation for the Blind received the BSCB Community Access Award. The Memorial Foundation for the Blind began operation in 1906 providing services to the blind and visually impaired residents of the Worcester area. In its early years, the Foundation specialized in the provision of housing for the blind. By the 1950’s, the foundation was funding other services ranging from the Audio Journal to programs of the Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Larry has been involved with the foundation since 1983. He served two years as the Foundation’s president and now holds a permanent position on its board.



Denise Karuth received the BSCB Betty Gayzagian Advocacy award. Denise has been a disability rights advocate since her early college days back in the 1970's. She has served as a peer counselor for persons with disabilities, as Executive Director of the Boston Self-Help Center, and as a grant writer for the Stavros Center for independent Living. Denise was also a founding member of the Disability Policy Consortium.

Roz Rowley received the Life Time Achievement Award. Roz is best remembered as a teacher at Perkins for 45 years as well as for being a staunch advocate for braille. Roz was also a dedicated leader of BSCB having served a number of terms on our Board of Directors. Roz will also be remembered for the countless years she spent at the BSCB registration table on Saturday mornings and as our very own Vanna White at many BSCB auctions. Speaking of which, the 2016 BSCB auction brought an end to Saturday.

Sunday morning began with a moving tribute to Marcia Dresser, Elaine Berrier, and George McDermott. Jim Badger tuned up his guitar and led us in the singing of "Amazing Grace." President Charlson spoke eloquently of how Marcia, Elaine, and George had touched his life and the lives of many others. Brian hopes that a tribute to those who have passed on will become a fixture at the beginning of Sunday mornings at future BSCB conventions.

Speaking of the future, Daisy Russell, Carey Scouler, and Lina Coral, board members of BSCB Students (BSCBS), led us in a presentation entitled "BSCB in the Future." Daisy and Carrey are charter members of BSCBS, which was formed two years ago. Daisy first reported on the BSCBS Summit, which was held as part of our convention on Friday evening. They passed many amendments to their Constitution and elected the following officers and board members: Daisy Russell, President; PJ Fernandes, Vice-President; Carey Scouler, Secretary; Minh Ha,

Treasurer; Lina Coral, Director; and Sarah Weils, Director. BSCBS is creating a database of colleges and universities to which they will be sending information on BSCBS. They hope this will help to grow the chapter. There was a brief discussion of the GRE, which is a prerequisite test for admission to many graduate level courses of study. BSCB members offered to assist BSCBS in terms of advocacy and expansion efforts. BSCBS offers two levels of membership, regular members (18 years and older), and junior members (ages 16 and 17). Carey expressed her deep appreciation to Marcia for launching the BSCBS chapter. The BSCBS website is [bscbsofma.org](http://bscbsofma.org).

Sunish Gupta, researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, presented an update on a recent consumer electronics show. This show is held each year in Las Vegas. Sunish helped to develop the original KNFB Reader, which is a Kodak camera, attached to an old-style personal data assistant. Over the years, this has been replaced by an app for both iPhones and Android SMART phones. Before he lost his vision, Sunish was an electronic engineer working in Silicon Valley. He then switched to marketing of technology. Upon losing his vision, it occurred to Sunish that the technology being used by most persons who are blind was two generations behind that which was being used by those who can see. He was frustrated that much of the newer technology was not accessible. He was honored to meet and work closely with Raymond Kurzweil. Sunish explained to us the conundrum that faces all of us who want both state-of-the-art technology and accessibility. Technology changes very rapidly so that, all too often, by the time a technology becomes accessible, it has been replaced by newer technology. Sunish is working with MIT and others in the field to convince hardware and software developers to make accessibility a top priority such that new technology is accessible when it is released. Sunish encouraged us to give feedback to developers regarding items we have purchased that need accessibility

improvements. One way we can accomplish this is to go to [easyalliance.org](http://easyalliance.org). We can also send emails to Sunish at [info@easyalliance.org](mailto:info@easyalliance.org). Sunish is a member of the Institute of Electronic and Electrical Engineers. He leads their accessibility initiative. When Sunish attends meetings of groups like the IEEE, he often finds himself the only blind person in attendance. He even joked about how some of his fellow engineers have asked him if his white cane was a new type of presentation pointer! Sunish told us that the annual electronics show is so big that it covers an area the size of 30 football fields. He passed around a device that feels a bit like a USB jump drive, but it is actually a finger print reader, which can be used in place of a password, as one would do with the newer iPhones. He also passed around a tile. Tiles are used to find misplaced items such as cell phones and key chains. Brian told of a friend who has attached a tile to her recycle bin for easy retrieval at the end of the day. Well, that beats the heck out of going out there swinging your cane around because you never know where that recycle bin might be left. Sunish brought up the common frustration with touch screen displays. He said that the previous decade was known as the decade of the display. In other words, almost every consumer electronic or electric device seems to have a display, which made products like washers and dryers less accessible for the blind and visually impaired. He hopes that the next decade will be the decade of the accessible display.

Brian pointed out that he chairs ACB's Information Access Committee. He expressed frustration as follows. When he was diagnosed with diabetes, his doctor suggested that he should expect to come to the clinic at least once per day to have his blood sugar checked. The doctor had no idea that there was such a thing as a talking glucose monitor. Furthermore, he added that the accessible glucose monitors tend to be less accurate than the inaccessible monitors are. The bottom line here is that we all need to be making our voices heard regarding inaccessible

products in a wide range of product categories. The more of us who speak up, the more likely it is that we will get products that are more accessible.

We next heard from Kim Charlson, Director of the Perkins Library. The library now has an information line for the Library Without Walls program, which allows patrons to communicate via conference call with book authors and others of interest. This information line will let you know when the next conference call takes place and the number to call. To reach this information line, call 617-972-7852. The library has had a number of retirements and additions to the staff. Long time BSCB member Pat Ahern recently retired. The library now has a technical support specialist, Corey Cadlik, who can help patrons with things like using portable players and the BARD website. A new and expanded drop-in area where patrons can read and peruse library offerings is being added. BSCB will be adding a NewsLine channel, which will feature issues of *BayLines* and *BayLines Express*. The library's collection of audio described DVDs which now includes over 1300 titles continues to grow. NLS is close to completing the process of converting older titles to the digital format, which should be complete in the next year. Kim let us know that cassette players are still available for those who want one. The library is offering a Sunday book club, which meets bi-monthly. Discounted museum passes are available for the Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Science, the New England Aquarium, and the Children's Museum. The library continues to assist patrons in obtaining free currency bill readers. The library is currently testing a new low-cost braille display, which will hopefully someday lead to the availability of electronic braille book readers for all braille-reading patrons in the next few years.

Our next presenter was Cheryl Cumings who spoke on the importance of voter participation by persons with disabilities. She informed us that the level of voter participation by persons with

disabilities is not measured in the largest database used to track this statistic. As with many other issues, disability seems to be left out. This database measures many other categories such as gender, race, neighborhood, etc. Categories included in this database tend to get more attention from those who are running for office. Cheryl asked that anyone interested in our democratic process should consider getting involved in their political party of choice and becoming a delegate to the national convention of that chosen party. She told us that the democrats would like 12 percent of delegates to be persons with disabilities. Since this goal has not been met, perspective candidates could argue that persons with disabilities are not voting in high numbers. Ideally, we would like to see increased participation by persons with disabilities in all aspects of the political process.

Rick Morin next presented the BSCB Treasurer's Report. Proceeds from the 2016 BSCB auction were \$3,406. Rick told us that a BSCB convention usually ends up costing us anywhere from \$2,000 to \$3,000. He was happy to report that this convention will have all costs covered by sponsors. Rick hopes that we will be able to continue counting on sponsorships for both the fall conference and the spring convention, which would substantially improve BSCB's finances. Rick encouraged all of us to participate in the Monthly Monetary Support program. He reminded us that up to 50 percent of a donor's contribution can be targeted to a local affiliate.

The convention concluded with a president's report from Brian Charlson. Brian focused on the future. We will be continuing to work on important access issues such as access to hospitals and transportation. Brian wants us to become more involved in fixing a broken employment system that continues to allow for a 70 percent unemployment rate for blind and visually impaired Americans. Brian says we need to increase our membership. It is estimated that Massachusetts has a population of 120,000

persons who are blind or visually impaired. Brian wants the Publicity Committee to take the lead in increased outreach efforts.

## **Resolution 2016-01, Categorical Services for People who are Blind and Visually Impaired**

WHEREAS, since 1906, vocational rehabilitation and social services have been provided to blind and visually impaired residents of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts by a commission for the blind; and,

WHEREAS, this arrangement allows for direct consumer input by means of a governor-appointed rehabilitation council; and,

WHEREAS, effective rehabilitation of blind and visually impaired persons requires a unique set of skills training in areas such as orientation and mobility, managing activities of daily living, braille, assistive technology, and incidental learning; and,

WHEREAS, studies by Mississippi State University have proven that the most effective vocational rehabilitation and social services are provided by categorical service agencies which specialize in these unique skills areas; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Charles Baker, who wrote two papers - one in 1996 and another in 2002 - that recommended that services provided by a number of disability agencies be merged so as to provide these services more efficiently, is now considering the combining of disability agencies including the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, and the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; and

WHEREAS, the Bay State Council of the Blind (BSCB) is concerned that this type of merging will diminish both the service level currently provided by our Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and the opportunity for direct consumer input afforded by the rehabilitation council;

NOW, THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Bay State Council of the Blind, (BSCB) in convention assembled on this fifth day of March, 2016 in Burlington Massachusetts, believes that vocational rehabilitation and social services should continue to be provided to blind, blind and multi-impaired, and visually impaired residents of the Commonwealth by a separate and distinct Commission for the Blind; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that BSCB is strongly opposed to any attempts by the Governor or the legislature to combine any of the direct service budget line items of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind with the line items of other agencies.

**O&M Massachusetts Transportation Updates and  
Resources  
by Meg Robertson, COMS  
(Director of the O&M Department at MCB)**

Many transit authorities have been providing some paratransit services for over 30 years. There are 15 regional transit authorities (RTAs) in Massachusetts. For an RTA list, go to <http://www.matransit.com/index.html>.

Paratransit service is a shared-ride system for individuals who cannot use fixed route transit some or all the time due to a physical, cognitive, or mental disability. To apply for paratransit, one must contact the local regional transit authority (RTA) and apply for the service. Once eligible, one may also access other transit authorities if traveling to other area in state and/or out-of-state.

One does not have to live in the paratransit community to apply. For example, if you live in a community which does not have paratransit but travel to one, you can apply to that transit system

and once found eligible can access it when you are in that community.

One companion may also ride with an eligible rider if space is available and the companion pays a fare. (A PCA does not count as a companion and does not pay a fare.)

ADA Paratransit has three categories of eligibility (From <http://dredf.org/adatg>):

1. Unable to navigate the system independently
2. Needs an accessible vehicle
  - a. Inaccessible bus routes and bus stops
  - b. Lack of stop announcements
3. Obstacles which prevent individuals from reaching transit system
  - a. Terrain, weather, safety or other obstacles which may hinder due to disability

There are 3 types of eligibility:

1. Unconditional (all trips)
2. Conditional (some trips)
3. Temporary (short term)

Depending on the transit system, you may be eligible for paratransit but your trip may not be. Many transit systems do not enforce this rule at this time. However, one should be aware that not all trips might be eligible to use paratransit. An example is that there is a bus stop in front of your house and the bus drops you off in front of your destination, that trip may not be eligible for paratransit ride if there are no other factors preventing you from taking the bus.

A paratransit rider may also use the main line transit system. It is not an either/or system.



Paratransit issues include the trip usually must be set up 24 hours in advance though this may vary with each RTA. It is a shared ride system so not direct service and fares usually cost more than taking the fixed route system. Paratransit is a destination-to-destination service so if the RTA usually only provides curb-to-curb service, it can provide door to door service if the disability requires this assistance. The O&M department now recommends that consumers should apply for paratransit as a back-up transportation option, even if one never uses it. An example is when an independent traveler breaks a leg and can no longer walk; one may then use paratransit to continue to get around the community.

Other transportation options within your community may be the local **Council on Aging van ride service**. They may provide assistance to people with disabilities who are not elders within the town or city limits.

Massachusetts has an office of Human Service Transportation Department, which can assist with finding transportation options. The contact number is 617-847-3744 or website [www.mass.gov/hst](http://www.mass.gov/hst).

**MassRides** is the Executive Office of Transportation's statewide travel options program, providing free assistance to commuters, employers, and students. It is a ride-matching service: [www.commute.com](http://www.commute.com) or call 1-888-4-COMMUTE (888-426-6883).

**Mass 211** has information about transportation and other services statewide: call 2-1-1.

**Work Without Limits:**

<http://www.workwithoutlimits.org/individuals/transportation/options>

**If a veteran, contact a local veteran worker in the city or town.**

**\*Job commuting**, check with worksite/HR Dept. for ride-sharing options. One may wish to negotiate with the company to see if they will provide assistance.

**Yes We VAN!**: Southcoast transit resource:  
<http://yeswevan.org/websites/yeswevan/>.

**Ridebuzz.org**: Rideshare website <http://www.ridebuzz.org/buzz>.

**\*Check out**: Craig's list; Church or Local volunteer organizations: Taxi/Cab or Uber/Lyft services or hire own driver.

## **Route Planning Resources**

[www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com) has a service like MapQuest but now has added Transit to the search route resources. Go to Google, click on maps section (top of page), type address, click on type of transit (car, public transit or walking) and it will give you a route.

[www.Nextbus.com](http://www.Nextbus.com) Different Massachusetts transit authorities participate in this program.

**RideScout app**: includes description of route with time and price comparisons for public transit, driving, pay services like Uber and taxis, biking, etc.

**Navigation Apps**: Check out other Smart Phone Apps, search MBTA or Massachusetts Transit

## **Blind Square**

**RideScout app**: includes description of route with time and price comparisons for public transit, driving, pay services like Uber and taxis, biking, etc.

## **Seeing Eye Navigation Tool**

## **Sendero GPS Look Around**

## **City mapper**

**Nearby Explorer Online:** (Android only) available on American Printing House for the Blind (APH) from Quota Funds or for purchase by downloading at <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.aph.nearbyonline>.

For more information, please contact the MCB O&M department at 617-626-7581. If one has more suggestions, please email Meg Robertson at [Meg.Robertson@state.ma.us](mailto:Meg.Robertson@state.ma.us).

## **Paratransit Worcester Style by Sharon Strzalkowski**

I became a daily user of the paratransit in Worcester several years ago when the bus route near my house was changed and getting to the bus became very difficult. Also, in Worcester, many buses run once an hour, so the paratransit affords better access in many ways.

The Worcester system is somewhat different than the Ride in Boston. First of all, we are a curb-to curb service with a 20-minute window, so you must be outside or right at your door, as the driver is not required to ring the doorbell or give any other sign that he is there except the toot of a horn. Secondly, we have never gone beyond the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile limits set by the corresponding bus routes, so whole parts of towns in our area are without service. I always advise people moving into the area to consult with paratransit to make sure that their home would be in the service area loop. A

final difference is that, in addition to vans operated by the Worcester Regional Transit Authority, Yellow Cab is a significant contractor which picks people up as much if not more than the vans. Only certain drivers are permitted to do this charge work, which the cab company calls Code Four. There is a good deal of ride sharing on both cab and van, and a rider can be switched from one to another if the service is running behind. Worcester paratransit has greatly reduced no-shows to about 3 percent of trips, so the aggravation of waiting for the next passenger who does not show up is minimal.

As a daily user for work, medical, and recreational purposes, I find the system to be mostly on time. A real benefit of a smaller community is that I have come to know the cab and van dispatchers as well as many of the drivers of both types of vehicles. It feels like a kind of family to me, and that helps when I have the inevitable annoying day when I'm on the vehicle too long and have to be somewhere else ten minutes after I get home.

It is hard to know if our paratransit will become creative any time soon with regard to same-day service. The computer systems of the cab and van companies are not currently synchronized, which is a real issue. We riders have a periodic meeting known as TPAG, Transportation Paratransit Advisory Group, which has resulted in a few changes such as the policy of being able to cancel an hour before a scheduled trip, and which allows passengers to leave a message regarding their next-day trip without having to speak with a call taker. Complaints about individual trips have not always been addressed in a clear way, however, and there is some back-and-forth blaming between the paratransit administration and the vendors. On the whole, though, I am grateful for, and mostly satisfied with the service.

## **Charles River Chapter Holds Spring Meeting and Field Trip by Jim Denham**

On Saturday, May 21, the Charles River Chapter held our spring meeting at the Perkins Library in Watertown. We had a good crowd, with twenty people attending! Our guest speaker was Kate Crohan, a teacher in the Secondary Program at the Perkins School. Kate shared some of her experiences teaching both braille and technology to a variety of students. She stated that while many of her students found the transition to Unified English Braille annoying, most of them were doing quite well with this change in the braille code. As she is extremely well organized, Kate also spoke to us about a variety of techniques for attaching braille labels to commonly used items. She emphasized the need to make smart labeling decisions, that is, only put labels on those items you cannot otherwise easily identify! The presentation concluded with President Denham showing the 6Dot Labeler, a new device from LoganTech. The 6Dot Labeler allows users to easily create braille labels on a device with a Perkins style keyboard.

The second portion of the CRC meeting was a short field trip to the new Braille Trail in Watertown. Approximately fifteen adventurous souls took advantage of the beautiful spring weather and hiked the two blocks to this new walking path. While walking the trail, participants were able to experience the braille signs, a variety of artistic benches, and a xylophone with braille on the keys. The Braille Trail is located near the intersection of Arsenal and Irving Streets in Watertown, and is open for anyone to come explore.

As you can tell, the May meeting of the Charles River Chapter was a rousing success. It was a day full of information and exploration for all involved. Our next event will be the annual CRC

pool party later this Summer. Stay tuned to *BayLines* and *BayLines Express* for more information about this event. If you have any questions about the Charles River Chapter, please feel free to contact President Jim Denham via email at [jimdenham3@gmail.com](mailto:jimdenham3@gmail.com) or call (773) 330-0803.

## **Tactilely Accessible Currency? Really? by Bob Hachey**

I remember back when ACB won a lawsuit against the Treasury Department which would require the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) to produce tactilely accessible currency. ACB was extremely frustrated that most other nations other than the United States already had tactilely accessible currency. I thought to myself, "Wow, it'll be nice to be able to independently identify money with no assistance from technology." Given that it usually takes quite a while for a large bureaucracy like the federal government to implement changes, I figured we'd be waiting a number of years before we would see the advent of accessible currency. I figured that perhaps by the year 2015, the first accessible currency would be released. But now, we've been told that we must wait until 2022 for the results of our victory.

It is my humble opinion that the BEP is still fighting tooth and nail to reverse our victory. For example, I and many others had the opportunity to make recommendations to the BEP regarding how accessible currency should be implemented. The BEP insisted that different sizes of currency notes would not be an option. They claimed that changing the size of currency would place an undue burden upon business, as machines that take currency would have to be changed. BEP showed us a number of tactile options for identifying currency. We chose the one we liked which was much easier to use than other options presented. Once again, the BEP balked. This time, they claimed that the option we like was

“too high.” That is, was raised too high upon the note, which would make it much harder to package large quantities of currency! Really? Don’t these jokers get it? We want currency that we can identify and the feature that helps us to identify the currency is the height of the embossed characters! It’s as if BEP wants to reduce to the barest minimum the feature that we need and have fought for and won in court! I now have the sinking feeling that by the time we get accessible currency, not many of us will be using it any more. It’s a good thing that we have reliable advocates like Eric Bridges and Kim Charlson to keep holding BEP’s feet to the fire.

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