



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
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BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: May 11, 2015

In attendance: Brian Miller (Chair) William Staderman (Vice-Chair), Heidi Case (2nd Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Charlie Crawford, Marisa Laios, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahan, Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Patrick Sheehan, and Anthony Stephens.

Call to Order

Chair Miller called the May 11, 2015 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The BRS approved the May 11, 2015 meeting agenda as amended. The BRS approved the April 13, 2015 meeting minutes.

Public Comment

A follow up comment was made to one originally made at the May 2015 Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting regarding a discontinued bus stop along the 42/43 lines. Metro staff had invited the customer to comment during the next BRS meeting. The customer stated that the bus stop was moved from 9th & G Street near the Martin Luther King Library to 9th & F Street. The customer opined that the new bus stop is more difficult to navigate because the intersection is wider and allows cars to turn right on red. This is dangerous for blind travelers. The customer stated that the library is a popular place for many in the Blind and Deaf community because it houses the Center for Accessibility (formerly Adaptive Services). Many people from the disability community still stand at the stop because they have not received information about the change. The customer suggested that the stop be returned to its original location or allow Bus Operators to continue to stop at the original location.

Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), introduced Jim Hamre, Director, Metrobus Planning (BPLN), to address the concerns on the 42 Line. Mr. Hamre stated that the 42 route provides services across downtown through Farragut Square up to Connecticut Avenue and ends at Mount Pleasant. The bus stop at 9th & G was a terminal stop. Changes in the immediate area allowed Metro to re-open a temporarily relocated bus stop which adjusted the relationship to the bus stop on 9th & G Street. Additionally, the X2 route changed to allow every other bus to go to Lafayette Square, and on the weekends the bus will turn right on to 9th & F Street towards the Grand Hyatt.

Metro notifies customers of route service changes through its website, brochures, MetroAlerts, Twitter, and NextBus service. Mr. Hamre stated that Metro's analysis of the 42 Line before the change demonstrated that the ridership is quite low. Returning the bus stop to its original location would be problematic because the X2 uses the location for lay-over before the run begins again. Dr. Miller expressed an interest in whether

the discontinued bus stop was permanent, and whether Metro could partner with the library to notify its customers of the change. Mr. Hamre stated that the relocation of the bus stop to 9th and F Street is permanent. Since the change, the data indicates that the ridership and on-time performance has improved on the X2 Line. Marisa Laios suggested that Metro also partner with Independent Living Centers (ILC) around the region to notify customers of bus service changes. The ILCs can disseminate information to the disability community about the service changes. Mr. Hamre stated that partnering with the library and ILCs is an excellent idea.

Phil Posner reiterated his suggestion about using the same approach as the Circulator. He stated that the Circulator places a person at the affected stop to notify customers of the change. Mr. Hamre stated that Metro uses the same approach for large service adjustments. Metro does not have the resources to use this approach for every Metrobus service change.

Charlie Crawford stated the challenges with intersection appears to be the responsibility of the District of Columbia (D.C.) and Metro should be partnering with D.C. to correct the issue. Mr. Hamre stated that D.C. has an accessibility improvements program which is installing the accessible pedestrian signals at intersections. D.C. also studied the pedestrian traffic flow and traffic light signals in the downtown area and plans to adjust traffic signal cycles in the downtown area.

In another comment related to the 42 line, the customer stated that information about the change was not in an accessible format because most of the information was in print. The customer suggested that in the future, Metro add audio announcements to stop or on local radio announcements. Mr. Hamre stated that Metro's annunciator system on the bus is limited and therefore unable to play route specific service changes information.

Heidi Case stated that the MetroAlerts are available to anyone with a computer or a Smartphone. A comment from the public stated that many people in the Blind community do not have access to technology. The customer suggested that Metro announce the changes on radio stations such as WTOP or WMAU. Another suggestion from the public was to add the announcement on service changes to Metro's Customer Service Line. When customers call (202)637-7000 for assistance, the customer would be able to hear the approved service changes.

Denise Rush expressed an interest in having a bus stop located at the MGM Casino in National Harbor. She stated that it was her understanding that in the initial plans, public transportation was included; however, since that time, the casino has declined any

public transportation to its facility. Mr. Hamre stated that Metro has authored a letter in support of public transportation at the location. The AAC supports Metro's position. Mr. Hamre stated that an article in the local newspaper about the lack of public transportation access worked in Metro's favor. Approximately two weeks ago, Metro (along with Prince Georges County) met with MGM officials and developed a design for a bus stop. However, the return stop will be located off casino property. Metro is looking to the jurisdiction to build a bus stop that complements the bus stop on casino property. Mr. Blake stated that the AAC has an initiative to develop bus stops on private property and would like to work with BPLN on the issue.

Additionally, Ms. Rush expressed an interest in whether the bus stop at the casino would be considered as inside the MetroAccess service area. Mr. Blake stated that if Metro or a local bus service is offering service to that location, then the MetroAccess service area would include all points within 3/4 of a mile of the bus stop. Mr. Hamre stated that Metro is anticipating increased demand from the NH1 with the new casino. The Authority plans to service that location for many years to come. Also, beginning in June 2015 the NH1 will depart from Southern Avenue Metrorail station.

In June 2015, Metro will be transferring operations of the W15 Bus Line to Prince George's County Transportation System, 'The Bus'. In response to a question about the impact on MetroAccess service, Mr. Hamre stated that the service area for MetroAccess will not be impacted by this transfer. Dr. Posner expressed an interest in whether the transferring of operation will change the timing of the routes. Mr. Hamre stated that the schedule will be same with minor adjustments.

Ms. Case expressed an interest in the height of the Station Manager kiosk at the Metro Center (Shady Grove side). She stated that customers using mobility devices have to push the button and then move back so the Station Manager is able to see them. Additionally, when accessing the kiosk from the pay area, the steps are a barrier from accessing the button. Ms. Case stated that the installation of the new kiosk has made access worse, not better. Dr. Posner stated that the AAC identified this issue during the AAC review of the Silver Line stations. Mr. Blake stated that his office will investigate the issue and provide feedback.

Elver Ariza-Silva expressed an interest in a SmarTrip card for MetroAccess users who use fixed route. He stated that the card would greatly reduce the need for customers with disabilities to contact Station Managers. Mr. Blake stated that Metro is in the discussion phase and will keep the AAC abreast of the discussion.

Ombudsman Report

Antonio Stephens, ADA Ombudsman, provided an update on comments made at the April 2015 BRS meeting. During that meeting, there was a comment regarding elevator buttons that had gone dim at the Judiciary Square and Ballston Metrorail station. The Ombudsman stated that the issue has been forwarded to Keisha White, Quality Control Specialist. Ms. White has informed Metro's Plant Maintenance of the issue and will continue to monitor completed. The Ombudsman stated that he will provide periodic updates as information becomes available.

New Electronic Payment Program (Update)

Terri Anomnachi, Project Manager, New Electronic Payment Program (NEPP), provided an update on Metro's next generation of fare collection equipment. She stated that Metro is moving from a card-based collection system to an account-based system. With the new system, funds will be available on a customer's account as opposed to on a chip in the card. Metro anticipates that the migration to the account-based system will offer customers more options to check fare media balances and monitor accounts. Ms. Anomnachi stated that customer can still use the fare vending machines to check balances, and for tech-savvy customers, mobile applications on Smart Phones will be available. Ms. Rush expressed an interest in the accessibility features of the fare vending machines. Ms. Anomnachi stated that Metro will also be replacing all its fare vending machines and gates. The vendors include audio feedback and a headphone jack.

The NEPP Pilot Program began in February 2015 and will conclude late May 2015. The pilot program will test the core capability to ensure the system is capable of running a high volume of transactions and can handle high-speed processing of information. In the pilot program, Metro is meeting the performance goals. The next phase of the project is design review. Ms. Anomnachi, stated that during this process, user interface is critical and will include processing payments, audible tones, and messaging. Metro will test the new system in a controlled environment before making the system available to the public. Mr. Crawford stated that in entering information, some programs "time-out" before the process can be completed. This can make the process of entering information very frustrating for some customers with disabilities. Ms. Anomnachi stated that the new system is programmed to time-out and NEPP will review the guidelines for accessibility in that area before implementation. Also, Metro's parking lot systems will be tested after the end of the pilot. She invited the AAC to test some of the accessibility features to provide feedback on the user experience. In the summer 2017, Metro will migrate to NEPP system-wide while simultaneously phasing out the old system.

Doris Ray expressed an interest in exposure of customer account information. Ms. Anomnachi stated that the NEPP is an open-payment system. Customers can use their

credit or debit cards, smartphones, and cash to “pay as you go” in the system. Additionally, the NEPP allows cards to be linked to a bank account and load value with cash at retail stores. In response to a question about using NEPP with paper fare cards, Ms. Anomnachi stated that Metro is eliminating paper fare cards. The fare collection equipment is for SmartTrip card only. Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, stated that the AAC is scheduled to be briefed on the elimination of fare cards at the June 2015 AAC meeting.

Dr. Miller expressed an interest in the ability to read card balances at the fare gates. Mr. Blake stated that for customer safety, card balances are displayed but not announced when tapping the target at the fare gate. Ms. Anomnachi stated that customers can use vending machines which have audio feedback and headphone jack audio indicators or Smart Phones to check balances on cards. In response to a question about SmartTrip cards, Ms. Anomnachi stated that SmartTrip cards issued within the last two years are compatible with the new system. She stated that Metro will have an exchange program to transfer old cards for new SmartTrip cards.

Patrick Sheehan expressed an interest in Smart Benefits. Ms. Anomnachi stated that Smart Benefits are part of the new system and in the new system, users will not have to go to the device to download benefits. Smart Benefits will be added directly to customer accounts. Mr. Sheehan also expressed an interest in mobile applications for Smart phones. He stated that lots of third-party vendors develop applications for transportation information. As part of NEPP, Ms. Anomnachi stated that Metro would develop a mobile application for Smart phones. In response to a question about accessibility of the mobile application, Ms. Anomnachi stated that NEPP is working with its partners internally and externally to ensure the mobile application is accessible.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in the new fare collection equipment for Metrobus. In particular, she wanted to know about the accessibility features and whether bus vending machines will also be tested prior to implementation. Ms. Anomnachi stated the new system will not allow customers to add value to SmartTrip cards on the bus. However, customers can add value to SmartTrip cards at any retailer. Currently, there are no plans to have the new equipment interface with banking systems. Ms. Anomnachi reiterated her comments about testing in a controlled environment.

Edward McEntee expressed an interest in whether this technology will be applied to MetroAccess service. Ms. Anomnachi stated that the new equipment will also be available to MetroAccess users. Metro is in the discussion phase.

The BRS thanked Ms. Anomnachi for her thorough presentation. The next generation of fare collection equipment will enhance the riding experience for a wide range of

customers. The BRS looks forward to the opportunity to test the new fare equipment and provide feedback on salient points of the new system.

Work Plan

The BRS identified the following items for the 2016 work plan: remote fare gate access at all stations; emergency exercises (lessons learned); station manager kiosk access; cell phone access in the rail system; Silver Line II; Metro's Lost and Found program; and Metro's "Station of the Future." The BRS also requested updates on the following topics: CFO financial update; platform and directional signage; ClickAndGo; elevator cleanliness and maintenance schedules; lighting; and bus stop improvements.

The BRS also expressed an interest in informational sessions on the following topics: accessibility features training for mobile applications and i-Beacon technology.

New Business

Ms. Case expressed an interest in a discussion for the 25th Anniversary of the signing of the ADA. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that she would add the topic to the work plan.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan