



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: April 17, 2017

In attendance: Ms. Denise Rush (Co-Chair), Ms. Carolyn Bellamy, and Dr. Philip Posner

Call to Order

Ms. Denise Rush called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:03pm.

Review of March 2017 Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved.

Review of April 2017 Agenda

Ms. Rush asked to add new business items to include an update on Abilities-Ride, safety issue discussion, and the participation in the upcoming Hearing/Town Hall meeting. The agenda was approved as amended.

Customer Service and Outreach Report

Mr. Carlton Brown, Quality Assurance Administrative Services Manager, MTM, reported all public comments from the previous meetings were investigated, addressed with the appropriate service providers, and communicated to the customers.

Dr. Posner asked if the customers were satisfied with the outcomes.

Mr. Brown stated that though MTM Quality Coordinators investigate the complaints and provide the findings to the customer, the customer is not always happy with the outcome.

Ms. Celisse Little, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, reported Ms. Allison Anderson, Operations Manager, Office of MetroAccess Service, and Reginald Ward, Travel Training Specialist, Office of Eligibility, attended the Prince George's County Advisory Committee on Aging on March 23, 2017. Ms. Little and Ms. Janice Fitzhugh, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, attended an event on April 4, 2017 held at Friendship Arms Apartments in Hyattsville, MD to answer questions regarding the recertification process, the new MetroAccess SmarTrip ID for conditionally eligible customers, and Metro travel training.

Ms. Rush stated that Mr. David Shaffer, Access Policy Officer and ADA Ombudsman, attended a recent National Federation of the Blind meeting, and asked why that event was not reported.

Ms. Little said the information regarding that meeting was not shared. She said going forward, MetroAccess will ensure inclusion of all outreach events in their reporting.

Ms. Rush presented the African Queen Award to Daniel Fisseha and Tony Gillis, Transdev Road Supervisors, stationed at JGB. Ms. Rush complimented them on their dedication to the customers in all situations and weather conditions.

Michael Wilson Award Presentation

Mr. Conrad Marshall, Project Manager, Transdev recognized Michael Martin, Transdev Trainer, as the Michael Wilson Award recipient. Mr. Marshall provided a summary of Mr. Martin's statistical performance, accomplishments, and key contributions to MetroAccess Service.

MetroAccess Passenger Assistance Study

Mr. Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, introduced the staff of Willis Towers Watson, Ms. Kristi Warr and Mr. Eric Kennedy. This company is assisting MetroAccess in the area of training paratransit operators. It was suggested that an occupational therapist observe the way paratransit operators are trained in assisting customers on and off the vehicle. The study seeks to find ways to reduce injuries while using MetroAccess.

Mr. Kennedy stated he is an industrial engineer and certified in ergonomics. He said the goal is to reduce customer injuries by developing new methods into principles to train operators in assisting customers. These methods include safely assisting passengers during the door-to-door, vehicle boarding, securement, and vehicle disembarking processes. During the seven days they were on site with the subcontractors, there was a five-step process they utilized to evaluate the current training curriculum. Mr. Kennedy and Ms. Warr collected data, reviewed materials used by the subcontractors to train operators, attended training classes and observed the classroom setting, and conducted field and road observations.

Ms. Warr explained the role of an occupational therapist as assisting individuals with injuries or disabilities to become independent throughout their life. In this role, she ensures their ability to move about before being discharged from a hospital or rehabilitation center.

Mr. Kennedy explained the results of their review. He stated that the analysis of the data showed that slip, trip and fall incidents associated with boarding and disembarking were the most common incidents, particularly when utilizing the lift. This includes ambulatory customers falling from a standing position, as well as, customers coming out of wheelchairs, scooters, or rollators. There appeared to be a lack of clarity with the

operator's role during a slip, trip or fall incident. Mr. Kennedy said the commentary door-to-door training was excellent, but not utilized enough. This training should emphasize the practice of offering an arm for ambulatory customers and asking the customer what side the customer prefers. The customer may prefer a side for hearing the operator. Mr. Kennedy said he understood the policy of the right of refusal for the posey belt, but felt the offer to assist with ambulation should be strengthened. The use of the posey belt for ambulatory customers was explained, stating the posey belt would assist with adjusting or strengthening the center of gravity and prevent a fall or dislocation of a shoulder, if used to stabilize a customer. Additional training on proper customer assistance, based on their impairment and on the use of different equipment, is needed.

Dr. Posner asked for an explanation of what an operator should do when a fall occurs. Further injury could be inflicted if the customer is moved, or if an operator attempted to lift them by the arm.

Mr. Kennedy commented that Dr. Posner makes an argument for the use of the posey belt for ambulatory customers as it will be easier to assist the customer in getting up without injuring them. Ms. Warr added to this by stating the operator should ask the customer if they want assistance getting up.

Mr. Kennedy continued with the results, discussing the policy of the operator escorting one customer at a time, and not carrying bags while escorting a customer. He said that while this is already a policy in place, it is not always practiced. Therefore, the policy must be enforced.

The sequencing of disembarking customers when there are two wheelchairs on board a vehicle was noted as a problem. This poses a problem regarding safety and efficiency. Educating customers on independent transfer ability to a vehicle seat from a wheelchair or scooter or encouraging a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) to travel with the customer is recommended.

Mr. Kennedy recommended enhancing the daily vehicle inspections (DVI) to include, interior lights, stair lights, and ensuring wheelchair tracks are clear of dirt and debris.

Mr. Kennedy commented the sensitivity training was excellent. However, he suggested adding ways to help the operator de-escalate customer incidents in appropriate ways should be considered.

The door-to-door training video is another excellent training tool. However, additional videos identifying various mobility equipment and coaching on the proper use of mobility devices, would strengthen the training. Proper use of the shoulder belt should be clarified.

Dr. Posner commented that the seatbelt extender is the solution to the seatbelt causing choking or being too close to the neck. He also commented about the sequencing of wheelchairs. He said the problem appears to be during trip movement, as dispatchers are not reviewing the trip to determine the sequencing.

Mr. Kent stated that MetroAccess will take the comments regarding sequencing of wheelchairs into advisement and work with customers to resolve the issue.

Mr. Omari June, Director, MetroAccess, stated the Trapeze system accounts for instances where there are multiple wheelchairs on board a vehicle and flags these occurrences. The general rule is "last in, first out." He said that Dr. Posner is correct in stating the breakdown usually occurs during trip insertions.

Mr. Kent said the feedback from Willis Towers Watson will allow MetroAccess and the AAC to work together to make improvements in the service MetroAccess delivers. He said other transit agencies would not necessarily embrace these changes, but MetroAccess is very interested in making the necessary changes.

Comments/Questions from the MAS:

Dr. Posner said slip, trips and falls are reported to major incidents on Metrobus and Metrorail. He also suggested if operators notice an inappropriate use of canes, crutches or rollators, they absolve themselves of liability by simply urging the customer to see a physical/occupational therapist to assist in the use of the device.

Ms. Bellamy said wheelchairs are not safe. She said posey belts would help. Operators need to be more diplomatic in informing customers about their mobility devices.

Ms. Rush thanked Willis Tower Watson for coming and sharing the information.

Mr. June asked the committee about their thoughts regarding a customer education campaign to educate the community on the importance of the posey belt.

Dr. Posner said there was a problem physically for some customers. A one-size-fits-all belt poses a problem. He said utilizing the posey belt for ambulatory customers is new to him.

Ms. Bellamy reiterated how important the posey belt is.

Ms. O'Konek commented that the belt is also called a gait belt.

Mr. Kent suggested that agencies pursue a grant to assist customers with an issue of acquiring a mobility device or the inability financially to repair a mobility device so they could use public transit.

Dr. Posner shared information regarding a program in Florida where the police hold workshops for bicycle repair. He said maybe someone could set up a workshop in the service area for mobility device repair.

New Business

Ms. Rush requested an update on Abilities-Ride. She also commented that the AAC participation in the appeal hearing process is poor.

Mr. Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, stated that there is no new information to share regarding Abilities-Ride. He said the process is still with the Procurement Office and a decision of which firm or firms has not been provided.

Mr. Kent acknowledged Ms. Bellamy for her participation as an AAC member.

Ms. Bellamy asked what is being done in Eligibility to clarify the role of MetroAccess.

Mr. Kent said he met with the Eligibility staff to discuss this question. He said Frank Roth, Director, Office of Eligibility, has been addressing this issue and will be willing to make a presentation to explain what is occurring related to ensuring customers understand the role of MetroAccess.

Ms. Rush commented that refresher training on changes over the years may need to be presented.

Mr. Kent said customers get updates during the recertification process. However, customers that receive updates to their file and receive administrative reviews may miss the updated information. He said Ms. O'Konek will be able to speak to the administrative review process.

Ms. Bellamy said customers are not paying attention to the videos shown in the Eligibility waiting area.

Ms. O'Konek said all customers are periodically reviewed. The file of customers who receive administrative recertification are reviewed to ensure all information related to mobility device and disability are updated. She said she is open to developing a method where all customers are receiving updated information.

Dr. Posner said the problems seems to be inconsistency with agents and operators following the policy and thus causing customer confusion. He suggested operators have placards with the policies in the vehicle. His suggestion for the appeal reviews is that they be conducted on the Mondays of the AAC meetings when committee members will be at JGB.

Mr. Kent stated he appreciates operators working hard to assist customers, however, when it makes other operators who follow policy look bad, it is detrimental to the system as a whole.

Public Comments

Comments received were with regard to: time on board a vehicle waiting for other customers and paired with customers traveling in opposite directions; customer address is incorrect and she was consequently no-showed; complaint of rude dispatcher; and appreciation for the committee requesting updates on Abilities-Ride.

Comments from the Committee

Ms. Rush was aboard a vehicle when there was a problem with the door and she had to exit the vehicle from the rear door. She also commented that on a separate occasion, the driver had the wrong address and was not paying attention. She said new drivers do not know to scroll down to the bottom of the ranger screen page to get all comments and information regarding the customer.

Ms. Anderson informed Ms. Rush MetroAccess will be making changes to the ranger screen page so that important information is presented first.

Dr. B. Moore-Gwynn, Accessibility Advisory Committee Coordinator, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, advised that the committee is actively recruiting new members.

For detailed descriptions and resolutions of public comments made during the meeting, please refer to the April 2017 / AAC MAS April Meeting located at <https://www.wmata.com/about/accessibility-advisory-committee/subcommittee.cfm>.

Meeting adjourned at 5:50pm.