



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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### **BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: December 14, 2015**

In attendance: Roger Stanley (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair), Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford, Phillippa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, Randall Pope, Denise Rush, Elver Ariza-Silva, and Patrick Sheehan.

#### **Call to Order**

Second Vice-Chair Stanley called the November 9, 2015 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:07 pm.

#### **Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

The BRS approved the December 14, 2015 meeting agenda as amended.

The BRS approved the November 9, 2015 meeting minutes

#### **Public Comment**

A comment was made about add-ons trips to existing MetroAccess service. The customer stated that when a trip is added on to existing service, MetroAccess should make that the driver aware of the type of disability they will encounter. As a blind customer using the service, I expect the driver to identify themselves in the greeting for the service. MetroAccess drivers often do not have the proper information and unaware what to look for when picking up a customer. This lack of attention leads to poor customer service. Christian Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning stated that MetroAccess drivers are provided with the customer's disability information. Phil Posner stated that with MetroAccess add-ons trips, the new driver does not get the original manifest with all the information. Mr. Blake stated that Dr. Posner's point appears to be change in procedure, and the customer's comment will be forward to the MetroAccess team for follow-up.

Charlie Crawford noted that his trip to today's meeting on MetroAccess was pleasant. The MetroAccess vehicle operator was Leanna or Brianne.

Brianne Burger made a comment about the eligibility process for the Reduced Fare Program. The process requires participants to renew the card every 5 years and provide documentation of a disability. This is also the process for customer who have disabilities that are unlikely to change such as customers who are Deaf or Blind. She request that Metro reconsider its process to allow customers with permanent disabilities to renew for the program administratively without the having to provide documentation. Frank Roth, Director, Eligibility Certification and Outreach (ELIG) stated that the process to renew cards is the same for all customers with the exception of Medicare cardholders and Veterans. Customers who are deaf must provide an audiogram along with a completed application. The stringent process is part of an internal control mechanism that guards against errors or fraud. As an example, in the past, some customers have

fabricated a disability in an effort to receive a reduced fare card. In a system with checks and balances those types of situations are less likely.

In a follow up, Ms. Burger expressed an interest in the record keeping process. Mr. Roth stated that customer records are maintained on file for a couple of years. Metro does not recertify customers for the Reduced Fare Program based on old files.

Edward McEntee stated that the Social Security Administration processes social security insurance (SSI) based the file. Mr. Roth stated that the Social Security Insurance is governed under Health and Human Services while the Reduced Fare Program falls under Federal Transportation Administration.

Mr. Crawford stated that vocational rehabilitation also has a need to verify information before services are rendered. As part of the statute, it indicates that if a person is a recipient of social security insurance, the person automatically eligible for services. Mr. Roth stated that not every person on SSI qualifies for Medicare. Customers with Medicare and Veterans fall under the guidelines.

Denise Rush stated that at the October 2015 meeting, the AAC received a presentation an advertising campaign to complement Metro's diversity and recruitment efforts. Recently, she indicated that she was made aware that the poster were on the bus and in the system with no changes to the content. During the presentation, many members objected to the wording used in the advertisement. Additionally, the AAC recommended that Metro re-examine its language in all media formats related to people with disabilities to ensure it is not unintentionally reinforcing negative stereotypes. Ms. Rush stated that the AAC continuously request that Metro bring information in advance, and consider the Committees recommendations more seriously. Mr. Blake stated that the AAC feedback from presentations are evaluated with all the other assessments and comments and the leadership of that area makes the final decision.

Mr. Blake stated that the AAC should look at all its work and accomplishments and in review the AAC should see how their recommendations have influence outcomes at Metro. In response to a comment about receiving presentations after certain initiatives have already been in place such as the pilot program to lock the equipment gates in the rail system, Mr. Blake stated that staff makes every effort to present information in a timely fashion; however it is not always possible. He asked members to keep in mind that the AAC is an advisory group on accessibility issues.

In follow up, Dr. Posner stated that there are accessibility issues and universal issues. He suggested that the AAC request that the Rider's Advisory Council (RAC) champion this issue along with the AAC. Upon motion, the AAC recommended that the AAC liaison to the RAC bring the poster issue forth for consideration.

### **Reflections from the Emergency Exercise**

The BRS discussed the emergency volunteer exercise at the Forest Glenn Station. Ms. Rush stated that five AAC members and several members of the public participated in the final exercise of 2015. As part of this exercise, participants were required to sign a waiver.

Ms. Rush indicated that she has volunteered in several exercises and expressed an interest why a waiver was required for this event.

Elver Ariza-Silva stated that the waiver was used to absolve Metro from any liability. He stated that the exercise very intimidating because of the lack of communication. First responders appeared not to be interested in the directions offered by any member of the disability community on how best to handle a person's body during the evacuation. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that he did not feel safe in the exercise.

Ms. Bush stated that she was not asked to sign a waiver; however was still able to participant in the exercise. She agreed with Mr. Ariza-Silva indicating that in her opinion, the emergency exercise was dangerous for people with disabilities. Communication is key and stressed the importance of first responders, the on-site Commander, Metro staff and others listening to the person with the disabilities about their personal abilities for movement. As an example, a volunteer with a service animal made several attempts to explain how best to handle her and the service animal. After an inordinate amount of time, first responders and Metro staff conceded. In a real emergency, the time taken to resolve this issue could have resulted in a catastrophe for everyone involved.

In follow up, Ms. Bush stated that she was transferred from the railcar on a gurney. For a person with a disability that cannot control their neck or arms such as customers with cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis, the gurney has too much flexibility and may result in that person being injured when transported. To prevent a possible injury, Ms. Bush recommended that padding be added around a customer with a disabilities next and shoulders. Ms. Bush stated that from the gurney she was transferred to an Emergency Tunnel Evacuation Cart (ETEC) cart. One of the straps from the cart was caught around her neck, and began to chock her. She stated that first responders did

not immediately realize it. She also recommended that the fasteners be changed to velcro to prevent the incident she experienced.

In a follow up, Mr. Blake asked all the members who participated in the most recent exercise whether they felt comfortable that if something occurred in the system, they would be okay. In unison the members said no.

Brian Miller stated that he participated in an exercise over a year ago and had very similar experiences. My feedback was shared with the organizers but it does not appear they listen to my needs.

Ms. Burger stated that she participated in the exercise in the District at the Stadium-Armory station. Although she had an interpreter, she stated that she refrained from using the interpreter because she wanted to make the experience as real life for the first responders and herself. Ms. Burger stated at the conclusion of the exercise first responders and staff indicating that they had not realized all the shortcoming related to communication.

Mr. Ariza-Silva suggested that first responders need a training or classroom setting with people with disabilities to learn how to move and handle a person's body with special needs. Dr. Posner stated that classroom setting should include the fire and police departments from each jurisdiction along with emergency liaison from Metro to participate. Additionally, Ms. Burger stated that one point she learned from the exercise, is that in each emergency exercise, first responders are trained on a different aspect of evacuation. Understanding that fact, she indicated that she agrees with Mr. Ariza-Silva's suggestion about a classroom setting to better prepare first responders.

Mr. Blake stated that Metro has conducted several of these exercises; however, members have not had an opportunity to provide feedback directly to first responders. He stated he would schedule a presentation for the next meeting so the experts can better explain their procedures. He will request that the presenter be prepared to discuss the following: waiver; participant's experience; possibility of a classroom training; possibility of equipment changes; central liaison to handle all the debriefing feedback from each exercise and distribution of feedback and lessons learned to each the jurisdictions; and possibility of an emergency exercise focused only on customers with disabilities.

### **Ombudsman's Report**

Antonio Stephens, ADA Ombudsman, provided an update on comments made at the November 2015 BRS meeting. He indicated that there was a robust discussion on the previously filed complaint regarding a train at the Navy Yard Metrorail station and Dr. Staderman. The Ombudsman stated that he has relayed to Dr. Staderman that video is available at his convenience for viewing.

Dr. Miller expressed an interest in how long videos are stored before being recorded over. The Ombudsman stated that Metro retains video on Metrobus and Metrorail for 30 days before it's recorded over. He stressed the importance of providing the correct information and filing complaints with Metro's customer service in a timely fashion.

The Ombudsman stated that Dr. Staderman discussed another incident at the meeting in November on the Orange line. Dr. Staderman complaint was that he was entering the railcar and before he could get there the train doors closed, and brushed his feet as it left the station. Train Operators are not looking down the platform. The Ombudsman stated that he has requested and reviewed video. It shows the train doors open on the platform for 8 seconds, prior to the door closing and the train pulling away. The next train arrived on the same platform 21 seconds later, with the doors remaining open on the platform for 11 seconds. Dr. Staderman was able to board that training.

In light of the difference in dwell times, the Ombudsman requested further information from the Office of Rail Transportation (RTRA). The Ombudsman stated that he will read the statement from RTRA as written. RTRA stated that the normal door opening times can vary and it is approximately 5 seconds at most stations in the system. There is a larger variance at transfer stations. Train Operators have been trained and instructed to manually close train doors within that range when the platform is clear. Additionally, the time could also vary when in automatic train control (ATC) mode and depending on other factors, the train doors could close in 5 seconds automatically. When in manual door operation, the Train Operator will close the doors when the platform is clear. Train Operator do have the ability to override the door closing.

Dr. Posner stated that the dwell time and skipping stations have been an issue on the Orange and Silver Lines. The station skipping was not announced prior to the skipped station due to track work. This is also affecting the dwell times at the station.

Mr. Crawford expressed an interest in cameras on the platform to allow Train Operators view the entire train. Mr. Blake stated that he followed up with RTRA for the feasibility for this type of tool in the rail system. RTRA is interested and will work with the

Department of Access Services to begin the coordination. In a follow up, Dr. Posner stated that at the Board's last safety committee meeting, MTPD mentioned a grant for new cameras in the rail system. Perhaps MTPD will be willing to collaborate with Access and RTRA.

Patrick Sheehan stated that in previous discussion on the issue of dwell times, the AAC recommended a minimum dwell time of 10 seconds. As a compromise, Metro committed to having the train come to a complete stop on the platform, pause a few seconds while making station announcements, before opening the train doors, giving all customers including people with disabilities an opportunity to be lined up at the door before the door opening. Many members agreed that the procedure would make a huge difference and upon motion recommended that Metro reinstitute procedure. Additionally, the AAC endorses any efforts to add cameras on the platform to allow Train Operators view the entire train.

Ms. Burger expressed an interest in the staffing levels for Metrorail stations during peak or off-peak hours. Upon motion, the Subcommittee requested the standard operating procedures (SOP) on the staffing requirements and responsibilities in Metrorail stations.

In response to a question about ATC, the Ombudsman stated that the Orange, Yellow, Blue, Green and Silver line trains are being operated in manual mode and only the Red Line trains are being operated in ATC mode.

The Ombudsman also provided follow up on a comment made at the October 2015 BRS meeting regarding a portable traffic sign blocking the pathway to the bus stop on 7th & H Street. The customer stated that the traffic sign prevents bus operators from lowering the lift for customers with mobility devices, and on several occasion bus operators refused to deploy the lift because of the obstruction. The Ombudsman stated that the portable traffic sign is the property of the Metropolitan Police Department and it is very unlikely it will be move. Metro is looking into moving some of the newspaper racks to provide bus operators adequate space to lower the ramp to board customers.

Additionally, the Ombudsman provided feedback on the elevator outage at the Waterfront Metrorail station. Information was requested from the Office of Elevator and Escalator Services (ELES). ELES stated that the wiring in the elevator at the Waterfront station had shorted the system and the issue was not immediately noticed or reported. The issues have been corrected and the elevator was scheduled to go back into service on last Thursday and when last checked the elevator at the Waterfront station is back in service.

### **Remote Faregate Access**

Mr. Blake stated that the issue moved to the AAC agenda and was thoroughly discussed by the members. The Deputy General Manager of Operations was in attendance at that meeting and is committed to a review and resolution of the issue. In response to a question about response time, Mr. Blake stated that it is anticipated that a response will be provided soon.

### **Station Manager Kiosk Access**

The BRS discussed access to the Station Manager kiosk. Dr. Miller stated the following issues prompted the discussion: the call box on the Station Manager kiosks on the Silver Lines were too close to the wall; the height of the Station Manager kiosk and accessing the transaction window; the steps are a barrier to accessing the kiosk from the pay area; and the color new station kiosk.

Mr. Blake stated that the design for the new station kiosk appears to be the appropriate height. As an example, he indicated that the transaction window has been lowered by 4 feet and the base of the kiosk is 4 inches. In response to a question about view the prototype before full production, Mr. Blake stated that he will investigate and provide feedback. Mr. Sheehan suggested that Metro review the standards in Section 508 for kiosk design.

Dr. Posner suggested that the BRS develop a kiosk work group. The work group would meet with the designers and provide feedback to the Subcommittee. He indicated that this is the process used for the 7000 series.

### **New Business**

Ms. Burger expressed an interest in adding rails to the ceiling for hold near the accessible wheelchair space on the 7000 series trains. As with the previous issue, Dr. Posner suggested that the AAC request that the RAC champion this issue along with the AAC. Upon motion, the BRS recommend that Metro add rails to the ceiling near the wheelchair area to better protect mobility device users that are in the accessible wheelchair from being used as handrails.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.