



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: October 10, 2017

In attendance: Edward McEntee (Chair), Tino Calabia (Vice-Chair), Herbert Treger (2nd Vice-Chair), Hazell Brooks, Charlie Crawford, Steven Kaffen, Phillippa Mezile, Mary Kay McMahon, Anthony Oberg, Randall Pope, Denise Rush, and Franklin Torres.

Call to Order

Chair McEntee called the October 10, 2017 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the October 10, 2017 meeting agenda.

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

Ombudsman's Report

David Shaffer, ADA Ombudsman, provided feedback on issues raised during the September 2017 meeting. A customer stated that during single tracking on the Orange, Blue, Silver, and Red lines trains, the Passenger Information Display Systems (PIDS) have been displaying blank screens with no information. Mr. Shaffer stated that the data stream that connects to the PIDS was being updated. The system is now operating properly, and information is being displayed on the PIDS.

Mr. Shaffer also provided an update on a comment made about the announcements on the 7000 series railcars. A customer stated that the line color and train destination announcements were being cut off by the door closing announcement. The Ombudsman stated that the issue appeared to occur during the weekends or late in the evening when ridership is low. The Office of Rail Transportation (RTRA) has instructed all train operators to wait until the announcement has completed before activating the door closing announcement. Additionally, on the 7000 series, train operators will provide door open announcements manually. RTRA will also have Rail supervisors monitoring both issues.

In a follow-up, Steven Kaffen expressed an interest in whether the order of the announcements on the 7000 series railcars was still an issue. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, stated that the issue was raised and addressed by RTRA. RTRA stated that the order of the announcements is a safety issue.

Mr. Kaffen also expressed an interest in whether the announcement that requested customers to move toward the center of the railcar was addressed by RTRA. Mr. Blake stated that he was not aware of that issue being raised by the Committee.

Franklin Torres stated that access to announcements and information is very important to the Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing, and Deaf-Blind community. He suggested Metro flash the lights once for door opening and twice to let customers know that the doors are closing.

Mary Kay McMahon stated that the headways on her local bus in the morning appeared to be excessively long. She stated that she is very close to the beginning of the route and requested that the issue be investigated. The Ombudsman stated that he would obtain more information from the member and investigate the issue.

Hazell Brooks stated that the new changes on the W14 (Bock Road) have made the trip in each direction longer. Additionally, she stated that the service at the Southern Avenue Metrorail station was poor.

Mr. Kaffen made a comment on behalf of his neighbors. The customer stated that the music in the station was a safety issue and made it difficult to hear important information, such as the station and train announcements. Additionally, Metro signage prohibits music in the station. Mr. Blake stated that through the public announcement system, Metro is playing music in two stations the system to improve the customer experience.

Mr. Shaffer stated that the London transit system plays classical music, and research has shown that the music can significantly reduce crime.

Ms. Brooks stated that she associated a pleasant experience on public transportation with service that operates properly, (i.e. bus/rail on time, announcements that can be heard, etc.), not music in the station.

Philippa Mezile expressed an interest in the stations with music. Mr. Blake stated that the music is being piloted in the Gallery Place and Judiciary Square stations.

Mr. Shaffer stated that he would investigate all the issues and provide feedback.

Public Comment

No one present at the meeting requested to speak for public comment.

Shuttle Services for Planned Elevator Outages

Mr. Blake stated that Metro plans to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for shuttle services for planned elevator outages. Currently, when an elevator is out-of-service,

Metro uses Metrobus to shuttle customers to the next station on the same line. This approach is no longer the most efficient use of Metrobus resources. To address the issue, Metro wants to use the services of one or more companies with smaller wheelchair-accessible vehicles. The smaller vehicles would offer Metro's shuttle service more flexibility while freeing up Metrobus vehicles for the needs of core bus service. When there is an outage, station managers will still be available to assist and provide additional information on alternate routes. Mr. Blake stated that the type of vehicle used for the shuttle will change, but not the customer experience. Mr. Blake encouraged the AAC to read the RFP if/when it is released, and provide comments.

Herbert Treger expressed an interest in how the third-party shuttle service will be identified. Most stations have several bus lines that come to the station, and it may be confusing as to which bus or vehicle is the shuttle service. Mr. Blake stated that the signage on the shuttle will identify Metro shuttle on the front and side of the vehicles.

Additionally, Mr. Treger expressed an interest in the drop-off and pick-up locations of the shuttle service. Generally, the shuttle services for condos and hotel's drop-off or pick-up on one side of the station while buses go to another. Mr. Blake stated that the customers can connect to a shuttle service on the same side as Metrobuses at those stations.

In follow up Anthony Oberg expressed an interest in whether the shuttle will be on standby or will customers have to call ahead. Customers can still request shuttle service from station managers prior to arriving at the station where there is an elevator outage or call Metro's Bus Operations Control Center at (202)962-1825 to arrange for a shuttle.

Franklin Torres expressed an interest in how Metro was communicating the elevator outages to customers. Mr. Blake stated that information about outages is available on Metro's website, announcements in stations, information on PIDS, distributed electronically via e-Alerts, and announcements are made by train operators.

Escalator and Elevator Performance and Maintenance

As a follow-up to comments made at the September 11, 2017 meeting, the BRS discussed Metro's Elevator and Escalator Performance. Mitchell Nici, Acting General Superintendent, Office of Elevator and Escalators (ELES), provided an overview of Metro's elevator and escalator service. He stated that there are 618 escalators and 318 elevators in the Metro system. Of that number, 278 elevators are used by customers in the stations. The remaining elevators are for

internal use only. ELES has 285 employees who perform all the service and maintenance on elevators and escalators as well as support the jurisdictional safety inspections.

Mr. Nici stated that the rehabilitation and replacement of elevators and escalators are performed by contractors. Metro plans to replace the 100 worst elevators in the system. The work on the 100 elevators is scheduled to be completed by the year 2024. Additionally, Metro has a team of engineers who support the rehabilitation and maintenance projects along with internal dispatchers and a remote monitoring system. The function of the remote monitoring system is to identify outages before they are reported.

Mr. Nici introduced Dan White, Assistant General Superintendent, ELES, who oversees the maintenance for the elevators and escalators throughout the system. Mr. White stated that Metro is committed to maintaining maximum reliability and has set goals of 97.5% availability of all elevators, which means that at any snapshot in time, Metro's goal is to ensure that 97.5% of the elevators and 93.5% for escalators are available for customers to use the system. ELES is meeting its goal with elevators and escalator performance for the system.

Mr. Treger expressed an interest in the remote monitoring system. Mr. Nici stated that through technology, the elevators and escalators in the system send messages about performance to the monitoring system. When an out-of-service issue arises about one of the elevators or escalators in the system, the technician has information to validate the issue, which includes working with the Station Manager to restart the systems before the elevator or escalator is taken out of service.

Ms. Brook expressed an interest in the length of the process from monitoring an outage to validation of failure. Mr. Nici stated that the process of monitoring to validating an issue occurs rather quickly. When an outage occurs, Metro re-prioritizes issues to repair the outage. The remote monitoring system is staffed by one person during the week. Metro is working on a plan to have the elevator and escalator system monitored on the weekends. Mr. White stated that means the system will be monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In follow up, Ms. Brook expressed an interest in whether the repairs performed on the weekend are more cost-efficient for the system. Mr. Nici stated Metro performs preventative maintenance on the escalators at night to lessen the impact on customers and not the budget. The repair technicians are on duty round the clock.

Mr. Treger expressed an interest in whether the monitoring system can notify the technician of the outage via a hand-held device, especially on the weekends. Mr. Nici stated that when an outage is verified, a work order is generated, and the work order is dispatched to all supervisors. On the weekends, the notification and verification of outages are conducted through Metro's Operations Control center.

Mr. McEntee stated that ELES performance numbers are excellent. He expressed an interest in whether vandalism was an issue for the system. Mr. Nici stated that vandalism is at its highest during the summer months. Mr. White stated that Metro replaces a great deal of vision panels and side glass in the elevators. Most recently, there has been an issue at the Rockville station. Metro's Transit Police are addressing the issue.

Mr. Oberg expressed an interest in whether Metro had any plans to improve access to the elevators in the system. For example, the locations of the elevators at L'Enfant Plaza are not as conducive as the locations of elevators at Gallery Place or Metro Center. Mr. Blake stated that Metro has reviewed the possibility of additional elevators at the L'Enfant Plaza. Some of the challenges to this have been cost and property access. The reason some of the elevators are not in a "logical" place is that they were placed in the system after the system was built. Metro is consistently reviewing ways to improve.

Mr. Oberg also expressed an interest in the process for the public to provide input on elevators. Mr. Nici stated that customers can communicate issues through Metro's Office of Customer Service and the ADA Ombudsman's Office. Mr. White stated that customers can also communicate via social media and with the station manager.

The BRS thanked ELES for an insightful discussion on elevator and escalator system.

Emergency Exercise Reflections – White Flint Station

The BRS discussed the emergency exercise that occurred in August 2017 at the White Flint Metrorail station.

Mr. Calabria stated that it was his first time and there was a bit of confusion on what to expect in the exercise. Although he did not play the role of an injured passenger in the exercise, he viewed the lack of disregard by the first responders as disappointing.

Ms. Brooks stated in her experience the exercise appeared to be disorganized. The exercise did not start on time. The exercises included a scenario of smoke and explosion in the system. The first responder appeared not to take the exercise seriously. Additionally, the first responders lacked compassion and did not comfort the injured people in this real-life scenario. In a real-life situation, nobody wants to feel as if their needs are not being met. Ms. Brook stated that she rode the Metro Emergency Tunnel Evacuation Carts (ETECs) cart to the platform.

Mr. McEntee stated that issue of communicating the issues in the scenario has been discussed by the Committee.

Mr. Calabria stated that with the recent tragedy in the news it is important to recognize that first responders do respond and bystanders do help in emergency situations. That's real-life. In this exercise, the injured were all in one railcar, and the first responders appeared to disregard them all. Additionally, Mr. Calabria stated that the exercise included a trainer who served as a passenger in the exercise. The trainer was disappointed over the outcome of the exercise.

Mr. Oberg expressed an interest in whether a person with a mobility device participated in the exercise and was the process of evacuating a customer in a mobility device during an emergency took place. Mr. Blake stated customers who use mobility devices likely will be separated from their device during an emergency evacuation, they will be evacuated from the system via the ETEC, a stair-chair, stretcher, or Sked, and will have assistance as long as the customer is in need of assistance. The customer will be reconnected with their mobility device at a later time. The emergency exercise events are open to the public; however, other members of the AAC did not participate.

Ms. Rush stated that she has participated in several exercises and each exercise is different. She stated that the exercise allows for all ambulatory customers to walk first, but anyone needing assistance is evacuated last.

Mr. Oberg stated that he has experience with fire fighters because his dad is a firefighter. He stated that firefighters have a plan of protection in place, and all fire departments should have a plan. It should not matter whether the scenario was simulated, everyone should operate as if the exercise is a real-life situation.

B. Moore Gwynn stated that it is anticipated that there will be another emergency exercise in Virginia. As soon as the information is available, it will be forwarded to the members.

The BRS requested that Metro's Office of Emergency Management be invited to the next meeting prior to the exercise.

Administrative Process

Dr. Moore Gwynn gave a brief update on the AAC elections, BRS appointments, Hedding Award, and Metro's Accessibility Excellence Awards ceremony.

The AAC has elected new leadership. The winners of the election for the AAC leadership positions are as follows: Phil Posner, Chair; Ms. Rush, Vice-Chair; and Elver Ariza-Silva, 2nd Vice-Chair. The new leadership team will serve a two-year term effective October 1, 2017.

Additionally, at the last AAC meeting, appointments to the BRS and MAS were confirmed. The BRS appointed Ed McEntee, Chair; Tino Calabia, Vice-Chair; and Herbert Treger, 2nd Vice-Chair. Paul Semfortl and Ms. Rush were reappointed as Chair and Vice-Chair of the MetroAccess Subcommittee respectively. The Subcommittee appointments were also effective October 1, 2017.

Dr. Moore Gwynn announced the results of the 2017 Richard W. Hedding Accessible Transportation Award. This year, the nominees were: The Arc of Northern Virginia, Catherine Hudgins, Denise Rush and the National Federation for the Blind - DC Chapter and there is a tie between two nominations. The BRS expressed an interest in allowing members who had not voted an opportunity to vote to break the tie. Mr. Blake stated that the voting period will open again for one day to allow those members who did not vote a chance to vote.

Mr. Calabia suggested that Metro should consider recognizing the reporters who often write about the issues of the disability community. Recognizing them may encourage others to document the issues within the community as well as honor those who do.

New Business

Ms. Rush stated that she received a request from a constituent about the notification for the last train. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that the information for the last train is located in each station on the station manager's kiosk. The information is also on the website. The Ombudsman stated that the information was also on the trip planner.

Old Business

Mr. Calabia provided follow-up on a comment made at the September 11, 2017, BRS meeting. The customer requested the AAC's assistance with a bus stop at the intersection of MD Route 198 and New Hampshire Avenue near the Woodland Horse Center. Many members suggested that the customer take up the issue with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). MCDOT owns the right-of-way of the roads in that area. The customer did follow up with MCDOT, but unfortunately the issue will be moot because the horse riding center is closing at the end of this year. The customer was grateful for the direction and assistance of the AAC.

Mr. Treger expressed an interest in feedback on the leveling of the platforms at Braddock Road and Rhode Island Avenue Stations. Mr. Blake stated that Metro has added platform signage to indicate the optimal boarding areas on the bumpy tiles. The information is on the website and train operators are making the announcements in the area.

Dr. Moore Gwynn gave an update on the 2017 AAC Travel Initiative. She stated that the AAC embarked on this initiative to highlight the experience of disability community members traveling in the system. The following Board members expressed an interest Christian Dorsey (Arlington), Catherine Hudgins (Fairfax), and Kathryn Porter (Montgomery County). The AAC trips were submitted, and thus far, the Board member from Arlington has confirmed. It is anticipated that the other members will also confirm. AAC members will receive an update.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:23 p.m.