



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: January 16, 2018

In attendance: Edward McEntee (Chair), Tino Calabia (1st Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Charlie Crawford, Steve Kaffen, Anthony Oberg, and Paul Semelfort.

By Remote: Phil Posner (AAC Chair)

Call to Order

Chair McEntee called the January 16, 2018 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the January 16, 2018 meeting agenda as amended to remove the Ombudsman report, in the interest of time.

The BRS approved the December 11, 2017 meeting minutes as written.

Public Comment

A customer commented on Metro's efforts to encourage customers back to Metrorail through a project that whenever a train is more than 15 minutes late, Metro would refund the fare of a customer, which will happen automatically. However, on Metrobus if the bus is late, bus customers must go to a specific Metro website to request a refund. The customer stated that bus riders have no idea why a bus is late, and therefore have to go online every time a bus is late, which the customer feels is not equivalent. The customer also believes bus riders should be incentivized to continue to use bus service by being granted a free trip after a specific number of trips.

Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that the customer raises an interesting and fair point. He added, however, that the big difference between rail and bus, is that for rail service, Metro owns the right of way, so just about everything related to the service is basically under the control of Metro. Whereas the bus service is subject to traffic, planned street closures, accidents, and other circumstances beyond Metro's control.

Dr. Posner added that some people may try to game this refund system by delaying the time they tap out of the system. Metro needs to watch out for such opportunists. However, in the case of people with disabilities, particularly people using mobility devices during rush or other crowded conditions, and may not be able to immediately board a train, their tapping out of the system made be delayed as well, but not as a result of an effort to game the system. Metro needs to remain aware of the differences.

Mr. Ariza-Silva issued a public comment about the interior design of the 3000-series rail cars. He stated that near the door of 3000-series railcars there exists a bump that is difficult to navigate when having to back out of a train due to crowded conditions preventing him from turning around in his mobility device. Mr. Ariza-Silva wanted to know how much longer the 3000-series will be in service. Mr. Blake stated that Metro has already announced that the 3000-series will be phased out as more 7000-series cars are added. Mr. Blake stated that he will also look at the design issue Mr. Ariza-Silva has raised. Chair McEntee added that this could be an issue for universal design.

8000-Series Railcar – Follow-up Discussion #1

Chair McEntee began the discussion asking members to discuss and decide if there is a need for an 8000-series work group, as previously suggested by Dr. Posner.

Dr. Posner stated that the email discussion between AAC members about railcar co-efficient shows that there is a need for a work group that can add to the design of the 8000-series, and provide meaningful feedback to the engineers.

Mr. Calabria stated that he has provided many comments to the other AAC members about the 8000-series, but added that his comments also relate to the 7000-series, particularly his comments about the inter-car barriers. The new rubber barriers on some cars on 7000-series trains have a gap that would not prevent a person from being alerted to the fact that the opening is not a door. He stated that there needs to be uniformity of the inter-car barriers on the 8000-series cars. He reiterated a previous suggestion that Metro consider accordion-style inter-car barriers used in New York. He believes the engineers and contractor should comment on the New York barriers.

Mr. Calabria added that during a discussion with the Chair of the Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities, the Chair expressed the hazard of the 7000-series cars during wet conditions due to the lack of carpeting. Mr. Calabria added that the Chair reported slipping on a 7000-series car, and that an AAC member, Mary Kay McMahan, reported witnessing a customer slip and fall on a 7000-series car. In her email statement, Ms. McMahan recommended that the floors on both the 7000 and 8000-series cars have some sort of anti-slip material or applicator place on them.

Mr. Blake responded to this issue of inter-car barriers. He stated that it was made clear that the inter-car barrier design currently on the 7000-series is ADA compliant. He then added that after much discussions with the AAC, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and disability stakeholders in general, Metro decided to retrofit all 7000-series that have the new inter-car barrier, by removing the new barrier and installing Metro's traditional chain barrier between all cars. Mr. Blake added that this project is underway, but slightly behind the original schedule.

Mr. Blake reminded the committee that the 8000-series will have the traditional chain barrier between all cars as well. He added that if the AAC really wants to advocate for the accordion barrier, now is the time to speak up. However, he added that part of the 7000-series retrofit is to have a uniformed inter-car barrier design throughout the entire rail fleet, therefore, the accordion barrier recommendation would disrupt that goal, and likely not move forward.

Dr. Posner explained that one of the reasons the New York Transit System uses the accordion design is because on that system customers are allowed to transfer between cars. That, more inclusive, type of barrier provides additional protection for such inter-car walkthroughs.

Mr. Calabia stated that in Metro's system, while a train is stopped during an emergency, some customers may have to move between cars, and therefore the risk of falling is present. He added that he understands the cost and planning challenges, but if cost is not an issue, and the timing of design would not be impacted, why not go with the safer barrier.

Mr. Calabia made a motion to have Patrick Lavin, Metro's Chief Safety Officer, compare the two inter-car barrier designs, and respond to the AAC.

In discussion of the motion Mr. Kaffen asked if rail car doors automatically unlock during an emergency, and that it would be safer for customers to move between cars to a safe location instead of outside of the cars. Mr. Calabia stated that during a recent emergency exercise there did take place transfer between rail cars. Dr. Posner added that there is an emergency release on each rail car that can be used during a major emergency to open the rail car door when Metro personnel is not available.

Mr. Crawford asked why Mr. Blake did not believe that Metro would move to the accordion styled barrier. Mr. Blake stated that one of the key issues/concerns Metro heard from customers, stakeholders, and the FTA about the dual barrier design on the 7000-series is that it is not consistent across the train nor the fleet. Metro is committed to having a uniformed approach to inter-car barriers across the entire Metrorail fleet. Having the accordion barrier on the 8000-series and chain barriers on the remainder of the fleet would be contrary to our efforts to respond to requests uniformity.

Public comment during discussion of the motion endorsed the motion for support of the accordion barrier, and despite prior calls about the uniformity, she recognizes the added safety benefits of the accordion barrier. Mr. Crawford asked what is the benefit of the accordion barrier versus chain barrier. Mr. Calabia believes the accordion barrier would be preferable.

The motion passed.

Mr. Ariza-Silva made the following recommendations to the design of the 8000-series car: (1) Priority seating set at 22", a different height than the other seats; (2) Have more ceiling bars added to the 8000-series cars; and (3) install an arm rest on each of the first forward-facing seats. Mr. Ariza-Silva also recommended that the AAC be afforded the opportunity to view the final design. Chair McEntee stated that he recalled prior agreement on the arm rest proposal. Mr. Blake concurred.

Chair McEntee returned to the discussion of slippage on the 7000-series cars. Dr. Posner stated there was a big debate on the idea of removing carpet from the 7000-series. When the final decision to switch to solid flooring, there was a promise of a slippage co-efficient that would prevent slips and falls. The slippage would be tested in snow, ice, and wet conditions. Dr. Posner stated that there may be a need to have the slippage co-efficient re-tested based on the recent incidents.

Mr. Calabria made a motion to have a Metro conduct a study on the slippage co-efficient of the 7000-series rail cars.

In discussion of the motion, Mr. Kaffen asked if the type of flooring in the 7000-series is used in other systems. Dr. Posner stated he was not sure about transit, but he is aware of its use in laboratories.

The motion passed.

Dr. Posner recommended that, for the 7000-series, videos be developed on priority seating, and that the videos run on the monitors above the priority seats.

Mr. Calabria stated that the monitors are silent. There would need to be a creative skit developed, perhaps pantomime, to highlight priority seating, along with white boards, and emergency situations.

Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that for the proposed and all Back2Good messages, Metro needs to include more people with disabilities involved. The public needs to see people with disabilities in the videos. There needs to be more inclusiveness in those videos.

Mr. Calabria made a motion to request Metro enlarge the monitors on the 7000-series, and request Metro's Marketing office create Back2Good videos about priority seating, and eventually white boards and emergency situations, and include more people with disabilities in the videos.

The motion passed.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:01 p.m.