



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
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BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: April 11, 2016

In attendance: Roger Stanley (2nd Vice-Chair), William Staderman (1st Vice-Chair), Brianne Burger, Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford, Steven Kaffen, Marisa Laios, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, and Denise Rush.

Call to Order

Second Vice-Chair Stanley called the April 11, 2016 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the April 11, 2016 meeting agenda.

The BRS approved the March 14, 2016 meeting minutes.

In Memoriam

The BRS paused for a moment of silence for the family of Dr. Brian Miller, BRS Chair. Dr. Miller suffered a tragic loss when his wife suddenly and unexpectedly passed away. In response to a request for an update, Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, reported that Dr. Miller sent a heartfelt thank you to all members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and Metro staff for their support during this difficult time. He stated that he is most appreciative of the BRS Vice-Chairs who have stepped up and continued the work of the subcommittee. Dr. Miller indicated that he is working on gathering strength to return to the committee.

Public Comment

Persons in attendance offered no comments.

Ombudsman's Report

Antonio Stephens, ADA Ombudsman, provided follow-up on a comment made at the March 2016 BRS meeting regarding Metro responses to complaints made via Twitter. The Ombudsman stated that Metro's Department of Customer Service, Communications and Marketing (CSCM) has a social media and twitter account, and responds to various customer issues identified on Twitter and other social media web sites. Metro's Office of Customer Service (CSVC) will be adding a social media and Twitter account and dedicated staff person to enhance communication with customers.

The Ombudsman also reported on a comment regarding data on the number and types of complaints Metro receives about bus and rail services. The BRS expressed an interest in the top five complaints. The Ombudsman stated that CSVC is the repository for all complaints on all three mode of service (Metrobus, Metrorail, and MetroAccess). He added that the resources of the Ombudsman's office are utilized to complement CSVC efforts with respect to concerns or complaints related to accessibility on Metro's services.

The categories for the highest number of complaints are broken down by mode. For the current fiscal year, the top five complaints for Metrobus are as follows: (1) delayed or late bus; (2) failure to serve a bus stop; (3) no show of a bus; and (4) rude, discourteous or uncooperative staff; and (5) unsafe operations. The top five complaints for Metrorail are: (1) air conditioning or heating; (2) delayed or late; (3) inadequate service; (4) maintenance problems; and (5) rude and discourteous or uncooperative staff. The top five complaints for MetroAccess are: (1) driver conduct; (2) early or late vehicle; (3) scheduling errors; (4) no show or failure to wait; and (5) operating policy.

In response to a question about whether the complaints were broken down by type (e.g. phone, email, written letter or verbally), the Ombudsman stated the information does not provide that type of detail; however, customers can make complaints using any of those options.

Dr. William Staderman expressed an interest in whether Metro offered blank forms for complaints. The Ombudsman stated that paper forms for compliments or complaints in writing can be found on both Metrobus and Metrorail. Darnise Bush stated the form on Metro's website to submit a compliment or complaint is very easy to use and includes a space for a narrative.

Charlie Crawford expressed an interest in whether the data provided any information on the frequency of certain complaints or disciplinary action. CSVc monitors complaints on a monthly basis and participates in a bi-weekly conference call with Metrobus and Metrorail about complaints and action taken based on the information provided. The Ombudsman added that Metro's Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP) has conducted accessibility awareness refresher training for staff on the fixed-route system as part of a remedy for disciplinary action. Complaints on Metrobus are down from the previous year. Complaints are higher for Metrorail, and Metro is taking a holistic approach to resolve the issues on Metrorail.

The Ombudsman reminded members and the public that submitting concerns or complaints to the Ombudsman should not be considered an alternative to Metro's complaint process, but an additional level of review.

Passenger Information Display System (Pilot Program)

Chief Asante, Engineer, Rail Transportation, discussed a new pilot program aimed at reduce crowding and congestion near and around the Passenger Information Display Systems (PIDS) signs. Metro, in partnership with the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT), developed two low-cost solutions to reduce crowding and

congestion at certain areas on a station's platform: (1) making certain information on the PIDS more prominent; and (2) placing floor signage to help customers know where to stand on the platform.

Currently, the information displayed on the PIDS includes the line, number of cars, destination, and number of minutes to arrival, and the headings are displayed using red lettering. The data listed below the headings are displayed in amber lettering. The pilot proposes making a small color change to display the number of cars in red when an eight-car train is inbound to the station. This would make the information more easily recognizable from most locations.

Dr. Staderman expressed an interest in the why the color red was chosen. He indicated that in our culture, red is a color of hazard, danger, trouble or stop. Changing the car number to red may give some customers the impression that there is a problem on that train. Mr. Asante added the current technology is limited to the following colors: red, amber and green. A test of those colors against the background demonstrated that amber and green were too close in color, therefore lacking sufficient contrast. Dr. Staderman suggested that Metro use green for the number of cars listed on the PIDS as opposed to red. Some members agreed, stating that green would be more visible than red because it would make the change more distinguishable for all customers including those with low vision.

Customers are also interested in knowing where to stand on the platform. They often crowd near escalators or steps making it difficult to navigate the platforms. Another pilot solution is the placement of accessible floor signs that indicate the exact spot of the last car of a six or eight car train. These provide customers the opportunity to spread out on the platform leaving more room to navigate the space.

Brianne Burger stated that at the Smithsonian station and others along the mall, tourists often pack the platform near the elevator leaving little room to navigate the space on the platform. The floor signs have made a huge difference at those stations. Ms. Burger stated that she believes that the signs will be an even more helpful improvement to easing crowding on the platform than the PIDS. Other members also agreed that the floor signs have made a difference.

Lost and Found Program

Jeremy Franklin, Acting Director, CSVC, discussed Metro's Lost and Found program. There are two program categories in the Lost and Found program - the fixed-route system and MetroAccess. When a customer loses an item in the fixed-route system, the

item is secured in a lost and found bag, logged into the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM), and then matched with a customer report on lost items. In response to a question about contacting customers, Mr. Franklin stated that Metro contacts customers by phone, email, and customers contact cards. He stated that the main office for the Lost and Found program is in Hyattsville, MD, and is accessible by the Prince George's Plaza Metrorail station.

The BRS expressed an interest in items that are never claimed by customers. Mr. Franklin stated that Metro makes every effort to connect the customer with the lost item and maintains custody of items for 30 days. When a customer does not claim an item, the item is destroyed, donated, or auctioned.

Mr. Stanley expressed an interest in the most common items lost in the system. Mr. Franklin stated that keys and eyeglasses are the items most frequently lost items. Other common items lost are cell phones, purses, wallets, and book bags.

When an item is lost on MetroAccess, the vendor operating the trip will retain the item. Customers can contact Metro's Lost and Found Office, which will follow up with MetroAccess Customer Assurance team who will confirm that the item has been found. MetroAccess Customer Assurance team then contacts the customer and provides information on where to claim the item.

Ms. Rush stated that she lost an item on MetroAccess and commended the driver for returning it back to her in a timely fashion.

Ms. Bush expressed an interest in the lost and found procedures among the paratransit vendors. She stated that she has lost items on the service and found that the procedures are different for each vendor. Irving Frye, Operations Manager, MetroAccess Service, stated that the paratransit providers have been instructed on the process. Additionally, customers can book a trip to the garage location to claim the lost item. Generally, when an item is lost on MetroAccess, the driver can identify to whom the item belongs and the item is returned to the customer.

New Business

Members were shown a new TV program developed by Metro's Marketing Team called Metro Focus. The Metro Focus program will highlight interesting destinations along the rail system and other Metro-related topics. This third episode includes a segment called Beyond Barriers, which showcases the experiences of customers with disabilities

on Metro and featured AAC member Brianne Burger. The new TV program will air on public access TV stations in DC, MD, and Northern VA.

Old Business

Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, reminded members that the 2016 AAC recruitment period will close on April 15, 2016. The AAC has seven vacancies and openings will be filled from the pool of qualified applicants from the current recruitment as well as previous applications on file. AAC members interested in renewing their membership must re-apply. Metro retains all applications received from individuals interested in serving on the AAC for two years from the date submitted.

In a follow-up to a comment made at the April AAC meeting about personal safety in the Metrorail system, Ms. Rush expressed an interest in a presentation from the Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD). As recently as this afternoon, there was another fatal incident in the system. Members agreed that something needs to be done and greater police presence on the fixed-route system may curb some the crime. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADAP, stated that staff will request that MTPD provide a presentation on the issue at the next AAC meeting.

He added that in an effort to increase the ranks of MTPD, Metro is actively engaging in a recruitment of new police officers. Metro recognizes that if customers do not feel safe, they will not use the system. MTPD is also changing the color of their uniforms to make officers more visible while in the system.

Edward McEntee expressed an interest in whether Metro used uniform and plain clothes police to deter crime in the system. Mr. Blake stated that he will table specific questions about MTPD procedures to the next AAC meeting when he expects to have MTPD present.

Mr. Frye stated that he is a frequent traveler in the Metrorail system and has seen an increased presence of MTPD throughout the system.

Steven Kaffen expressed an interest in whether MTPD shares information on best practices with other transportation agencies across the region. Mr. Blake stated that he is highly confident that MTPD collaborates with other transit properties as well as local police departments and other first responders across the region, but MTPD should confirm that during its AAC presentation.

Ms. Bush expressed an interest in whether it was customary for MTPD to travel alone or in pairs. Additionally, she expressed interest in whether MTPD did any outreach as a way to prevent crime.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:22 p.m.