



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: March 10, 2014

In attendance: Dr. Brian Miller (Chair), Dr. William Staderman (Vice-Chair), Heidi Case (2nd Vice-Chair), Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Darrell Drake, Regina Lee, Dr. Phil Posner, Mary Jane Owen, Doris Ray, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Chair Miller called the March 10, 2014 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS tabled the review and approval of meeting agenda and minutes until its next scheduled meeting due to the lack of a quorum.

Metrobus Public Service Announcements

Sam Stepney, Manager, Bus Planning (BPLN), provided an overview of public service announcements (PSAs) on Metrobus. He stated that PSAs are used to communicate short messages related to Metro customers. The PSA system is connected to the annunciator system, which provides audio bus stop, route and destination announcements in accordance with the ADA on all Metrobuses. Metro provides PSAs on a variety of topics related to traveling in the system such as NextBus service, electronic devices, holiday schedules, and safety and security messages.

Mr. Stepney stated that once a bus operator logs onto the on-board bus system the annunciator is activated, providing a series of programmed announcements along the route. The BRS expressed an interest in the sequence in which PSA are made on the bus, stating that some announcements are made more frequently than others. Mr. Stepney stated that the annunciator system is pre-programmed and operates via a global positioning system (GPS). As the bus moves from point to point along the route, the system is programmed to provide all announcements including PSAs.

The BRS also expressed an interest in why some annunciators “malfunction,” (i.e. working intermittently), along some routes but not on other routes. Mr. Stepney stated that because they are operated via GPS, they can freeze up or experience dead zones where they could be temporarily disconnected, similar to cell phones. When this occurs, Bus Operators should manually log onto the system again as well as notify the Bus Operations Control Center (BOCC) of this issue. Mr. Stepney stated that customers can also report buses that do not provide stop announcements by contacting Metro's Customer Service at 202-637-1328. When calling customer service, customer should provide the bus number, time and location. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that customers should also contact ADAP at 202-962-1100 for additional follow-up on the matter.

Members also added that on some routes, the annunciators volume can be very low, making it difficult for customers to hear the next bus stops. The BRS expressed an interest in whether the system had volume control or could be manually disconnected. Mr. Stepney stated that Bus Maintenance maintains the quality of the annunciator, and that bus operators have no control over the volume, nor can they disconnect the system.

Mr. Stepney stated that, in an effort to provide better communication with customers, Metro recently reviewed its PSA program and determined that some announcements are too long and can interfere with other announcement on the routes. Understanding the constraints of time, Ms. Owen suggested that Metro use compressed speech for PSA. Mr. Stepney stated that he will take the feedback to the BPLN leadership for further discussion. Moving forward, Metro will consolidate some announcements, eliminate others all together, and keep all announcements to 15 seconds or less.

The BRS expressed an interest in whether the PSA are available in multiple languages. Mr. Stepney stated that some messages are available in Spanish. The BRS encouraged everyone to report buses with inoperable announcements.

Elevator/Escalator Report

As a follow-up to comments made at the February 10, 2014 Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting, the BRS discussed Metro's Elevator and Escalator Performance. Lonnie Murray, General Superintendent, Office of Elevator and Escalators (ELES), provided an overview of Metro's Elevator and Escalator service. He stated that there are 289 elevators in the Metro system. Of that number, 240 elevators are used by customers in the stations. The remaining elevators are for internal use only.

Mr. Murray stated that as part of the new Silver Line along with the Silver Spring Transit Center, Metro will add 27 new elevators to the system. Metro is committed to maintaining maximum reliability and has set a goal of 97.5% availability of all elevators, which means that at any snapshot in time, Metro's goal is to ensure that 97.5% of the elevators are available for customers to use the system. In 2013, Metro fell slightly below its target reaching 96.48% of the goal. For 2014, Mr. Murray stated that Metro has a goal of 97.11% and is on target to achieving that goal.

Mr. Murray stated that as part of plan to improve elevator reliability, Metro is currently rehabilitating 2 elevators and has 7 slated to be completed by the end of the FY2014. Beginning in FY2015, Metro plans to rehabilitate 100 elevators over the next 6 years.

Ms. Lee expressed an interest in the intense schedule, adding that such an aggressive approach will impact customers who use mobility devices.

Mr. Murray stated that Metro's energetic approach aims to ensure that the oldest elevators in fleet remain functional and reliable, and are brought into compliance with the most current codes. Mr. Murray added that the planning for this extensive amount of work will be centered on minimizing the customer inconveniences.

In response to a question about how the data is calculated for outages, Mr. Murray stated that the data is derived from all the hours that the system is in operations. The data includes scheduled elevator outages, rehabilitation, accidents, and incidents that would impact a customer's ability to use the service. The BRS expressed an interest how elevators that are out-of-service multiple times a day are calculated. Mr. Murray stated that the hours the elevator is out-of-service is included in the calculation.

Ms. Case stated that the performance report data did not reflect the outage she experienced at the Anacostia station during the month of December 2013 and January 2014. She stated that the station elevator was out-of-service for approximately 17 days and Metro provided shuttles during the outage. Mr. Rolando Grimaldi, Superintendent, ELES, responded with the use of examples of same day or next day repairs. He stated that on December 11th at 5 p.m. there was a reported elevator outage at the Anacostia station, and that the elevator was returned to service at 6:30 p.m. the same day. On December 14th at 4:45 p.m. there was another elevator outage, and it was returned to service at 12:52 p.m. the next day. Mr. Grimaldi stated that there may be times when elevator information is not updated to the alert system in a timely fashion, but often there is no report when the outage is quickly repaired. He stated that elevators and escalators are part of a Station Manager's station review. When an elevator is inoperable and must be placed out-of-service, the Station Manger must contact the Office of Customer Operations (COPS) to report the outage. Likewise, the Station Manger must contact COPS to return an elevator back into service.

Ms. Owen stated that Metro should not totally depend on station managers for elevator information. She stated that the majority of station managers are superb at orchestrating the flow of traffic and providing customer assistance in the general area of the kiosk, but checking on the functionality of an elevator should not be the total responsibility of the station manager. Additionally, when there is an outage, most station mangers lack the knowledge to provide customers with options to travel around the outage. Mr. Murray stated that all station managers are trained in basic elevator and escalators operations. He stated that ELES will encourage station managers to look

at alternative travel routes. The greater knowledge that station managers have about travel options can assist customers.

It is a challenge for station managers especially during peak periods to check elevators on a regular basis. Many members commented that there seems to be a lack of communication that may be causing elevators to be out of service longer than normal. This has a negative impact on customers and Metro's performance.

Mr. Murray stated that Metro is working to improve the notification process for elevator outages by implementing a remote access system (RAS). The remote monitor will be able to provide real-time information on elevator outages thus providing better accuracy and reliability. The RAS is designed to notify ELES of an outage. ELES will contact station managers to verify the outage, and proceed with station protocols if an outage exists. Mr. Murray stated that this will allow shuttle service to be set-up in a more timely fashion as well.

One of the challenges with remote system is integration with the multiple types of elevators throughout the rail system. Chair Miller expressed an interest in the implementation of the RAS for elevators. Mr. Murray stated that the system is in the implementation phase and needs to be thoroughly tested before Metro goes live with the new system. Ms. Case expressed an interest in whether the RAS will be tied to the alerts for elevators and escalators. Metro is reviewing the options of remote monitoring for elevators and escalators. Mr. Murray stated that the systems are currently not designed to provide that kind of information; however, Metro is considering manually creating such a system. The RAS is scheduled to be available in June 2014.

Dr. Banerjee requested clarification on the calculation for the mean time between failures (MTBF) and number of hours Metro is in operation per day. Mr. Murray stated MTBF is the elapsed time between failures during operations. The data from the ELES reports provided to the BRS should be viewed by the total number of hours Metro is in operations.

Metro's opens at 5:00 a.m. Monday thru Friday and 7:00 a.m. on the weekends. The system closes at 12:00 a.m. Sunday thru Thursday and 3:00 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. On average, Metro has at least one elevator out of service every 449 hours per-year. In response to a question about the types of outages in the total number of elevator failures, Mr. Murray stated that number on the report also include scheduled outages due to rehabilitations. In a follow-up, Ms. Case expressed an interest in how the data is calculated for the total number of elevator failures if an elevator is out-of-

service for a long period. Mr. Murray stated that elevator failure is calculated as one. Mr. Murray stated that the reports are tied to work orders and the alerts are connected to the outages.

The reports received by the committee are not included in the count. Outage information reported by Station Managers is calculated in availability. Mr. Murray stated that he will follow-up on how alerts are connected to outages and provide feedback to the Subcommittee.

Ms. Lee expressed an interest in the maintenance and cleanliness of Metrorail elevators. She stated that some customers use the elevators as personal restrooms. When this occurs, this impacts the access and ride for customers who use mobility devices. This issue has occurred inside or outside elevators. Mr. Murray stated that elevators are cleaned on a daily basis typically at the start of revenue service.

The BRS also expressed an interest in Metro escalator program. Mr. Murray stated that Metro has 586 escalators in the system. Metro's reliability goal for escalators is 91% which is a percent higher than last year's goal. Metro has been above its escalator reliability goal since last year. The data for reliability is calculated in the same manner as it is calculated for elevators. Chair Miller requested the status of Metro's escalator rehabilitation program. Mr. Murray stated that schedule to rehabilitate and replace escalators in the system is on-going. There are 120 escalators slated to be replaced by the year 2020. The goal is to reduce the aging fleet of elevators as well as bring the system in compliance with current codes while minimizing the customer inconvenience.

The BRS expressed an interest in the safety barrier around escalator construction in the rail system. Sometimes, the area around the safety barrier is very narrow making it extremely difficult for customers that use mobility devices to travel in that area. Mr. Murray stated that Metro understands customer's concerns on this issue, especially during our peak periods and makes every effort to minimize customer frustration. But safety comes first. As a rule, Metro maintains approximately 5 feet from the edge of the platform.

New Business

Mr. Blake stated that Metro is updating its Metrorail Braille flip maps. Metro is requesting a review for the accuracy of the information by members of the AAC. Additionally, the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) has also requested the AAC's assistance with the review of its Braille map. Mr. Blake stated that ADAP has already provided VRE with guidance on the font size and appearance of its Braille map. Chair Miller stated that he welcomes the opportunity to review both maps.

Old Business

The BRS discussed Bus Stop Accessibility. Mr. Blake stated that Metro is working with the jurisdictions and will be presenting a PowerPoint presentation on the topic to Board. Metro has identified 57 bus stop around the region that the jurisdictions should focus on the improve accessibility. Frank Roth, Director, Eligibility Certification and Outreach, stated customers can report bus stop inaccessibility by contacting 202-962-2848 or via email at eligibility@wmata.com. The information should include the bus stop ID number or closest intersection and any other detailing information about the area around the stop.

As a reminder, Mr. Blake stated that the Bus Stop Accessibility Work Group next meeting will be held on March 17, 2014 immediately following the MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Roth also provided an update on Metro's Reduced Fare SmarTrip Conversion pilot program. He stated that the program began in late February 2014 and has approximately 50 customers and their PCA's participating in the pilot program. There has been no negative feedback from the pilot program. In response to a question about access to the new cards, Mr. Roth stated that as reduced fare cardholders cards expire, eligible customers will receive a replacement Reduced Fare SmarTrip card.

Public Comment

A comment was made about proposed flooring for Metro's existing fleet of railcars. Barbara Millville, President, National Capital Citizens with Low Vision (NCCLV), stated that feedback from the low-vision community on this issue is that noise level will be increased by moving from a carpeted surface. Additionally, there are some concerns about the slippery surface for customers, guide dogs. NCCLV is also concerned about glare and suggested that Metro choose a matte finish on the flooring. Mr. Blake stated that Metro will investigate and provide feedback.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan