



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

Accessibility Advisory Committee

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: November 18, 2013

In attendance: Paul Semelfort (Chair), Denise Rush (Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Heidi Case, Kevin Hanretta, Regina Lee, Dr. Brian Miller, Mary Jane Owen, 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 4:06pm.

Review of November 2013 Agenda

The MAS approved a motion to move the Securement agenda item to the full Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). The agenda was approved as amended.

Review of October 2013 Meeting Meetings

The minutes were approved with the following amendments: (1) the wording in the first sentence under the customer service and outreach report section, question/comment from the committee changed from "seatbelt" to "securement"; and (2) under the public comments section, the last comment changed from "since the onset of the new MetroAccess contractors" to "since 2010."

Customer Service and Outreach Report

Ms. Allison Anderson, Operations Manager - Operations Control Center, MetroAccess, reported that all public comments were addressed either during the committee meeting or after thorough investigation by the Customer Service staff.

Ms. Anderson reported attendance at the following events: American Council of the Blind Silver Spring affiliate monthly meeting, National Harbor Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind's Annual Community Resource Day, and Saint Paul Senior Living Center.

MetroAccess Employee Recognition

Ms. Anderson recognized Nancy Coates as the Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award winner. A detailed description of Ms. Coates' accomplishments can be found in the accompanying document titled "Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award" located under the November 2013 heading at

http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm.

Safety Training – New Drivers

Omar Browne, Field Operations Manager, and Irving Frye, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, explained the incumbent and new driver training as it applies to safety.

MetroAccess collectively revised and approved the materials of the driver training to ensure uniformity among all of the service delivery providers. Safety training topics covered include the following:

- Fatigue Management - All drivers are trained to better manage their time for sleep and work shifts. Fatigue management and wellness training is necessary to prevent fatigue during work hours.
- Accident, incident, and emergency procedures - Drivers are trained on what procedures to follow during an accident or incident. The training includes who should be contacted during these incidents and when to contact EMS.
- Proper parking procedures - Drivers are taught to pay attention to their surroundings while parking to prevent damage to vehicles. Drivers are required to put a safety cone out to acknowledge that the vehicle is stopped and put in mirrors to prevent mirror strikes.
- Defensive driving techniques to include driving in severe weather conditions - Drivers are encouraged to change their habits considering weather conditions.
- Door-to-door service refresher - Drivers are initially trained to perform door-to-door service, and refresher training is provided periodically to ensure door-to-door is completed properly, safely, and consistently.
- Lift operations, wheelchair securement to include web looping - Drivers are trained to do a four-point tie down; make sure securements are in the tracks, secure the optional posey belt; and secure the lap belt and shoulder harness. The shoulder harness is required unless there is medical documentation to show that this securement could cause harm to the customer, at which time the lap belt will be utilized alone. All drivers are required to go through wheelchair and securement training annually.
- Electronic device policy - Drivers are required to have all electronic devices turned off and put away while operating a vehicle.
- Mirror and reference points - Drivers are trained on utilizing large mirrors and convex mirrors as well as what to look for in each mirror. Tracking tire placement using mirrors is taught to prevent hitting curbs.

A portion of the training consists of a skills course, on the road training, and cadetting. Incumbent driver training is currently on-going and will continue through the end of the calendar year.

Question/Comments from the committee:

1. Is courtesy training offered for drivers to be sensitive to individuals with disabilities?

Mr. Browne stated that customer skills are trained. Omari June, Director, MetroAccess, added that Ms. Bellamy performs sensitivity training to the drivers. Ms. Bellamy commented that she speaks to every driver that is trained. She said that sensitivity is difficult to train. Ms. Bellamy requests others to assist with this training.

2. The web looping is not as tight on the wheelchairs as they could be. Are drivers hours related to driver fatigue? What is the maximum number of hours a driver may work, and does it include travel time to and from their work location?

Mr. Frye stated driver's hours are strictly monitored to ensure drivers are not overworked. If a driver is approaching the maximum number of hours allowed, a call is made to management alerting them of such. Drivers may work fifteen hours per day. This time does not include travel time to the work location, but does include stand-by time, meaning the time they are at their work location waiting to leave. Mr. June stated that the amount of time the driver is on the road is different than a fixed-route operator. MetroAccess drivers are not on the road driving the entirety of their shifts. Because MetroAccess is a door-to-door service, drivers are on and off the vehicle. He said that while fifteen hours is the maximum for driver work schedules, the actual hours they are slated to work is significantly less. Mr. Browne commented that before their shifts drivers are examined for physical signs of fatigue and asked if they have had sufficient rest to perform their duties for the day. If a driver responds "no", or appears to be fatigued and unsafe to drive, they are not permitted to work.

3. Are drivers instructed to inform customers not to contact EMS when there is an emergency and to allow the driver to call? Shouldn't the driver tell the customer that they are calling EMS? Is a mystery rider program being implemented for MetroAccess?

Mr. June said that drivers have the ability to call EMS themselves; however, customers are not discouraged from calling EMS. Whether drivers should inform the customer that they do not need to call would need to be reviewed. Mr. June said that a mystery rider program is being utilized for MetroAccess and is very helpful.

4. Can the fifteen hour maximum schedule be changed to twelve hours? Drivers may not report that they are tired as they need to work.

Mr. June said that many drivers will self-report when they are tired. Some will call to dispatch stating they are tired. The driver is then told to pull over and are met at their location by a road supervisor and taken to their personal vehicle. Once the driver arrives at the garage they are encouraged to wait to begin driving their personal vehicle to ensure that it is safe for them to drive. The contractor will not penalize the driver for self-reporting they are fatigued. He reiterated that most shifts are twelve hours and below.

5. Even twelve hours is too long. If a person drives from the Washington metropolitan area for twelve hours, they could make it to the state of Florida. Though the driver is on and off the vehicle, they are on the job and must be

alert. They are under stress to deal with weather, traffic, dispatchers, and customers.

6. There are no first aid kits on vehicles. What are the procedures to handle emergency situations? If the driver is injured what happens?

Mr. Browne stated that EMS and police support are contacted. Mr. Frye stated that others call EMS even when the driver or dispatch has contacted support personnel.

7. What does door-to-door look like when it is properly done?

Mr. June stated that there are certain criteria that must be met for a location to be door-to-door serviceable. There has to be a safe and accessible path of travel from the vehicle to the door; the door can be no more than one hundred-fifty feet from the vehicle; the driver must maintain sight of the vehicle at all times; and they have to have a safe place to park the vehicle. This may change per location and time of the day. If all of the criteria are met, the driver presses the "arrive" button on the Ranger which alerts dispatch and sends out the automated arrival phone call. They proceed to the outer most exterior door, if the location is a hospital, they may proceed through the first door to the vestibule area. They may not go into private residences or public entrances. They will announce themselves as MetroAccess and wait one minute at the location. If the customer is not present for boarding at that time, the driver will return to their vehicle and push the No-Show button on their Ranger. The No-Show process is initiated by dispatch, who calls the numbers on file. If they are not able to reach the customer, dispatch asks the driver for details of the location. The driver may not leave the location until dispatch has authorized them to do so. If the customer presents themselves for boarding, the driver is to then go back to the door and escort them to the vehicle. The type of assistance the driver may provide consists of maneuvering wheelchairs through accessible paths only and the use of their arm for guidance but not for support. The driver may follow a few feet behind the customer if the customer does not want driver support. If the customer has baggage, the customer can decide when the driver arrives to have the bags taken to the vehicle first and return for the customer afterwards or vice versa. The driver may not take the baggage and customer to the vehicle at the same time.

8. How many hours do Metrobus Operators operate a vehicle per day? Does a MetroAccess driver have a choice to their shift? Is there a union?

Mr. Frye stated that Metrobus Operator's hours are comparable to MetroAccess drivers. Because MetroAccess drivers must get in and out of the vehicle, it keeps drivers alert. Mr. Frye said that drivers do have a choice as to their shifts and they are represented by a union.

9. Drivers may not be driving the entire length of the work shift; however, their customer base may require more work. Fifteen hours is too much.

10. Is there a forty hour work week for drivers?

Mr. Browne stated that the hours are based on labor laws and are followed; anything over forty hours is overtime.

11. What is the hourly rate for Metrobus Operators and MetroAccess drivers? What is the protocol for Metrobus drivers regarding overtime in comparison to MetroAccess drivers? Twelve to fifteen hours is excessive for drivers to work, and the policy should be reviewed for the safety of the driver and customer.

Mr. June stated that the information for Metrobus driver pay is not available at this time. Mr. June stated that he would prefer to have a representative from Bus address those questions. MetroAccess driver pay varies based on location, seniority, and other factors. MetroAccess drivers are paid hourly.

Essential MetroAccess Policy Brochure (update)

Ms. Anderson stated that the committee was asked to contact Dr. B. Moore-Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, with comments or additions to the brochure. Dr. B. has not received any additional comments therefore MetroAccess is ready to proceed with production. Members of the committee stated that they approved the current draft at the AAC meeting.

New Business

Ms. Ray requested a moment of silence for the passing of Ronald Kirby who was the Director of Transportation Planning for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Mr. Kirby was the victim of a violent crime that occurred on November 14, 2013.

Vice-Chair Rush stated that a lot is expected of MetroAccess drivers, and the committee needs to assist in finding funding to increase the salaries of these drivers. She also commented on the lack of attendance by the committee at the Mayor's Age-Friendly Task Force meeting.

Dr. B. commented that work plans from both AAC subcommittees will be reviewed at the December meetings.

Dr. Posner reported Mr. George Aguehoude, MAS member, was hit by a car but is doing well.

Public Comments

Comments were in regard to: requested information on a particular driver to submit a commendation; a request to give consideration for direct trips to medically extenuating

circumstances; notice to customers when being picked up by a taxi provider; drivers need better training to work with visually impaired customers; disrespectful dispatch supervisor; dispatchers providing their name and identification to drivers to increase courtesy; customer received three improper No-Shows; drivers arriving trips before they are at the address; and driver trainer was texting while trainee was driving.

For detailed descriptions and resolutions of public comments made during the meeting, please refer to the November 2013 Complaint Resolution Report located at http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm.

Meeting adjourned at 5:49pm.