



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

Accessibility Advisory Committee

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: April 18, 2016

In attendance: Mr. Paul Semelfort (Chair), Ms. Denise Rush (Co-Chair), Mr. Patrick Sheehan, Mr. Edward McEntee, Ms. Marisa Laios, Mr. Charles Crawford, Ms. Darnise Bush, Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Mr. Elver Ariza-Silva, Dr. William Staderman, and Ms. Phillipa Mezile.

Call to Order

Dr. William Staderman called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:00pm.

Review of April 2016 Agenda

The agenda was approved without amendments.

Review of March 2016 Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved without amendments.

Customer Service and Outreach Report

Ms. Jennifer Weber, Quality Assurance, MTM, reported all public comments from the previous meetings were addressed.

Ms. Stephanie Newsome, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, reported attending an outreach event on April 13, 2016 at Fresenius Kidney Care Facility in Suitland, Md. During this event, information was shared and questions were answered regarding MetroAccess service.

Mr. Crawford requested a summary of the top three major issues and the resolutions that have been reported over the last three months. He stated this information would be helpful in determining if there have been improvements on specific issues, or if these issues are still unresolved.

Ms. Allison Anderson, MetroAccess Operations Manager, said the information would be compiled and made available at the next MAS meeting.

Safety – Seat Belt Incident Statistics Presentation

Mr. Donald Scruggs, Assistant Director, MetroAccess, provided information regarding the effectiveness of insufficient securement in mobility transportation. He began by presenting seat belt injury and fatality statistics illustrating seat belts saved an estimated 12,584 lives in 2013. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has provided data showing seat belts reduce the risk of serious crash-related injuries and death by about half. The data reported unbelted passengers add risk to other occupants in the vehicle by becoming projectiles, and lap belts alone do not

protect well. Mr. Scruggs provided the history of crash test dummies and the sled test used in determining how speed and the use or nonuse of seat belts affects passengers. He cited the organizations that set the wheelchair safety and design standards and described the standards that apply to MetroAccess vehicles and mobility devices. Wheelchairs themselves have transportation standards which have a direct bearing on the safety of the user and all persons in the vehicle. Mr. Scruggs included video clips and narrated each, demonstrating the sled tests with crash test dummies in standard wheelchairs. In the videos, the crash test dummies were shown utilizing different securements, as well as compliant and non-compliant wheelchairs. Each clip displayed the impact and potential areas of injury incurred with the use of each securement type during a crash.

Mr. Scruggs said the presentation was meant to inform individuals about risk. WMATA takes the safety of our customers, passengers and operators very seriously. He thanked Ms. Rush for suggesting a presentation on the impact of seat belt usage.

Comments from the Committee and the Public on Safety – Seat Belt Incident Statistics Presentation

Mr. McEntee asked if the lap belt was attached to the chair frame in the lap belt only video clip. He also described an incident when he was injured.

Mr. Scruggs stated in the video clip, the lap belt is attached to the anchors on the floor.

Ms. Rush asked if there were examples of passengers sitting in a regular seat on a van, as there are MetroAccess customers with seat belt waivers who are not wheelchair users.

Mr. Scruggs said all of the videos were of wheelchair securements.

Dr. Banerjee stated that in the video, even with the proper securements, the head is not protected and moving around. He asked if head protection may be needed.

Mr. Scruggs explained that proper securement would not mitigate all possible injuries, but it would reduce the risks.

Ms. Bush asked if the research applies primarily to a standard wheelchair or to power wheelchairs and scooters.

Mr. Scruggs stated that some of the research at the University of Michigan included power wheelchairs but not scooters. The majority of the research was completed on manual wheelchairs.

Dr. Banerjee advised the power wheelchair is safer than the manual wheelchair due to the weight of the power wheelchair.

Dr. Staderman said the information provided was valuable.

Ms. Rush asked if there was a breakdown of the number of injuries that have occurred on MetroAccess vehicles, involving individuals that have a seat belt waiver.

Mr. Scruggs said he did not have that information, and was not aware that the information had been recorded in the safety database. Attempting to glean statistics from a very small sample is generally misleading, but he would investigate if there is data available.

Ms. Laios said she cannot wear belts due to medical issues, but she has her own seat belt. She asked if there were images of wheelchair users that utilize wheelchair seat belts only.

Mr. Scruggs stated that one of the video clips demonstrated a wheelchair seat belt being used and the belt snapped loose on impact.

Mr. McEntee commented that his wheelchair seat belt saved his life during an accident.

Mr. Scruggs said any securement on a mobility device will assist in a low speed impact, and are better than no securement at all.

Public Comments

Comments received were with regard to commendation for MetroAccess operators, fare changes, charges for companion, limited service to Centerville, VA, subscription policy, vehicle monitoring, continued dispatcher calls to operators, and how operators distinguish which customer should be dropped off first.

Comments from the MAS

Ms. Rush commented on the issues with the phone system in the MetroAccess Operations Control Center. She stated the system was down on several occasions, only allowing reservations calls.

Ms. Laios echoed Ms. Rush's comments stating that when there are issues with the phone system, the Reservations department should extend their hours to accommodate customer calls. She said on one occasion she was advised she could only make reservations for the following day and would have to call back to make reservations for any other day.

Ms. Rush and Ms. Laios stated that during these outages calls are disconnected and are not placed in the telephone queue for the next available reservationist.

Ms. Anderson explained there have been recent issues with the interactive voice response (IVR) system and WMATA has been attempting to resolve the issue. When issues arise, the system is placed in fail over mode which will allow basic operations to occur, such as making reservations or requesting information regarding trips through Where's My Ride (WMR). Canceling and making changes to trips through either department are also still available in fail over mode. The outages have not extended over a 24-hour period, but have been sporadic for a few hours during the day. Reservation department hours will be extended, when needed, to accommodate customers who have waited for long periods or had difficulty reaching the Reservation department to book trips because of an outage.

Ms. Bush commented about the question regarding companion fare. She said the operator does not make a decision on the amount a companion pays. The operator will request from the customer the amount that is printed on the manifest. The customer may be charged the fare for the companion, whether the companion travels or not. Ms. Bush also commented about the phone system issues. She then asked if there is a glitch in the system that causes two customers traveling from the same location with very different pick-up windows to be paired together. Ms. Bush said this has happened to her, causing her to wait for the window of the second customer to begin, which in some cases has been over 30 minutes.

Ms. Anderson clarified the response stated earlier during public comment that the operator is to notify dispatch if the companion is not present for travel. This information will be noted by the dispatcher and a refund of the companion fare will be provided if it was paid through the customer's EZ-Pay account. Ms. Anderson thanked Ms. Bush for her suggestion regarding schedulers taking a trip on MetroAccess so they have a better understanding of trip routing. She advised Ms. Bush that a service monitor will speak with her after the meeting to get more information regarding the issue of waiting for other customer's pick-up windows to begin.

Dr. Banerjee asked how often the issues with the phone system are occurring. He suggested that the MetroAccess Subcommittee Performance Report include the top five customer complaints, and these complaints be measured to determine if there is a change or resolution to the issues highlighted.

Mr. Leroy Hayford, Financial Operations Manager, MetroAccess, said those figures are reviewed and available. He asked that a formal request for the information be made by the committee.

Mr. Semelfort advised the committee to propose a motion.

Dr. Banerjee requested a motion be made to receive statistics on the top five common customer complaints. The information should be included in the monthly performance report beginning May 2016, and the report should include statistics for the previous three months. The committee approved the motion.

Ms. Laios advised Ms. Bush to contact a dispatch supervisor when she is on a vehicle waiting for another customer's pick-up window to begin.

Ms. Rush asked if there is a standard time to wait for another customer's pick-up window to begin when two customers are at the same location.

Ms. Anderson said there is not a set time as there are other parameters involved in the pick-up process; however, a customer should not be waiting 30 minutes on another customer under the scenario described.

Mr. Crawford stated that he has had issues with the automated system for EZ-Pay. He said the call times out before he has finished inputting his credit card number. He requested the timing on the call be extended.

Ms. Anderson advised Mr. Crawford that someone would look into his report.

Ms. Rush stated she is still having issues with operators locating her work address. She asked about the GPS updates.

Ms. Janice Carpenter, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, informed Ms. Rush that she took a trip on a MetroAccess vehicle to her work location on 1330 Connecticut Ave. NW to listen to the GPS system and determine how the operators are being directed. Ms. Carpenter explained that the system directs the operators to the correct location when traveling north bound on Connecticut Ave. NW, toward Dupont Circle. However, when traveling south bound on Connecticut Ave. NW, the GPS system announces its arrival on the odd side of the street, across the overpass from the actual location. Ms. Carpenter said, according to WMATA IT, this issue is related to needed mapping updates that will occur very soon, and this update should correct the reported problem.

Ms. Bush commented that though operators are now able to find her home location in the morning, they have problems locating it in the evenings. She said she knows someone visited her location to make the needed changes, which has helped during her morning trip.

Ms. Anderson said someone would look into this.

Dr. B. Moore-Gwynn, Accessibility Advisory Committee Coordinator, Office of ADA Policy & Planning, advised the committee that the next MAS meeting will be a field trip to the

MetroAccess Operations Control Center in Hyattsville, MD. She advised committee members to book their trips to and from that location. She will email the information and request members to RSVP with her.

For detailed descriptions and resolutions of public comments made during the meeting, please refer to the April 2016 Complaint Resolution Report located at http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm.

Meeting adjourned at 5:48pm.