



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Bus and Rail Subcommittee Meeting Minutes: March 11, 2019

Attendees

Present: Tino Calabia (Chair), Anthony Oberg (Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Erin Coneys, Charlie Crawford, Steve Kaffen, Mary Kay McMahon, Philippa Mezile, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, and 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 introductions of the Committee members.

Approval of Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes:

The meeting agenda was approved.

The February 11, 2019 Meeting Minutes were approved. Chair Calabia clarified his comment about Metrorail running time and dwell time. Mr. Kaffen commented about well written meeting minutes since the past few months.

Ombudsman Report:

David Shaffer, Ombudsman, Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated there were no pending issues and asked for any questions. There were no questions for Mr. Shaffer.

Rail Announcements Update:

Donald Goings, Superintendent, Rail Infrastructure and Support Services, stated the committee's recommendations have been reviewed and an effort is underway in determining how to incorporate them. The recommendations he received are as follows:

- Clarify sequencing and length of the announcements.
- The unutilized 5 seconds of dwell time.
- Visual displays for information purposes.
- The elevator outage announcements not being made by train operators.

Mr. Goings stated there is an overlap of auto manual door operation forthcoming. The changes will be made all at one time. One of the clarity issues that came up was "lexit" being announced instead of "exit." About the announcements during rush-hours versus non-rush-hours, all announcements are standard and universal for all times of service. The proposed shortening and the sequencing of the announcements will be adopted. The committee's recommendation was to mention the transfers first, and then announce, "careful of the gap between the cars on 7000 series." The unutilized 5 seconds of dwell time may get resolved with the coming automatic operations. Concerning the train and station displays, the train displays can be manipulated to display certain messages. At

the same time, messages informing customers to vacate priority seating may not be enforced, but only suggested as all passengers are paying customers.

Mr. Goings further stated there are safety issues regarding the displays at the bottom of the escalators and in front of the elevators. Displays at the bottom of the escalators may cause back-ups. An appropriate location for such display signs is being reviewed. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated this recommendation was made because at several stations the Passenger Information Display Systems (PIDS) are out of view from the escalators.

Mr. Goings asked if any of the committee members have heard the elevator-outage announcements while aboard trains made by the train operators? Committee members have not heard these announcements; thus, the matter does not seem to have improved.

Ms. Ray shared her concern about tabulations on how loud and unclear the public address (PA) system is in some stations. Sometimes there is an echo in the stations.

Mr. Ariza-Silva stated he has heard the elevator-outage announcements at the Metro Center and Gallery Place stations, but not on the trains by train operators.

Chair Calabria stated that one of the recommendations was with respect to clarity of the announcements made by the train operators. They do not make clear announcements, thus what can be done to help train operators make clear announcements.

Mr. Kaffen asked if the “stand clear, passengers exiting” announcement was reviewed and if it was still deemed to be effective? Mr. Goings stated this announcement has been reviewed. This is an instructional announcement to inform people to be courteous of passengers exiting and not to block the doors. Mr. Kaffen stated the 7000-series train announcements seem to be implicit. Mr. Goings stated from the recommendations received, the announcement may be “be careful of the gap this is a 7000-series train.”

Ms. Ray stated that the announcement, “this is a 7000-series train”, is utterly useless for people with a vision impairment. Mr. Goings stated if the auto-manual change occurs in the next 6 months, then there will not be any immediate changes. If the duration may be more than 6 months, then there may be a possibility of the changes made. Ms. Ray stated the announcements are made on the interior and not on the exterior of the trains. Mr. Goings stated he is an advocate for the committee’s recommendations. As a follow-up, he would seek the following: dead-lines as far as how far ahead are they going to look at the auto-doors and time-frame for implementation of recommendations by the AAC. Mr. Goings will provide the update to Christiaan Blake, Acting Assistant General Manager, Access Services.

A customer stated his concern that some of the trains have screens, but either they do not have closed-captioning or it is not working properly. How do we improve that feature? How can a person with hearing impairment, who is new to the area, navigate the system without closed-captioning? Mr. Ariza-Silva asked for clarification whether the customer refers captioning on the 7000-series trains, and is that on the side that has some kinds of

announcements? The customer stated it is right above the priority seats. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated there is no sound on those screens, only images. Dr. Posner stated on the 5000 and 6000 series, in the middle of the cars, there are signs that give information. However, if some of those cars are not the same types of the series, there is no captioning. There is no captioning on the 3000 or 4000 series.

Ms. Ray stated announcements on the trains are made so that a person can navigate the system if not able to see the signs.

Mr. Ariza-Silva asked why was the announcement “this is a 7000-series train” created, was it because people with low vision require description of the 7000-series? Ms. Ray stated most people do not know that the statement “this is a 7000-series train” means there is a gap in-between the rail-cars. Mr. Blake provided the background of the announcement. It was in response to two situations where customers fell between the rail-cars. The idea for a special announcement was to inform customers of different barriers, which are being replaced with the traditional chain barriers. As between-car-barrier retrofit project comes to a conclusion, these announcements are likely to be removed. All the extra detail is provided on the station announcements and is available on the website.

Chair Calabria thanked Mr. Goings for coming, sharing the information, and for the actions that are going to be taken.

Elevator Call Buttons: ADA Requirements

Inconsistent numbers of elevator buttons, location of the elevator buttons, lighting inside the elevator, and distinction between the different kinds of elevator buttons (call button, emergency button, levels’ button) was discussed by the committee members.

Mr. Ariza-Silva stated one of issues is the consistency of the number of types of elevator buttons. For example, in some elevators there is only one button to get to the next level. Whereas in other elevators there may be more than one button for various levels. Are all the elevators going to have upgrades for consistency? Chair Calabria asked is there an ADA mechanism that can improve the situation? Mr. Ariza-Silva stated some of the elevator buttons are not accessible for people with different disabilities. For example, a person in a wheelchair may have to stretch to reach the elevator buttons. The new elevators on the Silver Line stations are working fine. In some station elevators, there is a bar attached to the wall similar to the public bathrooms. Not all elevators have these kinds of bars. Is this a new ADA requirement? Ms. McMahon stated she has used the bars in the elevator to steady herself.

Chair Calabria stated at one of the stations someone had pasted a hand-written note to distinguish the buttons. Maybe there is some corrective measure that can be done. He inquired on how many new stations are under construction on the Silver Line? It would be easier to install the correct buttons in the new stations, instead of having to retrofit the buttons. He asked to contact the appropriate departments to ensure correct elevator buttons are placed for the new stations. Mr. Blake stated five new stations will open on

the Silver Line Phase 2, and that the appropriate departments can be contacted. He also shared his observation of the Rosslyn station elevators: they are new, fast, and great. Dr. Posner stated that the elevator buttons are standard. The lighting at the Rosslyn is great and that helps. Insufficient lighting in the elevators does not help and it contributes to riders calling the station managers by mistake. At the L'Enfant Plaza station, elevators go to different levels, however the buttons are not clearly marked and causes confusion for riders. Position of elevator buttons could be standardized throughout the system. Chair Calabria stated that could be a matter for fixing the sign plates. Design the sign plates, so that the emergency button is not so close to the call button.

Mr. Oberg stated the members were trying to have a standardized location for the buttons. Chair Calabria stated the buttons are too close to each other as a result, riders inadvertently push the wrong button. Perhaps the buttons need to be placed a bit apart. Mr. Kaffen provided a solution, to have perforation between the buttons this way a person can feel and distinguish between the buttons.

Ms. Ray stated there has never been proper signage that would benefit everyone informing riders which button to push. Ms. Ray provided information on some upgrades that were done and were very helpful at the Court House and the Clarendon stations' elevators: Braille was added, the material used was very nice, the lettering was contrasting in color, however the buttons did not provide sufficient contrast for people with sight impairment and did not have proper signage. Ms. Ray asked Mr. Blake a few questions: are there ADA requirements for the elevator buttons, what can be done to correct that, and why is it not consistently done?

Mr. Blake stated the ADA has maximum and minimum height requirements, and asked for clarification if Ms. Ray was referring the buttons are one on top of the other? Ms. Ray stated the buttons are side by side. Mr. Blake stated those should be reviewed.

Chair Calabria stated at various stations, there could be just one button and the other could be for the station manager. Dr. Posner stated the number of buttons for levels, depends on stations. For example, at the L'Enfant station there are more than one levels, thus multiple buttons for levels in the elevator. However, the buttons are not standardized. At the Virginia Square station elevator there is only one button as per the need. The labeling of elevator buttons is very confusing. For example, what is meant by "trains" or "exit" on the buttons. This has not been standardized.

Ms. Ray asked if the elevators are considered full size or LULA? Mr. Blake responded that he assumes they are full size, as LULA means Limited Use Limited Application.

Chair Calabria recommended one of the solutions for existing buttons for retrofitting is to have tactile buttons and added there needs to be a better template to separate 2 or 3 buttons in contrast to the existing too close together buttons. These steps will help reduce the confusion for riders to go up and/or down. Ms. Ray stated there is a requirement for signage, you cannot put them side by side. Dr. Posner stated adequate lighting in the area will be helpful. Dr. Posner provided an example on how to distinguish the buttons.

In the private sector the emergency button is red in color. Having a different color that stands out is helpful. Because of the architectural limitations at the Capitol South station inside of the elevator is brown and it is very dark, thus making it difficult for riders to distinguish the buttons properly. Ms. Mezile also stated that of color distinction will help people with sight impairments.

Mr. Oberg proposed to the committee to collectively share thoughts in a formal proposal to the Board perhaps in the month of May, and to the person responsible for the Elevator and Escalator Department (ELES). Anyone can share their feedback. The motion was approved for Mr. Oberg to draft a proposal.

Railcar Barriers:

Mr. Blake provided an update on the between-car-barriers retrofitting. As of Friday, 444 cars, 59% of the fleet had been completed. This number is 18 more than the target as of Friday. In the months of March, April, and May 94 railcars each month will be completed. That will conclude retrofitting of the between-car-barriers installation. In the months of June and July, Metro will receive 20 new railcars each month, already with the traditional chain-barriers. That will make all the 748 rail-cars of the 7000-series trains fitted with the traditional chair-barriers.

New/Old Business and Work Plan Updates:

Chair Calabria discussed an article that he had earlier shared via email. The article is about the articulated trains to be used for the upcoming Purple Line in Maryland. These are the open-gangway trains and can avoid incidents, such as people with low vision falling between the rail-cars. Chair Calabria stated the open-gangway trains by Kawasaki, are going to be used in the New York subway system. The New York subway system has ordered 10 trains; thus, it provides them some experience in producing for a system here.

Mr. Blake reminded the committee that the Purple Line is a light rail train system, but acknowledged that, New York is buying heavy/subway railcars.

Ms. Ray asked does the Access Board or the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have minimum guidelines for open gangways trains? Mr. Blake stated he does not know whether there are standards for trains or about the guidelines, however he does not believe the argument was that open gangways were not accessible. Ms. Ray stated the open-gangway trains will have to be accessible. Mr. Blake stated that he did not think that was the issue, and if his colleagues present an open gangway car and it is accessible, ADAP will be supportive of the idea. The AAC would have to show it as an enhancement for accessibility to be persuasive.

Mr. Oberg stated the AAC should continue to advocate for new ideas and ask what are the ADA requirements? Chair Calabria asked if Mr. Blake would be able to invite someone from the FTA on behalf of the AAC? Mr. Blake stated we can facilitate that, however protocol needs to be followed. The AAC needs to ensure this is in a board report first.

New/Old Business and Work Plan Updates:

The Work Plan was discussed. Some of the topics that need further action are as follows: the Cashless Bus Pilot expansion (Chair Calabia asked for the status). Mr. Blake stated the pilot is still going on and added the AAC can continue to express concerns and recommendations until a final decision is made. Chair Calabia asked if we could have a guest speaker for updates and Mr. Blake stated that can be arranged.

Bus Stop Accessibility: The AAC received a presentation on the Bus Transformation Project. Mr. Kaffen stated there may be a further update in a month. Chair Calabia talked about an article about the Northern Virginia's need to connect within the jurisdictions and recommended for the Bus Transformation Project to review it as well. Ms. Ray stated she has addressed the issue of lack of connectivity within the Northern Virginia area.

Blue/Yellow Lines summer shutdown: Mr. Ariza-Silva asked if the AAC will receive update? Mr. Blake informed on April 1st, update will be provided for the AAC meeting.

Public Comment:

A customer shared a question that was asked to him by a wheelchair user: is there a wheelchair accessible restroom in a Metro station? Mr. Blake stated not all Metro station restrooms are wheelchair accessible at this time. If a customer has an emergency, Metro's policy is to be courteous to allow the customer to use the restroom. There are no "public restrooms". We are in the process of retrofitting many of the station restrooms.

Ms. Bush asked shouldn't all the public restrooms be wheelchair accessible? Mr. Blake clarified these are not classified as "public restrooms". In some systems, customers must go outside of the station and find a restroom to use. Metro is making an accommodation to let customers use the employee restrooms. As we speak, these are not the public restrooms, constituted with the public facility, under the public accommodation law. The ADA has evolved. When these stations were built they had different requirements. The current and new stations on the Silver Line have accessible public restrooms. Dr. Posner proposed a motion that Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) investigates upgrading the employee restrooms to all accessible restrooms. The motion passed, with a refusal by Ms. Ray.

Another customer's concern was about MetroAccess vehicles that come with different belts and hook-ups. Drivers informed the customer that they are given the belts but are not checked to see whether they have same hook-ups and will work. The hookups for seat-belts are not universal, but they should be universal. Mr. Blake stated that is an excellent point and it will be reviewed.

A third customer's concern was that on Sunday, he waited an hour and a half, for an 86 bus. Chair Calabia stated Mr. Shaffer will review it and provide feedback

Meeting adjourned at 6:00pm.