



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: December 15, 2014

In attendance: Mr. Paul Semelfort (Chair), Ms. Denise Rush (Co-Chair), Ms. Heidi Case, Ms. Doris Ray, Dr. Phil Posner, Mr. Edward McEntee, Mr. Roger Stanley, Mr. Charles Crawford, Ms. Phillipa Mezile, Dr. Tappan Banerjee and Elver Ariza-Silva.

Call to Order

Chair Semelfort called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:02pm.

Review of October 2014 Agenda

The agenda was approved without amendments.

Review of September 2014 Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved without amendments.

Customer Service and Outreach Report

Ms. Sara Morris, Senior Administrative Coordinator, MTM, reported that all public comments from the previous meetings have been addressed.

Ms. Jacqueline Quander, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, reported that there were no outreach events for the month of December. On December 10th the 2014 Mayor's Annual Senior Holiday celebration took place. MetroAccess was in attendance as was Mr. Reginald Ward, Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach, who set-up a table with information regarding the travel training program. Mr. Irving Frye, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, attended a meeting in preparation for relocation of MVLE on Boston Boulevard, Springfield, VA.

MetroAccess Employee Recognition

Ms. Celisse Outlaw, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, recognized David Gray as the Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award winner. A detailed description of Mr. Gray's accomplishments can be found in the accompanying document titled "Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award" located under the December 2014 heading at http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm.

The Marketing of Fixed Route Services – Barriers to Utilization

Mr. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, stated that the topic was discussed at the previous Bus and Rail Subcommittee meeting. He stated that the goal of Metro is to provide customers with disabilities the same freedom and independence that others have in terms of the ability to utilize fixed route service at their own convenience. He invited MAS members to outline barriers to the utilization of fixed route service for people with disabilities.

He asked that members be as specific and detailed as possible in their comments so the comments can be incorporated in a Board-directed study that the Department of Access Services will conduct. This study will be used to advise the Board on specific actions that can be done to help customers with disabilities better use fixed route service.

Questions: (The comments to the questions are a summary of all comments made from committee members and the public).

What is your overall perception of Metro's Bus and Rail services as they relate to being able to be used by people with disabilities?

Committee members made comments in regards to navigating bus and rail using wheelchairs and scooters. Members stated that such navigation remains difficult for several reasons, including the lack of space to turn scooters and power wheelchairs around at the bus stop as well as on the bus. They state that drivers are unsure how to board customers with scooters and power wheelchairs. Narrow openings through the emergency gates are difficult for wheelchairs and scooters, and many times the elevators are not working. The bus shelters are not accessible due to lack of space, bus ramps are unable to lower correctly for access to the bus. Traveling in inclement weather (rain or snow) would prevent individuals with power chairs or scooters from utilizing fixed route transportation. MetroAccess affords these individuals the ability to travel in inclement weather.

Individuals with cognitive disabilities have difficulty figuring out where the buses are going and where the stops will be. The signage and bus schedules are not clear for these individuals.

Members expressed concern with safety, stating that a lot of robberies occur on the bus. Station lighting was a concern as well as the ability to receive important information via announcements on the platform and on trains, annunciators are frequently not working. Orientation and mobility training for individuals with vision impairments is lacking. Long rides bus-to-bus, or rail-to-bus is another barrier for the disability community.

Better communication between the drivers and the customers.

People with disabilities need to be able to adapt to the changes that occur on bus and rail. If the disability community could trust that Metro staff would be available to assist in these instances, this would not exist as a possible barrier. Language also exists as a barrier to utilizing bus and rail. Information is not readily available to understand how fixed route operates.

Do you know that as much as sixty percent of eligible MetroAccess customers are certified as Conditionally Eligible?

Conditional eligibility is not well known and therefore ensuring that individuals are knowledgeable about Conditional Eligibility and the policies related to it is necessary.

A concern for customers was raised that there needs to be a distinction made, in the criteria used to make customers eligible for MetroAccess and the benefits of conditional eligibility verses the Reduced Fare Program. Opening up the discussion may prove to be more productive.

What do you think of Metro's efforts to promote bus and rail services to people with disabilities?

Educating drivers and customers on the available programs that Metro offers to customers with disabilities, lack of marketing, cutting bus routes that prevent disabled individuals from getting to the next stop nearest them are items that Metro needs to improve upon.

Public Comments

Comments received were with regard to: Question of what is fixed route; a suggestion that Reservationists discontinue stating that that MetroAccess does not offer same day trips during calls for reservations; suggestion for possible changes to the three-quarter mile service area policy; late arrivals of vehicles; one year eligibility; route trip movement; dispatch calling drivers too much; allowing drivers to have customers' phone numbers; late pick-ups; and seatbelt issues.

Comments from the Committee:

Ms. Rush commented that service animals must remain on the floor and not occupy a seat on the vehicle. She also questioned the fare for trips in the same zip code being varied. Ms. Rush's final comment was regarding the reservations process and the need to call Reservations several times for a customer to get a time that would work best for them.

Ms. Case shared a success story of a customer who transitioned from MetroAccess to being able to access and utilizes fixed route transportation.

For detailed descriptions and resolutions of public comments made during the meeting, please refer to the December 2014 Complaint Resolution Report located at http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm.

Meeting adjourned at 5:56pm.