

# **Accessibility Advisory Committee**

**Meeting Minutes  
May 3, 2010**

## **Committee Introductions**

Fifteen committee members were introduced: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Phil Posner (Vice-Chair), Paul Semelfort, Doris Matchett, Marilyn Lutter, Tom Dowling, McKinley Young, Emily Singer, Tapan Banerjee, Nicole Miller, Darrell Drake, Debbie Brown, Joyce Callahan, Julius Fleischman, Elliott Lapin, and were in attendance. Michael Brownell, Susan Holland and ex-officio members, Carolyn Bellamy and Sharon Moore were absent.

## **Review of Agenda**

Agenda was accepted as presented.

## **Review of Minutes**

Minutes were accepted as written.

## **Public Comment Period**

Audience member, Bill Orleans, referenced the MetroAccess Appeal Board Training/Eligibility classes that were administered in April and wondered if any additional training would be available to committee members and non-committee members, such as him.

Glenn Millis responded that training will be available to those individuals participating in the Appeal Process and is currently limited to those individuals, but Mr. Orleans' request will be considered.

Mr. Dowling mentioned an annual event that took place on May 1<sup>st</sup> at George Mason University that serves the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community. Mr. Dowling thanked Metro for their participation in the event and specifically thanked Gernae Weaver and Reginald Ward, who represented the Office of ADA Programs at this event.

## **MetroAccess Subcommittee Report**

Ms. Matchett presented the Committee with the ridership performance statistics for March: ridership increased by twenty-one (21%), or 40,700 trips from March 2009. The

average weekly ridership for March increased by eighteen percent (18%), which represents an additional 1,400 trips per weekday since March 2009. The number of MetroAccess registrants increased by 12% which is an additional 3000 customers. Reservations for March increased by approximately twenty percent (20%), approximately an increase of about 43,700 reservations requested. The on-time performance decreased by four-fifths of a percentage for the month of March. The quarterly ridership statistics (January-March 2010) increased by 7.2% or an additional 37,800 trips.

Ms. Matchett stated that the MetroAccess Subcommittee meetings are 2 hours long, from 4-6 pm and 45 minutes is being allotted to the Public Comment Period so customers can voice their questions and concerns.

Mr. Semelfort stated new safety initiatives were presented to the Subcommittee by MV Representative, Leland Peterson, explaining the types of encouragement/incentives given to MV drivers to use safe practices.

Ms. Matchett stated the Subcommittee will begin focusing on the communication between the passengers, drivers and dispatchers as far as safety is concerned.

Ms. Matchett announced that due to Memorial Day on May 31st, the next MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting will be held on Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Singer questioned the reason behind the increased time for MetroAccess Subcommittee Public Comment Period. Ms. Matchett stated that individuals don't only come to voice their complaints/concerns, but also to provide input, which is part of the Public Comment Period.

Ms. Callahan stated that since there seems to be ongoing issues, a possible way to assist in resolving those issues would be to provide incentives as a way to curb certain issues. Ms. Matchett stated that employees are recognized and commended for providing good customer service and employees (drivers and reservationists) are awarded during each Subcommittee meeting. Mr. Semelfort stated that he'd like to see dispatchers awarded as well because they aren't recognized as often as other employees.

Mr. Young commended the Office of MetroAccess for the performance statistics presented while Ms. Matchett commended the Office of MetroAccess support staff who attends the Subcommittee meetings.

## **7000 Series Rail Car Follow-Up**

Debo Ogunrinde presented the committee with an update on 7000 Series Railcar which provided information on the background, current status and the next steps to be taken.

Some of the advantages the 7000 Series possess will be that trains will increase from 6 cars to 8 car availability; capacity will increase; on-board passenger communication will be available in real-time, etc.

Some of the interior improvements to the railcar include new seating design, resilient flooring, spring grab handles, LCD displays, etc.

Kawaski Rail Car, Inc. was the manufacturer selected to build the 7000 Series rail car and once the Board approves funding for rail cars, the process, review and comment on final interior design will begin. The projected delivery date of the rail cars is 2013 or 2014.

Mr. Banerjee questioned the reason for changing to a new rail car design since there is no increase in floor space to accommodate wheelchairs. Mr. Ogunrinde responded that part of the reason for the change is that it assists in maintenance costs and it allows more room to accommodate other functions being added to the train.

Ms. Singer asked for clarification on the number of seats available in the 7000 series and Mr. Ogunrinde informed the Committee that no seats were removed to create additional space in the railcar nor was any additional space added to accommodate more wheelchairs.

Mr. Posner stated that the feedback since the AAC submitted their concerns and suggestions to Metro regarding the 7000 rail cars has been terrible and would like someone to ensure Metro provides feedback on any updates and/or changes regarding the rail cars in a timely manner. He mentioned a series of questions the Committee submitted back in October that has yet been responded to. Mr. Ogunrinde asked the committee to resubmit the questions to him through Mrs. Otto-Anderson and he will provide feedback on the questions received.

Ms. Brown inquired about the type of flooring and the audio/video features to be installed in the railcars and asked if the announcements will be automated. Mr. Ogunrinde responded by saying good feedback has been received from other groups regarding the resilient flooring that is being tested and automated announcements will be an option with the new 7000 series rail cars. He also stated that questions and concerns are welcomed and he will respond back to the Committee.

Mr. Sheehan stated he'd like to see automated announcements himself since Operator announcements are often inaudible or often aren't consistently made.

Ms. Lutter inquired about the availability of handrails/grab bars and Mr. Ogunrinde stated that handrails that are installed on the back of seats have been increased and the seat crossbars will remain in place.

Mr. Dowling inquired whether visual alerts will be available if announcements will be automated (for example: Doors Closing audible signal), and asked if a visual alert will display along with the audio. Mr. Ogunrinde stated in terms of the “Doors Closing” announcement, the consensus is to make announcements consistent throughout the system and accessible for everyone. Mr. Dowling then asked about the length of time to give alerts before the doors begin to close. Mr. Ogunrinde stated the time allotted for individuals to load/offload the trains is adjustable and is an operational issue depending on the station.

Mr. Drake asked what was the chance the board would approve the 7000 series rail car and what is the timeline for when the rail cars will be put into service? Mr. Ogunrinde stated the Board is still deliberating on making decisions but once the notice to proceed is given, it takes approximately 40 months before the rail cars will be put into service which includes testing and ensuring the rail car is reliable.

Audience member, Doris Ray, wanted clarification on the flooring selection and the features audio/video system to be installed on the rail cars. Mr. Ogunrinde reiterated that resilient flooring is currently being tested on a rail car in service presently. He stated that the audio/video system will be enhanced that will feature TVs that will display rail information per line, e.g. red line, green line, etc.

Ms. Singer pointed out that if announcements are going to be made to benefit individuals with vision impairments (i.e. doors closing), that exact information should be displayed at the same time the announcements are made, to benefit individuals with hearing impairments. Mr. Sheehan stated that the role of the Office of ADA Programs is to ensure accessibility for all is included with the design.

## **Eligibility Follow-up**

Frank Roth presented the committee with an update on the Eligibility Process. The presentation was administered as follow-up to questions that were previously asked at prior meetings. The categories of discussion were the eligibility process, eligibility types, recertification requirements and travel training. Answers to questions are as follows:

- Audiograms are not required for applicants who are deaf.
- Medical certification by a licensed healthcare provider is needed for those applicants who are deaf.
- All healthcare providers must provide license number and state of issue.
- The same application is required for all certifications. (MetroAccess, Reduced Fare Program)
- A customer can complete a new application with updated certification from a healthcare provider if there is a change in disability status. Another assessment

may be required.

- Applicants may not pre-apply if surgery is planned or scheduled. The ADA requires that proof of disability be established to determining eligibility.
- Identifying all conditions in which a customer can utilize the fixed-route system, even though the customer may be eligible for MetroAccess all other times is a focus of Conditional Eligibility.
- Variable health conditions and environmental factors also play a key role in the focus of Conditional Eligibility.
- The Reservationists apply specific conditions based on the functional assessment and mutually agreed upon conditions by the customer and Office of Eligibility Certification when booking trips.
- The Office of Eligibility Certification makes the final decision in determining Conditional Eligibility.
- Metro sought advice and reviewed successful Conditional Eligibility programs with other transit authorities.
- Different color cards will be issued to customers who qualify for unconditional eligibility. SmartTrip cards are being planned for the future.
- ID cards are mailed to those customers who qualify for the program along with information after eligibility is determined.
- All customers will require recertification, however, customers with Unconditional Eligibility have a 5 year recertification date and may be able to administratively recertify.
- Participating in travel training does not disqualify you for MetroAccess.
- Customers who've been determined eligible prior to July 1, 2010 will not require reassessment before the current recertification date.
- Customers will receive Reduced Fare card if determined ineligible for MetroAccess but determined eligible for the Reduced Fare Program.
- Conditional Eligibility will be implemented on July 1, 2010.

Ms. Brown wondered what needs to be done when a condition changes, such as environmental changes like construction, which prohibits a person's access to using the fixed-route service. Mr. Roth stated the customer should notify Metro of the changes to be verified by Metro, but changes in disability, verification must be provided from a healthcare professional, certifying the change. He also stated any updates will be added to the Trapeze system and it would show as updated within a day or two.

Mr. Semelfort mentioned as a way to continually educate the public about Conditional Eligibility and its processes, Mr. Roth may want to consider different ways in providing this information, such as, using the television in the Transit Accessibility Center to display information about Eligibility, using the Metro website, MetroAccess IVR, and ensure information is available in a variety of accessible formats etc.

A discussion began regarding the importance of announcements on MetroRail and it was stated that unless announcements are made and are made clearly, MetroRail is

inaccessible to individuals who have vision disabilities. Ms. Singer affirmed that it should be the Office of Eligibility Certification's responsibility to take the reason(s) given by customers stating no or inaudible announcements is what's preventing them from utilizing the fixed-route service. In-turn the importance of this feature should be communicated to Rail to ensure proper maintenance is conducted and operators are informed on how to communicate properly so the system is fully accessible to everyone.

### **Old Business/New Business**

Mr. Fleischman made a motion that the Committee submit a letter to the General Manager regarding his ongoing issue with bus idling and would like this to be at least a 6 month project that is supervised. He also requested that the Committee be informed of the personnel to be involved with this project as well as when the project begins and ends. Mr. Posner suggested that a coherent statement be written and presented to the entire committee for approval then forwarded onto the General Manager. Mr. Fleischman and Ms. Brown agreed to draft a letter to be discussed during the June AAC meeting. Mr. Young requested an amendment to Mr. Fleischman's motion to include any cost savings that would benefit the Authority regarding the bus idling issue. The Committee passed the motion.

### **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.