



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: June 8, 2015

In attendance: William Staderman (Vice-Chair), Heidi Case (2nd Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Brianne Burger, Marisa Laios, Phillippa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Second Vice-Chair Case called the June 8, 2015 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the June 8, 2015 meeting agenda. The BRS approved the May 11, 2015 meeting minutes.

Public Comment

A comment was made about the automated stop announcements on the new 7000 series railcars. The customer stated that when railcars arrive into a station the system announces the name of the station, but does not perform door opening announcements. The customer suggested that Metro address this to make the announcements on the 7000 cars consistent with the announcements made on the older series railcars. Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, stated that staff will follow up on this issue and provide feedback.

Mary Kay McMahon made a comment about elevator doors at the Woodley Park station. She stated that the doors of the street elevator open and close too quickly. She stated that she reported the issue to a Station Manager, but the issue still has not been resolved. Mr. Blake stated that his office would follow up on this issue and provide feedback.

Phillippa Mezile made a comment about rail station signage. She stated that during a recent visit to the Foggy Bottom station she noticed that the lettering on the Station Ahead List signage on the walls was too small for customers to see. Dr. Posner stated that Foggy Bottom has lots of construction occurring, which can make it difficult to see the signage on the wall. Mr. Blake stated that his office would review the issue and provide feedback.

In a follow up comment on signage, Heidi Case stated that on some side-platforms Metro has placed poles for signage, which has reduced the space on the platforms. The poles make it difficult for wheelchair users to navigate the platform without being close to the edge. Mr. Blake stated that his office will provide an update on the progress to address this issue at the next meeting.

Brianne Burger made a comment about the Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) signs on station platforms. Whenever a train is delayed in the system Metro provides audio announcements. She stated that those same announcements need to be displayed on the PIDS to allow for deaf and hard-of-hearing customers to know what is happening. She added that cellular access in the system is limited in some areas and non-existent in others making eAlerts unreliable. She added that the deaf and hard-of-hearing community has waited far too long for this. Mr. Blake stated that Metro is working to improve the PIDS throughout the system. He added that Metro has installed new PIDS on all mini-mezzanines, and those PIDS consistently scroll information about elevator outages and train delays. New and improved platform PIDS are being planned.

Dr. Posner stated that he has been in the rail system when delays were announced on the PIDS, and he's been there when there were no delays displayed on the PIDS, but a eAlert is issued. Dr. Posner stated that this may be a personnel issue, and that Metro may not have enough staff to address this issue on a regular basis. He added that during times when customers are rushing to get to a train, they are unlikely to be paying attention to the Kiosk Information Display Systems (KIDS) located on the Station Manager kiosk. He suggested that Metro consider adding the large PIDS that display information near escalators, as some currently are at some stations on the Orange Line. This would allow customers to read the information before they reach the platform.

Ms. Case stated that she noticed Metro is requiring MetroAccess customers to use the accessible fare gates in the rail system. She views this as a step in the right direction. Antonio Stephens, ADA Ombudsman, stated that, in an effort to reduce fare evasion, Metro has increased its enforcement in the system. All customers will be asked to use the fare gate to enter and exit the system. Officers are stationed throughout the system to address this issue and maintain safety.

Denise Rush expressed an interest in Metro's purchase of new 7000 series railcars. Dr. Posner stated that during the last Board Finance Committee meeting the topic was discussed and Metro plans to invest in more new railcars to replace all the 1000 and 4000 series cars.

Ms. Rush also expressed an interest in how Metro determines the fastest route for MetroAccess trips. MetroAccess customers constantly complain about the unpredictable cost of MetroAccess fares. When an inquiry is made, MetroAccess tells the customer that the trip is based on the fastest route, which is usually rail. She requested information on how the route is determined when bus service is the only option to and from the destination. Mr. Blake stated that the MetroAccess team would be better

suiting to respond to the question and requested that the question be raised at the next MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting.

Ombudsman Report

Mr. Stephens discussed the upcoming Metrobus service changes. He stated that the service changes would take effect on June 21, 2015, and impact several routes throughout the region. In response to a question about where the information is located, Mr. Stephens stated that the information is posted on Metro's website. The BRS requested that the information be forwarded to members via email. Dr. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, stated that she would forward the information via email to all members. Ms. Rush expressed an interest in whether any of the bus changes would impact MetroAccess service. Mr. Blake stated that ADAP has reviewed the list and there is no impact on MetroAccess service.

Bus Stop Accessibility (Update)

Mr. Blake provided an update on bus stop accessibility in the region. He stated that Metro views accessibility of bus stops as a quality of life issue because of the independence and flexibility accessible stops can bring to the lives of people with disabilities.

In 2014, Metro Board adopted a new bus stop accessibility standard, adding pathway accessibility to the standard ADA definition of an accessible stop. Mr. Blake stated that many bus stops in the region fall short of true accessibility due to a lack of accessible pathways to and from the stops.

Mr. Blake stated that Metro has a bus stop database and is committed to making and keeping the information current. He stated that Metro is working on a tool to allow regional partners to directly update the database, and Metro is working on a smartphone application to allow customers and other community stakeholders to provide feedback on the accuracy of the accessibility reporting of each stop.

Metro received a grant to improve bus stops around the region. Mr. Blake stated that the Department of Access Services (ACCS) identified three bus stops; one in the District of Columbia and two in Prince Georges County, that were inaccessible and proceeded to improve those stops. The stop located in the District of Columbia is located at Massachusetts Avenue and 18th Street. The stops in Maryland are the north and south bound stops at Keith Street and St. Clair Drive in Temple Hills. He stated that 161 MetroAccess eligible customers live within 1/2 mile from the improved stops, and they will be informed of the improvements and offered travel training.

Additional bus stops have been identified in the District of Columbia, Prince George's County, MD and Fairfax, VA. An additional 20 bus stops are being reviewed for improvement. In response to a question about bus stop amenities, Mr. Blake stated that Metro's Office of Bus Planning (BPLN) works with the jurisdictions on those issues.

Dr. Posner suggested that the update also be shared with two former AAC members, Susan Holland and Regina Lee, who were instrumental in the early stages of the AAC discussions on bus stop accessibility around the region.

Doris Ray expressed an interest in the funding and number of bus stops completed. She stated that it was her understanding that 157 bus stops would be made accessible through the grant. Mr. Blake stated that Metro evaluated 157 stops, however only 75 were identified around the region to be improved.

Ms. Ray also expressed an interest in how Metro was partnering with the region on bus stop accessibility. She stated that in Fairfax County, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) owns many of the inaccessible bus stops. Mr. Blake stated that BPLN has a Bus Stop Coordination Committee (BSCC) and all the regional partners are members of this group. The way the process works is, ACCS identifies and completes the designs for the stops to be improved, and then BPLN coordinates with BSCC members to ensure there is no duplication in efforts to improve a bus stop. If the jurisdiction is working on stop that has been identified by ACCS for improvements, Metro takes it off its list and moves to the next inaccessible bus stop on the list.

Edward McEntee stated that he is aware of several places around Fairfax County where bus stops have been improved by the VDOT, yet they are still inaccessible. In these cases it does not appear that there was any consultation with the disability community. For accessibility purposes, Mr. McEntee suggested that a member of the AAC serve on the BSCC as an advisor. To also assist in this process, Mr. Blake stated that he will share more information on the bus stops that are being considered for improvement through the grant. This will allow members to see the stops prior to the improvements and provide suggestions that Metro may take under consideration.

A comment from the public expressed an interest in whether Metro considered adding the following bus stop amenities to its list; high contrast at the curb or tactile features for customers who are blind/ low vision. Mr. Blake stated that although those features are not part of the accessibility universal design, he will discuss them with the BSCC.

In a follow up to the comments on bus stop amenities, Dr. Posner echoed comments made by former AAC member Debbie Brown, regarding adding accessible signage that include Braille or raised lettering to bus stop poles. This would allow customers who are blind know which buses serve a particular bus stop.

Patrick Sheehan stated that the State of Maryland Highway Administration has been committed to improving intersections, which are covered under the ADA and should be made accessible. In Montgomery County and Prince George's County infrastructure for the accessible pedestrian signals that can be updated remotely has been implemented to make traveling safer for the disability community.

Ms. Case suggested that Metro review the bus stop on 13 and K NW in the District for accessibility. She stated that the bus stop is positioned on a narrow island that is surrounded by traffic on both sides. Mr. Blake stated that his office will follow up on this issue and provide feedback.

Work Plan

The BRS continued its discussion on its 2016 work plan and added the following new items to the list: Communication plan (audio and visual) and innovations in this area at other transit properties; and Metro's plan to enhance communication with the Deaf community.

The BRS also expressed an interest in informational sessions on the following topics: transit ambassadors in Metrorail system, the logic of bus planning, and walkable communities.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan