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Accessibility Advisory Committee

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: May 20, 2013

In attendance: Paul Semelfort (Chair), Denise Rush (Vice-Chair), Chanelle Houston, Regina Lee, Dr. Phil Posner, Doris Ray, and William Staderman.

Call to Order

Vice-Chair Rush called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:01 pm.

Review of May 2013 Agenda and April 2013 Meeting Report

The May 2013 meeting agenda was amended adding an update on the transition to the new contractors, and a discussion of safety and evacuation policy and procedures for the MetroAccess service.

The April 2013 meeting report was approved.

Customer Service and Outreach Report

Leland Petersen, MV Transportation, stated that all of the public comments submitted at the previous MAS meeting have been addressed.

Allison Anderson, MetroAccess, reported that she attended a Driving & Beyond Symposium and Mobility Resource Fair at Asbury Methodist Village in Gaithersburg, MD. The focus of this event was to provide information to the attendees regarding MetroAccess.

Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award

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

MetroAccess Fare Calculator Update

Omari June, Director, Office of MetroAccess Service, began by giving an update of the specifications for the Fare Calculator. He stated that the initial plan for the Fare Calculator was to have it integrated into Trapeze, where the customer would get the lowest fare over a period of thirty minutes. Due to the complexity involved with integrating this function into the Trapeze software, providing online access to the Fare Calculator was offered as an intermediate solution. However, online access was not successful due to the burden it placed on the system; therefore, MetroAccess pursued the original plan to implement the Fare Calculator through Trapeze.

MetroAccess has been working with Trapeze for the past nine months on the development and integration of the Fare Calculator. The system will locate the lowest fare fifteen minutes before and after the requested pick-up time, searching each and every time point within the thirty minute window, and it will automatically produce the lowest fare for that time frame. This is important for customers to know as they will not be choosing a time; the system will find the lowest fare. Allowing the system to do this will assist the Reservationist and not overload the system. Metro has received a beta build from Trapeze for the Fare Calculator, and it is currently undergoing testing through an extensive process that will ensure the other components of the Trapeze system will not fail due to the complexity of this integration. A report will be provided to the Full Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) regarding the completion of the integration of the Fare Calculator into Trapeze.

Christian Kent, AGM, Access Services, summarized the history of the Fare Calculator by stating that initially Metro thought the Fare Calculator product could be created without the use of Trapeze, but the AAC had pointed out that not all MetroAccess customers have access to computers, so a product needed to be developed for the benefit of everyone. Therefore, it was necessary to seek the involvement of Trapeze in order for the product to work through the reservation process.

Questions pertaining to whether customers will be able to utilize the web to access the Fare Calculator; whether customers will be able to book trips by an appointment time; and if the Fare Calculator would be ready by May 31, 2013, were asked.

Mr. June explained that booking by appointment is possible; however, without a pick-up request time the system could not generate the lowest fare in a thirty-minute window. Mr. June stated that the current build will not function in this manner. A possible option would be that once a customer has booked an appointment time and is aware of the resulting pick-up window, they could request the mid-point time that would generate the applicable pick-up window with the lowest fare. He reemphasized that the product is still being tested, and work is in progress to ensure that it is able to generate the same result with an appointment time as it does with a requested time. Mr. Kent concluded stating that this Fare Calculator will be the first of its kind in the nation. He explained that having a third party software company create this product requires Metro to be dependent on the company for the desired results. He said that because the MetroAccess Trapeze system is already very complex and has so many features beyond the basic software, adding this new element has made it more complex and requires added time to ensure it functions as Metro requires. Mr. June said that he could not say whether the product will be completed by May 31, 2013 as there is still extensive testing being conducted. He said that a report will be provided to the full AAC at their next meeting.

MetroAccess Performance Report

Leroy Hayford, MetroAccess, provided an update on the faring profile for MetroAccess by fare paying passengers. A histogram of the fare distribution for the third quarter of fiscal year 2013 (January-March 2013) was provided to the MAS, and Mr. Hayford explained portions of the completed profile. He explained that the best way to look at the ridership was by quarters and report on the trends. The report showed the percentage of fare paying customers and the increments of fare base, ranging from \$3.20 to the maximum of seven dollars. Mr. Hayford stated that very little changed from the previous quarter. The chart represents customers who actually paid fare. It excludes certain ADA ridership, PCA's, eligibility trips, riders under age five, WMATA employees, and late trip credits.

Questions and comments raised regarding the report were as follows:

1. There was a major change with the drop in percentage of five dollar to five dollar and fifty cent range in fare, and an increase in the five dollar and fifty cent to seven dollar range in fare. The first quarter financial report for fiscal year 2013 indicated that there was an increase in fares collected while the volume of ridership was down.
2. Were the numbers based on a percentage of individuals traveling or everyone traveling?

Mr. Hayford stated that the information was based on fare paying customers only.

Mr. Kent stated that this information was shared to illustrate the charged fare and the fare paid by customers. He reported that late trip credits have had a substantial impact.

A member of the MAS stated that this information will assist in determining what will occur after the Fare Calculator is in place.

Please refer to May's MetroAccess Performance Report located at http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm.

Safety and Evacuation Procedures

Dr. Posner suggested a meeting between all contractors to discuss best practices nationally as well as the contractors' practices regarding safety and evacuation procedures for MetroAccess service, to provide uniformity in service delivery. Dr. Posner asked that the MAS vote to enter this as a motion. He stated that training was a major item to be considered in safety and evacuation procedures. The MAS approved this motion.

Mr. Kent acknowledged that it is a great topic for the MAS to cover, and suggested that Metro staff provide the MAS with the emergency procedures located in the relevant section of the Request for Proposals, which illustrate what Metro requires of the contractors. Metro also may add to the current emergency procedures.

He asked that the MAS understand the difference between Metro policy and the various company procedures. He stated that if there were a Metro policy that the MAS would like to amend, it would be appropriate to discuss. Mr. Kent informed the MAS that MetroAccess managers and staff visit the various provider facilities, monitoring and evaluating the trainings to ensure consistency. He urged the MAS to review the training curriculum and provide input from a community perspective to ensure the training captures the experience of the customer. Mr. Kent made a request to add safety and evacuation procedures to the MAS July agenda.

MetroAccess Transition Update

Mr. Kent explained how the transition will be completed in increments. Over a seven-week period beginning May 12, 2013, week by week portions of the service are being transitioned to the the new contractors. Two of the seven transitions have been completed. Diamond Transportation and the First Transit facility in Gaithersburg, MD have been successfully accomplished. Mr. Kent recognized and thanked Mr. Petersen, Robbie Werth, and Michael Rademacher for their efforts to ensure the transition to these two contractors was seamless.

Mr. June commented about the transition of the Quality Assurance contractor MTM, Inc. Mr. June stated that the no-show review process and the complaint resolution process would be moving to MTM. Mr. June briefly explained the elements of the no-show process. He added that each transition is occurring on weekends, and includes drivers going through a more stringent process of finger printing and background checks, which are being conducted by Metro Transit Police.

Questions were raised regarding:

1. The location of the new providers, and whether staffing was complete;
2. Whether there would be more Road Supervisors;
3. If the lack of available pick-up times when booking by appointment time is due to the transition;
4. The number of drivers transitioning to the new providers and the number of new drivers;
5. Information not being consistent from Dispatch Supervisor to Dispatch Supervisor regarding providing estimated time of arrival for vehicles;
6. Whether drivers need to follow their GPS system or can receive the advice of customers for directions; if the GPS will provide information to travel using toll roads; and if there was a waiver for MetroAccess vehicles to be able to utilize toll roads;
7. The possibility of fare boxes on MetroAccess vehicles; and
8. The policy for drivers to refuel vehicles with customers on board.

Mr. June provided addresses of the facilities, and stated that staffing of the providers has been completed. He stated that there will not be additional Road Supervisors. The Road Supervisors will continue to work for MV Transportation and will be dispersed amongst the providers. A comment from a committee member stated that there weren't enough Road Supervisors for the service as customers wait for long periods of time during incidents that require the assistance of a Road Supervisor. Mr. Kent suggested that this topic be addressed during the discussion of the safety and evacuation process. He stated that though there were no funds available for an increase in Road Supervisor personnel, there are discussions to make use of safety personnel from bus service for assistance during incidents on MetroAccess.

Ryan Parr, MetroAccess, explained the process the system goes through when customers book by appointment time.

Mr. June stated the numbers of drivers are being tracked, but the projection is that there will be no change in their numbers. He added that this will be accomplished by a combination of new and returning drivers. Mr. June said a complete driver number will be available at the end of the transition.

Mr. Petersen stated that meetings between management and Dispatch Supervisors have been occurring to address consistency. Mr. Petersen also stated that the drivers are required to use the GPS devices made available to them. If there is an incident that causes a road closure they may deviate from the GPS. Drivers are provided extensive training on the geographical area. Drivers are not directed to use toll roads. Mr. Petersen stated that vehicles should make it through a shift without needing to refuel. If there is an incident in which a vehicle needs to be refueled, the driver should call dispatch and a Road Supervisor will be dispatched to the driver.

Mr. June stated that a waiver is being pursued to utilize toll roads, but is not currently available to MetroAccess vehicles. He also commented that fare boxes are not feasible on MetroAccess vehicles at this time.

Public Comment

Customers made comments related to improper seatbelt placement by drivers; a gap between the wheelchair lift and the vehicle; drivers needing maps for campuses; drivers not asking for customer IDs; late trip pick-ups; order of customer drop-offs; late trip credit amounts; a request for an exception to grandfather a customer; a compliment about having the opportunity to voice concerns and get answers; a compliment for the service and drivers; a compliment to MV Transportation for responding to a safety concern; a request for more public relations to promote positives about MetroAccess; and a request for a celebration for the twenty-year anniversary of MetroAccess service.

Please refer to May'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 6:00 pm