



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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### **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: March 16, 2015**

In attendance: Mr. Paul Semelfort (Chair), Ms. Denise Rush (Co-Chair), Ms. Carolyn Bellamy, Dr. Phil Posner, Mr. Edward McEntee, Mr. Charles Crawford, Ms. Marisa Laios, Dr. William Staderman, Ms. Doris Ray, Dr. Tappan Banerjee, and Mr. Elver Ariza-Silva

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Semelfort called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:00pm.

#### **Review of March 2015 Agenda**

The agenda was approved with the addition of a comment from Ms. Carolyn Bellamy. Agenda approved with amendments.

#### **Review of January 2015 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. Celisse Outlaw, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, reported the attendance at Leisure World's Transportation Fair in Silver Spring, MD. Information pertaining to MetroAccess service, travel training, and senior smart-trip cards was shared with the attendees. The fifty attendees were welcoming and grateful for the information.

#### **MetroAccess Employee Recognition**

Ms. Janice Carpenter, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, recognized Ms. Euell Washington as the Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award winner. A detailed description of Ms. Washington's accomplishments can be found in the accompanying document titled "Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award" located under the March 2015 heading at [http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy\\_policy/subcommittee.cfm](http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm)

#### **Paratransit Faring Profile**

Mr. Leroy Hayford, Financial Operations Manager, MetroAccess, provided a presentation on MetroAccess ridership and fare distribution. He noted that the analysis had been requested by the Subcommittee and is presented at least once a year. He began by explaining that under MetroAccess policy, certain passenger trips do not require fare payment such as those taken by Personal Care Attendants (PCA) and Eligibility Assessment among others. He then explained that for the integrity of the analysis, the nonpaying portion of ridership had to be excluded from total. For that reason, ridership depicted in the presentation was actually a subset of overall ridership that addresses

only those passenger trips that required fare payment. He went on to note that the analyses compared the 2nd quarter ridership (October – December 2014) to the same period in the previous year. He noted that the time period selected for review was intended to mitigate the short-term statistical impact associated with decisions and behaviors of riders based on the most recent fare policy change that occurred in July 2014.

The presentation centered on a histogram that demonstrated the relationship between paratransit fare ranges (in 49-cent increments up to the present maximum fare of \$6.50) and the percentage of riders that actually paid the fare. He indicated that the bar representing the maximum fare of \$7.00 during Fiscal Year 2014 is noted for data consistency. He noted that the distribution of fares paid has remained largely bimodal consistent with previous reports, on one end, it is \$3.50 to \$3.99, and on the other, it is \$6.50 to \$6.99. He explained however, that the findings as depicted by the bar graph clearly demonstrated a shift in the ranges associated with fares paid. He went on to explain that on the low end of the fare structure, 46% of MetroAccess riders paid fares in the range of \$3.00 and \$3.49 during the quarter in Fiscal Year 2014. During the same period in FY2015, however, 47% of MetroAccess riders paid fares between \$3.50 and \$3.99. The maximum fare in FY2014 was \$7.00 for 24% of ridership compared to FY 2015 where the maximum fare is \$6.50 for 34% of ridership. Mr. Hayford concluded his presentation by stating that the average fare (based on riders that paid the fare) has been \$4.78 for the past six months.

Questions/Comments:

**Dr. Posner asked if the interval breakdown for the fares between \$3.50 and \$3.99 could be provided. He commented that prior to the fare increase the Committee asked for a fixed rate fare of \$4.50. The mean fare is now \$4.78 which is fairly close to what was requested as the fixed rate fare.**

**Mr. Crawford asked for the number of paying customers and the total number of MetroAccess riders.**

Mr. Hayford said he would review the request further and obtain additional clarity (from Dr. Posner) in order to provide an appropriate response.

Mr. Hayford stated that the ridership category that includes PCAs and Eligibility appointments typically represent 13% to 15% of monthly paratransit ridership.

**Dr. Banerjee asked the cause of the percentage fluctuation in ridership between fiscal year 2014 and 2015.**

Mr. Hayford stated that it could be a combination of factors, the nature of the trips, the timing of the trips, shifts in ridership, seasonal etc.

### **Door-to-Door Video Presentation**

The updated Door-to-Door video was viewed by the Committee and public in attendance to fully explain the door-to-door policy. Mr. Omari June, Director of MetroAccess, introduced the video.

#### Questions/Comments:

**Ms. Bellamy stated that there is still a problem with customers understanding of the door-to-door policy and the expectations of what it should be. She also said the five minute wait time is not allowing enough time for customers to get to the vehicle nor the drivers to perform door-to-door.**

**Mr. Ariza-Silva was thankful for the video. He asked that the video and training be offered to the DC Taxi Project as taxi drivers are not offering door-to-door service to the customers.**

Mr. Blake explained that the DC Taxi Project is required to offer door-through-door service ensuring that customers are taken inside the facility. The companies are required to provide certification that the drivers have been trained to a certain level of customer sensitivity.

**Dr. Banerjee commented that there was a picture of Dulles airport in the video when MetroAccess does not travel to Dulles airport. He also asked how MetroAccess arrived at the five minute wait time. He and Ms. Bellamy discussed the process for a driver to arrive the trip, make contact or not with the customer and return to the vehicle to contact dispatch. They both agreed that the wait time should be ten to twelve minutes.**

**Dr. Posner asked if the new GPS systems will alleviate the driver performing the function of arriving the trip at the location, therefore allowing the dispatcher to see when the vehicle does arrive and begin the five minute wait time. He also commented that the five minute wait time pertains to contact with the customer but by the time the driver contacts dispatch, and dispatch attempts to contact the customer the time is longer than five minutes and causes delays in the service.**

Mr. June clarified that the five minute wait time is for the customer to present themselves for boarding the vehicle. It is not the time it takes for the customer to traverse from their pick-up location to the vehicle. He stated that the customer's responsibility is to be ready for boarding during the thirty-minute window. Mr. June addressed Dr. Posner regarding the GPS system. He said the system is already installed in the vehicles, and dispatch can see where the vehicles are at all times. The auto arrive capability does exist; however, there are complications with usage. At large facilities there is a very specific geocode point that is activated when the vehicle arrives at the location. When there are multiple entrances, the vehicle may arrive at a place where the customer is not located. The driver is required to press arrive when they arrive at

the location. He said that by the reaction from the attendees, some corrections may be needed.

**Dr. Banerjee asked if a customer's spouse or child meets the driver at the door and informs the driver that the customer is coming. Will the five minute time begin at that point? If the driver sees the customer while the driver is still at the location will the No-Show process still continue?**

Mr. June affirmed that the five minute wait does begin when the driver knocks at the door. He said that if the customer presents themselves for boarding while the driver is still on location, the driver is to go back to the door and assist the customer to the vehicle. He stated that the intent is to make contact with the customer and provide transportation.

**Ms. Rush stated dispatch agents need to be retrained. She said that dispatchers are ready to No-Show customers when the driver has not provided door-to-door. She continued stating that taxi cab drivers are not providing door-to-door service.**

Mr. June stated MetroAccess takes incidents like these very seriously. MetroAccess is working to improve in this area and would like these customers to bring it to staff's attention when these incidents occur. He reiterated that drivers are to perform door-to-door service each and every time.

Mr. Blake explained the difference in the DC Taxi Project versus MetroAccess taxi providers. He stated trips provided through the DC Taxi Project are not affiliated with MetroAccess service or the MetroAccess Call Center. Those trips are provided directly by the District of Columbia government. The drivers are required to provide door-through-door service. Trips that are booked through the MetroAccess Reservations department and scheduled with a MetroAccess taxi provider will provide door-to-door service.

**A comment from the public expressed an interest in the following: Why don't customers get a courtesy call; who is going to inform the dispatchers and driver on the five minute wait time; when is the arrive button activated (i.e. once the driver has parked or when the driver is preparing to do door-to-door; will the new system inform dispatchers when another dispatcher has made contact with the driver to avoid No-Shows; why doesn't the driver knock on the door?**

Mr. June stated the courtesy call is just that, an automated call that goes out when the vehicle arrives. The GPS system on the vehicles alert staff to when the vehicle arrives and the five minutes begins when the vehicle arrives. The arrival button must be pressed once the driver arrives at the location.

### **Public Comments**

Comments received were with regard to: Grandfathering, CPR certification of drivers, trip insertions, late pick-ups, excessive on board time, issue with booking trips by appointment time, courtesy calls, five-minute wait period for No-Show, dispatchers give

incorrect estimated time of arrivals, safety policy, allow customers to have drivers phone numbers, circuitous trips, message for weather cancellations.

**Comments from the Committee**

Ms. Rush explained the courtesy calls.

Ms. Bellamy commended MetroAccess during the recent inclement weather event. The drivers, dispatchers, and other staff traversed the weather and worked to ensure that the customers made it to their homes safely.

Mr. June thanked everyone for attendance at the MAS meeting. He stated that while it was difficult to hear the level of complaints that were presented, he realizes there is a lot of work to do and he takes what was said seriously. Every situation will receive a response. He stated that work is being done to make MetroAccess the best paratransit service in the nation.

Mr. Semelfort announced that applications are being accepted for the AAC. Applications are due by March 30, 2015.

For detailed descriptions and resolutions of public comments made during the meeting, please refer to the March 2015 Complaint Resolution Report located at [http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy\\_policy/subcommittee.cfm](http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm).

**Meeting adjourned at 6:04pm.**