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## **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: October 16, 2017**

In attendance: Mr. Paul Semelfort (Chair), Ms. Denise Rush (Co-Chair), Ms. Darnise Bush, Ms. Hazell Brooks, Ms. Carolyn Bellamy, and Dr. Philip Posner.

### **Call to Order**

Chair Paul Semelfort called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:14pm.

### **Review of October 2017 Agenda**

The agenda was approved without amendments.

### **Review of September 2017 Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Carolyn Bellamy stated several comments provided regarding the new MetroAccess vehicles were not included in the minutes.

Ms. Allison Anderson, MetroAccess Operations Manager, Operations Control Center, stated MetroAccess personnel will review the recording from September 18<sup>th</sup> to ensure all comments have been included.

Ms. Darnise Bush stated under the New Vehicle Demonstration and Discussion section, the committee's concerns regarding the vehicle's steps were missing.

Mr. Semelfort stated the minutes will be held for approval until the November 20<sup>th</sup> meeting pending a review from WMATA staff.

### **Customer Service and Outreach Report**

Ms. Jennifer Weber, Quality Assurance Compliance Auditor, MTM, reported the eight public comments were received from the previous meetings. All customers were contacted, and resolution efforts were provided to address each service issue.

Mr. David Shaffer, Access Policy Officer, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, reported within the last month he has attended outreach events at the National Federation of the Blind National Harbor Chapter- Annual Resource Day, District of Columbia Rehabilitation Services Administration (DC RSA) "Navigating Your Independence Through Community Opportunities" Forum, and the Montgomery College Youth Transitions Fair. Information was shared and questions were answered regarding MetroAccess service, Abilities-Ride, Bus and Rail accessibility, and the Travel Training Program.

Mr. Shaffer advised the committee regarding upcoming events, include speaking with the Veterans Engagement Board at Veterans Hospital and the Department of Disability Service at Judiciary Square.

Ms. Anderson encouraged committee members to provide recommendations on upcoming special events and locations in need of discussion and materials related to MetroAccess service.

### **Comments from MAS**

Dr. Posner inquired if there is an established pickup and drop-off point for the National Harbor. The casino, outlet mall, and shopping centers seem to have the same address.

**Mr. Shaffer stated he was unsure of the designated pickup and drop-off point for the National Harbor. He advised there has not been an issue in the past with pickups and drop-offs. In cases of this nature, he refers this information to Ms. Anderson to assess the geocoding of a location.**

**Ms. Anderson stated a pickup point has been established for customers traveling to the MGM Grand. If a customer has additional concerns with pickups and drop-offs at the National Harbor, adjustments can be made in the system to alleviate any delays.**

Ms. Bush stated Mr. Shaffer did a great job at the DC RSA outreach event with such short notice.

Dr. Posner requested data on the minimum and maximum fares and how the statistics correspond to bus route changes by jurisdictions.

**Mr. Leroy Hayford, Financial Manager, MetroAccess, advised he can provide the minimum and maximum fares and will determine if this information is available by jurisdiction.**

Ms. Rush inquired if statistics on customer and operator incidents in the new MetroAccess vehicle can be provided.

Ms. Bellamy inquired if this request can be accommodated prior to the Ford meeting.

**Mr. Donald Scruggs, Assistant Director, MetroAccess, stated he will attempt to compile this information prior to the meeting with Ford on November 6<sup>th</sup>.**

### **Tour of MetroAccess Operation Control Center (OCC)**

Ms. Anderson welcomed the committee to the Office of MetroAccess Service and introduced Ms. Nicole Ridgeway-Reid, Director, MV Transportation as the presenter and guide for the MetroAccess OCC tour.

Ms. Ridgeway-Reid provided an overview of the MetroAccess OCC departments and staff assignments. She advised the Reservations Department consists of seventy-five (75) agents, one supervisor, being led by Quality Assurance and Acting Reservations Manager Angela Estes. Reservations is open to accept calls Monday through Sunday 8:00am to 4:30pm. Reservationists receive between 2,300 and 3,100 calls per day. The Reservations Department leads the OCC in customer commendations. The Scheduling Department consists of ten schedulers reviewing 8,500 to 9,200 trips per weekday, and 2,500 to 3,000 trips on the weekend. Schedulers are assigned to develop manifests, review routing for efficiency, and ensure the assigned MetroAccess performance metrics are being met. The Dispatch Department consists of fifty-five (55) dispatch agents, twenty-five (25) supervisors, and six managers. On average, agents monitor thirty-five (35) routes with one supervisor assigned to every four agents. The Reconciliation Department performs manifest and system reviews for accuracy.

Ms. Ridgeway-Reid stated in addition to Trapeze, MV Transportation has been utilizing a software called Viewpoint, which will improve and enhance route monitoring in the Dispatch Department. The IT Department is composed of an IT director and five administrators. The Quality Assurance and Training Department ensures employees are being hired that fit the company's mission and goals.

Ms. Ridgeway-Reid led the group through the OCC discussing the features and tools utilized daily by each department to facilitate and administer service.

### **MetroAccess Employee Recognition**

Mr. Michael Rademacher, Administrative Manager, MV Transportation, recognized Dispatch Manager Mr. Adam Lasky as the Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award winner. Mr. Rademacher advised during Mr. Lasky's tenure he has had an outstanding degree of efficiency, accuracy, and professionalism. Mr. Lasky is also well known for displaying an exceptional level of customer service to both the customer and team members.

### **Discussion of Vehicle Demonstration and AAC Recommendations**

Mr. Scruggs stated during the last meeting the committee provided a list of new vehicle concerns in which he has investigated, and will provide an update on mitigation efforts taken to address. He advised the limited knee space on the right-side seat was evaluated. Placement of the heater was identified as the reason for the space limitation. There is the possibility that the heater can be moved to the left side of the vehicle and shifted vertically. This modification is typically made to the vehicles in the building stages. To increase this space on the vehicles already built, the fix will include movement of the vertical stanchion. A review of the height of the fold down double seat in the rear of the vehicle was also performed. Unfortunately, alterations cannot be made to lower the seat with this model. Adjusting this seat will limit the amount of wheelchair space on the vehicle. There were several questions brought forth regarding the new vehicle steps. A year ago, the decision was made to utilize the narrow step as opposed to the wide step to reduce the amount of fixed object strikes. The transition to the wider step can be applied. Another concern brought forth by several visually impaired customers was the need for a lip at the end of the step to add tactile detection. This feature can be added to the vehicles, along with roughing the surface of the step to prevent slips and falls.

The committee reported the need for an overhead grip bar on the new vehicles, and to add a left side armrest to the double fold down seat. A build can be administered to accommodate the overhead grip bar, however, we are unable to accommodate the request for the left side armrest, as it would impede the fold down functionality of the seat. It was also agreed that the positioning of the vehicle's ranger could be lifted by replacing the extension bar, which will prevent the operator's need to look down while in transit. An added change identified by WMATA staff will include extra lighting in the rear of the vehicles.

Mr. Poser inquired if it is possible to remove the seat from the front of the vehicle and have one less seat on the van.

**Mr. Scruggs advised that this option was not under consideration, and would require additional discussion from executive management.**

Ms. Bellamy stated she does not believe it is acceptable or safe for a customer's legs to swing. The customer's ability to have their feet planted on the floor provides a sense of stability.

Dr. Posner stated he has witnessed providers in alternative paratransit systems offer a block to place underneath the customer's feet to provide stability. This may be a solution to this issue.

**Mr. Scruggs stated he will explore this option; however, he must ensure that this does not impede the walkway and create a safety risk.**

Ms. Darnise Bush stated frequent movement in the seat of the new vehicles causes the seat belt to tighten to an uncomfortable position.

**Mr. Scruggs stated the seat belt is only designed to tighten if it is completely extended and not locked into position.**

**Mr. Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, inquired on the intent of the comments raised by the committee.**

Ms. Bellamy stated this information is being provided to help understand these vehicles are not designed for a disabled customer. If a disabled customer would have performed an evaluation of the vehicle prior to this purchase they would not have been approved.

**Mr. Kent commented that during the procurement process it would have been ideal to purchase the same vehicle utilized in the past; however, the vehicle was no longer available. The meeting established with Ford will give the committee an opportunity to provide feedback on future designs of MetroAccess vehicles. There are no choices in the automobile industry to fit these expectations. Manufacturers do not wish to perform up fitting and conversions to their vehicles. The disability community needs the automobile industry to create a paratransit vehicle market, and the meeting with Ford will initiate a platform to do so.**

Ms. Bellamy stated two customers cannot sit on the back seat together. She also commented that operators should not have to look down to view their manifest, and the tail pipe is low enough to scrape speed bumps.

Dr. Posner inquired if a vehicle will be onsite for the Ford meeting.

**Mr. Scruggs stated a vehicle will be onsite. There will be three vendors in attendance for this meeting. With the collaboration of Ford, Mobility Works, and Sonny Merriman, adjustments will be made to the vehicle to address the committee's concerns. The low tail pipe concern can be mitigated by adjusting the vehicle's turndown.**

**Mr. Kent stated these parties will work together to ensure the vehicle is not modified in an unsafe manner. Ford monitors the customizations to ensure that their safety standards are kept in place.**

Ms. Bush stated the handle bars on the lift need to be extended. They are not long enough for a customer in a wheelchair.

**Mr. Scruggs stated the grab bars are the exact same size as the older vehicles.**

Ms. Brooks stated that upon entry and exit she risks banging her head. This van is very uncomfortable for a tall customer.

**Mr. Scruggs stated there has been an uptick in customer lift usage due to the narrow step. This concern has been provided to Ford and the conversion company to raise the height of the door from six inches to eight inches for future models.**

Ms. Bellamy stated a heavy-set operator cannot drive a newer van comfortably. Operators are unable to adjust the seat. Metro is paying a great deal of money for the new vehicles and all issues brought forth by the committee should be addressed.

**Mr. Scruggs stated the operator's seat is roomy; however, if reports are received, adjustments can be made. He has received very few reports from operators.**

Ms. Brooks inquired on the reason WMATA would accept these vehicles if they are not satisfactory. She also inquired if there are any other manufactures outside of Ford that could provide a quality van.

**Mr. Kent stated outside of the current modifications in place, the vans have been purchased and will be transitioned into service. The new vehicles purchased met the required buy America and accessibility specifications. For customers that do not wish to travel in this van, the option may be available in the future to place their vehicle preference on file.**

Ms. Bellamy stated that customers are required equal rights and there should be no circumstances in which a customer is turned away.

**Mr. Scruggs stated Dodge Ram Van, Mercedes Sprinter, and Toyota MPV van, do not meet the buy America provisions. Ford is the only van in this weight class that meets the approved specifications.**

Ms. Bellamy recommended establishing a work group to manage the committee's new vehicle concerns.

Mr. Semelfort advised he agreed and communication should be provided via email to ensure all parties are well informed.

**Abilities-Ride Discussion:**

Mr. Semelfort suggested taxi companies offering Abilities-Ride streamline the reservations process. When calling to schedule a trip, customers are being bounced around, and on one occasion he was transferred to a voicemail. Informing dispatch that you are a MetroAccess customer should speed up the reservations process.

**Mr. Kent stated this information will be shared with Mr. Blake.**

Mr. Semelfort stated overall his trips have gone well; however, for longer trips, the operators require additional instructions on how to navigate to a destination.

**Mr. Kent thanked Mr. Semelfort for his feedback, and requested additional feedback from customers traveling in wheelchairs. Prior to the start of Abilities-Ride, taxi companies have been dormant. Operators are not familiar with the area but will develop familiarity over time. Through positive reinforcement and customer service reports, this program will advance. Satisfaction of MetroAccess customers will fuel additional funding from WMATA.**

Ms. Bush inquired if there is a flyer being distributed for the Abilities-Ride program.

**Mr. Semelfort stated there are additional details on [abilitesride.com](http://abilitesride.com).**

**Mr. Kent stated communication will be posted by MetroAccess staff to inform customers of the program.**

Ms. Bellamy inquired on the type of oversight being provided for this program.

**Mr. Kent stated customer feedback on the quality of service is the principal means of oversight being used.**

**Meeting adjourned at 6:03pm.**