



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: November 14, 2016

In attendance: Brian Miller (Chair), Darnise Henry-Bush, Charlie Crawford; Larry Haile, Suzanne Kamel, Marisa Laios, Phillippa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, Dr. Phil Posner, Denise Rush, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Chair Miller called the November 14, 2016 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the November 14, 2016 meeting agenda.

The BRS approved the October 11, 2016 meeting minutes as written.

Public Comment

A comment was made about the new MetroAccess ID cards for conditionally eligible customers. In December 2016, Metro will demonstrate the new cards on a Metrobus at a local advocacy organization general body meeting. The cards allow for independence and autonomous entry into the system. The customer thanked Metro for improving accessibility into the system.

A comment was made about the planned emergency exercises and the lack of participation from the disability community. Many customers with disabilities are not participating in the exercises because of the required liability waiver. This means first responders across the jurisdictions will not get the full experience of rescuing customers with disabilities in the Metrorail system. The customer suggested that the AAC explore the issue and provide recommendations for improvement.

Ms. Henry-Bush expressed an interest in the equipment gates at the Judiciary Square station. The area is extremely dark, isolated, and the gates to the elevator are very close to the track. Customers who use mobility devices have difficulty maneuvering through the space safely. Ms. Henry-Bush stated that this is a safety issue. Customers should have the ability to tap in and out of the gate, and Metro should enhance lighting in the area. Mr. Blake stated that Metro plans to implement a full-scale fare evasion program to prevent unauthorized access to the system. At certain stations, Metro will not lock the gates because of limited access to a station manager. The new MetroAccess ID cards for conditionally eligible customers will allow customers to have independent access to the system.

Dr. Posner stated that the exit gate area on the platform level at the Judiciary Square Metrorail station is tight. The gate faces the track, and if a customer in a mobility device uses a lot of force to get the gate to open, the customer could potentially land on the track. The area is isolated and lacks a call button for assistance. Customers who have limited mobility could not use the gates without assistance. Dr. Posner stated that the

revenue gates are parallel to the track and suggested that Metro change them so that they are parallel to the track and not facing the track. Mr. Blake stated that at this, time there are no feasible infrastructure changes possible. The new smart cards for MetroAccess-eligible customers will allow for all customers to use the accessible fare gates.

In a follow-up Ms. Henry-Bush expressed an interest in a call button for assistance. Mr. Blake stated that the remote call access technology is available in some stations. Metro is moving toward greater access to the system through the accessible fare gates. In response to a question about implementation of the ability to tap in at accessible fare gates Chris Colbert, Operations Manager, Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach, stated that it is anticipated that MetroAccess customers using the Free Ride Benefit will have this ability to enter the system in the next couple of months.

Chair Miller referred the issue of lighting at the exit gates near the elevators on the platform level at the Judiciary Square Metrorail station to the BRS Station Lighting Work Group for review.

Susan Kamel expressed an interest in the timeline for when the between-car barriers will be retrofitted on the 7000-series railcars. Some railcars still have the clamshell style barriers while at others have the traditional between-car barriers. Mr. Blake stated that Metro plans to have the traditional rope barriers on all 7000-series railcars over the next twelve to eighteen months.

Ms. Henry-Bush also expressed an interest in the signage in the stations along the blue and orange lines. At some stations, the station name and destination are clear, yet they lack the International Symbol of Accessibility. Additionally, all of the system maps appear to have been removed from the trains. Mr. Blake stated that Metro has an ongoing effort to replace signage in the Metrorail station. In reference to the removal of system maps from the center of railcars, Metro removed them in order to enlarge the text on the emergency evacuation posters. Dr. Posner suggested that Metro put the map on the ceiling. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that Metro add Maps to ceiling on all 1000-6000 series railcars. This will allow all customers to have access to the information but it will never be blocked during peak periods.

Ombudsman's Report

David Shaffer, ADA Ombudsman, provided a follow-up on a request made at the September 2016 BRS meeting to survey the complaints related to Metro's Senior

Disability card and the Reduced Fare card with Metro's Office of Customer Service (CSVC) over a two-year period.

Metro has an excellent representation of seniors and people with disabilities riding the fixed route system. Mr. Shaffer stated that customers who use the programs accounted for approximately 14% of the ridership on the fixed route system. Of that number, approximately 52% of customers with disabilities and seniors ride both Metrobus and Metrorail with the remainder of the population only using one or the other.

Mr. Shaffer said the data demonstrated that the experience of customers with disabilities is not much different from other customers using the system; customers with disabilities and seniors experience many of the same problems. Customers with disabilities have concerns with personal safety when using or waiting for Metrobus, and problems with inadequate announcements. On Metrorail, most of the problems are related to purchasing a fare and problems with inadequate announcements.

Mr. Shaffer stated that since the training of customer service staff, the data on customer complaints, compliments, and other comments has improved. By the end of the year, he plans a full analysis on all disability-related issues.

Larry Haile expressed an interest in how will the data from the full analysis will be used. Mr. Shaffer stated that the information would be used to guide policy and well as training staff. Mr. Haile suggested that Metro use the information to enhance the customers experience and safety. In response to a question on whether Metro has standard operating procedures (SOP) for Metrorail and Metrobus, Mr. Shaffer stated that Metro uses SOP.

Mary Kay McMahon stated that many times, the station announcements are drowned out by announcements made over the public address system (PA) in a station. Mr. Shaffer stated that station announcements over the PA system are made by the Rail Operations Control Center, and since the implementation of SafeTrack, announcements in the station have been more frequent.

Phil Posner stated that he has noticed that during rush hour, there often isn't sufficient time to exit the train because the doors were closing so quickly. He added that in the off-peak it was the exact opposite. He concluded that it appears Metro is more interested in headways to make up for the delays related to track work. Christian Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that Metro's rule is safety over schedule, so while there are speed restrictions in certain parts of the

system, there should not be a case of rushing where customer safety is impacted. Mr. Blake reminded members (and the public) to report such issues to ADAP and include the time of day, train or bus number, and line. He added that the Ombudsman will follow up.

In a follow-up on the SOP, Mr. Haile expressed an interest in the SOP procedures of train operators. Mr. Blake stated that as a train approaches the station, the train operator announces the station and the side on which the doors will open. Once the train has berth in the platform, the doors open. The Train Operator looks out the window to view the platform and announce the doors closing. Once the doors close, the Train Operator gives the line, destination, and next station. Mr. Haile stated that he finds it interesting that Train Operators look out the window to view the platform when closing the doors because customers with disabilities getting hit by closing doors is a chronic issue. He stated that most likely, Train Operators are not following the SOP. In response to a question about dwell time, Mr. Blake stated that dwell times can differ depending on circumstances at the station and ahead on the tracks. He stated that he would follow up and provide additional feedback on the issue.

Mr. Shaffer stated that he would be training Metrobus Operators at upcoming safety meetings. The Department of Bus Services is supporting this effort and has assigned a person to work with the Ombudsman on all ADA-related issues. Mr. Shaffer stated that he has also been working on issues of accessibility with Metro's website. He encouraged members and the disability community to report all questions of accessibility to him for review.

Bus Stop and Pedestrian Access – MGM National Harbor

The BRS had previously discussed the bus stop located at the new MGM National Harbor Hotel and Resort. During the May 2015 BRS meeting, Jim Hamre, Director, Metrobus Planning (BPLN), stated that Metro authored a letter in support of public transportation at the location. The position was also supported by the full Committee. The letter and a local newspaper article about the lack of public transportation access prompted a meeting between Metro, Prince George's County officials, and MGM officials. This meeting led to the development of a design for a bus stop at the location.

Corinna Sigsbury, Accessibility Planning Manager, ADAP, stated that bus stop will be located on a service road on the National Avenue side of the hotel and resort. As the location gets closer to opening, some of the names of the streets will change. For instance, National Avenue will become Monument Avenue. Ms. Sigsbury stated that the

bus stop meets Metro's Bus Stop Standard and will include a shelter. The bus stop will also be raised with a crosswalk giving customers direct access to the hotel and resort. It is anticipated that the bus stop will be available prior to the opening of the MGM in December. Currently Metro has two bus lines; NH1- National Harbor to Southern Avenue and NH2 – National Harbor – Alexandria Line, that access National Harbor.

Chair Miller expressed an interest in whether the bus stop will include any bus stop amenities. Mr. Blake stated that stop will be accessible and other features may be added later. Ms. Sigsbury stated that there is also a sidewalk that leads away from the bus stop and follows the road.

Darnise Henry-Bush expressed an interest in whether the bus stop would include bus schedules. Ms. Sigsbury stated that bus schedules are standard at all Metro bus stops.

A comment from the public expressed an interest in whether the bus stop would be considered as inside the MetroAccess service area. Mr. Blake stated that since Metro is offering service to that location, MetroAccess service would be available to the stop and all points within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of the stop.

Ms. Rush encouraged everyone to use public transportation when traveling to the hotel and resort. As a representative of the Prince George's County, Ms. Rush stated that she has attended most of the meetings related to the traffic plan, and traffic congestion is slated to be pretty bad.

Emergency Exercise Meeting with Council of Governments

On Friday, October 21, 2016, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Fire Department Passenger Rail Safety Subcommittee (FDPRSS), invited members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee to share their concerns about the emergency exercise and emergencies in general. Elver Ariza-Silva, AAC 2nd Vice-Chair, Chair Miller, BRS Chair, and Larry Haile attended the meeting.

Larry Haile stated that the meeting with the FDPRSS was informative and productive. During the meeting, he stressed the importance of having an in-person comprehensive training that instructs first responders on how to provide proper assistance to customers with disabilities. At many points during the meeting, it was emphasized that having customers with disabilities be a part of that training for first responders was important because first responders would hear directly from people with disabilities themselves on the best ways to assist them. The FDPRSS stated that first responders receive training via a Computer-Based Training (CBT) on how to assist people with

disabilities. Ms. Haile stated that it was expressed that although the CBT may be helpful, the best way to properly inform first responders on how to assist people with disabilities is through an in-person comprehensive training that includes people with disabilities. Mr. Haile stated that the FDPRSS and other attendees appeared really excited and expressed an interest in developing standard approaches for working with people with disabilities during an emergency.

AAC Chair Sheehan stated that he participated in the planned emergency exercise at the Southern Avenue station. He agreed the training was the key. One thing that needs to be corrected is that everyone working the event during the emergency should make a point to identify themselves each time they address the group. Additionally, some members of the disability community were allowed to walk the track back to the platform, Mr. Sheehan stated that a good understanding of the terrain would have been helpful. Although he walked the track, it was extremely difficult and exhausting. A customer with a service animal would not have been able to do this because the catwalk is extremely narrow. In these situations, Mr. Sheehan expressed an interest in who has the authority to overrule a volunteer's judgment if they think it is not safe.

Mr. Haile stated that he also participated in the emergency exercise at the Southern Avenue station. The issues at this training were similar to the AAC concerns regarding communicating with the deaf/hard-of-hearing, service animals, and mobility device users. In response to a question about whether members of the disability community were allowed to walk the track back to the platform, Mr. Haile stated that he and others were allowed to walk the track.

Dr. Posner expressed an interest in whether access to the intercom system on the trains was available during the planned emergency exercise. Mr. Haile stated that he does not believe anyone interacted with the train operator via the intercom system. Dr. Posner suggested that train operators should make an announcement at the beginning of the exercise to advise customers of the situation. The train operator should also ask customers with disabilities (if they can) to use the intercom system to let the train operator know which car they are on. Dr. Posner stated that the information on the emergency exercise poster is not clear.

Phillippa Mezile stated that the problem with Dr. Posner's suggestion is that people with disabilities may not even know where the intercom system is located on the train.

Chair Miller stated that one of the concerns from the general public (including the disability community) is the lack of communication and the uncertainty during an emergency. Education and training would help.

Mr. Haile suggested that Metro review the emergency exercise poster from a training perspective. He stated that he would like the BRS to take a more proactive approach and engage the first responders around the jurisdictions. The intercom system should also be incorporated into this training.

Ms. Kamel agreed with Mr. Haile's suggestion on training and added that Metro should look to hospitals and organizations that have professionally trained individuals and work with people with disabilities on a regular basis to provide training to first responders.

Edward McEntee suggested that Metro make a video for customers and first responders regarding evacuating the Metrorail system during an emergency. The video could highlight evacuation procedures. Many agree that the BRS should work with Metro to develop training for working with people with disabilities during emergencies. Once the training is implemented, a video for the general public can be developed.

Chair Sheehan stated that it does not appear the first responders have learned much about working with people with disabilities over the last two years.

Dr. Posner suggested another meeting with Metro's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and first responders in the region. Upon motion, the BRS recommended OEM be asked to attend the next BRS meeting to discuss the emergency exercises; lessons learned, and improvements for future exercises.

Ms. Henry-Bush stated that the BRS should also have someone to discuss the liability waiver. The disability community wants to participate in the exercises; however, having to sign a waiver negatively impacts customers with disabilities from participating. The BRS requested that Metro's General Counsel attend a meeting to discuss the required waiver for participation in the emergency exercises. Mr. Blake stated that he will follow up and provide feedback.

Mr. Crawford expressed an interest in whether there was an existing position in writing regarding the waiver. Mr. Blake stated that the waiver is considered a best practice across the industry.

Ms. Rush expressed an interest in whether employees who participate as volunteers in the planned emergency exercise have to sign a waiver. Mr. Blake stated that he believes employees who volunteer to participate in an exercise must sign a waiver as well.

Administrative Process

The BRS discussed the appointments of Brianne Burger as Vice-Chair and Mr. McEntee as Second Vice-Chair.

New Business

It was announced that Metro's Accessibility Excellence Awards would be held on November 16, 2016 at Metro's Headquarters. AAC members and the general public are invited to attend.

Adjournment

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