



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
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BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: May 13, 2013

In attendance: Debbie Brown (Chair), Brian Miller (Vice-Chair), George Aguehoude, Elver Ariza-Silva, Darrell Drake, Chanelle Houston, Regina Lee, Dr. Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Patrick Sheehan, and Dr. William Staderman

Call to Order

Chair Brown called the May 13, 2013 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Public Comment

During the April 2013 Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting Ms. Rush asked about the number of Green Line stations that had been evaluated by the BRS Station Lighting Work Group. Barbara Millville, President, National Capital Citizens with Low Vision (NCCLV), reported that Work Group's initial evaluation focused on core stations and stations with high ridership. Ms. Millville stated that with Green Line being Metro's newest line, there has been little concentration on those particular stations up to this point. However, she added that the Work Group will study Green Line stations in the near future and share their findings with the BRS.

Dr. Posner reported that new track bed lighting has been installed at the Judiciary Square, and he expressed an interest in whether the Work Group has evaluated this new lighting. Ms. Millville reported that she has noticed the lighting improvements at Judiciary Square, and the initial evaluation of lighting along the track bed and other areas of the station do appear to be better. Christiaan Blake, Acting Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that new lighting has also been installed behind the side platforms and will provide reflection off the station's walls.

A comment was made about the recent negative press about MetroAccess and Metro's response. Metro should increase its publicity efforts on service improvements and the number of people it helps. Chair Brown, reported that she would relay that information to Paul Semelfort, Chair, MetroAccess Subcommittee.

A comment was also made about Bus Operators who refuse to deploy lifts on the V14 District Heights-Seat Pleasant bus line for customers who use mobility devices. Mr. Blake stated that customers should file complaints with Metro's Customer Service Office, and then contact ADAP for additional follow-up and investigation. The BRS expressed an interest in Metro's Mystery Rider program; and asked if the program uses people with disabilities as mystery riders. Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, will investigate and provide feedback on the use of people with disabilities in the program.

A comment was made about damage to accessible signage located on the front fare boxes on the C8 College Park White Flint bus line. Missing braille and/or raised letters make it difficult for customers who are blind or have low vision to identify the bus number. Chair Brown reported that she would like to add the topic as an update to the work plan.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the May 13, 2013 meeting agenda as amended, and approved the March 11, 2013 and the April 8, 2013 meeting minutes.

Priority Seating

Jawauna Greene, Director, Marketing (MKTG), discussed priority seating on Metrobus and Metrorail. She stated that as part of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) public transit agencies are required to make priority seating available for people with disabilities and senior citizens. Metro has priority seating on the bus and rail systems. On Metrorail priority seating is located near the center doors of every rail car, while on the Metrobus priority seating is located directly behind the driver on the right and left sides all the way to the first forward facing seats.

Ms. Greene stated that while the ADA mandates that all public transportation provide priority seating, it does not mandate the enforcement of priority seating. Metro encourages customers to be courteous to fellow passengers, pay attention to their surroundings, and keep priority seats available for people with disabilities and senior citizens. The International Symbol of Accessibility signage was added to the buses and rail cars throughout the system to enhance awareness, but over time, customers have become less sensitive to the issue.

Metro will be launching a new media campaign to increase priority seating awareness. Ms. Greene stated that to enhance awareness about priority seating Metro will use traditional and innovative advertising strategies such as 'take one' brochures; enhanced announcements on buses; and increase the frequency of information on the Passengers Information Display Systems (PIDS). Metro will also use the General Manager's column in the newspaper; social media; and public service announcements to bring attention to this issue. In response to a question about involving customers in the process, Ms. Greene stated that as part of this campaign, Metro will encourage customers who need priority seating to be proactive and ask for one. The new media campaign to increase priority seating awareness will commence in June 2013.

Mr. Ariza-Silva suggested that Metro expand the priority seating campaign to priority space for customers that use mobility devices. During peak hours, trains are so crowded that the space for mobility devices is filled. He stated that many customers do not acknowledge him or the space designed for mobility devices. Ms. Greene stated that this kind of feedback will help Metro build a strong campaign to address the issue. Mr. Miller expressed an interest in the number of seats on the bus and rail that are designated as priority seating. Ms. Greene reported that she would investigate and provide feedback.

Dr. Posner expressed an interest in adding the information to Metro's new mobile website for smart phones and conducting a survey to gauge the improvements. Ms. Greene stated that she plans to work closely with the BRS to ensure campaign points are on target to get the message across to all customers. The review of the priority seating campaign was one of the action items from the AAC Leadership Quarterly meeting with the Metro Board Executive Committee. The BRS applauded Metro for its proactive approach to creating a culture of courtesy and looks forward to working with MKTG on various aspects of the priority seating campaign.

Silver Line Station

Jim Hughes, Director, Intermodal Planning, discussed Metro's new Silver Line Metrorail station design. He stated that the new rail line is an extension from Northern Virginia to the system being built in two phases by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority. The first phase will include five stations connecting East Falls Church Metrorail station on the Orange Line to Wiehle Avenue–Reston on the new Silver Line. The final phase of the project will connect Herndon, eastern Loudon County, and Dulles Airport and is scheduled to open in 2018. The BRS expressed an interest in directional signage at the new station. Mr. Hughes stated that Metro will update all its signs with new information. He added that interior directional signage is being handled through another program.

Metro's original plan was to terminate the new rail station at the Stadium-Armory station. Mr. Hughes stated that, due to operational and infrastructure constraints with the pocket track, the Silver Line will operate between the Wiehle-Reston East and Largo Town Center. This option to extend the line to the Largo station will eliminate the need for Orange Line Rush+ service. The BRS expressed an interest in a tour of the new station to review the design and lighting. Mr. Hughes reported that Silver Line station remains an active construction site; therefore, it is not safe for a tour. He stated that all of the stations on the Silver Line will have the benefit of natural light because they will all be outdoor stations.

Mr. Hughes stated that the peak headways on the Silver, Orange, Yellow, and Green lines will be 6 minutes, and the peak headway for Blue Line will be reduced to 12 minutes. All Orange Line service from Vienna will now terminate at New Carrollton station, and there will be no changes to service on the Red Line.

The Silver Line, along with integrated bus service, will provide high-quality, high-capacity transit service along the Dulles Corridor to Reston. It will also provide the District of Columbia and Prince George's County more direct and faster transportation to Virginia, providing an alternative to automobiles.

To complement the new rail line, the 60 existing bus routes that service the area of the Silver line will be restructured to provide service to the five new stations. There will be total of 62 route changes: 12 new routes, 39 modified routes and 11 eliminated routes. The integrated bus service plan will be fully implemented by the end of calendar year 2013.

Open Payment System

Greg Garback, Executive Officer, Department of Finance and Administration, provided a brief overview of Metro's New Electronic Payment Program (NEPP). He stated that Metro's existing fare collection equipment and systems are old and limited. In an effort to meet the demand of customers and provide better service, Metro is exploring new electronic payment systems. Mr. Garback stated that any new payment system must integrate with Metro's other business systems such as Maximo, Trapeze, and Peoplesoft. The BRS expressed an interest in accessibility features of the fare gates in NEPP. Mr. Garback reported that any fare collection equipment and systems will be 100% accessible; Dr. Posner added that Metro has always gone beyond the minimum accessibility standards of the ADA. In response to a question about SmartTrip cards, Mr. Garback stated that the new system will not phase out any fare media, and cash will still be accepted on all three modes.

In the coming weeks, Metro will be testing fare gate equipment from several suppliers. Mr. Garback requested the BRS's assistance in testing the equipment and providing feedback. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that the NEPP be moved forward to the AAC for review at the June 2013 meeting.

Work Plan

The BRS identified the following additional items for the 2014 work plan: priority seating campaign (survey and maintenance updates); accessible bus signs (maintenance); emergency preparedness drills (update); and lighting at the Silver Line stations.

New Business

Dr. Posner applauded Metro for its new mobile website. Metro launched a new mobile website designed smart phones. The website features the trip planner, next train, next bus, elevator status, alerts, and advisory announcements.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan