



Massachusetts Bay  
Transportation Authority

## Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's The Ride Relies on Vontas OnCall to Innovate Operations and Collaboration

### Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

#### Bus

Vontas OnCall

“Our drivers need Vontas OnCall in the event of an emergency. Vontas OnCall really is a lifeline for them.”

James A. Nihan, Manager  
of Paratransit  
Operations, MBTA-Office  
of Transportation Access

#### MBTA AT A GLANCE

**7,500+**  
trips/day  
at peaks

**58**  
cities and  
towns served

**7**  
days/week

**22**  
hours/day

### Digital Transformation for Transportation Operations

Transportation organizations manage complex operations, dynamic environments, and a distributed workforce that is constantly on-the-go. Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), Greater Boston's public transportation service, faces these challenges every day with their paratransit service,

The RIDE, which provides door-to-door transportation for passengers with temporary or permanent disabilities. The RIDE managed up to 7,500 trips pre-COVID in its 22-hour operating day, seven days a week in 58 cities and towns around the Greater Boston area. The RIDE's dispatchers and drivers manage and navigate dynamic, on-demand routes throughout Eastern Massachusetts, in rural and urban areas.

### Challenge

MBTA required new, intelligent technology to provide centralized management, decision-making, and organizational visibility of The RIDE's dynamic transportation network. Aging radio technology hindered operations and could not offer the necessary benefits of digitally transforming The RIDE's fleet communications and operations.

The radios at MBTA provided dispatch little intelligence about their drivers and passengers' location and status. The RIDE's Control Center lacked complete visibility of operations with real-time location information of the organization's dispersed drivers and passengers. MBTA's Control Center, customer service representatives, and dispatchers also needed to ensure drivers were productive and completing routes as assigned.

Radios were costly to maintain, unable to scale, and only supported a limited range, preventing MBTA from adding users on any device at any distance. These limitations made communication unreliable in remote areas and created collaboration challenges for support staff. Slow, manual processes also stalled productivity, with drivers starting each shift with a manual radio check requiring dispatcher response. MBTA faced several challenges with The RIDE's operations, including limited operational control and organizational visibility, aging technology in need of replacement with modern alternatives, an inadequate collaboration environment, and slow, manual processes for dispatchers.

“Vontas OnCall gives us the ability to have new users download the app on their mobile device and immediately join our collaboration environment. This will be key when MBTA uses non-dedicated service providers to provide additional capacity. These drivers will seamlessly connect with MBTA’s dispatchers through the Vontas OnCall platform.”

Jim Nihan, MBTA

## Solution

It was time to upgrade the fleet’s communications system from legacy radios to the Vontas OnCall Collaboration Platform for Transportation. MBTA’s Command Center equipped dispatchers with Vontas OnCall’s web-based Dispatch Console and 750 vehicles with a tablet enabling the Vontas OnCall app. The Samsung Tab A with GPS Lockbox is installed in each vehicle with a digital speaker-mic that allows for easy sending and receiving of messages. The Vontas OnCall Collaboration Platform for Transportation offers:

### Voice-First Communication for Incident Response

Vontas OnCall ensures drivers can always reach dispatch with PTT available on both the tablet app and web-based Dispatch Console. During an incident or emergency, dispatchers create and move the driver into an ad hoc 1:1 or limited group environment with necessary personnel like supervisors, customer service representatives, emergency responders, or maintenance. The driver receives immediate, undivided attention while other drivers remain undistracted. All messages are archived for safety, compliance, and incident reports.

### Automation for Processes

Vontas OnCall’s unique Process Automation Suite enables bots and workflows to automate previously manual procedures like pre-ride vehicle inspections and radio checks required for safety and compliance. Vontas OnCall’s Status Check Bot lives in the collaboration environment and automatically responds when drivers speak the words, “Radio Check.” Drivers confirm they are online without a manual response from dispatch.

### Operational Control with the Vontas OnCall Management Console

The Vontas OnCall Management Console with Advanced Location Services provides centralized operational visibility, management, and decision-making. MBTA’s Control Center, managers, customer service representatives, and dispatchers see a real-time view of operations and driver location information in a single web-based console. The Vontas OnCall Management Console enables MBTA’s supervisors, customer service, and dispatchers to confirm that drivers are on their assigned route and where they need to be at any given time. Incident response is centrally managed through the web-based Console. Message Archiving enables supervisors and dispatchers to download Message Logs and playback or view sent messages.

- **Operational control and organizational visibility**
- **Dynamic voice-first communication groups**
- **Driver location and status**
- **Driver and passenger safety**
- **Automation with bot-driven radio checks**

*“Before Vontas OnCall, if 25 drivers came online during 10 minutes at the start of a new shift, dispatch was overloaded responding to each radio check and delaying other drivers from starting their route. Dispatchers also had to respond to hundreds of radio checks throughout the day manually. By eliminating the need for manual radio checks, dispatchers can focus their higher-value responsibilities, and drivers get out on the road faster.”*

Jim Nihan, MBTA

## Results



**IMPROVED INCIDENT REPORT  
AND CUSTOMER SERVICE  
SUPPORT**



**EXPANDED COLLABORATION  
ENVIRONMENT**



**SAFETY AND  
COMPLIANCE**



**ELIMINATE ALL MANUAL  
RADIO CHECKS**

“The Vontas OnCall team was excellent to work with. They left no stone unturned and were truly engaged in making Vontas OnCall the best solution for transportation organizations like MBTA.”

Jim Nihan, MBTA

MBTA easily and quickly deployed Vontas OnCall over a 24-hour period. The RIDE's Control Center of 150 supervisory users instantly gained access to Vontas OnCall's web-based Dispatch Console, and MBTA used mobile device management (MDM) to immediately scale and push Vontas OnCall to tablets installed in over 750 fleet vehicles. Here are the benefits MBTA's The RIDE gained with The Vontas OnCall Collaboration Platform for Transportation:

### **Improved Incident Response and Customer Service Support**

Ad-hoc groups help MBTA manage dynamic situations quickly and effectively, ensuring dispatchers can add all information and relevant personnel to evolving or urgent conversations. During minor incidents like an unexpected driver delay, customer support operators can quickly communicate 1:1 with the driver to assess the situation and gain the information needed to provide the customer with updates. In urgent situations, dispatchers rapidly communicate with drivers, provide updated routing information, or deploy immediate assistance.

### **Safety and Compliance**

All messages are stored and recorded for review or future compliance needs. Vontas OnCall makes incident reporting for compliance easier with automated archival of all information. MBTA's operations management can review, analyze, and evaluate incident information to improve driver and passenger safety and prevent future incidents.

### **Expanded Collaboration**

Vontas OnCall enabled MBTA's The RIDE to immediately expand the collaboration environment to include customer service, maintenance, safety, operations, and on-demand drivers — a task previously improbable with radios. Operations is better able to manage the dynamic nature of MBTA's frontline workforce by seamlessly including new group members when responding to demand surges, unusual driver activity, or incidents.

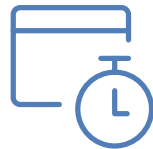
### **Elimination of Time-Consuming Manual Processes**

MBTA uses Vontas OnCall to eliminate all manual radio checks, saving MBTA up to 10 minutes for each driver at the start of each shift. Over a year, this adds up to nearly 45 hours saved for each weekday driver and 17 hours saved for each weekend driver. Manual radio checks alone may save the MBTA an estimated ROI of nearly \$700,000 each year.



#### MBTA USES VONTAS FOR:

- **30,000** messages processed every day
- **300,000** messages processed each week
- **Unlimited** ad hoc 1:1 or small groups



#### BY AUTOMATING RADIO CHECKS, MBTA SAVES UP TO:

- **45 hours** per weekday driver each year
- **17 hours** per weekend driver each year
- **\$700,000** of annual ROI gains each year

“Vontas OnCall made sure that we received the exact technology we needed to do our job. With Vontas OnCall, MBTA gained a safer, more productive workforce offering the highest service level to Greater Boston’s paratransit customers.”

Jim Nihan, MBTA

#### Greater Operational Control

MBTA centralized visibility to enhance real-time oversight, safety, and productivity organization-wide. MBTA’s Control Center, operations management, and supervisors can now use the Vontas OnCall Management Console to drive more informed decision-making and improve driver productivity and the safety of both drivers and passengers. Vontas OnCall’s Advanced Location Services create complete visibility of dispersed drivers. Operations supervisors and managers can record, playback, and archive all messages.

#### Interoperability with Third-Party Software

Vontas OnCall is an open API platform, allowing MBTA to run other apps like Adept and GoogleMaps to meet their organizational requirements. Along with Adept, Vontas OnCall provides real-time location information to improve the safety of drivers and customers. Visibility into driver locations is also key to ensuring MBTA continues to meet and exceed its on-time performance for customer trips as part of meeting ADA requirements.

Connect with our Experts

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