

Auto Body Labor Rate Advisory Board
Meeting held on October 29, 2025 at 4 p.m.

MINUTES

Members Present

Michael Powers, Co-Chair
Stacey Gotham, Co-Chair
Mark Merante
Rick Starbard
Brian Bernard
Matthew Ciaschini
Christopher Stark
Peter Smith
Samantha Tracy
Paul Burke
Sean Kane
JC Burton
John Kwoka
David Brown

Call to Order:

Co-Chair Powers called a meeting of the Auto Body Labor Rate Advisory Board, hereby known as the Board, to order with a roll-call vote. Co-Chair Gotham, Sean Kane, JC Burton, Mark Merante, and Matthew Ciaschini attended the meeting virtually, while all other Board members attended in person at the Tri-County Vocational Technical School in Franklin, MA.

Introductions from the Co-Chairs and Board Members:

Co-Chair Powers explained the Board's statutory task and that the purpose of this meeting was to gather public testimony from interested parties. Co-Chair Powers gave each Board member the chance to briefly speak and address the meeting attendees.

Public Testimony:

Public testimony was heard from in person and virtual attendees. Below is a summary of the points and opinions that were shared during attendees' statements:

- Statement: Body shops used to be fairly compensated, but now they are paid the same rates they were 20 years ago.
 - The auto body labor rate must cover all of a shop's expenses, including wages, training, and more. The current rate is not enough to do so.
 - The auto body shops have little fault in the cost of repair of vehicles. They don't set the cost of paint or parts.
 - Doesn't like the idea of a state-imposed rate. In an ideal world, it would be a fair market rate, but the insurance industry is not going to let that happen.
 - Question: Are auto body shops in other states more valuable? Why are they paid more?

- Statement: The only way the insurance industry will pay fair rates is if they are forced to by legislation.
 - It's egregious that insurance companies are willing to negotiate higher rates with dealerships as opposed to mom-and-pop labor shops.
 - The Board must examine current data, and the Board should consider that hurting auto body shops does harm to consumers.
 - Many auto body shops have already had to close their doors.
- Statement: With inflation and other expenses, it's hard for shops to operate. Massachusetts drivers are placed in danger. Would you be comfortable having your vehicle repaired somewhere technicians aren't properly educated?
- Statement: Stagnation in rates doesn't just affect repairs, it affects consumers. It prevents shops from investing in training and tools necessary for safe repairs. Consumers face unsafe delays and shortcuts. The suppressed rate is no longer sustainable.
- Statement: The current labor rate makes it increasingly hard for shops to retain skilled labor.
- Statement: There are other items that need to be recovered in the rates. Shops need to be able to earn profit from their labor rates.
 - The Board should share information from the survey.
 - Rates should be based on different services shops perform. It shouldn't be one labor rate.
- Statement: Repressed rates subsidize the insurance industry's profits. Rates are not reflective of true costs at body shops. There must be a solution that reflects more of what retail costs are at body shops.
- Statement: People are not going into the auto body industry. We need to be able to invest in auto body technicians. Many have a bright future but had to leave the industry because of low pay.
- Statement: The Board needs to consider historical data. You can't determine what is fair today without acknowledging what was unfair in the past. There are record profits for insurance industry. Insurance companies should not pass the cost of raising rates on to consumer premiums.
 - Labor rates should be no less than national average.
- Board Member Stark made a statement.
 - Insurance companies want to get this right. From 2023 data, we are only off by 10 percent in the total cost of repairs in Massachusetts. We have to understand the scope of the problem. The decision must balance premium increases and other things. If you were to consider total cost of labor, which is off by about 22 percent in Massachusetts, rates would jump to \$52 an hour. People would still not be happy with that.
 - Response to Board Member Stark's comment: If premiums need to go up, so be it. This is a matter of consumer safety.

Co-Chair Powers explained the process moving forward. He requested written recommendations from interested parties. The Board will put those recommendations in the final report. These recommendations are due before the next meeting.

Board Member Merante leaves the meeting at 5:44 p.m.

Next Board Meeting:

November 24, 2025 at 2:30 p.m.

Motion to Adjourn:

Board Member Ciaschini motioned to adjourn, and Board Member Stark seconded this motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll-call vote, and the meeting was adjourned.