



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
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BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: June 9, 2014

In attendance: Dr. William Staderman (Vice-Chair), Heidi Case (2nd Vice-Chair), George Aguehoude, Elver Ariza-Silva, Darrell Drake, Chanelle Houston, Regina Lee, Mary Jane Owen, Dr. Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Patrick Sheehan, and Anthony Stephens.

Call to Order

Vice-Chair Staderman called the June 9, 2014 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the June 9, 2014 meeting agenda. The BRS approved the May 12, 2014 meeting minutes.

Ombudsman Report

Antonio Stephens, ADA Ombudsman, provided an update on an item from the May 2014 meeting. He stated that the language for the Metrobus securement policy was being updated in Metro's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and a "notice to operators" (NTO) of Metrobus will be distributed. Anne Carey, Director, Bus Training, is scheduled to attend the July 14, 2014 BRS meeting to provide a full update.

Public Comment

A comment was made about Metro's proposed signage in the rail system. Metro is moving toward using cardinal direction indications on Metrorail and away from using end stations. The customer stated that the current directional signage is useful for customers who are directional challenged. The customer encouraged Metro not to change the signage. Mr. Stephens stated that a presentation on the topic is scheduled for today's meeting and he will forward the customer's comments to the presenter.

A comment was made about escalators in the Metrorail system. When one escalator is not working and the other escalator is going in the upward direction and there is no down escalator, it makes it difficult for customers that use canes and crutches to access the station. Metro should re-examine its policy to always have an escalator moving in the upward and downward directions. This would make easier for the riding public. Mr. Stephens stated that he would share the comments with Metro's Office of Elevator Escalator (ELES) and Rail Transportation (RTRA).

A comment was made about parked cars in the bus lane near the Columbia Road area. When a car is parked in the bus lane, it makes it difficult for the bus to pick-up or alight customers using mobility devices. Some AAC members reported having the same challenges in their neighborhoods. Heidi Case stated that she has even experienced this issue with a Metro vehicle. When she explained this to the driver of the vehicle, the

response she received was that they were allowed to park in a bus zone because "they're Metro". Mr. Stephens stated that this is a recurring issue across the District. He stated that the issue was high on the list of challenges for seniors at the DC Age-Friendly meetings he attends. One of the proposed solutions was to increase enforcement of no parking in bus zones. Vehicles parked in a bus zones should be ticketed.

A comment from the public related to vehicles parked in bus lanes, stated that Metro should contact the Community Officer in the Police Department in each jurisdiction and invite them to a meeting to discuss this issue further. Mr. Drake reported that in the neighborhood around the Ballston Metro station, law enforcement is very strict, so the public is aware not to park in the bus zones. Dr. Posner suggested that Metro provide a list of the areas where this type of activity occurs most. This information could be presented to Metro Transit Police (MTPD) to enforce. Mr. Aguehoude suggested that Metro add 'no parking in bus zone' signage to all its bus stops. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), agreed that one of the keys to resolving this issue is enforcement by the local law enforcement. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that Metro invite MTPD to meetings to further discuss this issue of enforcement.

A comment was made about the behavior of Metrobus Operators. Many Bus Operators are rude and act in an unprofessional manner. Mr. Stephens encouraged customers to contact Metro's Customer Service at (202) 637-1328 and submit a complaint when issues arise. Customers should be prepared to provide the date, time, bus number, direction of the bus, and a brief comment about the incident. Mr. Stephens stated that he would follow-up with the customer after the meeting.

A comment was also made about cleanliness of rail stations. Mr. Stephens encouraged the public to contact Metro's Customer Service and submit a complaint. Additionally, customers can report any issue to the Station Managers.

Ms. Case made a comment about the construction around the escalators in the rail station. She stated that the issue was brought to her attention at a local disability meeting. Metro uses temporary wooden barriers to block off work areas, and often the barriers do not leave sufficient space for customers who use mobility devices to move freely on the platform. Ms. Case stated that from a previous presentation, it was noted that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) only requires 5 feet from the platform, but added that she believes this is a safety issue. Mr. Stephens stated that he would follow-up with her directly and provide feedback at the next meeting.

Anthony Stephens commented that the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) was pleased to learn that truncated domes will be installed at the Braddock Road station. He stated that over 25 employees and hundreds of people with visual disabilities use that station daily to access services at NFB. Mr. Stephens also stated that recently some guide dogs have relieved themselves at the entrance of the Pentagon rail station. Some of his colleagues who also use guide dogs are concerned about backlash from the recent incidents. He asked if Metro has a policy to let customers know that their service animal should be relieved prior to the entrance of the station. The Ombudsman stated that he would investigate and provide feedback.

New Electronic Payment Program (Update)

Just prior to the June 2013 Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting, the AAC received a tour of the next generation of fare collection equipment at Metro. Thomas Randall, Director, New Electronic Payment Program (NEPP), provided an update on the subject. He stated that Metro is changing its fare collection system to keep up with public demands of having multiple ways to pay for services. The NEPP system will have a new look and feel. Input from the AAC included selecting the clamshell style over the swing gate; the increase number of payment targets on the accessible fare gate; more contrast on payment targets; and softer lights to limit the glare.

Metro will integrate the hardware and software on all services, which includes a new fare collection system for MetroAccess. Accenture is the company that will integrate the systems with new technology. Mr. Randall introduced Metro's partner on this project from Accenture, Mr. Jarret Wu. He also introduced Paul Eiben, Project Manager at LTK Consulting.

In addition to accepting cash, NEPP will have a new website and an expanded network of retailers for customers to add value or purchase other fare media. The BRS expressed an interest in the process to add money. Currently, when funds are added to a SmarTrip card, it takes several days before the funds are available. Mr. Randall stated that fare vending machines will not be part of the pilot, but they will be thoroughly tested before implementation. NEPP transactions will be completed in one step and funds will be available immediately.

A pilot program is scheduled to begin in January 2015 and run until June 2015. Mr. Randall stated that approximately 2,000 randomly selected customers will test the NEPP system at 10 mezzanines, on 50 buses, and at 2 parking facilities during the pilot phase. In response to a question about which mezzanines were selected for the pilot program, Mr. Randall stated that the pilot will occur at the following stations: Suitland;

Union Station South, Pentagon City, Farragut West, Shady Grove, Eisenhower Avenue, Ballston, Gallery Place East, Navy Yard East and Pentagon. Medical Center, Columbia Heights, DuPont Circle North and Bethesda were selected as alternate mezzanines for the pilot program. Mr. Randall stated that all systems will be thoroughly tested prior to system-wide implementation.

Mr. Randall stated that an accessible fare gate will be tested during the pilot. A comment from the public expressed an interest in the integration of student-school cards in the new system. Mr. Randall stated that he would follow-up and provide feedback.

The BRS thanked Mr. Randall for the update and recommended another update at the conclusion of the NEPP pilot study.

Open Discussion on Metro's Signage Program

Vice-Chair Staderman opened the meeting with a welcome to Carol Carter Walker, Chairman, Riders' Advisory Council (RAC), and all the RAC members. He thanked the RAC for collaborating on this topic that impacts all riders in the system. Ms. Carter Walker stated that the RAC was pleased to have this opportunity to collaborate with the AAC, and she introduced the following RAC members: Katherine Kortum, Karen Lynch, Lorraine Silva, Deborah Titus and Daniel Turk.

Michael McBride, Program Manager, Public Art and Environment Graphic Design, provided an overview of the proposed signage program for Metrorail. He stated that Metro is exploring a new signage program in four main areas: Station Ahead List signs; Station Name signs; Exterior Wayfinding signs; and System Use and Tactile signs in the rail system. This change is to better comply with the ADA and to accommodate a growing rail system. A review of Metro's existing signage program determined that the messages are not consistent system-wide; designs are not durable or affordable; the locations are not standard for customer viewing; and some signs are non-compliant with the ADA.

Mr. McBride stated that in the proposed design for Station Ahead List signs (SAL) the layout will be much more intuitive. The information on the signs will be uniform, consistent, complaint, and only have 14 layouts system-wide. Additionally, Metro's proposed signage will move to the use of cardinal directions as opposed to the names of end station on the signs. Mr. McBride stated that this will allow Metro to dramatically reduce the number of layouts of its signs. For example, he stated that Metro has 182 custom layouts for SAL signs throughout the rail system. In the proposal, there will only

be 14 layouts system-wide allowing a more balanced directional system. With this approach, customers would have the advantage of knowing all the stations on the line.

Dr. Posner stated that the use of cardinal directions would not be a customer-friendly move by Metro, adding that end station information is much more useful. Mr. McBride stated that Metro informally tested the concept using cardinal directions in the system and found the concept sustainable. In a follow-up question, Dr. Posner asked whether the concept of using cardinal directions included Rush Plus. Mr. McBride stated that there is a specific SAL for Rush Plus on the Yellow Line. He added that with the addition of the Silver Line, Rush Plus on the Blue and Orange Lines will disappear. Ms. Ray stated that she has concerns about this concept and its impact on people with visual disabilities. She stated that cardinal directions East/West works up and down the Route 66 corridor until Reston then it changes to North/West. This type of change will be challenge for all customers using the rail system. Mr. McBride stated that the proposed signage program is a simplified approach to traveling because there are no end stations names to remember. This is also more helpful for customers with cognitive disabilities. A comment from the low vision community stressed the importance of the disability community being more involved on this project because of its impact to all disabilities.

Ms. Carter Walker expressed an interest in customers who are directionally challenged, especially underground, and whether the concept had been tested on the masses for rudimentary understanding. Mr. McBride stated that the proposed changes are not just for the SAL, but there are other signs that accompany them and collectively the signage will improve the customers' traveling experience in the rail system. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that the proposed signage appears to be cleaner and easier to read. He stated that literacy is not an issue with this concept because people can be taught directions.

Dr. Posner stated that the Blue Line runs in a U shape with half of it running East/West and another half of the line running North/South. He stated that in this scenario, the cardinal directions concept does not hold up. Dr. Posner suggested that Metro add a helpful phrase like 'to downtown' in areas like Reagan National Airport where there is a large number of tourists instead of just using the cardinal directions. Mr. McBride noted that SAL signs are just one of the proposed changes. Metro is proposing changes to other signs in the stations that collectively will improve the traveling experience. An example of a companion sign would be the SAL sign above the advertising display case. These display cases are usually found on the center platform and will be backlit for easy viewing. To correspond with the proposed signage in the rail system, Metro will also add cardinal directions to the system map. Mr. Ariza-Silva suggested that

Metro include a system map in the advertising display case on each level of the platform. The information from the system map is helpful for all customers. Mr. McBride stated that he would add the information to the list of suggestions.

Mr. McBride stated that the proposal include changes to the station name, exterior way-finding and system use, and tactile signs. He stated that the proposed station name signs are more prominent; the direction of the train travel is demonstrated clearly; and includes exit information with accessible signage and the elevator symbols. With the existing station name signs, it required three separate signs to get the same information that is being proposed in one sign. Mr. McBride reiterated his point about accompanying signs in the proposal, stating that the SAL will be flanked by the station name, exterior way-finding and system use, and tactile signs throughout the platform.

Ms. Kortum expressed an interest in whether the Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) and display system on the rail cars display the color of the line along with cardinal direction instead of the existing information that displays the end station. Without the connecting information on the trains, the cardinal direction information will be too confusing. Mr. McBride stated that all systems in the rail will be coordinated with the proposed signage. Dr. Posner stated that Metro should rethink this approach especially in transfer stations where multiple lines can access a station platform. Additionally, the announcements on the trains are not consistent enough to prevent customers from getting onto the wrong train. Mr. McBride stated that the color of line will still be displayed along with the cardinal direction. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that the directional signage should be included for the elevators. This would provide information on where a customer will end up when using the elevator, like the street or platform level of the Green Line toward Branch Avenue. Dr. Posner stated that Metro should add accessible signage to all the signs, not just the SAL. Mr. McBride stated that the option will be explored.

Ms. Silva expressed an interest in rail lines that stop short a few stations before the end of the line. As an example, a Red Line train in the direction of Glenmont sometimes only goes as far as Silver Spring instead of the end of the line. Without the destination information, customer will be confused and station managers will have their hands full with taking complaints and giving directions. Ms. Kortum reiterated the question, requesting how Metro will distinguish between to eastbound trains going to Glenmont and the one going to Silver Spring. Mr. McBride stated that his office was in the process of working with Operations and Communications to ensure the proper information is given to customers traveling on those lines. Members of the AAC and RAC both agreed that the display on the rail cars still should provide the color of the line and the end station. Ms. Houston stated that the key to the cardinal direction working on the trains

especially when more than one line is serving a platform is clear and concise train announcements. Ms. Houston expressed an interest in the signage on mini-mezzanines. She stated that currently, signs have the end station. Mr. McBride stated the information will be same. Metro is removing the end station names and adding the cardinal direction. Mr. Drake says he agreed with many of the comments regarding the use of cardinal directions. It is important to ensure that train information is clear especially during rush hour.

Another accompanying sign to the design is the proposed exterior way-finding signs. Mr. McBride stated that in the proposed design, the names of the station on all the entrance pylons will be lowered to add space for the line color. Currently, each time a line is added to the system, Metro has to produce a new Station Entrance Pylon. The proposed design incorporates this feature, making the proposed design less costly for Metro.

The proposal also includes enhancements to the emergency pylons and mezzanine-level pylons. Mezzanine-level pylons are located at the entrance of the escalator and stairways. Mr. McBride stated that the current design with the end station name is too small and can be easily obscured by a customer. In the proposed design, the text size of the directional information is larger and is placed higher, making it easier for customers to view. In the proposed design of the emergency pylons, the words are more prominent. Mr. McBride stated that his office was working with ADAP to ensure proper messaging for the emergency pylon signs. All pylons will have accessible symbols, raised lettering, and Braille at the same height on pylons throughout the system.

Mr. McBride stated that the final area of proposed signage is the System Use and Tactile signs. He stated that these signs also have inconsistent messages. The proposed design enhances the messaging on Metro's Transit Police (MTPD) signs. These signs will also be available in Spanish and have the international sign for Police. Mr. McBride stated that the proposal also enhances the text size of Metro's prohibition signs located at station entrances; entrance pylons with operating hours; accessible entrance wayfinding signs; and the platform-level pylon service direction signs. He stated that the proposed signage is designed to carry Metro into the future.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in the height of the Braille and tactile signage. She stated that the ADA has reach requirements for mobility device users as well as requirements for viewing and reading in Braille. Mr. McBride stated that he is collaborating with ADAP on all accessible signage. Carol Lopez, Accessibility Design Review Manager, stated that the tactile signs will be at the required height as well as the visual characters. In

response to a question about contrast, Mr. McBride stated that in the proposed design, all the signage is Metro brown. Ms. Ray stated that as a visual impaired person, the Metro brown with white lettering is a good contrast.

Mr. McBride also stated in the proposed design, Metro will also incorporate more pictograms. The Nation's Capital is an international town, and this feature will also assist the international community in travel. The comments from the members and public were mixed. While some thought using international symbols were great, others thought Metro should be more concerned with the daily riding public's needs.

The next step in the process is to share the proposal with stakeholders. A cost analysis must also be conducted and approval from the Board must be obtained before an implementation strategy can be developed. AAC Chair Sheehan stated that the proposed signage is complex and confusing. He expressed an interest in the sum saved from this new signage. Ms. Case stated the proposed change means that many people with disabilities will have to be re-trained to travel in the system. Mr. McBride stated that with any change in the system, training will be necessary to ensure customers, and staff alike, understand the change.

Mr. McBride stated the goal is to have the proposal approved and implemented in Phase II of the Silver Line. Mr. Stephens expressed an interest in the time-frame for additional comments. He stated that the information was a lot to take in at one time. Mr. McBride stated additional comments should be made as soon as possible. In response to a question about the timetable for implementation, Mr. McBride stated that the project is FY2018 at the start of Phase II of the Silver Line.

A comment from the public expressed an interest in other transit properties that are using this type of signage. Mr. McBride stated that cardinal directions are widely used for traveling. Ms. Silva suggested that Metro improve signage around the exits especially at transfer stations where there can be multiple exits. Mr. McBride stated that supplemental signage will be included in the proposal.

Upon motion, the BRS voted that Metro should add the accessible and directional symbols to the all the signs immediately. The RAC members agreed. The BRS also recommended periodic updates on signage to ensure all the accessibility elements are being met.

Vice-Chair Staderman reminded members to send additional comments to the AAC Coordinator. Ms. Case thanked the RAC members for attending the meeting. She stated that the AAC looks forward to more opportunity where the two groups can collaborate.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan