



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: March 21, 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. Doris Ray, Ms. Darnise Bush, Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Mr. Elver Ariza-Silva, Dr. William Staderman, and Dr. Philip Posner.

Call to Order

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

Review of March 2016 Agenda

The agenda was approved without amendments.

Review of February 2016 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Darnise Bush stated that her name was omitted from the list of attendees. The minutes were approved as amended.

Customer Service and Outreach Report

Mr. Carlton Brown, Quality Assurance Administrative Manager, MTM, reported all public comments from the previous meetings were addressed.

Ms. Janice Carpenter, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, reported MetroAccess staff attended an outreach event on February 23, 2016 at Target Community and Educational Services Inc. During this event, information was shared and questions were answered regarding MetroAccess service.

MetroAccess Employee Recognition

Ms. Celisse Outlaw, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, recognized Transdev operator Mr. Anthony Hall as the Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award winner. A detailed description of Mr. Hall's accomplishments can be found in the accompanying document titled "Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award" located under the March 2016 heading at http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm

Request for Information (RFI) Update and Discussion

Mr. Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, stated the deadline to submit feedback on the Abilities Ride RFI was Friday March 18. The information will be used to create an alternative transportation service for MetroAccess customers. A great deal of feedback from community stakeholders and potential vendors has been received. This information will be recorded and Metro will use it to begin internal vetting. This program is anticipated to begin later in the year, and if successful, may be expanded beyond Maryland at a future date.

Comments from the Committee and the Public on Abilities Ride:

Mr. Semelfort asked if the service would be within Prince George's and Montgomery Counties.

Mr. Blake stated this alternative service would operate within the MetroAccess service area in Maryland.

Dr. Posner inquired on the status of the Request for Proposal (RFP) and asked if multiple vendors will offer this service, and will the MAS and the AAC be included in the upcoming vetting process.

Mr. Blake stated all information provided on the proposal will be reviewed, which includes customer and prospective vendor feedback. The internal stakeholder vetting will conclude around May 1, 2016, at which time a final proposed outline of service will be created. The proposed RFP completion date is July 1, 2016, with service anticipated to begin in early September 2016. The contract will be awarded to a single vendor. Mr. Blake stated that he was uncertain if the committee would have input in the internal stakeholder vetting process, but that is not a decision for him to make.

Ms. Rush stated that some of the particulars of the service are unclear. She inquired on the daily limit of four rides per day, no telephone access for booking trips, and no door-to-door service.

Mr. Blake stated the four-trip maximum per day is the expected standard for the service during the pilot phase. Post pilot service could result in as little as two trips per day or the trip limit could be removed. Much like the fare could change to incorporate a minimum fare per trip. Telephone access for booking trips is possible, but door-to-door service will not likely be a requirement of this service.

Mr. Crawford inquired on the process following the RFI.

Mr. Blake stated that the AAC, members of the disability community, other special interest groups, as well as potential vendors encompass the external stakeholder group. He said the RFI process is considered external stakeholder vetting and a time for parties to provide input. The vetting of internal stakeholders includes the Department of Access Services and other WMATA departments. These parties will develop the final scope of service, which will be used to build the RFP.

Dr. Banerjee asked how long the pilot program would run before it is deemed permanent or not viable.

Mr. Blake said the program will be a success if several components are met; 1) customer usage, 2) reduction in demand for MetroAccess service, and 3) positive customer feedback. If there appears to be challenges, the pilot program will be extended in an effort to mitigate the issues prior to expansion. The program will likely remain a pilot for at least one year.

Ms. Ray asked for clarification regarding the amount per trip WMATA will subsidize for each customer. She also inquired if the state of Maryland or other sources will pay for the pilot program. Ms. Ray asked if the program would be available to disabled passengers who use fixed route exclusively. Ms. Ray made a motion that would allow the AAC to review the final scope of service prior to creating the RFP. The committee approved the motion.

Mr. Blake told Ms. Ray that she was correct in her understanding that WMATA will pay up to \$15 for each trip, and the customer is responsible for any amount exceeding \$15. The pilot program is to be paid through the MetroAccess subsidy collectively. Only MetroAccess certified customers would be able to utilize the program.

Ms. Rush asked about the pilot program for ARC customers, and whether the AAC was apprised of the program prior to implementation.

Mr. Blake stated the program is called the Coordinated Alternative to Paratransit Service (CAPS). There is a partnership between WMATA and the State of Maryland, where the State pays for the service directly. It began in Montgomery County with Community Support Services. When the Montgomery County pilot ended, the Prince George's County ARC pilot began. Both agencies were paid directly to provide transportation for their MetroAccess eligible clients. These trips are servicing customers with severe intellectual disabilities who require special attention, which public transportation is unable to provide. He credited Mr. Omari June, Director, MetroAccess and his staff for attempting to provide service to these individuals. However, it has become challenging to provide the level of special service these customers request.

Ms. Ray asked if the trip is below \$15 does the customer pay a cost, and will the vendor charge WMATA the exact cost or a flat rate of \$15.

Mr. Blake said if the trip is \$15 or below, the customer will not be charged. Metro will pay the exact amount of the fare up to \$15, plus any administrative fee that will be awarded in the contract.

Ms. Bush asked for the difference in the fare for wheelchair customers.

Mr. Blake stated there is a \$12 surcharge that is being proposed to incentivize wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) availability from the providers, and will be paid by Metro. The customer is responsible only for the fare over the \$15 limit.

Ms. Rush commented that the customer will only be able to travel within Maryland. She asked if exact fare will be needed, and how payment will be made.

Mr. Blake said MetroAccess EZ-Pay will not be a part of the payment structure for the pilot program. He stated most of the transportation computer application services require debit or credit card usage. However, some of the companies may be willing to accept cash.

Ms. Ray asked if there is a performance requirement for dispatching a wheelchair accessible vehicle upon customer request.

Mr. Blake said that experiences with Transport DC will be used as a guide. There will be measurements and evaluation, but the key will be to locate as many WAVs and incentivize them to the greatest extent possible. The measurement will be included in the final scope of service.

Ms. Rush asked about cancellation time for the pilot program.

Mr. Blake stated there will not be a No-Show/Late Cancellation policy for the pilot program. Most transportation network companies charge the customer \$4 if the customer does not cancel within four minutes of the vehicle arrival. This cost will not be charged to the customer. Metro will be required to pay the amount. Therefore, when these occur Metro will keep track of the occurrences for statistical purposes as well as possible follow-up with the customers.

Dr. Banerjee inquired about same day accommodations for customers using wheelchairs.

Mr. Blake stated Metro is attempting to create a program where there are enough WAVs so that the wait for a same day service request is reasonable.

Ms. Ray stated accessibility to all would require reservations to be made through means that do not require a smart phone or computer only. She referred to Alexandria Yellow Cab where a cell phone or computer application can be used.

Mr. Blake stated that within the feedback received from potential vendors, some communicated an ability to offer telephone service for reservations.

Ms. Bush asked if there will be at least fifty wheelchair accessible vehicles in the fleet. She asked if a card could be created, similar to a SmarTrip card, for this pilot program.

Mr. Blake stated there will be at least 50 WAVs and the vendor will need to demonstrate an effort to attract more WAVs to its platform. A card will not be available initially, however, the option may be considered later.

Ms. Ray asked for clarification if customers might utilize this pilot program to travel outside Maryland. Ms. Ray agreed with Dr. Banerjee that more than fifty vehicles will be needed for this service.

Mr. Semelfort stated this program is only available for use within Prince George's County and Montgomery County.

Mr. Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, stated the AAC is comprised of a diverse group of individuals that bring a wealth of knowledge with them. The committee has the ability to advise Metro on what the program should be at the end of the pilot. He asked that the committee listen to Metro staff as different scenarios are introduced. He said designing a program with the end in mind, does not allow testing of individual aspects

of the service to evaluate how they work before adding additional requirements. It is important to Metro to provide as many wheelchair accessible vehicles and options for reservations and payment to assist MetroAccess customers in this pilot program. Information from the RFI, and input from the committee will assist Metro in building an exceptional program for the customer.

Ms. Rush stated information suggests that MetroAccess trips cost Metro approximately \$50 per trip. She asked if there was a desired cost per trips for the pilot program.

Mr. Kent said providing that amount would afford prospective vendors who may be in attendance at the meeting and desiring to bid on the contract an unfair advantage over others that may not be in attendance.

Mr. Sheehan suggested utilizing primary and substitute vendors to deliver a more complete package. He asked if there are companies that are seeking substitutes to offer a better package. He also asked if there are optional tasks that will be put into the RFP that could be exercised in subsequent years.

Mr. Kent said that it makes sense to invite bidders to provide pricing for various levels of service. This could provide a contract mechanism that would already be in place if Metro decided to move to another level.

A customer comment asked how customers who do not have access to a computer or smart phone will be able to book trips with this pilot program.

Mr. Kent restated Mr. Blake's comment that interested providers may offer telephone usage as an option.

Public Comments

Comments received were with regard to commendation for MetroAccess drivers; Metro's need to be careful utilizing Uber; a question regarding Metro moving to a new location; issues with emergency gates at rail stations; customer sitting on a vehicle waiting for another customer's pick up window to begin; routing issues; fare changes; retaliation toward drivers; and, issues with vehicles sitting at Georgetown Hospital.

Comments from the MAS

Dr. Posner complimented Mr. June for the performance report statistics, which again recorded a decrease in passengers for the month of January 2016, and a decrease in the average weekday ridership for MetroAccess. He said these numbers illustrate the system is still viable. He asked if, due to the shutdown of Metrorail on Wednesday, March 16, 2016, if all MetroAccess trips were calculated based on bus fare. Dr. Posner stated because there were no other options available this seemed reasonable.

Mr. June stated the fare structure did not change for that day. He said all trips for that day were booked and fares deducted anticipating regular service when the announcement was made to cancel service. Mr. June stated

Metro is researching options to adjust fares when there is long-term construction.

Dr. Posner requested a motion be made, from the MetroAccess Subcommittee to the Accessibility Advisory Committee, recommending to the Board to apply the policy afforded the bus/rail passengers who were given a free ride due to the rail service disruption. He said MetroAccess passengers should be charged based on bus fare, not the normal calculated fare, for the March 16 incident. Passengers that traveled that day should receive a credit. The committee approved the motion.

Ms. Ray asked if there will be data collection on the pilot program to provide data on the number of trip denials, driver no-shows, and driver inability to find a location among other information that will relate to the provision of ADA paratransit.

Ms. Bush asked how often the GPS system is updated. She also stated that some dispatchers are not familiar with the service area. She recommends that a dispatcher go out on the road with a driver.

Mr. June commented that the GPS systems are updated on an annual basis. He said a more robust map implementation is underway. This map will provide a better map and translate to the GPS system. He explained geocoding and the ability to readjust when a customer informs staff that a vehicle is not at the proper location. He assured Ms. Bush MetroAccess staff would work to correct the geocoding for her location.

Ms. Rush said the geocoding for her work location is not correct. She also commented about a customer that was taken off a vehicle when the driver was directed to do so by a dispatch agent.

Ms. Allison Anderson, MetroAccess Operations Manager, asked Ms. Rush to provide the customer information to conduct an investigation.

Mr. Crawford commented about the gates at rail stations, which are locked. He asked if smart cards could be coded offering information related to customer needs.

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

Meeting adjourned at 6:01pm.