



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Bus and Rail Subcommittee Meeting Minutes: February 11, 2019

Attendees

Present: Tino Calabia (Chair), Anthony Oberg (Vice-Chair), Melanie Jackson, Steve Kaffen, Mary Kay McMahon, Phillippa Mezile, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Patrick Sheehan, Remote participation –Phil Posner.

Call to Order

Chair Calabia called the Bus Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Chair Calabia started with the introductions of the Committee members.

Approval of Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes:

The meeting agenda was approved as modified. The Bus Transportation Project was added as a committee discussion.

The December 10, 2018, Meeting Minutes were approved. Due to the inclement weather, Metro was closed on January 14, 2019. As a result, the BRS meeting was canceled and meeting materials from December were brought forth to today's meeting.

Ombudsman Report:

David Shaffer, Ombudsman, Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), asked the committee members to volunteer for the appeals process on Tuesday, February 19th. There was a discussion about training for the appeals process. A training session will be scheduled for the committee members who have not been trained, or not been trained within last 5 years.

Mr. Shaffer provided an update on the stations with lighting improvements: Friendship Heights, Tenleytown, VanNess, Pentagon, Pentagon City, Crystal City, Farragut North, and Gallery Place. Mr. Calabia stated that the platform lighting at Friendship Heights has not been changed. Dr. Posner stated that the track lighting has been updated, but not the platform lighting.

Mr. Shaffer also provided update on the Falcon Transportation vehicles that are used as elevator outage shuttles. As per the AAC's recommendation, a wider first step and a grab strap have been added to the vehicle.

Dr. Posner asked if any one of the committee members from the Prince George's County have responded to the ride-along program with Board Member Mr. Crawford? Mr. Blake stated that he has not received any responses from the Prince George's County members, and that he will extend the invitation to all the committee members from Maryland.

Bus Transportation Project:

Mr. Kaffen provided an update about the Bus Transportation Project. The project began last year with riders completing a comprehensive survey. The responses exceeded expectations. Participants for the project were a diverse population. The AAC was well represented as Mr. Kaffen, Dr. Posner, and Ms. Rush were on the Strategy Advisory Panel of the project.

Dr. Posner stated the project was presented to the Board last month and there was a lot of positive work done. Jurisdictional responses included questions about the cost, organizational, and decision making. Some of the suggestions were free transportation, airborne transportation, priority lanes, priority signals, smaller buses for smaller pockets with lower population. Dr. Posner clarified that the airborne transportation is relevant for the future, with a possibility of having automatic buses, solar buses, and even buses with drones.

There was a discussion about the initiation of the project and selection of the participation. Chair Calabia asked if any of the AAC members responded to the survey? Dr. Posner informed that the surveys were on online. Mr. Kaffen stated that the surveys were at the Metrorail stations as well. Chair Calabia recommends that for future projects, the AAC should be made a major stakeholder and be involved from the start.

Mr. Oberg asked if some of the populations that were addressed in the survey, was it mentioned that disability was focused or was it an integration. Mr. Kaffen stated it was not mentioned as a specific unit. Mr. Oberg stated that people with disabilities are within there, and not necessarily that we were covered but that we were covered thru the surveys as ridership. Dr. Posner stated that persons with disabilities were very well represented. Mr. Kaffen stated note takers were present. Dr. Posner emphasized that the note takers made sure they covered everything.

Ms. Jackson asked which Metrorail stations were chosen for surveys and why? Dr. Posner stated that the stations with bus/rail transfers were chosen. Chair Calabia stated at least half or more bus users do not go to a station during their commute. If Metrorail stations were selected with bus terminals, that may not be enough. Ms. Ray seconded Chair Calabia's comments and shared her experience. She has been a bus rider in various counties and that going to Metrorail takes longer because it is not convenient. Mr. Kaffen stated that Chair Calabia raised important points for future. Perhaps there can be further review as to how the information is gathered.

Metrorail Dwell Time, Route Time, Scheduling of Trains, and Running Time between Stations:

Jim Hughes, Managing Director, Operations Support, provided information about the dwell time, route time, scheduling of trains, and running time between stations.

Mr. Hughes stated running time analysis does not change very often. The running time includes acceleration time, slowing-down time, station to station, and end to end. In 2016, we were having reliability issues. The running times were reviewed prior to the safe track.

The entire time was reviewed: from station to station, and end to end. The running time varies throughout the system. The running time from Gallery Place to Metro Center is 2 minutes, whereas, running time from West Falls Church to Vienna is 4 minutes. Upon review, it was determined that we did not have enough running time from end to end. On the Red Line from Shady to Glenmont we had 65 minutes. In June, we rebuilt the running time. For example, on the Red Line the running time from end to end is now 72 minutes. We added 3 minutes to the Orange, Blue, and Silver lines as well as, and added a couple of minutes on the Yellow and Green lines.

As far as the dwell time is concerned, train operators cannot close doors before 15 seconds without an override. The dwell time varies per station, and peak and off-peak hours.

The trains are no longer bunching. Service level has improved; highest in 15 years. Metro trains are still operating in manual mode. We are building ourselves to go automatic mode. In the spring doors will go in automatic mode, meaning that doors will open automatically instead of operators them. By the end of the year we are looking at going automatic on all lines during peak hours, while off-peak will remain manual.

At this time Mr. Hughes invited questions from the committee members.

Chair Calabria said that the committee's focus is on dwell time because of Metrorail announcements being interrupted and not providing pertinent information for riders to make appropriate travel decisions. Chair Calabria referenced New York's General Manager, who reviewed dwell time and running time. An analyst found that the New York system was running slower than it did a 100 years ago, and asked if Metro has records from the glorious days; what was the running time between stations and the dwell time?

Mr. Hughes stated there are records on end to end on running time, but not necessarily on dwell time. When we opened the Red Line from Shady Grove to Glenmont the running time was 60 minutes, now it is 72 minutes. From the time the Red Line opened, we added one station: NoMA Gallaudet/New York Avenue. Our ridership has changed. Each stop-added creates additional time. We are in manual operation and that also slows the system. Ridership at transfer locations has increased. All these factors contribute to the running time, as well as to the dwell time.

Chair Calabria asked when Metro goes back to automatic what will be the running time then? Mr. Hughes stated we do not know that at this time. We are going to run it and test it, and then determine. A guesstimate is that it might be only a 3 minutes difference from end to end. A 7000-series train will be faster than a 3000-series train. When we turn on the automatic doors it will save 3 seconds at each station. We need to run that with operators and customers to have the specific times determined. Mr. Hughes stated that a train may require different dwell times for a particular station, based upon direction and the time of the day. For example, an Orange Line train towards Vienna may require 20 seconds at West Falls Church, but 30 seconds while heading towards New Carrollton,

in the morning rush hours. For the same station it may reverse for the afternoon rush hours.

Mr. Oberg stated it is important to remember that the make-up of riders is different than it was when Metro started. At that time a person with disabilities may not have been a rider. Mr. Oberg asked is there any indication on the human side or mechanical side, that may affect the service, for example does rain affect the dwell time? Mr. Hughes stated that other than possibly snow, rain does not affect from the mechanical standpoint. It comes down to human factor, operator looks down the window to see who is about to board, the operator also must make sure to keep up with the headway. There are also trains behind that train in about 3 minutes, thus that specific train must keep moving.

Ms. Ray said she is a rail rider. It concerns her for trains to speed up for running time, especially after the incident in New York last year. On the dwell time side and opening of the doors, she is concerned about going back to automatic. There was a period where people with disabilities did not have enough time for boarding and exiting the trains. Since then, there has been less of that and people are not getting caught in doors as much. Her concern is backing off from the human factor, and she asked what could be done to prevent such incident? Mr. Hughes stated we are going to automatic, which means that a train will come to station and berth, and the doors open automatically without waiting for operator to say doors are opening. It is still up to the operator to close the doors, make those announcements, see the ridership, and then close the doors and move the train.

Ms. Ray stated with less dwell time, which may affect the announcements, some of the announcements we are concerned about, being truncated, is passenger safety and mind the gap between rail cars. These are critical for accessibility and usability. Not just at transfer stations, but all along the line. It seems to her that train operators are not using exterior annunciators; you must listen to the announcements from the inside of the train cars while waiting at the platform. Mr. Hughes stated we have been working on the 2000-series and the 3000-series train announcements, and we have made good progress. It is the same announcement made inside. The problem may be with the speakers on the outside of the rail car. Focus is on the 2000-series and 3000-series because we are keeping them. The 6000-series and 7000-series are in good conditions.

Chair Calabria asked if Mr. Hughes has seen AAC's recommendations for the announcements. Mr. Hughes stated he knows the department for announcements have them, he has not seen them. Chair Calabria stated if running time is increased that may increase the dwell time.

Mr. Kaffen asked is there a difference in dwell time for peak vs non-peak hours? Mr. Hughes stated there is a difference from station to station for peak and non-peak. The dwell time may be longer in peak hours because it is more crowded. However, there is not much of a difference in the running time. Mr. Kaffen further asked do announcements drive dwell time, or is dwell time determined, and the announcements are crafted

accordingly? Mr. Hughes stated there are a set series of announcements. There is a set of announcements for when train is leaving and before train leaves.

Mr. Sheehan stated we have been through the station announcements, and we have crafted the order of announcements. We want to change the order of announcements. Currently, the information given is for train operation. As a rider, "stand back to the door, stand by" is not helpful. Riders need to know the line, destination, and next station.

Ms. Ray asked what is the basis for counting the number of words per seconds? Mr. Hughes clarified we do not have a number of words, however, we may have a typical window of time. For example, we might have 15 seconds to make the announcements and there may be a set length, but not a set number of words.

Dr. Posner asked if it is possible to have certain announcements made by station managers? For example: rail line, destination, next stop. Mr. Hughes stated physically it is possible. However, station managers may be at a location where they cannot make announcements. For example, they may be outside helping customers, thus there may not be consistency and people may start depending upon these announcements. Due to lack of consistency, this may not be feasible. Dr. Posner further recommended for these announcements at transfer points. Ms. Ray stated unless there are huge improvements that is going to be a problem. Mr. Hughes agreed with Ms. Ray, and stated we may have to depend on the train announcements.

Mr. Kaffen stated the series of announcements, if truncated, may not give us proper information. Mr. Sheehan stated announcements on the 7000-series are audible, understandable, easy to hear, and very helpful. It may be true on the 8000-series. Mr. Hughes confirmed that the announcements on the 8000-series will be automated as well.

Ms. Mezile stated that the announcements get cut off and riders may not get the critical information, therefore, the basic message needs to be provided.

Mr. Kaffen stated the part of the announcement: "stand clear, move to the middle", was initiated as a test to see if people will enter and exit quicker. Tests showed that it helped in the beginning, but is it still helpful? Mr. Hughes stated that he will look forward to receiving the recommended announcements list. The 7000-series and the new 8000-series trains will have consistent announcements.

Dr. Posner explained as to what triggered the entire announcements issue. It was the lack of the elevator outage announcement on trains. If operators can make those announcements early enough that will be helpful for riders to know if they should get off the train or stay on the train. The elevator outage announcements are made sometimes, however, not consistently. Mr. Hughes stated the elevator outage announcements are made by the train operators, and that there could be better ways to convey the message.

Mobility Device Safety:

Gernae Ocasio, Metro System Orientation Specialist, Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach (ELIG), provided information about travel training process.

Ms. Ocasio informed of her recent trainings. She went to the Pentagon and 219 disabled veterans were enrolled in the reduced fare program. This is going to be an ongoing effort. She also went to Fort Belvoir and Walter Reed. Ms. Ocasio said ELIG has also been invited to visit the area hospitals.

Ms. Ocasio provides travel training for individuals and groups. While providing the training, she informs people that they should be aware of their destinations, surroundings, and emergency information, such as what to do when elevators are out, what to do during incidents, etc. Ms. Ocasio provides information about elevators: how to check elevator outages, get shuttles services, and the phone number for the shuttle. She informs riders that when they arrive at an out of service elevator they should press the emergency button and inform the station manager that they require an elevator shuttle. Ms. Ocasio explains the purpose of the bumpy domes. She recommends that until riders are comfortable using the system, they may want to go to the front of the train, tell the train operator of their exiting stop. The travel training also provides safety information if a person falls off the platform. Ms. Ocasio also provides travel training for bus riders. Persons in wheelchairs board first and exit last, and how can they safely travel on buses.

Ms. Mezile asked if something can be done to distinguish the emergency call button and the elevator call button? At some stations, the emergency button is so blurry that a rider may end up calling the elevator instead. Ms. Ocasio stated that can be referred to the ADAP. Ms. Ray recommended to have this matter on the agenda to discuss the elevator signage and the ADA requirements on the elevators. The ADA requirements have been changed. Some of the elevators have not had proper signage.

Chair Calabria asked Ms. Mezile to propose a motion. Ms. Mezile motioned to move the topic to the AAC for re-markings of the call buttons and emergency buttons for the elevators. Ms. Ray proposed to amend the motion and recommended to have WMATA staffers responsible for button positioning come to the AAC meeting to discuss the visual markings of elevator buttons.

The amended motion was passed.

Mr. Sheehan stated that the Yellow and Blue Line shutdown will happen over the summer, and asked if travel trainers will coordinate bus bridges? Ms. Ocasio clarified that the travel training does not get involved regarding bus bridges during shutdowns. She is not trainer for people who are blind or have low vision.

Mr. Blake stated that before the shutdown begins, the BRS will receive a presentation. Ms. Ray recommended that for this shutdown presentation, WMATA may consider inviting Alexandria's Commission of Disabilities as well as the citizens of Alexandria.

New/Old Business and Work Plan Updates:

The Workplan was discussed. Some of the topics that need further work are as follows:

- 8000-Series Railcar: Contracts are due to WMATA by April 4th, update needed.
- Metrorail Announcements: was discussed today and is an on-going discussion.
- Easterseals Project: will be placed on the AAC March agenda.
- Elevator Shuttle Bus Service: update was provided today on Falcon vehicles. Regarding the Blue and Yellow Line shut down during summer, a representative will be invited to provide a presentation.
- Mobility Device Safety: information on Travel-Training was provided in today's meeting.
- Bicycles on Trains: the AAC recommended to have bikes in the last two cars. Dr. Posner has added this topic in the Board Report.

Mr. Sheehan asked status of the 7000-series between-car-barrier retrofit project. Completion date is May 2019. Mr. Blake stated 32% have been completed at this time, and that the responsible group is aware of current completion percentage as well as the completion due date. Mr. Sheehan motioned a concern about WMATA's ability to meet the completion date, and for the AAC meeting, to have a representative provide update for the between-car-barrier project. The motion was passed.

Dr. Posner shared his observation that he has not yet seen any of the 7000-series railcars with the retrofitted barriers. Chair Calabria stated he saw the clam shell barrier on railcar #7246 without the orange and white colors, as it should have had. Ms. Ray stated when the AAC or the BRS receives an update, the committee members should get exact date of completion and the plan to complete the project by the due date. Ms. Ray also asked if the committee is getting elevator and escalator updates? Mr. Blake informed her that the monthly materials packet that the committee receives has the elevator and escalator updates.

Public Comment:

Ms. Ray stated that the street elevator at the Judiciary Square station is out of service. It has been very dark by the time she leaves the meetings. With the street escalator lights being out, she is not able to use those lights. Therefore, is there anything WMATA can do to improve lighting around the station? Mr. Blake stated we can check on this with the lighting department and see if and what can be done to improve the situation.

Meeting adjourned at 6:00pm.