



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
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BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: April 10, 2017

In attendance: Brian Miller (Chair), Brianne Burger (Vice-Chair), Edward McEntee (2nd Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Charlie Crawford, Mary Kay McMahon, Randall Pope, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Chair Miller called the April 10, 2017 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the April 10, 2017 meeting agenda as amended.

The BRS approved the February 13, 2017 meeting minutes as written.

Public Comment

A comment was made about Metro's new website. The customer stated that the website looks really good, however as a low-vision customer, the site is a little difficult to use. The customer encouraged the disability community to test the website and report issues to Metro and the Ombudsman.

Ombudsman's Report

David Shaffer, ADA Ombudsman, provided an update on comments made about the complaint system. The issue is that the online complaint system is not accessible with screen-readers. Additionally, it is difficult to register a complaint with Metro by phone during non-business hours. To rectify the issue, Mr. Shaffer met with staff from Metro's Department of Information Technology (IT). He stated that IT was able to correct all the issues except the attachment button. It is anticipated that the issue will be corrected soon, and the online complaint system will be accessible to everyone.

Chair Miller expressed an interest in whether Metro's web accessibility was outsourced. Mr. Shaffer stated IT could not correct the issue, so the task was outsourced.

Charlie Crawford expressed an interest in the function of the button. Mr. Shaffer stated the button allows customers to attach pictures or documents to a complaint.

Brianne Burger requested a follow-up on the whiteboards. She stated that when she follows up with station managers, most appear to not know anything about the new tool. Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that based on the comments from the last meeting, ADAP conducted a random survey and found that approximately 85% of the kiosks in stations had the white boards. The results also indicated that one or more of the station managers could not readily

identify the tool. Mr. Blake stated that he is confident that the white boards have been distributed; however, the boards are not being widely utilized. He stated that ADAP is working with Metro's Office of Rail Transportation to craft a memorandum to station managers regarding the boards and their purpose. Ms. Burger stated that Metro should announce that this new tool is available to aid communication in the system via a press release or with a communication campaign. Mr. Blake encouraged the AAC and the public to ask station managers about the whiteboards as they travel through the system. This will help increase the awareness of the boards and allow ADAP to be informed of kiosks in which a white board was not readily available.

Following up, Ms. Burger stated that she recently had an incident in the system where the white board would have been a huge help. A few weeks ago, a Red Line train was delayed on the platform for over 20 minutes. The announcements on the train and on the platform were inaudible, and there were no MetroAlerts on the issue. She stated that this situation was the perfect opportunity for the station manager to use the white board. Mr. Blake agreed that finding more uses for the white boards, beyond communication with customers who are deaf/hard of hearing, is a way to ensure the boards are always available, and station managers are aware of them and effective in using them.

Mr. Crawford expressed an interest in whether Metro provided daily updates to station managers. Mr. Blake stated that he is unaware of any daily briefings. ADAP is using this issue to craft a one-time memorandum to station managers regarding the new tool and its use.

Dr. Miller expressed an interest in the protocol for stations managers when an incident occurs in the system. Mr. Blake stated that there are different reporting protocols depending on the circumstance. He added that ADAP will invite RTRA staff to an upcoming BRS meeting in order for them to provide specific details.

Dr. Miller also stated that a recent radio program reported that Metro was not planning to return to automatic train operations. With crowded trains and more and more passengers standing, the ride on trains in manual operations is rough. This is a challenge for all customers especially those with disabilities. Mr. Blake stated that staff will add the item to the agenda for an update on the topic.

Station Lighting and Maintenance Report (Update)

Gairy Johnson, Office of System Maintenance (SMNT), and Kelly Reahl, Transit Infrastructure Engineering Service (TIES), provided an update on station lighting

improvements and maintenance in the stations. Ms. Reahl stated that she would provide the update on lighting and Mr. Johnson will discuss lighting maintenance.

Metro has made improvements to lighting. Ms. Reahl stated that Metro has 48 underground rail stations. Of that number, Metro has completed lighting improvements at all underground mezzanines except the following five: Anacostia, Farragut North, Forest Glen, Stadium-Armory, and Wheaton. All mezzanines are scheduled to be completed by the end of FY2017.

The next step is to address lighting near the platform areas. Ms. Reahl stated that Metro has completed the design phase for platform lighting improvements at the 48 underground rail stations. The platform lighting improvements are scheduled to begin in FY2018. In response to a question about whether the lights at the edge of the platform were included in the upgrades, Ms. Reahl stated that the plan is to improve the lighting fixtures and track bed lighting. The edge lights are not included in the improvements.

Ms. Burger expressed an interest in whether Metro had standards for station lighting. She stated that most of the stations have different degrees of lighting. Ms. Reahl stated that Metro's goal is to provide uniformity and consistency in lighting to every station equally.

In a follow-up, Ms. Burger expressed an interest in how Metro prioritizes the stations for lighting improvement. Ms. Reahl stated that some of the factors Metro used to prioritize lighting are safety, security, and the number of people that travel through the stations. This means transfer stations are normally high on the list for improvements.

The BRS expressed an interest in the funds for lighting. Ms. Reahl stated that lighting is part of Metro's Capital budget.

Mr. Johnson stated that SMNT performs the lighting repairs throughout the system. SMNT work is supplementary to Metro LED lighting project. He stated that many of the fixtures in the system are aged. Metro replaces aged equipment with a standard fixture until a full replacement is done. Mr. Johnson stated that all of the lighting fixtures are new and Metro uses this interim system to ensure effective lighting is maintained in the stations until work can be performed by Ms. Reahl's team in TIES. SMNT also performs maintenance on the tunnel lights throughout the system. Mr. Johnson stated that these lights ensure that when trains and staff enter the tunnels, there is sufficient lighting.

In a follow-up, Doris Ray expressed an interest in whether the new lights in the tunnel were a capital project or a maintenance project. Mr. Johnson stated that the lighting in the tunnel is an operations project. In response to a question about reporting lighting issues, Mr. Johnson stated that his team performs lighting inspections all over the system. Additionally, SMNT receives reports from ADAP regarding lighting issues in the system.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in the priorities for maintenance and timeframe for repairs. Mr. Johnson stated that station lighting is Metro's first concern because of safety. If there is a lighting issue in the tunnel and in the station, the station takes priority. Additionally, Metro catalogs the lighting outages in the system on a quarterly basis. He stated that lighting outages that do not require access to the track for repair can be addressed quickly. However, if the outage requires access to the track for repair, there is usually a two-week lead time on repairs.

Ms. Ray also stated that the lighting at Rosslyn, Metro Center, Court House, and Pentagon stations are dim. Mr. Johnson stated that over time the lighting level drops as dust accumulates on the fixture covers. He stated that when this occurs, SMNT cleans the fixture covers, however there is nothing in the system that dims the lights. The design of some stations make it difficult to maintain the level of lighting required. Ms. Ray stated that there is an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirement to make sure there is adequate lighting in the stations. Mr. Johnson stated that his team will review the stations.

In a follow-up, Barbara Milleville, President, National Capital Citizens with Low-Vision (NCCLV), agreed with Ms. Ray stating that the lights are on, but they are not illuminating the areas well.

Edward McEntee stated that a local television program discussed the painting of the dome walls at Union Station. He stated that painting the system prior to updating the lighting could cause contrast issues for the customers with low-vision. Mr. Johnson stated that Metro still plans to replace the track bed lights at that station. Metro is also changing the platform edge lights to white throughout the system. Mr. Johnson stated that, collectively, these things will improve lighting in the stations.

Ms. Milleville stated that the low-vision community appreciates Metro's work on lighting, and that the new signage near the elevators is making navigating the system more pleasant.

Ms. Milleville expressed an interest in the illumination levels of the platform lighting. Ms. Reahl stated that Metro is standardizing lighting with the new LED fixtures and their illumination.

Additionally, Ms. Milleville stated that the lighting near or around the stairs is also an issue. Ms. Reahl stated that, although this is not included in the lighting project, she will forward the comments to the appropriate office.

Ms. Ray stated that there is an ADA requirement for lighting around stairs and stair path markings.

Mr. Crawford expressed an interest in whether Metro has a standard for lighting at stations. Ms. Reahl stated that Metro uses design criteria on all of its lighting projects.

Elver Ariza-Silva stated that the system needs to improve lighting behind escalators. On the lower level platforms, these areas are unusually dark, and enhanced levels of lighting could benefit everyone.

Ms. Ray encouraged Metro to continue to involve people with disabilities in lighting improvements in the system. She stated that the AAC and NCCLV are ready to assist.

Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, read a statement about lighting from Paul Kelly, an NCCLV member. Dr. Miller requested that Mr. Kelly's statement be forwarded to the presenters for further review.

The BRS thanked Mr. Johnson and Ms. Reahl for the update and Metro's commitment improving lighting in the system.

iBeacon Technology

Mr. Shaffer provided an update on the wayfinding demonstration. On Saturday, March 11, 2017, the AAC held a demonstration on the wayfinding technology with the beacons at the Gallery Place Metrorail station. He stated that iBeacon technology allows Smartphones to deliver audio broadcasts along a route via Bluetooth.

The AAC and members of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) tested the technology for 10 different routes at the station. Mr. Shaffer stated that the feedback from the demonstration included questions about whether architectural features could block audio broadcast; inconsistency in the signal based on cellular service or smartphone used; and the range or distance of beacons for information. The

demonstration also showed that people with different levels of vision loss, orientation, and/or mobility capabilities responded to the technology differently. Mr. Shaffer reported that following the AAC presentation, Metro and ClickAndGo Wayfinding facilitated a presentation and demonstration for members of the U.S. Access Board. Mr. Shaffer stated that overall the technology was well received; however, some aspects need to be tweaked.

Mr. Shaffer encouraged the AAC and members of the public to test the beacons along with the wayfinding system. He stated that the wayfinding information is free and available in text, large print, Braille, refreshable Braille, audio, and MP3 formats via smartphones. In response to a question about information for the demonstration, Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that demonstration information will be forwarded to members.

Mr. Crawford expressed an interest in whether the beacons could put a customer in danger. Mr. Shaffer stated that the wayfinding information and iBeacon technology are designed to help prevent customers from being in dangerous situations while traveling in the system. The audio broadcasts are meant to be used in conjunction with the audio maps. The wayfinding information will include narrative directions related to slopes, sounds, tactile, and distance.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in whether the technology will be available in other formats besides iPhones. Mr. Shaffer stated that the wayfinding information accessible through a toll-free number and the iBeacon technology is accessible by Bluetooth. The beacons are a supplement that enhances the wayfinding information.

Ms. Ray also expressed an interest in whether the wayfinding and iBeacon technology would available on Metrobus. Mr. Shaffer stated that Metro is working on technology to include information on the bus side.

Old Business

Dr. Moore Gwynn reminded members about the upcoming emergency training exercise on Sunday, April 23, 2017, at the Navy Yard. This exercise is open to the public and requires a signed waiver. Interested parties should RSVP for the event by Monday, April 17, 2017.

Dr. Moore Gwynn announced that the 2017 AAC recruitment period is open from April 3rd through April 30th, 2017. There are a total of nine openings. The openings will be filled from a pool of qualified applications received during the current recruitment as

well as from previous applications on file. Applications are available in the vestibule during each meeting and online. Members should contact Dr. Moore-Gwynn directly for any information regarding specifics of their terms.

New Business

Ms. Ray requested a presentation on the trip planner voice application. She stated that accessing the system by phone is archaic. There is a range of commands the system does not recognize. Additionally, reaching trip planner on the weekends is complicated.

Dr. Miller agreed, stating the trip planner by phone system is limited.

Mr. Blake stated that the ride guide information is available on-line. The trip planner provides multiple options, and it is surprising that the phone option does not complement the online version. ADAP will schedule a presentation soon.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:48 p.m.