



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: April 8, 2013

In attendance: Debbie Brown (Chair), George Aguehounde, Elver Ariza-Silva, Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Debbie Brown, Chanelle Houston, Regina Lee, Mary Jane Owen, Dr. Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Patrick Sheehan, and Dr. William Staderman

Call to Order

Chair Brown called the April 8, 2013 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Public Comment

A comment was made about the BRS field visit to the Judiciary Square station to review lighting improvements in the mezzanine area. Barbara Millville, President, National Capital Citizen with Low Vision (NCCLV), stated that NCCLV proposes that Metro should consider using energy efficient lighting, such as halogen lights, at Judiciary Square and the others stations throughout the course of making the lighting improvements. She added that NCCLV supports the other suggestions that were made to Metro staff during the field visit. Ms. Millville also reported that NCCLV recently reviewed the lighting at the Largo Town Center station, and identified some deficiencies that can negatively impact people with low vision. NCCLV will share details on its findings at Largo at the next BRS Station Lighting Work Group meeting.

In response to a question about Silver Line station lighting, Christiaan Blake, Acting Director, ADA Policy and Planning, stated that the Department of Access Services is involved in the discussions and planning about lighting as well as all other Silver Line accessibility-related items. Upon motion, the AAC requested a report on Silver Line station lighting.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the April 8, 2013 agenda as amended. The BRS deferred approval of the March 11, 2013 meeting minutes until the May meeting.

Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Committee

Chair Brown stated that during the April 2013 Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting there was a discussion on the AAC's first-ever quarterly meeting with Metro's Board Executive Committee. The AAC forwarded five recommendations developed during the meeting to the BRS:

1. Review Metrorail evacuation procedures to include the availability of informational literature that outlines the safety procedures;
2. Study universal securement policy for Metrobus and MetroAccess;

3. Evaluate proposed lighting for the "station of the future" and Metro's lighting standards;
4. Assist the Board in the development of a communication and messaging plan to the jurisdictions regarding funding for accessible bus stops; and
5. Re-institute the Priority Seating campaign for Metrobus and Metrorail

Upon motion, the BRS added the recommendations developed during the quarterly meeting to its work plan. The BRS will immediately discuss the issue of evacuation procedures in the Metrorail system and will schedule the other items accordingly and provide feedback to the AAC.

Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, reported that the Rider's Advisory Council (RAC) invited the AAC to its meeting on April 10th. The RAC will discuss enhancing communication during emergencies and has proposed a public meeting or workshop with customers concerning Metro's emergency communications. Doris Ray expressed an interest in emergency preparedness on Metrobus. She stated that when an emergency occurs on Metrorail and evacuation is required, buses are used to transport customers away from the incident. She wants to know what occurs when a bus is involved in an emergency incident requiring evacuation. Staff will follow-up and provide feedback.

Emergency Evacuation of Metrorail Customers with Disabilities

Ron Bodmer, Director, MTPD Emergency Management, discussed emergency evacuation in the Metrorail system. He stated that the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) was established in 2008, and its mission is to provide support and emergency expertise during Metro-related emergencies. Mr. Bodmer introduced the OEM team of presenters: Denton Rourke, Manager, Emergency Operations; Bob Hester, Fire and Life Safety Liaison Officer; and Alexia Dupigny-Samuels, Manager, Technical Services and Planning. Also presenting was Captain Robert Konczal, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, and Co-Chair, Fire Chiefs Passenger Rail Safety Subcommittee, Council of Governments.

Bob Hester provided an overview of OEM. He stated that OEM serves as the liaison between Metro and local jurisdictional first responders, and uses a unified approach for response and recovery during an emergency. This national standard coordinates incidents through one central command post, providing order in a potential crisis in the

Metrorail system. Using a national standard ensures clear expectations, responsibilities, and a chain of command which results in organized and efficient handling of incident responses.

OEM provides support for a variety of emergencies in the Metrorail system, such as train door malfunctions; loss of power on the tracks; and collisions. During an emergency Metro's first priority is to evacuate customers to the platform. Mr. Hester stated that Metro does not encourage self-evacuation due to the numerous hazards present outside the rail car. In response to a question about evacuating customers with disabilities in imminent danger, Mr. Hester reported that all customers are evacuated according to severity of their injuries. He added that customers who use mobility devices may be initially evacuated without the device but are later reunited with it.

Mr. Hester stated that on a regular basis Metro conducts exercises on emergency preparedness to improve response times and actions during actual emergency situations. For many of the exercises, customers with disabilities are invited to participate in order to offer real-world experiences of emergency rescues. Mr. Bodmer added that track walking exercises have been conducted with blind and low-vision customers at Metro's track simulator facility to further demonstrate best practices for any emergency situation in the Metrorail system. Ms. Milleville stated that the training is beneficial for blind and low-vision users of the system.

Mr. Hester stated that Metro pre-stages emergency equipment and supplies strategically throughout Metrorail stations. Metro Emergency Tunnel Evacuation Carts (ETECs), E-kit light sticks, Motorized Emergency Recon Vehicle (MERVs), and fire maps are all located on Metrorail platforms and inside of station manger kiosks. The equipment is available for rescue by the local fire and EMT departments, as well as Metro staff. Local fire and EMT personal also use Stair Chairs and glow sticks to evacuate customers from the system.

The BRS expressed an interest in enhancing communication with customers who are deaf or hard of hearing during emergencies. Captain Konczal stated that this is a challenge for some first responders, and more attention needs to be placed on this issue. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that Metro include accessible signage, with raise lettering, in all E-Kits to communicate basic instructions to customers who are deaf or hard of hearing. Mary Jane Owen stated that major incidents, not necessarily emergencies either, in the system could be terrifying experiences for customers, including those with disabilities. She added the often platforms are very crowded and the stations are sometimes chaotic.

The BRS expressed an interest in how a customer who uses a mobility device and oxygen is accommodated after being evacuated from a train. Metro's goal is to keep the customer and their device together, but in cases in which the customer must be separated from their device for emergency evacuation purposes, the first responders will use a stair-chair, stretcher, or Sked to evacuate the customer, and will remain with the customer as long as the customer is in need of assistance. Oxygen would either be brought with the customer or provided by first responders. Mr. Rourke stated that Metro has never left anyone behind and reiterated that all customers are evacuated from the system according to severity of their injuries. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that the AAC and RAC jointly develop a report about passenger safety that will be submitted to the Board. Ms. Owen suggested that Metro develop a video for seniors on emergency preparedness in the system.

OEM invited the AAC to participate in the upcoming drills and emergency preparedness exercises. Emergency drills on Metro's Silver Line are scheduled for the Fall of 2013. Captain Konczal stated that this is the most effective way to bridge the gap of first responders in the local jurisdictions. These are opportunities for Metro staff to collaborate with the Fire Chiefs Subcommittee, CERT teams, and others in the region on best practices for conducting rescue operations in the transit system. The BRS praised the work of Metro's MTPD Emergency Management team.

Mr. Blake reminded the BRS that this review of evacuation procedures for the Metrorail system was one of the quarterly meeting action item and that the next steps on this item are for the BRS to review the information presented this evening, provide any recommendations to the AAC, and then review with ADAP staff the availability of informational literature that outlines the evacuation procedures.

Union Station Rehabilitation Project

Kenny Spain, Project Manager, Red Line Rehabilitation Project, provided an update on the Union Station Rehabilitation Project. He stated that, in addition to the upgrades to the air conditioning, electrical system and station manager kiosk, some of the ceiling tiles have been replaced, and some structural and maintenance repairs were also performed. He reported that the repairs on the escalators and elevators at Union Station have been completed. The BRS expressed an interest in enhanced lighting at Union Station. Mr. Spain stated that lighting upgrades are part of a larger, system-wide Metrorail initiative, and that all lighting in Union Station will be in full compliance with ADA requirements.

Metro has also completed the installation of the granite edge and concrete pavers at all rail stations on the Red Line from DuPont Circle to Silver Spring. The new pavers are slip resistant, require little maintenance, and are easier to replace than the current tiles. Mr. Spain reported that repairs and maintenance at the Brookland, Fort Totten, and Silver Spring stations will be completed in the summer of 2013.

Work Plan

The BRS identified the following items for the 2014 work plan: emergency preparedness on Metrobus; elevator and escalator outage communication; 7000 series railcars; and identifying alternatives to payphones in the Metrorail system.

The BRS also added the following actions items developed during the AAC's quarterly meeting with Metro's Board to the 2014 work plan: review Metrorail evacuation procedures, to include the availability of informational literature that outlines the safety procedures; evaluate proposed lighting for the "station of the future" assist the Board in the development of a communication and messaging plan to the jurisdictions regarding funding for accessible bus stops; and re-instituting the Priority Seating Campaign for Metrobus and Metrorail.

The BRS deferred staff recognition to the 2014 work plan.

New Business

Doris Ray expressed an interest in the lighting design of the bus bays a Vienna Metrorail Station. She stated that the lighting is too bright and blinding for a person with low-vision. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that she will follow-up with staff and provide feedback on her findings.

The BRS discussed the new process for disseminating the electronic monthly meeting materials. Some members reported that the new electronic format makes it difficult to operate using a screen reader such as JAWS. Mr. Blake reported that staff will attempt to make accessing the materials easier through the use of a hyperlink instead of the current practice of using the direct URL link. In response to a question about the limited number of days that the documents are available on-line, Mr. Blake stated that in an effort to manage server bandwidth, IT had determined the five day time period. He added that his office will work with IT to extend this period of time. Mary Jane Owen reported there is a wealth of information on the internet related to the AAC and materials should be place on-line so members can access the materials at their convenience with no timelines. Mr. Blake reported that many options are being

explored. Chair Brown stated that this issue should be discussed at the AAC, and recommended that it be placed on the AAC work plan.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan