



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
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BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: February 11, 2013

In attendance: Debbie Brown (Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Kristen Barry, Darrell Drake, Chanelle Houston, Regina Lee, Marilyn Lutter, Brian Miller, Mary Jane Owen, Dr. Phil Posner, Denise Rush, Patrick Sheehan, and Dr. William Staderman.

Call to Order

Vice-Chair Brown called the February 11, 2013 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Public Comment

In response to a comment about the lack of announcements when trains skip stations, Metro staff reported that a member from the Office of Rail Transportation will address the issue during the meeting.

Comments were made about escalator outages at the Dupont Circle Metrorail station and escalators that move in a downward direction during outages. Staff reported that they would follow-up with the Office of Elevator/Escalator for feedback.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the February 11, 2012 agenda, and approved the January 14, 2013 meeting minutes.

Enhanced Operator Announcements (Update)

Paul Bumbry, Superintendent, Office of Rail Transportation (RTRA), provided an update on enhanced train operator announcements, and specifically addressed the issue of announcements on "express" trains, those that skip a station for scheduling purposes. He stated that RTRA has increased its focus on train operator announcements and that the office stresses the importance of these announcements to seniors and people with disabilities to train operators. RTRA has approximately 88 Field Supervisors and 36 Utility Supervisors who monitor and address problems on a daily basis, including operator compliance.

Mr. Bumbry added that the Train Operators Training Module includes an entire section devoted to announcements and providing proper service to customers with disabilities and senior citizens. To enrich the learning environment, videos focused on serving customers with disabilities and senior citizens are used as well. Additionally, policies related to station serving procedures were re-issued to all Train Operators and Supervisors, and will be re-issued again this month to maintain awareness. Prior to the implementation of Rush+, all train operator announcements were re-written to reduce their length, yet provide more concise and audible information to the customers.

Mr. Bumbry stated that Metro is committed to improving announcements in the Metrorail system. "Left side" auxiliary microphones, that enhance train operators' ability

to make announcements, have been installed on the 2000, 3000, and 5000 series railcars. The 6000 railcars already have this capability, and the new 7000 series will have them as well. The 7000 series railcars will also have automated announcements.

Metro's new Rail Operations Control Center (ROCC) houses wall-sized monitors that display train operator announcements. This display of information allows the controllers to monitor and instruct train operators to make good announcements. On a monthly basis field audits are conducted and they include the monitoring of announcements. Last year, Metro implemented the Mystery Shopper program that also includes monitoring of train operator announcements. The data from this program is reviewed on a weekly basis and infractions are immediately addressed. Additionally, the Metro Customer Satisfaction Survey, conducted quarterly, also surveys customers on train operator announcements.

Mr. Bumbry then discussed announcements on board express trains. He stated that to ensure trains are traveling according to Metro's published schedule, there are times when a train is expressed/ordered to bypass a station in order to get the train back on schedule. Other circumstances in which trains can be expressed are following service disruptions or to manage crowded platforms. When trains are expressed, no transfer stations or core stations are skipped, nor are stations skipped late at night. Mr. Bumbry stated that every effort is made to minimize this activity and the decision to skip a station is made only after very careful consideration by Metro rail management. Additionally, expressed train data is tracked on a weekly basis. Current data shows a steady decline of this practice throughout the system over the last four months. In response to a question about announcing that a station is being skipped, Mr. Bumbry reported that train operators are instructed to announce "expressed train" at least two stations prior to the impacted station. The BRS reported that express train announcements have been inconsistent. Mr. Bumbry reported that he will advise RTRA staff of the BRS concerns.

The BRS expressed an interest in announcements on priority seating. A few years ago, a priority seating campaign made riders more conscience of the priority seating area. The BRS recommended administering that campaign again. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that RTRA establish a policy that all announcements be made five seconds after a railcar comes into a station and prior to opening the doors. The noise level is different, and this will better alert customers of any changes.

Interior Elevator Directional Signage

Michael McBride, Program Manager, Public Art and Environment Graphic Design, Department of Transit Infrastructure and Engineering Services discussed the addition of new symbols to interior signs in the Metrorail system. The three new symbols on interior signs will be the International Symbol of Accessibility (wheelchair), an elevator, and a directional arrow symbol. He stated that these symbols would replace the old symbol on existing pylons and interior station name signs. For better viewing, the new symbols will be placed close to the top of pylons located on platforms in Metrorail stations. The BRS expressed an interest in elevator symbol. Mr. McBride stated that elevator symbol was standard pictogram used nationwide. The BRS also expressed an interest in Braille and raised lettering signage. Mr. McBride reported that as a standard, Metro places Braille and raised lettering signage on any sign a customer will use to navigate themselves through the system. The new symbol on existing pylons and station name signs are visual signs and therefore do not require any Braille and raised lettering. In response to a question about directional arrows on the new signs, Mr. McBride stated that, in certain instances, the symbols would be specific such as to describe direction in a transfer station. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that directional symbols be included with the new symbol signage at transfer stations, and that Metro consider upgrading tactile signage where necessary.

MetroAccess Signage (Update)

Christiaan Blake, Acting Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), provided an update on MetroAccess stop signs that will be installed in bus bays at Metrorail stations. He stated that the signs will be placed at bus bays nearest to station elevators. In response to previous concerns about the color of the signs, Mr. Blake stated that red is one of the colors that makeup Metro's company brand. The BRS expressed an interest in the list of stations and bus bay locations for the MetroAccess bus stop signs. Mr. Blake reported that staff will provide that information to the Committee.

Mr. Blake stated that after the placement of the signs at Metrorail stations, the next step will be to discuss placement of signs at pick-up locations throughout the Metro region. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that this be a joint effort between the BRS and the MetroAccess Subcommittee and that a work group be developed to address the issue. Also upon motion, the BRS disapproved of the MetroAccess Bus stop sign design because of its visual inaccessibility and supported the placement of MetroAccess stop signs in bus bays at Metrorail stations.

Customer Service Process for Staff Recognition (Update)

Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, Accessibility Advisory Committee Coordinator, provided an update on the process to acknowledge Metro staff for providing outstanding service to senior citizens and people with disabilities. ADAP is working with the Office of Customer Service (CSVC) and the Department of Customer Service, Communications and Marketing (CSCM) to develop a staff recognition program. To begin the process the BRS needs to develop a criteria for the award that should include:

1. Name of Award
2. How the person will be recognized?
3. What will the honoree receive?
4. How often to award?

During the January 2013 BRS meeting, CSVC offered two programs, Extraordinary in the Ordinary and Kudos, that could assist the BRS in locating staff to award. An example of the type of situation and staff person who would be recognized with the Kudos program was read. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that a work group be developed to build criteria for recognizing Metro employees who provide outstanding service to customers with disabilities and senior citizens.

New Business

Dr. Moore Gwynn announced that Metro will hold public hearings on the new strategic plan, Momentum, and the FY14 budget. Public hearings are scheduled for February 11, 2013 at the Treetop Executive Center in Hyattsville, Maryland; February 12, 2013 at Metro's Headquarters, and February 14, 2013 at the Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School in Fall Church, VA. The public hearings begin at 5:30 p.m., and all are open to the public and accessible. Dr. Posner stated that the Falls Church location is not accessible because it is difficult to find and there is a long distance from the front entrance to the meeting location.

Cheryl O'Konek, Operations Manager, Office of Eligibility Certification, discussed paratransit Visitor Status Program. She stated that eligible paratransit users receive a maximum of 21 days of visitor status when in need of paratransit service in another area of the country not served by MetroAccess. Customers should contact Metro's Transit Accessibility Center (TAC) at least ten days in advance of their trip. George Brown applauded the work of TAC for processing his passes on a very short notice.

In response to a question about meeting times, Mr. Blake reported that the Department of Access Services is working on ways for members to listen in to meetings that they

cannot attend. Mr. Blake stated that there will be a full discussion at the next AAC meeting on this subject.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:18 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan