



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: April 15, 2013

In attendance: Paul Semelfort (Chair), Denise Rush (Vice-Chair), Tapan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Chanelle Houston, Regina Lee, Brian Miller, Dr. Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Patrick Sheehan, and Dr. William Staderman.

Call to Order

Vice-Chair Rush called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:04 pm.

Review of April 2013 Agenda

The April 2013 meeting agenda was amended; adding New Business to the agenda.

Review of March 2013 Meeting Report

The March 2013 meeting report was approved with a request to add MetroAccess staff comments and responses to meeting topics. This information will be added to the the meeting report posted to the MetroAccess website.

Customer Service and Outreach Report

Allison Anderson, MetroAccess, stated that all of the public comments submitted at the previous MAS meeting have been addressed.

Ms. Anderson reported that she attended the Transportation Action Group committee meeting for Independence NOW. The focus of this event was to provide information to the attendees regarding MetroAccess.

Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award

Paul Comfort and Leland Petersen, MV Transportation, recognized Chakita Kay as the Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award winner. A detailed description of Ms. Kay's accomplishments can be found in the accompanying document titled "Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award," located under the April 2013 heading at http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm.

Transition to New Paratransit Contract Discussion

Omari June, Director, MetroAccess, announced the addition of Ms. Anderson to the MetroAccess staff as the Operations Manager for the MetroAccess Operations Control Center.

Mr. June reported that the contract transition was well underway. He stated that the Quality Assurance contractor, MTM, has begun hiring staff for the quality assurance contract and will begin training their staff on policies and procedures.

Transitioning of vehicle service delivery from MV Transportation to the incoming service providers has begun as well. Recruitment and training of new drivers has begun under the review of MetroAccess staff. Staff is reviewing training material and attending training sessions to ensure that the training is held to the standard expected by MetroAccess and applied across the board. The transition will continue in phases over through the month of June. The phased-in approach is being applied in order to avoid disruption to service. Mr. June reported that all of the service delivery contractors have made arrangements for their respective facilities, and that MTM has leased space as well.

MAS members raised the following questions and/or suggestions:

How many new vehicles will be added to the fleet and why does there seem to be fewer vehicles available currently? Mr. June stated that there are approximately 600 vehicles in the MetroAccess fleet, and added that 138 new vehicles would be added to the fleet. He explained that all of the current vehicles are on average not yet two years old. Regarding fewer vehicle availability, Mr. June stated that at this time of year there is usually an increase in ridership, so overall fleet usage is increased, but there is no reduction in the number of vehicles available for service.

How many drivers are there currently; how many will be needed; and when will drivers transition to the new contractors? Mr. June and Mr. Petersen commented that when MV started in 2006 there were approximately 700 drivers and now there are currently 1000. The current number of drivers will be maintained and will be transitioned to the new providers through May and June 2013. All current drivers have been encouraged to apply for employment with the new contractors. Each company will make individual selections of drivers for the service.

Other suggestions included: All drivers (new and old) be trained; All dispatchers be re-trained; and Ensure that drivers provide door-to-door service to all customers, including those with visual disabilities.

Mr. Petersen stated that as part of the new contract, additional sensitivity and telephone training would occur for dispatch agents.

Regarding the use of visually impaired (VI) versus blind as identifiers, this will need further discussion with WMATA staff to determine if a change is needed. Mr. Petersen also elaborated the space type codes used to build route schedules are necessary to identify ambulatory and wheelchair customers to allot adequate space on vehicles and provide passenger lift equipment if needed.

When will the new contracts be available for the public and posted online? A request was made for a report on MetroAccess fares for the quarter. Leroy Hayford, Manager, Financial Operations, MetroAccess, acknowledged that it would be included in the performance report for the May MAS meeting. Sherrie Collings, Department of Access Services, will check with Metro's Procurement Office to see when the conformed contracts will be available.

Is MetroAccess seeing a trend in driver call outs due to the change in contracts and is there a concern about service disruption as a result? Mr. June explained that drivers must remain in good standing with MV to be considered for employment with the new contractors. Management of employee call outs is a daily occurrence and standby drivers are used to minimize service disruption.

Is there a distinction made in coding between blind and visually impaired customers for door-to-door service and what kind of training is offered to distinguish them? How many full-time equivalents are part of the quality assurance contract? Mr. June stated that there is no difference in the coding. Mr. Petersen stated that the key to the training is that door-to-door is a service for all customers. There is a specific training module on persons with visual disabilities and degrees of visual disabilities. Mr. June stated that there are 29 full-time equivalents for the Quality Assurance contractor.

At large locations, such as airports or train stations, dispatchers have guided customers to the location of the vehicle. Is this something done to assist visually disabled customers? Mr. Petersen stated that it is a best practice of the Operations Control Center for all customers.

Will taxi dispatching be transferred to Veolia and how will that function? Mr. June stated the distribution of taxi trips would remain in the OCC; the contractual relationship between the taxi providers is the only thing that will change.

Partnerships – MV Transportation and Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind

Brandon Cox, Director of Rehabilitation Services, Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind (CLB) and Mr. Petersen provided an overview of the relationship between MV and CLB. Mr. Petersen stated that MV currently employs eleven people with disabilities; eight from CLB, one of whom is a veteran. He said that MV has invested over \$35,000 in additional software equipment and training in this effort. Several Committee members expressed their appreciation for the efforts made by MV in this endeavor. One member asked if additional positions will be opened for this partnership. Mr. Petersen stated that there are part-time positions available at the present time. He stated that going forward he would like one-third of the approximately 70 reservations positions to be accessible positions for people with disabilities.

Work Plan

Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, discussed the need to develop the current work plan for fiscal year 2014. She read the previous list of topics and solicited input from the MAS for other items to go onto the work plan. Cheryl O'Konek, Operations Manager, Eligibility Certification, stated that Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, removed the eligibility update from the work plan as there had not been significant changes in the Eligibility Office to warrant the need for a work plan item. Some MAS members raised concerns about functional assessments being completed indoors only and the evaluating of applicants with cognitive disabilities. The MAS asked that one of the therapists attend an MAS meeting to explain the assessment process. Ms. O'Konek said that she would address the issues with the therapists.

A member suggested that the MAS add a work plan item to discuss advertising on MetroAccess vehicles to raise funds for MetroAccess.

The MAS discussed the need to have the MetroAccess Fare Calculator operational and raised concerns about the many delays in receiving the product. Mr. June explained that the Fare Calculator integration into Trapeze would be completed by the end of May 2013.

Dr. Posner commented on the Fare Policy Working group, stating that they have continued to receive quarterly statistics on fares from Mr. Hayford in an effort to determine if the Fare Calculator will make a difference. Dr. Posner also stated plans to utilize the information to address the Board in discussions of next year's budget.

Ms. Ray suggested having a presentation of the training for drivers with emphasis on the disability awareness portion.

New Business

The MAS commented on incorrect information in the MetroAccess Customer Guide. Mr. June stated that when the transition is complete, a revised Customer Guide will be developed. MetroAccess staff is currently working with Ms. Lee on the MetroAccess Customer Information brochure to get updated information to customers. The date of the MAS meetings is the one bit of information that is incorrect in the Customer Guide; however, the correct information regarding this meeting is on the website and on the MAS calendar.

A question regarding how drivers will be trained was asked. Mr. June explained that each provider will train their drivers. He stated that all training materials have been reviewed and approved by MetroAccess to ensure consistency with standards.

Antonio Hamlin, Manager/Safety Officer, MetroAccess Field Operations, explained the safety teams at the division levels, MV, and MetroAccess, all monitor safety performance. The three performance measures monitored are total collision rate, preventable collision rate, and passenger injury rate. All injuries are coded as either major or minor, and to date all injuries have been minor. Mr. Hamlin reported that all of the goals have been met in these areas. WMATA Safety Department supports this effort through training.

Dr. Posner asked about up to date safety measures and equipment such as having defibrillators on vehicles; training of drivers related to the application of defibrillators; and informational signs for customers. He feels that the AAC should work with WMATA Safety Department on training videos so customers know what to do in the event of an emergency. Other members agreed that the AAC should have an interest in the training videos.

Upon motion, the MAS recommended the initiation of a task force to review current safety, security, and evaluation procedures for MetroAccess.

Public Comment

Customers made comments related to the need for further sensitivity training for drivers handling visually impaired customers; dispatchers reporting vehicle ETA honestly; and commending MV and Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind on their partnership.

Please refer to April's Complaint Resolution Report located at http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm for detailed descriptions and resolutions of the public comments.

Meeting adjourned at 5:58pm