



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: December 10, 2012

In attendance: Debbie Brown (Vice-Chair), George Aguehoude, G. Robert Brown, Darrell Drake, Chanelle Houston, Marilyn Lutter, Mary Jane Owen, Denise Rush, and Dr. William Staderman.

Call to Order

Vice-Chair Brown called the December 10, 2012 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Public Comment

A comment was made about the observation of an increased use of older lift buses, whose lifts and ramps malfunction at a greater rate than on newer buses. When the lift or ramp of a bus malfunctions, the bus becomes inoperable for customers who use mobility devices, so the perception of increased use of older vehicles was troubling. Staff indicated that they would follow up and provide feedback.

In response to a request for an update on lighting in the Metrorail system, Ms. Lutter, Chair, BRS Station Lighting Work Group, stated that an update will be provided later in the meeting.

A written comment was submitted about the lack of announcements concerning priority seating in the Metrorail system. The letter indicated that some customers are not yielding the seats in the designated area to senior citizens and people with disabilities. A BRS member stated that Metro had previously conducted a priority seating awareness campaign and suggested that such campaigns be conducted periodically to maintain awareness.

In response to a comment about the dangers of people running inside of the rail system Vice-Chair Brown stated that announcements are made advising customers not to run in the system. Additionally, Station Managers and other Metro personnel are also on hand to advise customers not to run in the system and to monitor pedestrian flow.

A compliment was made about the excellent customer service of bus operators on the F4 New Carrollton to Silver Spring bus line. It was noted that bus operators on that route often make a special effort to accommodate customers with disabilities.

Vice-Chair Brown announced that the National Federation of the Blind discussed Metro's new SmarTrip dispensers and made a resolution that Metro continue to maintain the accessibility features on the dispensers.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the December 10, 2012 agenda as amended, and approved the November 13, 2012 minutes.

Metro Bus Stop Improvements and Bus Stop Signage (Update)

Jim Hamre, Director, BPLN, provided an update on bus stop improvements and bus stop signage. He applauded BRS members for increasing their knowledge about the surrounding jurisdictions' accomplishments and challenges when it comes to the issue of improving access to regional bus stops. Understanding the issues of accessibility in each region was a good start to finding solutions.

Mr. Hamre stated that there are 4 critical components to improving bus stops: staff, knowledge, time, and capital. He stated that throughout the region, there has been an increase in bus planning personnel. With the addition of a Bus Stop Coordinator and a Design Review Specialist, Metro alone has doubled the number of its staff members who work on bus stop projects and monitor the installation of accessible stops and signs.

Mr. Hamre stated that knowledge is essential to understanding the process and requirements of improving bus stops within each jurisdiction. Using Maryland as an example, he stated that several different agencies have approval authority for permits, which adds to the complexity of the process of improving bus stops in the State.

Other components important to the improvement of bus stops are time and capital. Mr. Hamre stated that many jurisdictions are working through their processes with the anticipation of beginning improvements in the spring, which is generally the start of construction season. Funding is the final component and is essential to improving bus stops in the region. Through various grants, Metro will improve bus stops on public rights-of-way in Prince George's County along the P12 and J4 bus routes.

Metro is continuing its work on replacing bus stop signage. Currently, Metro has replaced 1,500 bus stop flags at stops throughout the region. The new signage features have larger lettering for greater visibility. The signage includes the customer information number; website address; NextBus Identification numbers in Braille; and raised lettering in reflective material for better viewing. Mr. Hamre stated that the signs are designed to align with the information box and fit directly above the box. Mr. Hamre stated that the new bus stop signs are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Installation of new signage will be completed in approximately two years. The BRS expressed an interest in new signage at the Glenmont station. Mr. Hamre stated that all stops will include the new signage.

Additionally, Metro has completed its update on signage at the Shady Grove Metro Station. Mr. Hamre stated that the signage is clear, and it provides directional information to and from the rail platform to the bus bays. The BRS expressed an interest in the illumination of the new signs. Mr. Hamre stated that lighting was

factored into the installation of the new signs. The BRS expressed an interest in the timeline for opening the Silver Spring Transit Center. Mr. Hamre stated that the Silver Spring Transit Center will be a multi-level transit center that will service Metro, Maryland's Ride-On bus system, University of Maryland Shuttle service, Inner City Coach buses and other transportation services. Christiaan Blake, Acting Director, ADAP stated that the platform work is expected to be completed by the end of February 2013. Staff will provide further feedback on the expected date of completion.

In the spring 2013, Metro will install NextBus Information digital display signs at bus shelters around the region. The BRS expressed an interest in the new signs being equipped with audio. Mr. Hamre reported that the digital display signs will have an audio component that will announce real-time next bus information at Metrorail stations. This feature will also announce the relocation of bus stops, detours, or any other services announcement. Additionally, Metro has also redesigned the Bus System Map. The new maps are more functional than the older maps, and they clearly display highlight frequent service routes with bold red lines that and Metro Extra bus service with blue lines.

Bus Stop Improvement Grant (Update)

Al Himes, Assistant Planning Manager, BPLN, provided an updated on the New Freedom Grant. A work group, that included members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), developed the criteria for selecting bus stops to improve through the grant funds. A total of 75 bus stops were selected; however, the number was reduced because some improvements could not be implemented in a timely manner due to right-of-way issues. Enhancements of those stops will be addressed at a later date. Metro is working with each jurisdiction to complete the improvement selection process. A total of 50 stops will be improved through the New Freedom Grant.

In 2012, Metro was also awarded funding through the Livability Program. This grant will all allow a wider group of stops to be improved. BPLN will be working Metro's Rider's Advisory Council (RAC) on developing a work group similar to that which the AAC established to identify bus stops that need improvements.

Station Lighting Work Group (Update)

Marilyn Lutter, Chair, BRS Station Lighting Work Group, provided an update, stating that the AAC unanimously approved the Work Group's recommendations. She added that this first round cost estimate, which included three tiers of prioritized stations, totaled more than \$25 million dollars. Chairperson Lutter commended the advocacy groups for their efforts and reminded members that improving lighting in the Metro

system will be a long-term initiative. The advocacy groups will continue to review lighting in the rail stations.

Customer Guide

Mr. Blake provided an update on the Customer Guide for Metrobus and Metrorail for People with Disabilities and Senior Citizens. The Guide is designed to assist riders with the use of fixed route public transportation. He thanked BRS members for their contributions in the form of suggested edits and added language. He added that many of the recommendations received from BRS members were incorporated into to the document.

In addition to the normal distribution channels, the BRS recommended that the Guide be distributed at libraries, hospitals, independent living centers, public schools systems, university disability offices, as part of a MetroAccess seat drop, and at businesses such as Roberts Home Medical, Washington Ear, NewsLine, and state rehabilitation agencies. Mr. Blake stated that the Guide will be accessible in various formats, including Spanish and audio. The BRS suggested other formats including Braille and video with sign language. Mr. Blake will provide an update report at during the January 2013 BRS meeting.

New Business

The BRS expressed an interest in streamlining the process to compliment Metro staff members who provide exemplary service to customers. The topic has been added to the work plan.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan