



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: September 12, 2016

In attendance: Brian Miller (Chair), Brianne Burger, Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford; Larry Haile, Steven Kaffen, Suzanne Kamel, Marisa Laios, Phillippa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, Randall Pope, Dr. Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Denise Rush, Patrick Sheehan and Will Schell.

Call to Order

Chair Miller called the September 12, 2016 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the September 12, 2016 meeting agenda.

The BRS approved the July 18, 2016 meeting minutes as written.

Ombudsman's Report

Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), provided an update on a comment made at the July 2016 AAC meeting regarding Metro's plans to reduce the size of its workforce and the impact that decision may have on the Department of Access Services (ACCS). Mr. Blake stated that Metro has streamlined its workforce and ADAP was impacted by the reduction. The ADA Ombudsman position will no longer be a full-time staff member position. However, the functions will continue to be fulfilled. Mr. Blake then announced that David Shaffer, Access Policy Officer, is serving as Metro's official ADA Ombudsman.

Mr. Blake stated that Mr. Shaffer is familiar with the role of the Ombudsman because he has worked with Metro's long-time ADA Ombudsman Antonio Stephens. Mr. Shaffer will have all of the resources necessary to address customer concerns or complaints related to accessibility on Metro's fixed route and paratransit services.

Mr. Blake added that Mr. Stephens' former position also included the role of Metro's ADA Appeal Officer. Mr. Blake stated that he has been serving in that role since the retirement of Mr. Stephens, and will continue to do so for the near future.

Mr. Shaffer opened by stating that he looks forward to working with the committee. He added that by way of his regular attendance at AAC meetings, he is fully aware of the issues of interests to committee members. Mr. Shaffer stated that he can personally relate some of the experiences customers with disabilities have using the fixed route system because he is legally blind, hearing impaired, and has some mobility issues.

Mr. Shaffer stated that he would like to bring a more proactive approach to the role of Ombudsman. In August, he provided training to Metro's Office of Customer Service (CSVC) to provide them guidance on recognizing complaints, compliments and comments that were related to accessibility on Metrobus or Metrorail. When a customer contacts CSVC, in addition to documenting that information, there is a box that should be checked identifying the complaint, compliment or comment as an ADA issue. In the past, it had not been used a lot; however, since the training proper labeling of information has improved. The information will be used to identify possible trends and address them immediately.

Dr. Posner made a comment about Metro's proposal to change the hours of service on Metrorail. He stated that there are four different scenarios under review. He expressed an interest in a Title VI Equity Analysis, stating that the minority pool that this change would impact is very small and whether the calculations would be adjusted to focus on the smaller subset (these are customers who generally ride the system after midnight or before 7 a.m.). Additionally, Dr. Posner expressed an interest in the impact the proposal to change the hours of service on Metrorail would have on MetroAccess fares. During the Customer Service, Operations and Security Subcommittee meeting, there was no discussion about the role Metrobus would play. Dr. Posner suggested that Metro move to twice the bus fare for calculating MetroAccess fares. Mr. Shaffer stated that he would share Dr. Posner's question with MetroAccess management for review.

Mr. Haile expressed an interest in a quantitative process being used to track trends of identified accessibility issues. Mr. Haile also expressed an interest in whether Metro would do any outreach to the public about how to make a complaint, compliment, or other comment properly, so that customers know that the matter is being addressed as an ADA matter. Mr. Shaffer stated that information on how to make a complaint, compliment or other comment is prominently displayed on Metro's website. He stated that he is open to any ideas on how best to approach additional customer outreach on this issue.

In a follow-up to Dr. Posner's comments about Metro's proposal to change the hours of service, Ms. Ray stated that it is critical that customers with disabilities use all methods available to make comments. The Metro public participation plan appears to have only one public hearing scheduled about the proposed change. She stated that the change in hours would be a disaster for people with disabilities who rely totally on fixed route for all of their transportation.

Dr. Posner stated that Metro's timeline states that the public comment period will be from October 1-24, 2016, with a public hearing occurring the week of October 17. He

expressed an interest in whether the Compact allows for just one public hearing. Mr. Shaffer stated that he would follow-up on Dr. Posner's question, and provide feedback to the AAC.

Ms. Ray stated that proper and clear announcements are an issue that has been trending in the wrong direction for a very long time and without any meaningful resolution. One of the issues with CSVC is that a customer can only make a complaint by phone during business hours. She suggested that customers who ride the system should have the ability to make a complaint, compliment or comment by phone during the system's hours of operation, not just business hours.

Dr. Miller added that the automated announcements on Metro's customer information line, 202-637-7000, does not provide clear instruction on how to make a complaint, compliment, or comment, nor that the information was received. He stated that having access to the tools that will allow for real-time complaint, compliment or comment to be made will create more actionable feedback by customers for Metro.

Upon motion, the BRS recommended that Metro explore the feasibility of modifying survey collecting functionality by phone through an instrument that identifies ADA-related issues. The BRS also recommended that CSVC direct customers to the survey or other tools available for submitting a complaint, compliment or comment specifically related to accessibility issues.

Mr. Haile stated that members need to remember that any information should be available in a variety of formats. Ms. Burger stated that she likes the idea of the survey; however, customers need to know how to make a complaint in the first place.

Mr. Crawford expressed an interest in whether the trends and information from CSVC would be summarized in a report, adding that such information would help Metro prioritize the issue and resources. Mr. Shaffer stated it was a good idea that he will keep under consideration. In follow-up, Mr. Haile stated that the CSVC issues should be tracked regularly, so that the data can be compared on a quarterly basis. This will allow staff to understand the trends as it relates to accessibility.

Ms. Rush stated that she attended the Board's subcommittee meeting. There are four different options in the proposal to change the hours of service on Metrorail. Metro needs eight straight hours to perform basic maintenance functions on a section of track. Therefore, the change in hours Metro proposed will be permanent. She encouraged AAC members and the disability community at large to let their voices be heard on this issue at the upcoming board meeting, Thursday, September 22; at the public hearing in

October, and by any other means Metro allows for comments because of the impact on MetroAccess customers and those using Metrobus. Many members agreed that a permanent change in hours of service is a serious issue because of the ripple effect on other services.

Metro Wi-Fi Network Pilot Program

Fred Candelaria, Deputy Chief, Network Communications, discussed Metro's Station Public Wi-Fi Pilot program. Within the Momentum Plan – "Metro's Vision for the Future," there was funding for Metro to install Wi-Fi services for its own operational use at every station. He stated that this project is currently underway and is scheduled for completion by the end of the year.

To add value to the customer experience, it was determined that Wi-Fi services should also be made available to customers. In the Wi-Fi pilot, service will be available at the following stations: Union Station, Judiciary Square, Gallery Place, Metro Center, Archives, and L'Enfant Plaza. This service would give customers the ability to access the internet without incurring any cellular charges from their provider. Dr. Posner expressed an interest in which areas of the station the Wi-Fi service is available. Mr. Candelaria stated the Wi-Fi service is available for customers on the platform and mezzanine levels. The Wi-Fi service dwindles near the escalators leaving the station. In response to a question about how the stations were selected for the pilot, Mr. Candelaria stated that the stations were strategically chosen based on proximity to the downtown core; levels of passenger traffic; and station configuration.

The Wi-Fi service features a landing page with six icon images that include Metro Transit Police and Customer Service. In response to a question about the Next Train icon, Mr. Candelaria stated that the information displays minutes to the next train, the train identification number, and the number of cars; the same information that is displayed on the Passenger Information Display Systems. He stated that service for the Wi-Fi pilot program is free and is a shared service, similar to Wi-Fi service offered in a neighborhood coffee shop. Connectivity and support for this Wi-Fi service is not guaranteed.

Mr. Candelaria stated that the Wi-Fi service was developed in-house by Metro engineers, but has not yet gone through the proper 508 compliance review. He stated that the service had one primary initial intent, and that is to test customer interest. However, if there significant customer interest, Metro engineers will ensure that the end product is in compliance with the ADA. He encouraged customers to provide feedback via the landing page or "Amplify," which will be included in the business case for

consideration by Metro leadership. Mr. Crawford stated that any program or service developed by Metro should not be available for customer use without being ADA compliant. He stated that the Wi-Fi service should be available for all customers including those with disabilities. All members agreed.

Dr. Miller expressed an interest in the name of the network. Mr. Candelaria stated customer interested in using the service should find MetroInfo among the available networks.

Ms. Kamel expressed an interest in whether the Wi-Fi service would be available between stations. She stated that this information would be helpful when the announcements are inaudible for interruptions in service while customers are on the train. Mr. Candelaria stated that there were technical limitations to providing Wi-Fi service between stations because the signals have limited range. Additionally, the cost of implementing and maintaining the service is a factor. Ms. Kamel suggested that feedback page should allow customers to make comment in addition to a phone call. This will allow for real-time feedback.

In a follow-up to Ms. Kamel's point about service between stations, Ms. Burger stated that her phone always works on the platform. Service is needed between stations. She suggested that Metro should partner with cellular companies to provide this connectivity. This would really add value to the customer experience and increase ridership. Additionally, there are already several applications tracking Metrorail and Metrobus. Having one more would not make a difference, but not having the service between stations is a missed opportunity by Metro.

Mr. Schell stated that he uses the service for Metrorail information and see the potential in the service, however, he stated he was apprehensive about an open Wi-Fi in a crowded station because of the safety and security concerns. Mr. Candelaria reiterated his comments about the Wi-Fi being a shared service, similar to those offered in a neighborhood coffee shop. This information is also outlined in the terms and conditions of the service. Mr. Schell also expressed an interest in Metro providing this Wi-Fi service with outside services that provide transportation information.

Mr. Kaffen stated that the service being provided should be useful. He stated that the icon that connects to Customer Service would be helpful because it can offer real-time feedback. The most effective piece of information would be to give customers information as they are entering the system, so they can determine whether to wait for

the train or catch a bus. Mr. Kaffen stated that he agrees with Mr. Schell about the personal safety concerns.

Mr. Candelaria stated that he appreciated the feedback and will take all the comments back to the engineers. The BRS thanked Mr. Candelaria for the presentation. The BRS recommended that Metro ensure that any Wi-Fi service implemented in the system be fully ADA compliant.

7000-Series Railcar Between-Car Barrier Detectability Test

Mr. Blake stated that on August 18, Metro conducted a safety test of the detectability of the between-car barriers on a 7000-series train. The test involved six people who are blind/low vision, including several members of the AAC. The 7000-series rail cars have two different types of between-car barriers: (1) Metro's traditional link chain barrier; and (2) a clamshell style barrier made rubber, but without a connection between the two cars. Both between-car barriers are accessible and complaint with the ADA and Metro has found this dual barrier design to be safe and effective for all customers, including those who are blind or low vision. However, Metro, along with the Federal Transit Administration, has continued to evaluate the design.

The test took place at the Greenbelt Metro station. Mr. Blake stated that the participants took part in two tests: (1) demonstrate their ability to navigate from the station entrance to the platform and onto a 7000-series train; and (2) participants were randomly place on the platform facing the train to navigate to the edge of the platform, and provide feedback on what they detected, and then asked to navigate onto the Metrorail car. He stated that all participants were able to complete each test successfully, and safely enter the train.

Mr. Haile stated that he participated in the between-car barriers test on the 7000-series train. He added the point that resonated with him most about the test was the importance of travel training, and orientation and mobility (O&M) training for public transportation. Each participant was skilled and understood the techniques to help them navigate the system. To increase ridership and encourage more people with disabilities to the fixed route system, Metro should encourage travel training. Mr. Blake agreed, and added that Metro strongly encourages travel training. He stated that Metro often conducts marketing campaigns to increase interest in the free travel training Metro offers.

Dr. Frederick Krimgold, National Capitol Citizens with Low Vision, stated that he also participated in the test. He stated that he appreciated the opportunity to review the

between-car barrier and provide feedback. He considers such an opportunity to be a very positive step by Metro for all customers, but especially those with disabilities. Dr. Krimgold stated that agrees with Mr. Haile's comments about travel training, and how such training is key to safety.

Dr. Miller expressed an interest in whether there was an appreciable difference between the types of barriers. Mr. Haile stated that O&M training does not point him to the barriers, but to determine whether there is floor, which would indicate where a train door is located. Dr. Krimgold stated that he did find a difference. In his opinion the traditional link chain barriers were more difficult to detect than the clamshell style barriers. Additionally, the space between the traditional link chains poses more of a safety risk for a person who may be of short stature.

In regards to the clamshell style barriers, Dr. Krimgold suggested that Metro apply a reflective material to them to make them more easily identifiable and readily distinguishes them from another type of opening. Additionally, Dr. Krimgold stated that the length of the clamshell style barriers should be increased (position setting high and low), so a white cane user will more easily detect them. Because there is a space between the clamshell style barriers, Dr. Krimgold suggested that the space between the barriers be decreased to the greatest extent feasible.

Mr. Sheehan stated that the Rider's Advisory Council (RAC) has a survey regarding the 7000-series rail car, and added that the RAC is interested in input from AAC members and the disability community at-large. Mr. Sheehan stated that he would share the link with other members. Dr. Posner encouraged members to register for Amplify and complete the survey on the 7000-series.

Public Comment

Ms. Ray made a comment about SafeTrack. She stated that on the Orange line service will be single tracked between Vienna and West Falls Church Metrorail stations. Metro will operate this schedule for more than 30 days. This will have a significant impact on customers including those with disabilities in Northern Virginia.

Old Business

Upon agreement, the subcommittee moved the discussion of the BRS elections and the update on white boards to the next BRS meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.