



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
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BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: September 10, 2012

In attendance: Debbie Brown (Vice-Chair), G. Robert Brown, Darrell Drake, Chanelle Houston, Marilyn Lutter, Dr. Phil Posner, Denise Rush, Patrick Sheehan, and William Staderman.

Representing the Department of Access Services: Christian Kent (Assistant General Manager, Access Services), Christiaan Blake, Christopher Colbert, Sherrie Collings, Carol P. Lopez, Glenn Millis, Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, and Terry Prevost

Call to Order

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

Public Comment

In a follow-up to a comment made at the July 9, 2012 BRS meeting about overcrowding on station platform during peak periods, the BRS reported that Metro is in the process of developing rail standards, and that the full Accessibility Advisory Committee has recommended that platform crowding be included in the standards.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the September 10, 2012 agenda, and approved the August 13, 2012 minutes.

Customer Surveys

Alison Simon, Director, Customer Research, discussed the MetroAccess Knowledge and Usage Study. She stated that the study was designed to understand the characteristics and usage patterns of conditionally eligible MetroAccess customers. A random sample of 400 MetroAccess customers who used the service at least four times in the past twelve months and were conditionally eligible for MetroAccess, were selected to participate in the fifteen minute survey. The BRS expressed an interest in the definition of “conditionally eligible” for MetroAccess service. Chris Colbert, Manager, MetroAccess

Eligibility, reported that “conditionally” eligible refers to customer whose disabilities prevent them from utilizing fixed route services for most, but not all of their trips.

The results of the survey indicated that only a small number of conditionally eligible MetroAccess customers are familiar with Metro’s eAlerts. Only 12% reported that they are familiar with the MetroAccess alerts, while an even smaller number indicated being familiar with the Elevator eAlerts System. Ms. Simon indicated that these low figures demonstrated a need for outreach in this area. The BRS expressed an interest in the correlation between MetroAccess customers’ computer access and their familiarity with Metro’s eAlert systems. Ms. Simon reported that computer usage will be discussed in the survey presented at the MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting on September 17, 2012.

Among the customers surveyed 68% reported using Metrobus in the last twelve months, 45% reported using Metrorail in the third quarter, and 47% in the fourth quarter. These figures demonstrate a higher usage on Metrobus than Metrorail among conditionally eligible MetroAccess customers. When conditionally eligible MetroAccess customers were asked for their primary motivation to use fixed route service instead of MetroAccess for a trip, the primary reasons provided were convenience and the need for transportation on a short notice. There were a significant number of conditionally eligible MetroAccess customers who reported not using fixed route service at all. The primary reason indicated was health. The BRS expressed an interest in the type of health reasons that prevented a customer using the accessible fixed route service. Ms. Simon reported that the responses for this question were taken verbatim and customer responses of being too sick to ride the system were coded as a health reason.

Through the Free Ride Program customers deemed conditionally eligible for MetroAccess service can ride the fixed route service for free. The survey demonstrated that most customers are aware of the program yet there still a small number (eight percent on Metrobus and 11 percent on Metrorail), that reported paying a fare. Ms. Simon stated that this demonstrated that additional outreach may be necessary. To further understand patterns in MetroAccess customer usage on the fixed route system was compared over a two-year period. Forty-nine percent of the customers reported that they have not changed their use of fixed route service while thirty-six percent had decreased their usage of the service in the last year. The AAC expressed an interest in how the data compares to the overall ridership on bus and rail during the same time period.

Ms. Simon reported that that information was available and can provide feedback.

SmartTrip Card Dispensers

Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, provided an update on Metro's new SmartTrip card dispensers. Mr. Kent stated that all new SmartTrip card dispensers have been covered until all the accessibility features have been incorporated. The new dispensers will feature a touch screen display with Braille and raised lettering signage, and audio prompts. There will be a new machine placed in each Metrorail station in the system.

Mr. Kent stated that the mission of the Department of Access Services is to provide guidance on all issues related to accessibility at Metro, including the purchase of equipment. He added that the Department provided consultation in the initial phase of the SmartTrip dispensers procurement and then again when the prototype was delivered. It was in the final delivery phase that the Department was not involved and the dispensers were accepted without all the accessibility features, contrary to policy. Mr. Kent stated that Metro's General Manager has reiterated the importance of this policy and the importance of the involvement of Access Services in all stages of the process. This includes involving the AAC and its subcommittees in the review process.

Phil Posner stated that the new dispensers will only dispense SmartTrip cards, not add fare; therefore, it is imperative that Metro provide information to riders regarding where SmartTrip cards can be purchased as well as loaded. Upon motion, the BRS recommended displaying a sign near the dispensers in the stations that will let customers know that SmartTrip cards can be loaded at some retail locations. It was also suggested that a separate link for places that will load SmartTrip cards be added to Metro's website.

Bus Stop Accessibility

The BRS continued its discussion on bus stop accessibility with Arlington County Division of Transportation. Oleg Kotov, Bus Stop Program Manager, provided an overview of bus stops in the County. He stated that there are 1,103 bus stops in the County. Of that number, 562 are "Metro only" stops and 247 are shared bus

stops. He indicated that approximately 80 percent of the bus stops with shelters and benches in the County's system are located at Metro only stops.

Mr. Kotov stated that a 2007 inventory of the County's bus stops demonstrated that many of the stops are inaccessible because they lack landing pads, sidewalks or have insufficient clearance for a wheelchair or other mobility device. Mr. Kotov stated that bus stop improvements have been limited by right-of-way issues on state roads and private property, and limited funding. To date, the County's Bus Stop Improvement Project has upgraded 30 bus stops with ADA-compliant landing pads, accessible pathways, bus shelters, benches and real-time bus information. In addition to those improvements, the BRS recommended that the County look to ensure that curb cuts are more visible, allowing customers who use mobility devices to better view the curb from an angle. Through a New Freedom grant in collaboration with Metro, an additional six bus stops are slated for improvements. The BRS expressed an interest in how the additional bus stops were selected and prioritized. Mr. Kotov stated that the stops were selected in part by feedback received from MetroAccess and Specialized Transit for Arlington Residents (STAR) customers.

In the upcoming fiscal year, Mr. Kotov stated that Arlington County plans to upgrade 10 more bus stops to meet ADA requirements, install 10 new bus shelters, 20 new benches and 20 new trash receptacles, as well as add other amenities such as transit information boxes and improved lighting.

The BRS also discussed bus stop accessibility with Montgomery County Division of Transit Services. Stacey Coletta, Manager, Passenger Facilities Unit, provided an overview of bus stops in the County. She stated that the County has 5,400 bus stops in the transit system. Of that number, 3,400 bus stops needed improvement because they lacked pedestrian access, proper signage information, and other basic amenities such as benches and landing pads. The BRS expressed an interest in how the County selected bus stops for improvement. Ms. Coletta indicated that Montgomery County used a team approach to determine which stops needed improvements and collaborated with traffic engineers, utility companies, the State Highway Administration and Metro to review pedestrian and traffic patterns, safety and access. All improvements were fully funded by the Montgomery County.

Ms. Coletta reported that Montgomery is committed to making pathways accessible and has approved funds in the next year's budget cycle to improve

additional bus stops. Because of this, Montgomery County was able to yield their funds in the New Freedom Grant to other jurisdictions in the region. The BRS expressed an interest in how customers can report inaccessible bus stops in the County. Ms. Coletta stated that customers can contact the Montgomery County Customer Service 311 Line and report any issue.

Work Plan

The BRS reviewed its work plan and upon motion recommended the work plan be forwarded to the AAC for approval at the next meeting in October 2012.

New Business

No new business was introduced.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan