



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
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BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: January 13, 2014

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

Call to Order

Chair Miller called the January 13, 2014 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the January 13, 2014 meeting agenda as amended, and approved the December 9, 2013 meeting minutes as amended.

Public Hearings: Locations, Dates and Bus Shuttle Service

As a follow-up to comments made at the January 6, 2014 Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting, the BRS discussed Metro's upcoming Public Hearings. Loyda Sequeira, Board Secretary, provided an overview of Metro's process for selecting dates and locations for public hearings. Jim Hamre, Director, Bus Planning (BPLN), provided an update on bus shuttle service for the upcoming public hearings.

Ms. Sequeira stated that public hearing locations must meet certain criteria such as hold a minimum of 60 people, inclusive of customers who use mobility devices; have open availability on the dates and hours needed; provide easy access to meeting room once inside the building; and provide access to Metrobus, Metrorail, and MetroAccess services. The availability of Metro's Board members is also considered in the selection of public hearings dates.

The BRS wanted to know why Public Hearing Number 591 was scheduled the same day as the February AAC meeting. Ms. Sequeira stated that the calendar for public hearing is set in advance by Metro's Board and General Manager, and added that there was also a public hearing scheduled on the day of the Riders Advisory Council (RAC) meeting. The RAC has proceeded to reschedule its meeting so members can attend the public hearings.

The BRS also asked why Metro chose to once again use the Matthews Memorial Church as a location for one of the hearings, given that AAC previously advised against using that location because it is "very hilly" and therefore creates a barrier to participation for customers using wheelchairs or walkers. Ms. Sequeira stated that Metro continues to use that location because there are so few sites in that part of the city that can accommodate mobility devices; hold a large amount of people; and is transit accessible. The BRS reiterated the AAC's point about the location adding that cold and inclement weather can present additional challenges for all customers, but especially seniors and people with disabilities.

Heidi Case provided a map of the Matthews Memorial Church site, identifying the exact points where barriers exist. She stated that although the location has adequate bus service, the location is inaccessible because the first bus stop is all up hill and requires crossing two streets to arrive at the location; and the second bus stop has a curb and sidewalk that do not meet. Many members agreed that this would be difficult for customers with disabilities who use manual wheelchairs or walkers. Mr. Hamre stated that his office would follow-up on bus stops at the site to ensure the stops are functional for the hearing, adding the possibility of relocating one of the stops.

To improve on the selection of locations for future public hearings, Ms. Sequeira invited the BRS to provide a list of possible locations. In response to a question about the previous list of locations offered by members, Ms. Sequeira stated that all locations previously provided were reviewed, but for one factor or another did not meet Metro's criteria for public hearings.

As a solution to the issues at the Matthews Memorial hearing location, the BRS recommended shuttle service to and from the site. Mr. Hamre stated that Metro reviews the area around each location for transportation access. The Matthews Memorial hearing location meets the criteria for being accessible by way of Metro's fixed route services. Metrobus operates approximately every five minutes along the location and a Metrorail station is less than a mile away. For public hearing locations with inadequate fixed route service, such as in Greenbelt and Springfield, shuttle service is being provided to and from those sites. In response to a question about the times shuttle service is being offered at those locations Mr. Hamre stated that shuttle service will begin at 5:30 p.m. and operate until 7:30 p.m. or whenever the respective hearing is over. The BRS reiterated its recommendation for shuttle service to the Matthews Memorial hearing location to enhance customer accessibility. Mr. Hamre stated that he would take the BRS recommendation back to the Board and provide feedback.

The BRS also expressed an interest in the public hearing survey and the hearing pamphlet being distributed at the Metrorail stations. The BRS is concerned that the survey has very few questions regarding MetroAccess service or the fare increase. Ms. Sequeira stated the survey was developed by Metro's Office of Customer Service, Communication and Marketing (CSCM) and designed to gather additional information from customers who may not be able to attend any of the hearings. To further discuss the survey, the BRS requested the CSCM provide a presentation on the survey and the pamphlet. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that he would follow-up with the CSCM about attending the next meeting and provide feedback.

Regina Lee stated that the MetroAccess Interactive Voice Response (IVR) has an error regarding the entrance to the hearing locations in Montgomery County.

Metrorail Announcements (Update)

Robert Relyea, Assistant Director Train Operations, Office of Rail Transportation (RTRA), provided an update on enhanced train operator announcements. He stated that Metro has approximately 500 train operators. In the *Train Operators Training Module* there is an entire section devoted to announcements and providing proper service to customers with disabilities and senior citizens. The BRS expressed an interest in whether the training included instructions on when to make announcements, such as when the train arrives in a station or at the platform before the door closes. Mr. Relyea stated that train operators are instructed to announce the color of the line, destination, and which side the doors will open as the train approaches the station, when the doors open on the platform, and again at the closing of the doors. To augment the classroom materials, videos are used to further stress the importance of good customer service, particularly to senior citizens and customers with disabilities. Additionally, policies related to station serving procedures are periodically re-issued to all train operators and supervisors to maintain awareness.

Mr. Relyea stated that Metro is committed to improving announcements in the Metrorail system. The 2000, 3000, 5000, and 6000 series railcars all have a "left side" auxiliary microphone, which enhances a train operator's ability to make announcements. This feature is also incorporated into the new 7000 series railcars. In response to a question about automated announcements on the new 7000 series railcars, Mr. Relyea stated that the automated announcements are a feature of the new railcars.

Mr. Relyea stated that, on occasions, Metro trains are "expressed" (ordered to bypass a station) for the following reasons: (1) to get a train back on schedule; (2) service disruptions; or (3) to manage crowded platforms. Mr. Relyea stated that Metro makes every effort to minimize this practice, and when trains are express no transfer stations or core stations are skipped, nor are stations skipped late at night. All train operators are instructed to announce "express train" at least two stations prior to the impacted station. To monitor announcements, RTRA regularly conducts field audits. The data from the audits is reviewed on a regular basis and infractions are immediately addressed.

In response to a question about reporting inadequate announcements on the train, Mr. Blake stated that customers should file a complaint by contacting Metro's Customer Service line at (202) 637-1328. When calling Customer Service, customers should be ready to provide the car number, color of the line, destination, and time. For additional follow-up, customers should also contact ADAP for additional investigation and follow-up. Mr. Blake stated that ADAP not only monitors all complaints, but is also noting commendations of stellar train announcements. Chair Miller expressed an interest in where the car number is located on the train. Mr. Relyea stated that the train car number is available in braille and raised lettering and can be found in the following areas: (1) on the outside to the train; (2) at the emergency doors at each end of the railcar; and (3) at the wheelchair parking area.

The BRS expressed an interest in announcements related to elevator outages. Mr. Relyea stated that train operators are provided information on elevator outages and are instructed to make an announcement of the elevator outages at least one station prior to the impacted station. Additionally, Mr. Blake stated that ADAP is working with Office of Elevator and Escalator Services and RTRA to incorporate planned elevator outages into the regular communication of a train operator.

Metrorail 7000 Series Railcar (Update)

Debo Ogurinde, Program Manager, Transit Infrastructure Engineering Services (TIES), provided an update on Metro's 7000 series railcars. He stated that all the recommendations put forth by the AAC, except one, were incorporated into Metro's new 7000 series railcars. The implemented recommendations are as follows:

1. Removed floor to ceiling stanchions at doors
2. Vinyl seat covers
3. Non-slip vinyl floors
4. Twenty-five percent more bars/handholds at doors and throughout the trains
5. Vertical poles at each seat to assist people standing up; seat backs also have handholds/bars
6. Privacy screen
7. Four priority seats for people with disabilities and senior citizens
8. Two designated wheelchair parking areas at middle door with U-shaped grab bars including specially colored flooring
9. Increased aisle width from 32'to 34' to accommodate wheelchairs
10. Emergency call button at both ends and center of train cars
11. Two ceiling mounted displays providing line, station and destination information

12. Four wall mounted displays providing line, station and destination information
13. Automated station announcements
14. Retained priority seating signage, consistent with other series railcars
15. Retained platform to car floor gap reducers
16. Wording of all destination signs will be of the same color; the bars at the side of the wording will indicate the color
17. Improvements to train car public address (PA) system
18. International Symbol of Access (ISA) on exterior of the car at the middle door to designate priority seating area

Mr. Ogurinde stated that Metro was unable to incorporate the AAC's final recommendation of moving the wheelchair parking area to the ends of the railcars. The wheelchair parking area has been designated at the middle doors. Elver Ariza-Silva expressed interest in special colored flooring in the wheelchair parking area and gap reducers. Mr. Ogurinde stated that the wheelchair parking area in each car will have a symbol on the floor that will look different from the rest of the car's flooring. Gap reducers, which are designed to minimize the gap between railcars and platforms, must fit all platforms at the same time while preventing smaller wheels from getting stuck between the train and the platform. In response to question about load leveling capability on the new rail cars, Mr. Orgurinde stated that the feature is standard on all Metrorail cars.

Mr. Orgurinde stated that this past December, Metro had a small delivery of the new rail cars and hosted a media event with jurisdictional stakeholders. All feedback received was positive. Metro will begin testing the new rail cars for performance, which will take approximately 30 weeks, and after successful testing and conditional approval, the railcars will go into production. In response to a question about the availability of the new rail cars, Mr. Orgurinde stated that every time Metro expands its service, new cars will be needed to support passengers on the new line. It is expected that over time, half of Metro's fleet will be 7000 rail cars. The BRS expressed an interest in the timeline for the replacement of the 1000 series rail cars. Mr. Orgurinde stated that Metro plans to discontinue using the series in 2017.

Anthony Stephens expressed an interest in the BRS developing a communications plan to educate the customers on where to find the wheelchair parking areas on the multiple series of rails cars as well as the other accessibility features in the new 7000 series.

Upon motion, the BRS recommended amending the Customer Guide for Metrobus and Metrorail with this information to better educate customers about the accessibility features of the new rail cars.

Administrative: Role of AAC and Subcommittees in Material Preparation

Mr. Blake provided an overview of the role of staff in preparing AAC materials. He stated that ADAP serves as staff support for the AAC and subcommittees, and produces all the materials for the meetings simply because that is the way it has been done. However, recently some members have begun to imply that the "angle" of some of the information/materials being produced is too corporate and gives the appearance that Metro staff is dictating how and what the AAC should communicate to the Board. He added that the minutes are not intended to be transcriptions of the meetings, but instead detailed summaries of the meetings to capture the essence of each topic.

Ms. Case suggested that an AAC member develop the minutes and agreed to produce the minutes for one of the meetings. In response to a question about adding topics to the work plan for committee-only discussion, Mr. Blake stated that members should identify topics as discussion only, which will let staff know that a presentation from Metro is not needed or requested at that in point time.

Regina Lee stated that she posed the question about the AAC's role because of Metro's new survey on upcoming public hearings on fare adjustment. She added that the AAC should have had an opportunity to review the survey prior to its distribution to the public. Mr. Blake stated that AAC members are regularly asked to review surveys for accessibility, but not for content. Patrick Sheehan stated that historically, the AAC has critiqued surveys but only provided guidance on accessibility issues. Denise Rush stated that the AAC should have also had an opportunity review the pamphlets regarding the upcoming public hearings before the document was distributed to the public. The AAC's role is to advise the Board and Metro's staff, but staff has to provide the materials to the AAC to review. Mr. Ariza-Silva commended Metro for the Spanish translation of the pamphlet related to the upcoming public hearings. He stated that the information is very accurate. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that the AAC review all surveys and materials being distributed to the public. The motion was moved forward to the AAC for further discussion.

Public Comment

Barbara Millville, President, National Capital Citizen with Low Vision (NCCLV), thanked Metro for the good work on the interior signage. She stated that she would like to see more signs with larger International Symbol of Accessibility symbols and increased font

sizes on them. She expressed an interest in whether Metro will continue to use the tan background for its signage or the darker brown background. Mr. Blake stated that he will investigate and provide feedback.

New Business

Mr. Blake stated that as follow-up to the request to place the information about the public hearing on the IVR system, Omari June, Director, MetroAccess Service, stated that the IVR will be updated. Also, the Reagan National Airport, Elevator Outage Bridge Alternative walk through is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, January 16, 2014.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:17 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan