



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
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BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: April 9, 2012

In attendance: Susan Holland (Chair), Debbie Brown (Vice-Chair), Regina Lee, Phil Posner, Marilyn Lutter, Patrick Sheehan, Georges Aguehoude, Darrell Drake and William Staderman. Christian Kent, Glenn Millis, Christopher Colbert, Nicole June, Antonia Evans and B. Moore Gwynn represented the Department of Access Services.

Call to Order

Chair Holland called the April 9, 2012 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Public Comments

In response to a comment about the study *Research in Motion: A Case Study Evaluating the Accessibility of Public Transit in our Nation's Capital*, staff reported that the topic was listed on the agenda for discussion. Mr. Glenn Millis, Director, ADA Policy and Planning was commended for his efforts to resolve the phone application for elevator and escalator outage issues. The system is now operating properly. A comment was also made about the use of service gates by MetroAccess customers and discourteous behavior by the Station Manager in the Metrorail system. Staff reported that Station Managers should use the accessible fare gates to swipe valid MetroAccess cardholders in and out of the system. At Metrorail stations with mini-mezzanines, customers should use the intercom button to notify Station Managers, and the gate will be opened remotely. Staff reported that they will follow up on the discourteous behavior of an employee in the system reported to Metro.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The Subcommittee approved the April 9, 2012 agenda and the March 12, 2012 minutes.

Metrorail 7000 Series and Brake Maintenance Update

Mr. Joseph Reynolds, Chief Engineer for Railcars provided an update on the Metro's 7000 series railcars. Mr. Reynolds reported that the 7000 series railcars was designed with input from customers, safety experts, engineers, and maintenance staff to provide the most reliable and up to date railcar in the transit system. Mr. Reynolds reported that all eighteen recommendations put forth by the AAC were accepted.

Mr. Reynolds indicated that the 7000 series railcars will feature slightly larger seats with greater back support, larger aisles, more handrails and bars for holding, privacy screens, and new display signs for describing the train's location. In response to a question on the new display signs, Mr. Reynolds reported that the new display signs are designed to display the current stop and the stops just beyond that station all the way to the end of the line. This new signage will allow customers to identify better the stations and follow their trip to their destination.

Other features will include an emergency call button near the priority seating area, automated stop announcements, additional storage underneath seats, new station maps, visual displays on the outside of the railcar displaying the line and Closed Caption TV to allow Train Operators to view passengers at closing doors. To allow ease of movement, the railcars will not have carpet or center aisle poles. The Subcommittee also expressed interest in gap reducers, the load leveling system and adding the International Symbol of Access (ISA) on the seats. Mr. Reynolds reported that the gap reducers will be installed, and the railcar will be set to match the height of the platform. He indicated that the ISA logo on seats would not be feasible because it would limit the number of replaceable seats for repairs. The new 7000 series railcars will replace the older railcars in the fleet, and a prototype will be available in February 2014.

Metrorail and Wheelchair Ergonomics

The Subcommittee discussed the study, *Research in Motion: A Case Study Evaluating the Accessibility of Public Transit in our Nation's Capital*. Staff reported that Metro's Board of Directors is interested in feedback from the Subcommittee on the study. The research cited insufficient lighting and signage as a limitation to accessibility in the Metrorail system. The Subcommittee discussed that accessible signage is on the BRS work plan and the BRS Station Lighting Work Group is working with Metro to improve lighting in the system. The Subcommittee noted that the research study on wheelchair ergonomics cited one trip taken by an out-of-town non-disabled visitor, who while using a wheelchair for the first time, used Metrorail.

Also discussed was the ability of vendors to hold purchased farecards. Mr. Millis reported that fare vending machines operate properly retaining cards, and this feature was tested by staff at several vending machines. Additionally, the gap between the train and the platform was also discussed. Mr. Millis reported that the gap between the train and the platform is 3' gap and meets the requirements set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Subcommittee discussed that overall, the research study failed to address the provisions in place to meet ADA regulations. Upon motion, the Subcommittee recommended that the research study be discussed by the full Committee. The research did cite such as out of service escalators, issues that were germane to all passengers not just the disability community.

Mr. Christopher Barnes, an author of a similar article on the topic, was invited to speak. Mr. Barnes discussed access to the limited number of accessible farecard machines in stations. Mr. Millis reported that there are at least two accessible farecard machines per Metrorail station, which meets the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These machines have tactile and audio features that can guide a customer on how to purchase a farecard.

The Subcommittee also discussed discourteous service in the Metrorail system. Mr. Millis reported that personnel are trained in customer service and ADA sensitivity awareness. Conduct that is unbecoming of an employee is not acceptable and should be reported through the formal process. Mr. Barnes reported that in his experience, Metro personnel were polite and helpful.

Metrobus and Metrorail Training Materials

The Subcommittee discussed training materials with the Office of Rail Transportation and the Office of Bus Transportation. Ms. Rita Davis, Director, Rail Training and Instruction discussed training materials on the Metrorail. She reported that Station Managers receive eight weeks of training that include policy and procedures on compliance with the ADA. She indicated that Train Operators are also receiving similar training, which included train announcements. Ms. Davis reported that Metrorail Training will launch a customer service training program for Station Managers that will begin in May 2012.

Ms. Ruth Solomon, Curriculum Development Specialist, Metrobus Training reported that bus operators also receive training on ADA policy and procedures to include training on service animals, lowering the bus for customers to alight, priority seating announcements, hands-on instruction with wheelchair securement and safety. The Subcommittee expressed an interest in wheelchair securement. Ms. Solomon stated that Bus Operators are trained on securement devices using various bus models with actual mobility devices. This training is also continued at the division level and veteran operators are reviewed every two years.

The Subcommittee expressed an interest in persons with disabilities participating in training. Staff reported that both training departments are working with the Office of ADA Policy and Planning, to develop an ADA training video which includes customers with disabilities providing additional training.

ADA Customer Guide to Bus and Rail

Mr. Millis provided an update on the Customer Guide for Metrobus and Metrorail and reported that all the Subcommittee's recommendations were added to the document. The Guide is designed to assist riders with the use of fixed route public transportation. In addition to the normal channels, the Subcommittee recommended that guide be distributed at libraries, hospitals, public schools systems, university disability offices and business such as Roberts Home Medical. Mr. Millis accepted the recommendations and reported that the guide will be accessible in various formats, including audio and available in July 2012.

Subcommittee Work Plan

After discussion, the BRS requested accessible paths during construction at Metrorail Stations, shuttle response to elevator outages and enhancements to bus announcements be added to the BRS work plan. Dr. Posner reported that the Bus/Rail Fare Policy Work Group had concluded its work and have made its recommendations to the full Committee.

New Business

Patrick Sheehan reported that former AAC member Julius Fleischman passed away in March 2012.

Mr. Millis reported that the AAC is recruiting new members. The applications are available on-line or by contacting the Office of ADA Policy and Planning. The application period is open from April 2 – 29, 2012. Mr. Millis also reported that as part of the New Freedom Grant, the Office of Bus Planning has invited members of the Committee to participate on a Work Group to develop the criteria to determine which bus stops will be improved. To continue these enhancements, Metro is applying for additional grants, and Prince Georges County is also providing funding to improve bus stops in the County.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan