



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
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BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: September 9, 2013

In attendance: Dr. Brian Miller (Chair), Dr. William Staderman (Vice-Chair), Heidi Case (2nd Vice-Chair), Georges Aguehoude, Robert Brown, Kevin Hanretta, Chanelle Houston, Regina Lee, Mary Jane Owen, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Chair Miller called the September 9, 2013 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the amended September 9, 2013 meeting agenda, and approved the August 12, 2013 meeting minutes as amended.

Administrative Item

The BRS discussed formalizing staff presentations before the committee to ensure members have adequate time for questions and answers. Upon motion the BRS voted to have the allotted time for all presentations be divided in half: the first half will be staff presentation, and the second half will consist of questions from committee members and discussion.

Metrobus Service Changes

Jim Hamre, Director, Bus Planning (BPLN), discussed Metro's proposed Metrobus service changes that will be the subject of upcoming public hearings. He stated that the proposed changes are designed to ensure Metro is meeting the ridership demands; improve on-time performance; and increase fare box recovery. The changes are also designed to ensure Metro remains in a "State of Good Operations" by reducing crowding; improving reliability that reflects traffic conditions; increase evening and weekend trips; and replace unproductive routes. In response to a question about how the changes in the bus routes were selected, Mr. Hamre stated that the service changes derived from a series of public studies, local market changes, and staff initiatives. Mr. Aguehoude expressed an interest in the notification time of public hearings. Mr. Hamre stated that public hearings are announced 90 days prior to the hearings, providing sufficient time for the public discuss the proposed service changes. He reiterated that most of the service changes were a result of the public involvement on the study.

Mr. Hamre stated that there are four thresholds that trigger a public hearing: revenue miles; route miles; span of service; and boarding. Metro will conduct six public hearings that will provide customers with the opportunity to voice their opinions about the proposed changes. The public hearings are scheduled to take place from Monday, September 16, 2013 through Thursday, September 19, 2013, and a hearing will be held in each jurisdiction. Additionally, Metro will conduct a series of system outreaches at bus stops and rail stations throughout the region as well as with community organizations.

The BRS asked if any of the proposed changes will impact MetroAccess service, especially the loss of weekend Metrobus service. Mr. Hamre stated that the proposed service changes will actually improve weekend travel on public transportation making Metro service more reliable. In response to a question about changes for services in Montgomery County, Mr. Hamre stated that the proposal identifies changes on the New Hampshire Avenue – K9 Line. Ms. Rush stated that BRS should stay informed of Metrobus services changes and recommended that BLPN regularly provide updates to the Subcommittee. Mr. Hamre agreed and welcomed the involvement of the BRS and the disability community at-large. In response to a question about the public hearing materials, Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, stated that his office will forward all of the meetings in an accessible format the next morning, and going forward his office will provide the BRS with updates on upcoming public hearings.

Travel Training Programs

Chris Colbert, Operations Manager, Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach (ELIG), discussed Metro's Travel Training Program. He stated that ELIG has a direct referral system to travel training services, providing immediate feedback on the travel training process and an improved paratransit eligibility assessment of customers. Metro's in-house Travel Training program is augmented by contractors and community partners.

Mr. Colbert introduced Cherie Leporatti, Metro System Orientation Specialist. Ms. Leporatti stated that Metro's Travel Training program is a family of services that includes individualized trip plans, methods, and strategies for customers with disabilities and older adults to increase safe and independent travel on public transportation. The program is available to groups and individuals, and Metro has partnered with Medical Transportation Management, ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia, and Independence Now to provide travel training across the region. Metro also has a partnership with Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind (CLB) for specialized training for customers with visual impairments.

The BRS expressed an interest in training on different fare media such as SmarTrip cards. Ms. Leporatti stated that travel trainers teach customers how to use Reduced Fare, SmarTrip, Senior SmarTrip, and MetroAccess cards on Metrobus and Metrorail. Additionally, customers learn techniques and skills to independently use the system such as the proper way to access a Metrorail car. As an added service, all Metro System Orientation Specialists sell Senior SmarTrip card and Reduced Fare SmarTrip cards to customers directly.

As a follow up to a question from the BRS meeting on June 10th regarding outreach to older adults, Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, stated that Reginald Ward is the Metro System Orientation Specialist who serves that population. Mr. Ward stated that he would be participating in upcoming outreach events to seniors at the following locations: North Michigan Recreation Center, Edgewood Terrace, Sarah Circle, and Senior Picnic in the Southeast area of the District of Columbia.

Ms. Leporatti stated that Metro also offers travel training workshops bi-annually to professionals who serve people with disabilities and older adults who use public transportation. The workshop provides intensive classroom and field instruction to meet the needs of the specific community-based organization as well as schools, colleges, community events, disability awareness fairs, and residential facilities. The BRS expressed an interest in outreach to customers who speak other languages. Ms. Leporatti stated that Metro has travel trainers who speak Spanish as well as trainers who are fluent in American Sign Language. In response to a question about referrals for travel training, Ms. Leporatti stated that referrals should be sent directly to Metro and referrals can be placed either by phone or email. Mr. Colbert stated that Metro tracks and provides quality assurance for the travel training program.

Heidi Case expressed an interest in how customers might have trepidation over the thought of losing MetroAccess which would result in some customers opting to decline travel training. Ms. Leporatti stated Metro does not exclude customers from MetroAccess service for participating in a travel training program. Travel training simply gives customers with disabilities greater independence and freedom. Doris Ray expressed an interest in Metro hiring more Orientation and Mobility Travel Trainers (O&M) to serve the customers who are blind or have other visual disabilities. Mr. Colbert stated that Metro has one certified O&M travel trainer and also uses CLB when additional trainers are needed. Ms. Leporatti stated that Metro also has a DVD that explains the eligibility certification process and the Travel Training program. The BRS expressed an interest when workshops are held. Ms. Leporatti stated that the next travel training workshops will held in early November. The BRS expressed an interest in the Train-the-Trainer Workshop. Ms. Leporatti stated that the next workshop will be held in the Fall 2013.

Metrorail Evacuation Poster

Mr. Blake provided an update on the updated Metrorail Emergency Evacuation poster. He stated that the new poster will have eye-catching black and yellow borders, larger lettering, and the messaging will meet the need of a broader range of customers.

In response to a question about where the poster will be placed on the train, Mr. Blake stated that evacuation poster will be located at the center doors of every train car, where the current Evacuation posters are located. The BRS commended Metro for making the poster and message more inclusive.

Public Comment

A comment was made about the maintenance, safety, and cleanliness of Metrorail elevators. 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. The BRS expressed an interest in a presentation on cleanliness and maintenance of elevators and upon motion the BRS added the topic to its work plan.

A comment was also made about the Metro's bathroom policy in the rail stations. A customer was denied the use of the restroom and requested the official policy. Mr. Blake stated that he would investigate and provide feedback.

A comment was made about the ADA regulations regarding the use of the expanding barricade safety system that Metro uses to identify a work zone when escalators are out-of-service. At the McPherson Square Metrorail station a customer with low-vision nearly tripped because her cane did not detect the gate. Mr. Blake stated that he would investigate and provide feedback.

A comment was also made about an inaccessible bus stop at the Friendship Heights Metrorail station. Mr. Blake stated that Metro is working on the issue and he will have a report by the next BRS meeting. Dr. Miller suggested that the item be added to the agenda and upon motion, the BRS added the issue to the work plan and agenda for the October 15, 2013 BRS meeting.

New Business

Mr. Blake stated that AAC will re-establish the BRS Station Lighting Work Group. He stated that the Work Group will need a Chair and this position is available to any AAC member. Doris Ray stated that she would assist until a Chair can be selected. Mr. Blake also stated that as a follow-up to the establishment of MetroAccess stops at Metrorail stations, a MetroAccess Subcommittee Work Group will be established to study the possibility of setting MetroAccess stops on private property throughout the region. The group will be made up of members of the BRS and MAS.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan