



# AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

### **Bus and Rail Subcommittee Meeting Minutes: October 15, 2019**

#### **Attendees**

Present: Tino Calabia (Chair), Anthony Oberg (Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Rico Dancy, Melanie Jackson, Steve Kaffen, Mary Kay McMahon, Phil Posner, Denise Rush, Patrick Sheehan, and Kelley Simoneaux,

#### **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 and the guest speakers.

#### **Approval of Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes:**

The meeting agenda was approved.

The September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Meeting Minutes were approved as amended with one modification by Dr. Posner. Mr. Kaffen commended the high quality of the minutes and effort placed both in the Committee discussions and the minutes. Chair Calabia commented about the repeated compliments received for the minutes by Mr. Kaffen.

#### **New Passenger Information Display Systems**

Chief Asante, Senior ROCS Application Systems Analyst, Maulik Shah, and Kamaljeet Mani, Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) Team, provided information regarding the new PIDS that have been installed on the following six Blue and Yellow line stations: south of Reagan National Airport: Braddock Road, King Street-Old Town, Eisenhower Avenue, Huntington, Van Dorn Street, and Franconia-Springfield. Mr. Asante demonstrated the PIDS scrolling speed, as well as the color contrast. Committee members were asked to provide their feedback.

Dr. Posner stated the new PIDS solved the previous problem of not showing train arrival information while showing the advisories. Mr. Asante stated that the repurposing of the new PIDS was to show the predictions and advisory messages simultaneously. Carol Peredo Lopez, Director, Office of Americans with Disabilities Act Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated the background grey color is too light of a contrast for readability and needs to be changed to a darker grey. Mr. Asante stated he can work with the vendor to match the dark grey background color of the mini mezzanine PIDS.

Mr. Kaffen reiterated an issue previously brought up by Dr. Posner regarding the train coming in to the station in one-minute announcement not showing on the PIDS. Mr. Asante stated the train time changes to ARR which shows arriving, and then it changes to BRD which shows it is boarding. Dr. Posner clarified that Mr. Kaffen's comment refers to the mezzanine PIDS, not the platform PIDS. He explained that Metro did not want customers to know the train was arriving to prevent people from running and possibly tripping and falling on the escalators. Mr. Asante stated the platform signs work differently

than the mezzanine boards. The mezzanine PIDS are not divided by the track and will not show the train that is at the platform. There are some stations where the mezzanine location is a little further away from the platform, thus there is a timing delay. Therefore, the customers will not see a train that is two minutes away. To avoid rushing and running to catch that train, the customers may see the next scheduled train on the mezzanine PIDS.

Mr. Kaffen asked if there is a possibility of having similar PIDS for the bus shelters? Mr. Asante informed the committee that his team works specifically on the PIDS for Rail. Ms. Peredo Lopez shared that the bus bays already have electronic bus arrival signage in WMATA bus facilities. They are thinner version of the new PIDS and have audio capability with adjustable volume. Mr. Kaffen recommended having more than 2 buses listed on the bus electronic boards and for the screen to turn over faster. Ms. Peredo Lopez explained the reason that electronic board information moves slower was due to the large lettering for customers' convenience. The smaller lettering may not allow for customers to be able to read the needed information, thus the wait time may increase more than what Mr. Kaffen described.

Chair Calabria shared information about the PIDS used in Los Angeles transit system and asked if WMATA can display such information on the new PIDS. Chief Asante stated the wind-screens can show user friendly messaging shared with the customers. Chair Calabria asked if information about the availability of the white-boards can be displayed on the PIDS? Ms. Peredo Lopez explained to the PIDS team that white-boards are a mode of communication for people with a hearing impairment. She asked if a message about the white-boards can be displayed at the bottom of the PIDS. Mr. Asante reiterated these screens (PIDS) are specifically for train arrival times.

Ms. Peredo Lopez circled back to Mr. Asante's initial question to the Committee about the scrolling speed of the PIDS. She stated we are getting a lot of pressure from the general riding public to increase the speed. Certain standards from the Americans National Standard Institute (ANSI) are being followed about duration of a word or sentence that should be on the screen, which is much slower. There was a discussion about the speed of scrolling messages, questioning if it is too slow or is it adequate. Dr. Posner made a motion to keep the scrolling at its current level as it is a great speed and it does not interfere with seeing the train arrival information. Vice-Chair Oberg stated the current speed is good. Ms. Simoneaux asked about the ability to show a different speed. Mr. Asante stated we are not prepared to show a different speed at this time, however we are here to take feedback.

Mr. Kaffen stated his concern is about the bus PIDS being too slow in comparison to New York City and San Francisco transit agencies that display the information two and four seconds, respectively. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated our speed is 7 seconds as per the ANSI.

Mr. Ariza-Silva asked if the new PIDS will be in all Metro stations? Ms. Peredo Lopez stated currently these PIDS are installed in the six newly rehabilitated stations. Any station that goes through the rehabilitation program will get these PIDS. The PIDS will not

be in the new Silver line stations, as those contracts were finalized years ago and cannot be changed. Dr. Posner asked if the new PIDS have been tested for indoor versus outdoor stations for better visibility. Mr. Asante stated these screens are 55 inches, versus the 46-inch version at the Arlington Cemetery station and the Judiciary Square station. These screens have anti-glare coating on them, so the visibility is not diminished by the sun. The contrast band issue will be addressed with the vendor.

Dr. Posner stated the location of the PIDS is very important and asked if the screen would be visible from various locations at the platform and from the escalators. Mr. Asante stated we have doubled the number of the PIDS and that the wind screen signs that show more customer friendly information, are also posted on the sides of the platforms. These screens are being added to combat the dead spots.

Ms. Peredo Lopez stated the lettering size is smaller in the shelters (bus) because the mounted height is different; it is 5/8 of an inch as per the ADA requirements, versus the PIDS that have lettering size of 3 inches, a WMATA requirement.

Mr. Asante stated these screens were specifically selected for the platforms as part of the rehabilitation project and that older screens will continue to be seen on the mezzanines. The addition of screens in elevators and by the faregates are being investigated to improve the customer's experience. Dr. Posner stated the speed of the mezzanine screens needs to be improved.

Chair Calabria asked if Mr. Asante's office is responsible for video panels also. Mr. Asante stated his office is specifically focused on the PIDS for station platforms. Chair Calabria thanked Mr. Asante and the PIDS team for coming to the BRS meeting and sharing information about the new PIDS.

### **Automatic Train Control**

The Committee discussed the topic of automatic train control. Dr. Posner stated the major concern about automatic train control will be the announcements and when the doors open immediately, the five seconds pause will be lost. Chair Calabria commented about the suspension of the automated door opening. Dr. Posner shared the doors opened while the train was still moving on the Red line during the 2 weeks pilot and that is why it was suspended. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated tests must be performed to see why the doors opened while the train was running and until that has happened the automatic train control will not return, and there was no further update at this time. Chair Calabria stated the automatic train control should improve running time, increase the dwell time and provide a smoother ride.

### **Rail-Car Monitor Messages**

The Committee discussed the topic of rail-car messages. Dr. Posner stated if messages about the elevator outages can be placed in each rail car, two stations ahead of the station with the outage, that would be helpful. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated that is a great idea and she will bring it to the team. She stated the trigger for the announcements to begin may be the door opening, however the possibility of announcements being placed in-between

stations needs to be investigated. Dr. Posner stated it would be nice to have the elevator outage displayed on the side monitors and on the over-head scroll screens. Ms. Simoneaux commented about lack of consistency in the elevator notification and shared an example of incorrect information that she received this morning. Ms. Simoneaux also shared information about a few carts that blocked the street elevator buttons at the Federal Triangle station. Vice-Chair Oberg recommended to add the accessibility symbol by the station name for the elevator and strike it in red if the elevators are out of service for the specific station.

Dr. Posner made a motion, WMATA task their computer staff to be able to program the messaging on the 7000-series cars to notify the elevator outage two stations prior the station with the outage. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated the notifications need to be clear and provide precise information. David Shaffer, Ombudsman, ADAP, informed the specifics of the elevator are provided at the end of the notification. For special announcements made on trains, Mr. Kaffen recommended having a software that can translate train operators' announcement and display on the over-head scroll bar, as well as the side screens.

Mr. Shaffer provided an update about a meeting with Donald Goings, Superintendent, Rail Transportation. The meeting was to discuss the rail announcements, rail car maintenance, rail car door operations, and other topics. Mr. Goings recommended the hardware (rail car equipment) to be reviewed by the engineers and the operators need to be monitored, tested for announcements, and be provided training. Mr. Shaffer and Anu Sharma, AAC Coordinator, ADAP, are coordinating ADA trainings, first for the new rail hires, then for the entire rail staff interfacing with customers. Chair Calabria inquired how frequently the rail cars are checked thoroughly. Mr. Shaffer informed the checks are done daily.

Chair Calabria stated there have been concerns about inadequate announcements by the rail operators and inquired if there is a way to check on individual operators. The automated announcements on the 7000-series are very helpful. Mr. Shaffer informed there may be more than 700 rail operators and it may not be feasible to audit every single one of them. Chair Calabria asked Mr. Shaffer to provide an update about the issues of announcements, both from the hardware and the operator (individual monitoring) perspective, and if needed, the Committee could volunteer for operator announcement audit and help them modulate and improve their announcements. Mr. Kaffen stated the speed of the announcement is as important as the clarity of speech. The higher speed of the train hinders in understanding therefore, timing of the announcement is also important. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated that could be a recommendation for the 8000-series.

### **"Handbook" for Rail Car Design**

Chair Calabria and Vice-Chair Oberg have drafted a handbook for rail car design, which was discussed in the meeting. The handbook is a set of recommendations to be provided to the designers and engineers. Mr. Oberg stated all things that have been discussed in the past meetings have been included in the handbook. The document that is drafted is easy to read and can be edited as needed, with the hope of finalizing and presenting it to

the Board soon. Information in the handbook was discussed by the Committee. Ms. McMahon suggested including variable seat height in the handbook. Chair Calabria stated perhaps a picture of the variable seat can be included in the handbook. Ms. Peredo Lopez corrected a statement, under 2011, and asked to include the phrase “continue to use the gap reducers” since WMATA started using the gap reducers in 2001.

Chair Calabria asked about identifying the recommendations with a source. Vice-Chair Oberg stated the source is meeting minutes, however, he can go back and probably add it through the minutes of 2011. Chair Calabria shared various pictures from other transit agencies showing different ways of displaying information about the accessibility. Ms. Simoneaux stated there is a movement on the wheelchair symbol to become a sign of accessibility.

There was a discussion about poles and/or holding devices in the railcars. Mr. Kaffen stated there are no poles, ceiling holdings, or hand rails, to the right side of the center doors in the 7000-series. If the railcar is crowded, the situation becomes dangerous as people start balancing on each other and possibly fall. Mr. Ariza-Silva recommend for purpose of the 8000-series, we must bring someone else to see what we see due to no grab bar during our commute in rush hours. Mr. Sheehan asked what is the rational to removing the pole on the right-hand side at the center doors of the rail-cars. Chair Calabria stated it was to help people in wheelchair and scooters. Mr. Sheehan asked had there been a problem for wheelchairs entering or exiting. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated there is a pole on the left at the center doors. There is a wheelchair location and a grab bar on the right at the center doors., but there is no pole on the right to provide space to maneuver wheelchairs and scooters, providing customer ingress and egress.

Vice-Chair Oberg stated improvements are precisely the reason for us to draft recommendations for the 8000 series rail cars. Mr. Kaffen stated Metro has been concerned about pushing people in the middle of the car and have a long announcement pertaining to this. One of the reasons for removal of the pole may be to push people in the middle of the car. The extra space may work during off peak hours, however during rush hours not having anything to grab on to and not being able to move, creates dangerous situations as people lean on to each other. Ms. Simoneaux stated she would be very reluctant in being supportive of putting the pole back as she has had issues with having to back-in to the space and having to ask people to move around.

Mr. Kaffen stated perhaps the pole could be placed a bit away from the wheelchair space. Ms. Simoneaux stated ensuring a clear passage for mobility devices would make it possible to add the pole. Mr. Kaffen stated during non-rush hours, in rail-cars other than the 7000 series, people moved themselves away from the door. Mr. Sheehan stated if we had a mock-up of the rail car, it would be nice to walk through a mock-up for the 8000-series rail-car. Chair Calabria stated we are expecting a mock-up for the 8000-series. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated something like an extension pole should not be difficult to change afterwards. For a mock-up, we should probably talk about having more people in the car and test it as if during rush hour. Mr. Sheehan suggested working with the Riders Advisory Council (RAC) for recommendations.

There were a few recommendations for the positions of the poles. One of the recommendations by Chair Calabria was to install a pole from the ceiling half way that would not touch the rail car floor and would provide space for wheelchair users. Mr. Kaffen recommended hand holding poles from the ceiling with additional grabbing devices around it. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated as per the ADA we cannot have a protruding object that goes beyond four inches from the wall, in the path of travels and that any overhanging object would have to be low enough for someone to detect with a cane. Anything above 24 inches could be a protruding object therefore, cannot be placed in the railcar. Chair Calabria recommended the ADA review and revise the pole policy via the Federal Transit Agency (FTA).

Mr. Sheehan asked about the deadline for submitting the recommendations. Chair Calabria stated the aim is to have the handbook finalized next month, therefore recommendations can be submitted anytime until the next BRS meeting.

**Ombudsman Report:**

Due to time constraints, the Ombudsman Report could not be delivered.

**New/Old Business and Work Plan Updates:**

The Committee discussed the "Handbook" topic at length.

**Public Comment:**

None.

**Meeting adjourned at 6:05pm.**