



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: October 13, 2015

In attendance: Brian Miller (Chair), William Staderman (Vice-Chair), Brianne Burger, Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford, Phillippa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, Randall Pope, Phil Posner, Denise Rush, Anthony Stephens, and Roger Stanley.

Call to Order

Chair Miller called the October 13, 2015 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the October 13, 2015 meeting agenda. The BRS approved the September 21, 2015 meeting minutes.

Public Comment

A comment was made about Metro fares and the proposed elimination of the Free Ride Benefit for MetroAccess customers identified as conditionally eligible. The customer stated that the MetroAccess sustainability study lists the elimination of the Free Ride benefit as one of its recommendations. According to a report during the Board's Finance and Administration Committee, Metro would provide customers with reduced fare SmarTrip cards to enable autonomous access to the system. This change may impact customers at the lower socioeconomic level. The customer encouraged the AAC to take a long view to this and other recommendations in the study. Dr. Miller stated that fare policy was added to this meeting's agenda for further discussion.

Dr. Phil Posner stressed the importance of the AAC following Metro's fare policy. Metro is considering dissolving the free ride program. He stated that the purpose of the program was to move customers off MetroAccess and onto the fixed route system. Currently, Metro fare policy includes a board and distance fee. This means customers pay the same to enter the system, but drastically different fares to exit the system, up to a maximum fare. Dr. Posner stated that other transit systems similar to Metro have a flat fare. Metro plans to revisit this issue during the budget process.

Dr. Posner also stated that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has taken over safety supervision at Metro and there is a considerable amount of track work being performed in the system. He stated that during the periods where track work is being performed, customers should receive a reduced fare (based on the bus fare), because rail is no longer the fastest route. He added that the Rider's Advisory Council (RAC) is also discussing this issue.

Denise Rush stated that she attended the public hearing and listened to numerous customers describe the devastating impact that increased fares and changes in bus routes would have on their personal and professional lives. Dr. Posner stated that the

proposal to change bus routes will be discussed at the Board's Customer Service and Operations Committee meeting.

Phillippa Mezile stated that many seniors and people with disabilities are on a fixed income. Many in the senior and disability community do not drive and therefore must rely on Metro for all their travel needs. The proposal to abolish the free ride program would have a huge negative impact on the senior and disability community.

Dr. Posner encouraged members to begin work on fare policy issues now. The AAC fare policy work group also needs a chair. Dr. Posner also encouraged members to attend the Board's Committee meetings to be better informed about the issues. Ms. Mezile stated that she is interested in serving on the AAC fare policy working group. Upon motion, the AAC voted to add their concerns with the removal of the free ride program to the Chairman's report.

A customer commended the Bus Operator on the northbound 70 (Georgia Avenue to 7th Street) bus line. The customer stated the annunciator was broken, but the Bus Operator made clear and loud announcements. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, thanked the customer for the comments and stated that he would share this information with the appropriate office.

Anthony Stephens made a comment about stop announcements in the Metrorail system. With the Blue, Orange and Silver rail lines sharing a track, train operators are failing to provide line and destination information once the doors open. Additionally, when the information is provided it is unclear. This is critical information because it allows customers, including those with disabilities, to understand whether they are on the correct train, especially when the platform serves more than one line. Dr. Posner suggested that Metro should have personnel on the platform to provide train information in multiple formats. The Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) and Train Operators are not always accurate. Brianne Burger agreed, stating that she has expressed the need for alternate forms of communication on the platform on many occasions. She suggested that this issue also be included in the Chair's report and in the quarterly leadership meeting with the Board's Executive Committee. Upon motion, the AAC voted to add this issue to the Chair's report.

Elver Ariza-Silva made a comment about the number of customers who get lost in the system. He stated that he recently helped a family from another state navigate the system. He suggested that Metro implement a travel ambassador program. The travel ambassador program could operate in a similar fashion as the Downtown Business

Improvement District, providing customers information and assistance. Mr. Ariza-Silva also stated that this could relieve some of the strain on station managers to provide customer service. Additionally, this would also be a great opportunity for Metro to hire people with disabilities.

Ombudsman's Report

Antonio Stephens, ADA ombudsman, provided feedback on a complaint made by Dr. William Staderman at the Waterfront Metrorail station. Dr. Staderman's complaint was that as he was entering the railcar, he had to back out because a customer's bike was in the way. The train doors then closed and brushed his feet as it left the station.

The ombudsman stated that ADAP requested video of the Waterfront station. The initial findings from Rail Transportation was that customers with mobility devices boarded without incident. The ombudsman reviewed the video footage and found several customers in mobility devices using the station without incident. Dr. Staderman was not one of the customers in the video.

With the various activities related to the 25th Anniversary of the ADA occurring that day around the city, it was determined that the incident may have occurred at the Navy Yard station. This station is on the Green Line and one station away from Waterfront. The ombudsman requested video footage; however the footage was unavailable. After a certain period, Rail Transportation stated that video footage in the system is recorded over, and therefore the complaint could not be substantiated. In response to a comment about disciplinary action, the ombudsman stated that the incident could not be verified and therefore no corrective action could be taken.

Charlie Crawford stated that Metro should have a procedure in place to prevent video footage from being taped over when there is an issue of safety. This will allow it to be addressed with the appropriate staff member. Mr. Blake stated that he agrees and encouraged the AAC and the public to report complaints promptly to Metro's Customer Service at (202) 637-1328. The quicker an issue is reported, the quicker an investigation can occur and possibly prevent video footage from being unavailable. Customers can still contact ADAP, but only after the issue has been reported to Customer Service.

Mr. Stephens stated that he is pleased to know that Metro has this type of technology available in the system and uses it to review issues such as the aforementioned.

Patrick Sheehan expressed an interest in the FTA corrective action plan for Metro. He stated that he was unable to access the document at Metro's website because it was in an inaccessible format. Mr. Sheehan requested a copy of the document in Word format. Mr. Blake thanked Mr. Sheehan for bringing the issue to the attention of ADAP, and added that the document will be provided to all members.

A comment was also made about 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 occasions bus operators refused to deploy the lift because of the obstruction. The Ombudsman stated that he would investigate and provide follow up.

Metrorail Elevator Cleanliness and Maintenance

In response to comment made at the September 2015 AAC meeting regarding no substantive changes in the cleanliness of elevators in the Metrorail system, Michael Valentine, Acting Superintendent, Office of Grounds Maintenance and Custodial Services (PLNT), discussed the issue. He stated that Metro recognizes this as a serious issue and is committed to resolving it. PLNT staff is available from 6:30 am to 11:30 pm Monday through Friday, and from 7:00 am to 11:30 pm on weekends. The schedule of the team does not always match the system hours of operation, leaving up to two-hour gaps of service cleaning at times.

To address this issue, Metro has a small custodial emergency response team that responds to safety related issues in the system. Mr. Valentine stated that this team operates outside the normal hours (11:30 am - 2:30 pm); is stationed at Metro Center; and can be made available upon request from the station manager for cleanliness issues in the elevators during the gaps. In the April 2014 minutes, the following rail stations were identified as having a high number of incidents on elevators outside the normal business hours: Takoma, Shady Grove, Gallery Place, DuPont Circle, and Bethesda. Mr. Valentine stated that the custodial emergency response team will pay close attention to the elevators in those stations. Metro also has a special project team that operates from 10 pm to 6:30 am that can also be dispatched to reported incidents to resolve cleanliness issues inside elevators.

Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that as a wheelchair user, the option to bypass or go around some of the waste and debris is limited. Gallery Place and Tenleytown-American University Metro stations are worse during the afternoon hours because of the high number of students using the stations. Mr. Valentine stated that he would ask the staff to focus on those elevators during that period.

The BRS expressed an interest in the notification process. Mr. Valentine stated that once a customer notifies the station manager, the manager should contact PLNT, and a team is dispatched to the location to address the issue. Customers can also report incidents by contacting Metro's Customer Relations at (202) 637-1328 or Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) at 202-962-2121.

Dr. Posner suggested that the behavior of some customers should be added to Metro's 'See Something Say Something...about Cleanliness' campaign. If customers were permitted to report the issue by pushing the button in the elevators, the incidents would be reported in a timely manner to station managers. The BRS agreed that station managers, especially at transfer stations, are extremely busy and not always available to address the issue right away. Additionally, in some stations, the elevators are quite a distance away from the kiosk, which is also a contributing factor that makes this a difficult issue to address. Mr. Valentine stated that he would keep that suggestion under consideration.

Ms. Mezile requested that the elevators at the U Street Cardoza station on the 13th and U Street side be added to the list. Mr. Valentine stated that the station will be added to the list. A comment from the public stated that urination in public is not only a problem in the elevators; it is also a problem outside of them as well.

Pamela Vanderburg, Assistant Chief, MTPD, and Earl Brown, Captain, MPTD, discussed enforcement in the Metrorail system. Captain Brown stated that MTPD has been working to address the issue. At stations near large homeless populations, Metro has seen a rise in this type of behavior. Metro stations officers at these locations to curb the illegal behavior, however, incidents where elevators are used as bathrooms are sporadic. In response to a question about cameras on the elevators, Captain Brown stated that Metro's elevators have cameras, and they are visible from the station manager kiosk. Customers caught in the act are issued a citation. In a follow up comment, Mr. Stephens expressed an interest in enforcement with high school students. Captain Brown stated that adolescents generally do not use elevators as bathrooms; customers who have been drinking tend to use the elevators as restrooms.

The BRS expressed an interest in the charge and penalty for this type of incident. Captain Brown stated that the charge is urination in public, and customers are given a citation with a \$50 fine. Assistant Chief Vanderburg stated when an officer is present and working in concert with the station manager this type of activity is

dramatically reduced. Mr. Crawford expressed an interest in whether the MTPD had the power to arrest in these types of incidents. Captain Brown stated that the activity has to be witnessed by a member of MTPD. Assistant Chief Vanderburg encouraged members to report non-emergency illegal activity in the system. Ms. Burger stressed that many customers riding the system are Deaf and cannot make the call, and further stressed the need for multiple types of communication. The Metro Text Tip program is design to provide two-way communications for non-emergency situations in the fixed route system. Customers can text non-emergency information to 696873 or use the letters *MYMTPD*. The BRS stated that one challenge is that Metro does not have good cellular coverage in the system.

Dr. Posner reiterated his suggestion that allowing customers to notify a station manager when an elevator is dirty may help address the issue more quickly. A comment from the public suggested that Metro place a sign on the elevator sharing the public restroom policy. Additionally, the customer suggested that Metro also place a port-o-potty at the street level to curb some of this type of activity. Captain Brown stated that Metro implemented a similar initiative at the Rhode Island Avenue station few years ago. This initiative was not as successful.

Dr. Miller stated that restrooms on the Silver Line are more visible to passengers. He expressed an interest in whether making bathrooms readily available to customers has reduced this type of activity in the elevators. Captain Brown stated that in Virginia, public intoxication laws are stricter and the behavior is highly frowned upon, so less of that type of activity is seen.

Mr. Stephens suggested that Metro add a camera with a monitor in the elevators. This will allow customers to see themselves in the act and remind them that they are being watched. He stated that this appears to be effective in retail stores. Captain Brown stated that Metro has a similar program on Metrobus, but not on Metrorail.

In a follow-up to comments about elevators at Gallery Place (7th and F Street), a customer stated that the elevators at that location only have access to the street and platform levels. At that entrance, customers use the elevators as well as the mini-mezzanine as a bathroom. Additionally, some stations at the mini-mezzanine and platform levels lack basic cleanliness. Many of them have stains that have been there for weeks, which says to customers no one is cleaning the system. Mr. Valentine stated that he will follow up, but added there is a schedule for regular cleaning of stations.

Assistant Chief Vanderburg requested that the AAC make a list of the stations and times that this illegal activity is occurring, and Metro will ensure these areas get some added coverage.

A comment from the public stated the transit system in Europe uses a paint to detect whether urination has occurred in an area. The way the paint works is that after it has been applied when urination is present, the surface changes colors. Mr. Valentine stated that he was familiar with the information and Metro is reviewing all its options, including technology to curb this type of activity.

In response to a question about staffing levels, Assistant Chief Vanderburg stated that MTPD has 490 sworn police officers and is approximately 48 officers short of a full company. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that Metro restore MTPD to full staff, so they would have more officers to address these behavior issues in the system. The BRS also recommended that this information be included in the Board report.

The BRS encouraged members and the public to use every means to report these issues. The BRS thanked PLNT and MTPD for their efforts to keep Metrorail stations clean and deter negative behavior in the system.

New Business

Dr. B. Moore Gwynn announced the winner of the 2015 Richard W. Hedding Accessible Transportation Award. The AAC voted to honor the Diamond Transportation. The Accessible Transportation Award is in honor of the AAC's first chairperson who led the cause of Metrorail Accessibility. The award honoree will be recognized at Metro's Accessibility Excellence Awards on November 18, 2015.

Old Business

Mr. Blake provided a brief update on the comment about the portable traffic sign blocking the pathway to the bus top at 7th & H Streets. The portable signage appears to be used for directions during big events in the area. He stated that when a bus operator stops at the bus stop, there is adequate space to lower the ramp and pick up a customer using a mobility device. At this time, there is no violation; however, Metro will continue to monitor the area and inform the bus operators of this issue.

Dr. Posner expressed an interest in elections for the AAC subcommittees. Mr. Blake stated the AAC is scheduled to discuss the issue during the November AAC meeting.

Dr. Staderman provided a brief update on the AAC Priority Seating Work Group. The group was made up of members of the AAC and RAC. He stated that at the last work group meeting, a draft report was put together but as to date, there has not been a response by the RAC. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that she will follow-up with the RAC for a response.

In a follow-up on fare policy made during public comment, Dr. Posner stressed the importance of starting up the Fare Policy Work Group. He suggested that that the new leadership discuss the issue at the quarterly meeting with the Board's Executive Committee. Dr. Posner also suggested that the issue of conditional eligibility should be included in the discussion on fare policy. He also recommended that each member discuss these issues with their respective jurisdiction. It is important to establish these relationships now, especially since the Board has new members. Dr. Staderman stated that they need to know that the AAC is a resource that is available to them.

In follow up to Dr. Posner's comments on conditional eligibility, Mr. Blake stated that AAC members received a copy of the MetroAccess Sustainability study. The presentation before the Board's Customer Service Committee was postponed until next month, and staff plans to discuss the study with the AAC, therefore a vote by the committee could wait. In response to a question about the presenting to the MetroAccess Subcommittee, Mr. Blake stated that there will be a similar discussion at that meeting. Dr. Posner stated that the topic was already presented to the Board by the Chief Financial Officer. He added that the AAC is not in favor of the elimination of the Free Ride Benefit, however the issue was presented as though the AAC had already approved the study and its recommendations. Dr. Posner suggested that members comment on the issue immediately and add it to the Board report. Mr. Sheehan stated that the AAC is in favor of the current MetroAccess fare policy that includes the Free Ride Program and any reduction to current system would not incentivize customers to move from MetroAccess to fixed route. Upon motion, the AAC added Mr. Sheehan's comment to the Board report.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan