



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-962-6060

BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: July 9, 2018

In attendance: Edward McEntee (Chair), Tino Calabia (1st Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Tapen Banerjee, Hazell Brooks, Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford, Steve Kaffen, Mary Kay McMahon, Philippa Mezile, Anthony Oberg, Phil Posner, Denise Rush, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Chair McEntee called the July 9, 2018, Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:03 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the July 9, 2018, meeting agenda as amended to move the 8000-series discussion first.

The BRS approved the June 11, 2018, meeting minutes as written.

8000-Series Update

Christiaan Blake, Acting Assistant General Manager, Access Services, introduced Nahom Debessay, Program Manager, Office of Vehicle Program Services, to provide an update on the 8000-series rail car. Mr. Debessay stated within the next month or two Metro would have completed an analysis of information learned from all rail car series including the 7000-series. He added the inter-car barriers on 8000-series trains will have the chain style barriers that the 7000-series will eventually have. But he added that the cars have not been designed yet, so Metro is anticipating potentially a better chain style design for the 8000-series. Mr. Debessay stated, going forward, the AAC will continue to be a part of the design review process, and the mock-up review process.

Mr. Debessay stated Metro is also planning to address slippery flooring on the 8000-series. Mr. Debessay stated Metro is planning to have a better flooring design with strong slip coefficient. He added, once the carpentry gets ready to present the types of flooring, they will be presented to the AAC for testing and feedback. Mr. Debessay stated Metro will engaged the AAC going forward on the design and construction part of all rail car series. Mr. Blake stated that Metro's plan is to use the final chain style barriers that they are using on the 7000-series for the 8000-series.

Dr. Posner stated seeing the mock-up is not the same as seeing the entire train. Dr. Posner added it is very important for the AAC to see a final train before the 8000-series enter the service stage. Dr. Posner stated the slippery coefficient on the mock-up floors are different from the actual 7000-series service trains. Dr. Posner stated Metro should consider asking the company once the initial amount of grid runs out, how can Metro apply more coefficient.

Dr. Posner asked if Metro planning to put priority seating under the emergency door exit. Mr. Debessay stated as of right now the configuration is staying the same as the 7000-series. Dr. Posner stated there is not much change to be done. He added it is only changing the side the seat is on. He further added this will allow a short person to stand instead of leaning onto someone. Mr. Debessay stated he will take this recommendation back to the Engineering office to address. Dr. Posner suggested Metro consider installing a center pole in the 8000-series. He added they allow extra space for wheelchair customers. Mr. Debessay stated Metro had competing stakeholders who wanted the center pole and some who did not want the center pole. He added Metro made the decision not to add the center pole.

Mr. Kaffen stated, due to safety, he often likes to sit in railcars that have more people. He asked while Metro plans to move forward with new railcars will Metro ever consider using gangway cars. Mr. Debessay stated in 2017 an RFI was completed to gain information from the industry about the use of gangway cars. Mr. Debessay added shortly after Metro conducted their own independent study, it was determined the 8000-series gangway could not be used due to many structural issues with maintenance facilities.

Mr. Calabria stated Kawasaki is designing new trains for New York City and added they are planning to complete a pilot for use of gangway car trains in 2020. He added the gangway style cars are safer for people with a visual disability because it prevents them from falling on the track bed. Mr. Calabria stated gangway cars are used around the world. He added New York will be the first city in the United States to pilot a version. He asked why Metro couldn't pilot the use of gangway cars since Kawasaki is designing the cars. Mr. Debessay stated he will pass the comments about gangway cars to appropriate management.

Mr. Kaffen stated Metro should reach out to New York Transit to find out how they will maintain the gangway style railcars. Barbra Millville, National Capital Citizens with Low Vision (NCCLV) stated London is using the gangway style cars. She also asked when is the deadline to submit a comment about the design of the 8000-series trains. Mr. Debessay stated there will be plenty of opportunities for the committee to make suggestions. He added the first phase is developing the technical specs. He added more information will be given during the design phase. Ms. Bush asked has Metro awarded the contract. Mr. Debessay stated Metro has not awarded the contract.

7000-Series Update

Mr. Calabria stated he researched the regulations on inter-car barriers. He added the regulations state at 49 CFR §38.63, regarding between-car barriers for rapid rail vehicles and systems: Suitable devices or systems shall be provided to prevent, deter or warn individuals from inadvertently stepping off the platform between cars. Acceptable solutions include, but are not limited to pantograph gates, chains, motion detectors or similar devices. Mr. Calabria stated pantograph gates are accordion style gates. He added since joining the committee in 2017 he has been advocating for the use of accordion style barriers due to safety issues. Mr. Calabria stated since three customers have fallen onto the trackbed, the use of the accordion style would be effective. Mr. Calabria added, however, covering the rubber barriers with color tape is an improvement.

Mr. Kaffen stated, compared to the amount of people Metro has in their system daily, he was surprised to hear that only three people have fell through the barriers. He added the messages are not effective considering there are a lot of tourist travelers who use the system. He added tourists might not understand why Metro is making the announcement. Mr. Kaffen stated an easy fix to the barriers issue is to attach the pantograph gates. Mr. Oberg stated Metro has expressed on several occasions the reason why they cannot install the accordion style barriers. He added the committee should table the discussion for adding the accordion style barriers for the 7000-series because Metro is planning to install the chain style barrier.

Chair McEntee stated he believes the agency is not moving toward the gangway car style is due to cost.

Mr. Calabria asked if the response Metro sent to FTA regarding temporarily using the color covers on the inter-car barriers until all retrofitting is complete fixes FTA's concerns.

Ms. Bush stated some of the issues with using the accordion style barriers were the strength and placement of those barriers. She added they might not be great for the 8000-railcar series. However, she can attest it is not a money issue, because Metro is currently spending a lot of money retrofitting the 7000-series with chain barriers.

Dr. Posner stated he was at the Virginia Square Metro Station when he heard the announcement encouraging visually impaired customers to touch the floor before attempting to board the train. Dr. Posner added the announcement was low. He added to be effective the announcement should be recorded loud, and it should also be recorded in Spanish.

Mr. Blake stated the between-car barrier requirements that Mr. Calabria read are the exact requirements he read last week during the full committee meeting. Mr. Calabria stated there was never a mention of pantograph gates. Mr. Blake stated he did read pantograph gates, but he did not describe them as an accordion style. He added Metro has complied with the requirements of the FTA. He added that the rubber barriers are safe, but agreed that they may not be described as the absolute safest barrier. However, after Metro conducted a series of testing in 2016, the agency determined they would go back to using Metro's traditional style chain barriers. Mr. Blake stated the information he received from colleagues in rail engineering at the time of the decision led him to report that the project should be completed within 8-15 months. He added, over time design challenges delayed the project. Mr. Blake stated FTA believes the Metro system is safe when there is a uniformity in the style of between-car barriers. Mr. Blake stated Metro wants uniformity with respect to the barriers. He added having a uniform style barrier is one of the main reasons why Metro will likely not install the accordion style barriers. Mr. Blake stated the high visibility tape is a temporary solution until all the 7000-series are retrofitted.

Mr. Blake stated there are two announcements to alert blind/low vision customers. He added there is the station announcement that advises the customer to find the floor before boarding; and the train announcement that announces this is a 7000-series train when pulling into the station.

Mr. Blake stated Metro wants to bring awareness to passengers when using the 7000-series trains. Mr. Blake added he will follow up with rail operations about the announcements. Dr. Posner asked when members of the committee do not hear either announcements they can notify ADAP with train destination, time and railcar. Mr. Blake agreed.

Mr. Calabria stated Metro's FTA response indicates the AAC approved the rubber style barriers. He added it seems Metro is using the AAC as a cover up for their mistake. He further added that this cannot happen again. Mr. Blake stated the original design came out in 2008. He added the AAC in 2011 wanted the chains to remain, however the 7000-series project manager address the AAC stating Metro was using the rubber style. He added what was stated in the letter to FTA was throughout the process Metro consulted with the AAC. Mr. Blake stated that Metro has never said the AAC approved the rubber barriers in their response to FTA. Also, he added Metro is dealing with the statement of fact as to the timeline occurrence and Metro efforts of reaching out to the disability community about its plans for the 7000-series. Mr. Blake stated he is currently highlighting the work ADAP has completed in reference to educating the disability community about safety when boarding the 7000-series.

Mr. Blake stated Metro heard from stakeholders who said they would prefer a multicolor contrast stripe instead of a solid contrast stripes. Mr. Blake stated once the barriers are updated with the multicolor contrast stripes he will send out a newsletter and update Metro's website with the information.

Ms. Mezile stated the chain barriers and the rubber barriers may be ADA compliant, but they are not safe. Ms. Mezile added Metro should move towards using the pantograph gates. Mr. Blake stated there is not a plan to address that recommendation immediately, however his department will follow up on the recommendation. Ms. Mezile stated ADAP did specify diagonal stripes with contrasting colors. Mr. Blake stated yes. Dr. Posner stated contrasting color tape wrapped around the chain barriers may present a problem. He added in the future Metro should incorporate what San Francisco does when they are in Automatic Train Control (ATC) by marking the platform as to where the door will open whether it is a six car or eight car train.

Mr. McEntee stated in Arlington there is a beeping sound at crosswalks that is played, so that people with visual impairment know to cross the street. He asked if Metro is willing to play a beeping sound when doors open. Mr. Blake stated he will follow up to see if that's possible. Ms. McMahon stated hearing beeping in high transfer station may be difficult to hear.

Mr. Crawford stated customers with visual impairment want to locate the platform, find the door easily, and get on the train. He added if he could locate the chain barrier, he should not fall. Mr. Blake stated the issue is not the chain barrier, but the rubber barrier. He added Metro has been saying since 2016 customers should use their cane/stick to find the floor before boarding the train. Mr. Blake stated he is highly confident in the job Metro has done in addressing the issues with the 7000-series.

The Ombudsman Report

David Shaffer, ADA Ombudsman, ADAP, stated Kelly Reahl and Alex Zimar, IRPG, sent out an email providing the committee with an update on the Kelvin light standards and the lighting policy. Chair McEntee stated the committee will address the lighting standards email at the September meeting.

Public Comment

Ms. Millville stated the low vision community would like diagonal color stripes contrast on the rubber barriers. She added the color could consist of orange and black or green and black. Ms. Millville added the low vision community would like to see color covers on the chain barriers.

Dr. Posner stated it will be hard to put diagonal strips on a cover for placement on the chain barriers. He added it will not look diagonal once installed. Mr. Bake stated the committee should table the recommendation to install color contrast on the chain barriers for future meeting.

Dr. Posner stated he has the information for a representative in rail car maintenance who stated if you are on a slippery car to email him the car number and he will address the issues. He added if you need the email address to contact him.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.