



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-962-6060

BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: April 14, 2014

In attendance: Dr. Brian Miller (Chair), Dr. William Staderman (Vice-Chair), Heidi Case (2nd Vice-Chair), George Aguehoude, Elver Ariza-Silva, Darrell Drake, Regina Lee, Mary Jane Owen, Denise Rush, Patrick Sheehan and Anthony Stephens

Call to Order

Chair Miller called the April 14, 2014 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the April 14, 2014 meeting agenda. Approval of the March 10, 2014 meeting minutes was tabled to allow members an opportunity to submit written edits.

The BRS also approved the March 10, 2014 meeting agenda, and the February 10, 2014 meeting minutes.

Metrorail Elevators and Ground Cleanliness and Maintenance

Benjamin Foster, Project Manager, Grounds Maintenance & Custodial Services (PLNT), provided an overview of custodial and maintenance services in the Metrorail system. He stated that PLNT provides custodial and grounds services for all 86 Metrorail stations. This includes service to areas such as elevators, platforms, bathrooms, and the surrounding areas of the stations with trimming of grass and shrubs, and the removal of debris.

Mr. Foster stated that the cleanliness of all touch surfaces is a top priority for PLNT. This includes the handrails on the escalators; buttons on the fare card machines; targets on the fare gates; and buttons on elevators. All areas are cleaned two times per shift or more when necessary. In response to a question about staffing hours, Mr. Foster stated that the custodial and ground maintenance staff are available from 6:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, and from 7:00 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. on weekends.

One issue that appears to occur outside Metro's scheduled custodial hours is the use of elevators as restrooms. This is a huge impact for customers who use mobility devices and walkers. The BRS expressed an interest in the cleanliness of the elevators outside of scheduled hours. Mr. Foster acknowledged the inappropriate behavior of some customers stating that Metro has installed cameras to deter this type of activity, and added that PLNT responds immediately once notified. The BRS also expressed an interest in using Metro's Transit Police (MTPD) to curb inappropriate behavior in the elevators. Mr. Foster stated that MTPD has been involved in the effort to deter some of the activity. In response to a question about who customers should notify about inappropriate behavior on the elevators, Mr. Foster stated that customers can notify the Station Manager. The Station Manager notifies PLNT, and a team is dispatched to the

area to address the issue. Customers can also report incidents by contacting Metro's Customer Relations at 202-637-1328. Additionally, customers can contact MTPD at 202-962-2121.

The BRS expressed a particular interest in the stations where the inappropriate behavior on elevators is high. Mr. Foster stated that Metro has seen a rise in incidents on elevators outside of the normal hours at the Takoma, Shady Grove, Gallery Place, DuPont Circle, and Bethesda stations. When incidents occur outside the normal hours, the issue is immediately addressed the following day. Many members agreed that PLNT's custodial and maintenance schedule poses a challenge to addressing elevator cleanliness issues. Specifically, the custodial staff does not begin work until after the rail stations have opened and their shift end before the rail stations close. In response to a question about the maintenance cycle for removing newspapers from the trains, Mr. Foster stated that after 9-11, Metro removed 95% of trash receptacles for security reasons. PLNT provides spot maintenance on all railcars during the peak periods.

A comment from the public suggested that to deter inappropriate use of the elevator, Metro should increase its signage and communication with the riding public that restrooms are available. Mr. Foster stated that Metro has restrooms in each station; however most of the restrooms require a Station Manager's escort which may be difficult depending on the volume of passengers at the station. Metro's new Silver Line stations are designed to include public restrooms with electronic access. In response to a question about accessible bathroom stalls, Mr. Foster stated that all of the restrooms are fully accessible.

The BRS thanked PLNT for working to keep Metrorail stations and grounds clean. The BRS recommended that the scheduling practices of custodial staff be reviewed.

Text Tips Program

During the July 2013 AAC meeting Deborah Titus, Rider's Advisory Council (RAC) member, made a comment about a customer's ability to text to 911 during an emergency. Upon motion, the AAC recommended that the issue be placed on the BRS work plan for further discussion and response. Chair Miller stated that he would draft an email response to the RAC member and requested that Patrick Sheehan, AAC Chair, follow-up at the next RAC meeting on May 7, 2014.

Ron Bodmer, Operations Manager, MTPD Emergency Management, provided a brief overview of Metro's Emergency Management Office. He stated that in addition to responding to emergency situations in the rail system, Metro now offers a texting

program. To provide more information on the program, Mr. Bodmer introduced Pamela Dixon, Supervisor, MTPD Communications Division. Ms. Dixon stated that Metro's text tip program was initiated in October 2013, and was design to provide one-way communication to customers regarding emergencies in the fixed route system. Since the initial implementation, the program has been updated to provide two-way communication for non-emergency situations. Customers can text non-emergency information to 696873 or use the letters MYMTPD.

In response to a question about cost for sending and receiving text messages, Ms. Dixon stated that customers should check with their cellular provider to determine if fees apply. Ms. Dixon stated that customers should provide the following information in their initial text: 1) description of a person or problem, (e.g. gender, age, race, attire); 2) where the incident is occurred (e.g. platform, mezzanine, garage level); 3) train or bus number including direction of the route (e.g. Metrorail: Red Line in the direction of Shady Grove and the next station is DuPont Circle; or, Metrobus: 28F Southbound in the direction of Seminary Road); and 4) the time of the incident. This will allow MTPD to respond quickly and appropriately. Many members discussed the challenges of obtaining the train or bus number and expressed an interest in the train operator announcing that information similarly to the way announcements are made on the bus. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, stated that each train car has a different number, which would make it difficult for the train operator to announce all the numbers on all cars.

The BRS expressed an interest in whether the text system is capable of receiving audio and pictures. Ms. Dixon stated that the program currently does not accept audio or pictures; however, Metro will have this ability in the near future. Additionally, once a text is sent, Metro provides an automatic response. Since the implementation of the program, Metro has received texts about suspicious packages; lost/found property; disorderly conduct; unattended items; and parking complaints. A comment from the public suggested that Metro monitor the system for unattended packages. They should remind customers that the option to text information about unattended packages is now available. In response to a question about accommodating other languages, Ms. Dixon stated that currently MTPD uses the Metro Language Line to respond to customers in different languages.

The BRS expressed an interest in the anonymity of the text tip program. Ms. Dixon stated that all information is confidential. In response to a question about the lack of cellular service in the system, Mr. Bodmer stated that all of the underground stations have the capability to receive cellular signals; however, cellular service might not be

available in the tunnels at some stations. He stressed the importance of providing as much information as possible in the initial communication.

The BRS thanked Ms. Titus for bringing this issue to the attention of the Committee and applauded Metro for enhancing communication with customers.

New Business

In response to a comment made about the responsiveness of customer concerns on fixed route services, Mr. Blake stated that Antonio Stephens, ADA Ombudsman, will be available at all BRS meetings to address customer complaints on the fixed route system.

Mr. Stephens discussed the role of the ADA Ombudsman. He stated that the resources of the Ombudsman office are available to customers with concerns or complaints related to accessibility on Metro's fixed route or paratransit services. He added that submitting concerns or complaints to the Ombudsman should not be considered an alternative to Metro's complaint process, but an added level of review. Mr. Stephens stated that customers can contact him at 202-962-1100.

Mr. Stephens stated that he followed up on an issue regarding wheelchair securement on Metrobus, and shared information from Metro's Standards of Operation (SOP) on the issue. Dr. Staderman stated that the policy should give the option of applying the brake or powering down the chair. Ms. Case agreed stating that her ability to power down would be different for others who use mobility devices because her capabilities are different and the operations of her device is different. Mr. Stephens stated that he would follow-up further and provide feedback.

Other topics that were discussed were: 1) vehicles that park at designated bus stops; 2) vehicles that block access to curb cuts; 3) Metrobus Operators who don't come to a full stop yet drive pass bus stops; and 4) the need for a button for the accessible gate at the Smithsonian station. Mr. Stephens stated he would investigate and provide feedback. Upon motion, the BRS thanked Metro and Access Services for providing a point of contact for fixed route issues at each BRS meeting.

Work Plan

The BRS discussed its work plan. During the May 2014 meeting the BRS is scheduled to receive a presentation on accessible bus stops and a Silver Line update. The BRS is scheduled to receive an update on wayfinding, station lighting maintenance, and lighting at rail bus bays in June.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan