



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Bus and Rail Subcommittee Meeting Minutes: November 13, 2018

Attendees

Present: Tino Calabia (Chair), ElverAriza-Silva, Hazell Brooks, Charlie Crawford, Steve Kaffen, Mary Kay Mahon, Anthony Oberg, Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Chair Calabia called the Bus Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Chair Calabia started with introductions of the Committee members.

Approval of Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes:

The modified meeting agenda was approved.

The October 9, 2018, Meeting Minutes were approved.

Announcements:

A discussion about the Rail and the Bus announcements took place. The following items need to be addressed:

Metrorail:

- 7000-series railcar announcements do not start until the doors open.
- Elevator outage announcements were discontinued.
- Announcements on other railcar series do not exist or are very inconsistent.
- The Passenger Information Display Systems (PIDS) should coordinate with train arrivals. For example, display the train direction, number of cars, etc. However, not display information about elevator outages and event messages at the train arrival time.

Metrobus:

- Announcements are either too low or too high.

The Committee is requesting that the members work on a list of issues and present solutions to have appropriate (announcement) timings as to train type, direction, and station name. Chair Calabia shared a New York Times article about revising announcements, which includes clearer annunciation; provide training to train operators to properly enunciate, speak slowly, and not trail off at the end of the announcements; and audit the faulty equipment and correct it as needed. He also stated that on the 7000-series trains the acoustics are very good. In case train operators need to make announcements, WMATA should make some improvements and provide the needed training.

Mr. Kaffen stated about the sequence of the train announcements. The total time gap before announcements begin is now up to 18 seconds and has six components. A part

of the announcements gets truncated, and perhaps relevance/priority of sequence of the announcements need to be reviewed. Chair Calabia requested Mr. Kaffen make a motion and to work on the list/language, which will be circulated to the committee members for feedback.

Work Plan Updates: Strollers Proposed Policy, Wheelchairs on Escalators

Chair Calabia asked for an update on the incident that happened at the Friendship Heights Station involving a person in a wheelchair. Mr. Blake stated that the matter is still under investigation, but at the moment no accessibility issue has been identified related to this incident.

Dr. Posner stated the video showed that the person was not pushed. Mr. Blake stated we do not know if the wheelchair malfunctioned.

Ombudsman Report - Discuss Maintenance of Accessible Faregates

David Shaffer introduced David O'Toole for an update on the Accessible Faregates. Mr. O'Toole, Assistant Chief Engineer for Automatic Fare Collection Equipment, which includes the faregates, the fare-boxes, and the vendors works with the Maintenance department also, which is responsible for maintaining the equipment. Mr. O'Toole stated that the vendors may freeze up and not allow anyone to go through. He has contacted the vendor, Cubic, and they understand that this is the highest priority issue. Cubic has not been able to duplicate the issue; however, his own team was successful only once. Cubic has to fix this systematic problem.

Dr. Posner asked why there is only one green faregate at the far end (during non-rush hours) at the Judiciary Square station? Do faregates become unavailable when the data is being downloaded? Mr. O'Toole stated that the station managers set the direction of the faregates. A faregate may turn red while people are going through. Dr. Posner discussed how faregates at the Foggy Bottom station work. Ms. Ray shared her experience about the faregates issue as did Mr. Oberg, with the accessible faregates, and asked for a solution soon since it is an on-going issue. Mr. O'Toole stated he will work with his team and find a solution. An option is to reset the faregates every 30 minutes, which means 30 seconds of outage. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated he does not see any of these issues at Tysons Corner or McLean as those stations have upgraded faregates. He mentioned some of the stations where he has experienced accessible faregate problems and suggested that the gates should always be open on both sides of traffic. Mr. O'Toole stated the goal is to have faregates always be operable.

Ms. Ray suggested that WMATA should always leave the manual gates open at all stations, especially with stations where there is no mezzanine entrance for the elevator access. Dr. Posner stated that is a fare evasion issue, and a better option may be to have the accessible faregates left open when they are not functioning. Dr. Posner asked if there is any mechanism in place to alert the station managers (when not in kiosk) of accessibility faregate malfunction, like the one for elevator malfunction? Mr. O'Toole stated there is nothing at this time, they are working on some alert for future.

Chair Calabria stated this has been a universal issue for some time, and asked Ms. Ray to make a motion. Ms. Ray stated to ensure under the ADA rights, to enter and egress of stations and station platforms, the AAC recommends to the WMATA staff that in consideration of many reports of accessible faregates being out of service, that the manual accessible gates be always left open until staff can come up with a reliable solution.

Dr. Posner offered to simplify the motion by stating that whenever the accessible faregates malfunction, by default, they stay in the open position. Mr. O'Toole stated that may not be feasible as they do not know when they malfunction (until reported). Mr. Blake offered to simplify by stating that if an accessible faregate is out of service, Metro staff will leave the gate in open position. He also stated that the manual gates could also be a safety issue as the swing door could be close to the edge of the platform (at the platform level).

Ms. Ray stated that her motion is for the manual gates to be left open. Mr. Ariza-Silva asked what does it mean by the manual gates? Ms. Ray is referring to the emergency gates. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that emergency gates do not help everyone as people have different disabilities and may not be able to open them to either enter or exit, and station managers are not always there to help. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated for how long would the accessible faregates be left open? Dr. Posner clarified that the accessible faregates remain open when malfunctioned, until they are fixed. Ms. Ray stated her motion was completely ignored. She stated that the manual gates to remain open while the accessible faregates are inoperable. Emergency faregates cause fare evasion, but wouldn't that be the case with open accessible faregates? Mr. Oberg stated that the manual (emergency) gates are not accessible for everyone. We have already tried to leave those gates open and we were not successful. Therefore, asking to leave the accessible faregates open while they are inoperable is more feasible. Dr. Posner's motion was passed. Ms. Ray stated they may have problems in implementation on particularly street to platform accessible faregates, in getting in/out, and cause delay.

Mr. Blake confirmed that the committee has offered a short-term solution and asked Mr. O'Toole if the statistics confirm that the accessible faregates are down on a regular basis. Also, what is being done to keep the reliability of these faregates up. Mr. O'Toole stated the staff is reviewing and doing as much analysis as possible. The data is being reviewed. When a gate is not working, they do have to report, and they are trying to watch the cameras. They are working on conclusive reports on accessible faregates reliability.

Elevator Shuttle Bus Service

Mr. Blake introduced Jim Hamre, Director of Bus Planning and Scheduling. Mr. Hamre introduced Shawn and LeRoy Benon, Falcon Transportation, the contractor providing elevator shuttle service during the planned outage at the Suitland station.

Ms. Ray asked if this service is what used to be the bus bridge? Mr. Hamre stated to eliminate confusion, this service is being called elevator shuttle and the bus bridge is the service used for track work in-between stations.

Mr. Benon provided a presentation about their service, mission, office location, drivers, vehicle fleet, safety and fleet management, and their commitment.

There was a discussion about the committee members seeing the vehicle used by Falcon Transportation. A request was made for a vehicle to be brought to a future committee meeting as a courtesy. This request was agreed upon by Mr. Benon. A recommendation was made for the vehicle to be brought forth to the committee on a third Monday of the month.

Mr. Oberg asked if needed, would Falcon Transportation be willing to change the vehicle for better access? Mr. Benon stated should there be an issue about compliance, changing the vehicle would not be any problem. Mr. Oberg asked if a customer has an issue, who should they contact? Mr. Hamre stated Mr. Blake should be contacted. Mr. Ariza-Silva asked if Falcon Transportation service will be used for other services? Mr. Hamre stated this service is for planned outages. Mr. Blake stated that could be an opportunity for future, however, for now, it is only for planned outages. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated the AAC will not judge but give you enough details for future reference. Dr. Posner asked about a newly posted sign at the Independence Avenue and 1st Street, SE, that states Metrobus Shuttle. Mr. Hamre stated for all Metro stations, we have identified where shuttles will stop, and that is what that sign indicates. This will be helpful for customers and drivers.

Mr. Sheehan asked about the contract. Mr. Hamre stated it is a three-year contract. More information was divulged about the service being used in different parts of the system where upcoming scheduled outages will be taking place.

Ms. Ray stated the back-loading lift vehicles will be of concern in terms of being able to get the space in a safe environment, on the side walk, and space on the vehicle. The vehicles have hydraulic lifts. People are concerned about being on those lifts. There is some safety and access concern to get on and off the side walk and on the shuttle. This may cause delays (in boarding of a passenger). She suggested to change the vehicles, and to be situated closer to the elevators. Mr. Hamre stated he will think about that.

Barbara Melville, National Capital Citizens with Low Vision (NCCLV), asked if the vehicle lifts accommodate larger wheelchairs? Mr. Benon stated the lifts allow wheelchairs up to 48 inches and 750 pounds.

Chairman's Letter to the Board

Due to lack of quorum in the Accessibility Advisory Committee on November 5, 2018, the Chairman's Letter to the Board could not be approved. Therefore, the letter was approved in the Bus/Rail Subcommittee, by all members, except Ms. Ray as she abstained.

Budget

Dr. Posner provided information about the budget. The first workshop is scheduled this week, to be followed by another. Proposed flat fare of \$2 of bus fares on weekends will make flat fare of \$4 for MetroAccess weekend rides. Any service changes will impact MetroAccess. We must look for the following: changes of routes, hours, and fares. Then

the committee will respond on how it may affect the disabled community. In the capital budget, WMATA maintains the plans - under current plans, for upgrades on lighting, platforms, and now the accessible faregates. In Thursday's board meeting, additional money (much more than anticipated) for new MetroAccess contract is going to be approved. The Jurisdictional 3% cap does not apply on MetroAccess. He also provided process of the budget approval. When the final budget is produced, it goes out to the public hearings (to be scheduled in January).

Mr. Sheehan stated that at the Riders Advisory Council, there was a budget briefing, and the \$2 flat fare for Metrobuses on weekends was brought up as it will impact MetroAccess rides. He asked the presenter if they had factored-in the money saved from Abilities-Ride. The presenter stated that they will give that information to Mr. Blake.

Ms. Rush stated if the weekend Metrobus fares change to flat \$2, it will be \$4 for all MetroAccess weekend rides. How does fare calculator calculates the fare? Mr. Blake stated that the Fare Calculator will be adjusted accordingly to account for any fixed route fare changes. He also clarified that the \$36.5 million that is being added to the MetroAccess budget is not relevant to the fare changes and is not taken in to account for fixed routes. The MetroAccess budget had a structural deficit that needed to be addressed.

Mr. Oberg commented about having talking points for the public hearings, which was confirmed by Dr. Posner. He will send them to the full committee to be shared further.

Ms. Ray stated her concern that the Bus Rail Subcommittee, instead of deliberating the matter, is opting to wait until the end. It is unfair to people with disabilities who use fixed routes. She further stated that people end up planning their life according to the fixed route service (changes) and can have horrible consequences. MetroAccess users should support fixed routes users as they get the support. Ms. Rush stated when we talk about fixed route changes, we are not just talking about MetroAccess clients, we are talking about everyone, service-cuts impact everyone.

Meeting adjourned at 6:06pm.