



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
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METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: October 17, 2016

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

Call to Order

Ms. Denise Rush called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:04pm.

Review of October 2016 Agenda

The agenda was amended to include updates on the budget process and the Abilities-Ride Program. The agenda was approved as amended.

Review of September 2016 Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved.

Customer Service and Outreach Report

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

Ms. Allison Anderson, MetroAccess Operations Manager, reported that Mr. Mark Nash, Field Operations Manager, MetroAccess, attended an outreach event at CHI Center in Silver Spring, Maryland. Mr. Nash fielded questions and provided information regarding MetroAccess Service.

MetroAccess ID Card Conversion for Conditionally Eligible Customers

Ms. Cheryl O'Konek, Operations Manager, Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach, explained Metro has been working on a plan to address the loss of revenue as a result of people bypassing the faregates by using the emergency gates. The disability community has expressed concern with locking these gates, as it will affect conditionally eligible MetroAccess customers who utilize the free ride benefit to travel on Metrorail. In an effort to address this concern and provide autonomous entry for conditionally eligible customers, the Department of Access Services has partnered with the Office of the Treasurer to develop a new MetroAccess ID card for conditionally eligible customers and their personal care attendants (PCA) that will provide the free ride benefit on a SmarTrip® platform.

The new ID will allow customers and their PCAs to continue to use Metrobus and Metrorail at no charge, and can be used for riding on participating jurisdictional bus services. Benefits currently provided by the jurisdictions will be maintained with this ID. The new cards work like all other SmarTrip® cards, in that the customer will be able to add value and can be used to pay for parking. There are no discounts for parking, nor is there a pre-loaded value when issued. A corresponding PCA card will be issued in conjunction with each conditionally eligible MetroAccess SmarTrip® ID card. The PCA card will allow anyone traveling with the customer to access the system for the same fare as the ID card holder. When not traveling with the customer, or if the PCA card is used more than 90 seconds after the customer on the same fare target, or if used within 90 seconds after the customer *on a different SmarTrip® fare target* (in the rail system), the PCA card will function as a full fare SmarTrip® card. The cards are being produced and will be mailed to conditionally eligible customers by the end of the year. Once the new card is received by the customer, the white MetroAccess ID card will no longer be valid for use in the system as a "flash card". Following the initial mailing, future cards will be produced, registered and mailed by the Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach to the customer at the time of certification. The card will deactivate if the customer is not recertified within the necessary timelines set by policy. A brochure with information about the new card will be included when the new card is mailed. Accessible formats will be available and provided upon request. The initial card will be provided at no charge to the customer. Lost cards will be \$10 for the first replacement and \$25 for subsequent replacements. Cards that are stolen will be replaced at no charge with a police report of theft. Cards that become illegible or stop working will be replaced at no charge if they are provided at the time of replacement. PCA cards that are lost will be \$2 for replacement. Any remaining balance on the card will be transferred at the time of replacement to the new card.

Mr. Kent continued to describe the new customer and PCA cards while explaining how the improvements to the card will give customers autonomy in the Metro system and the ability to use Metrorail without requiring a station manager to provide access via the faregate or emergency gate. This will allow station managers to focus on safety, as well as allow WMATA to collect data on the number of customers with disabilities using bus and rail.

Dr. Posner asked if the cards would have raised lettering or braille.

Ms. O’Konek stated that they do not, but The Office of Eligibility has a brailler to add the ID numbers and expiration date, if requested, as is the practice for the current cards.

Mr. Ariza-Silva expressed his gratitude for the new cards. He also asked what the status will be for a rider who currently holds a blue card, when the new cards are issued.

Mr. Kent said a customer who received the blue card has been deemed ineligible due to safety concerns to utilize bus and rail through self-reporting, doctor certification, or results of the Transit Accessibility Center assessment. A customer with a blue card may reapply to the Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach if their condition changes or they secure a PCA to travel with them. It would be necessary for them to go through the entire assessment process again.

Dr. Posner asked if the new card could be used with the jurisdictional paratransit services since it is a SmarTrip® card.

Ms. O’Konek confirmed that it will be able to be used with the jurisdictional services, and money may be loaded onto the card to be used for parking payment.

Comments from the MAS:

Dr. Posner asked if a PCA is a senior citizen and used the card without the customer, would they receive the senior discount. He also asked whether the PCA will need to enter the fare gate directly after or before the customer to ensure they make the 90-second gap, and would it be any fare gate or just the disability gate. Dr. Posner also asked if his card can be sent to a different address than the one on record.

Ms. O’Konek explained that the PCA’s Senior SmarTrip® card will need to be used. As long as the two cards are scanned at the same target within 90 seconds, the transaction will be fine. This can occur at any fare gate, not just the disability gate. The Eligibility Office can send the card to a requested address provided they receive it timely.

Ms. Rush asked how the Eligibility Office knows if a customer needs a PCA card.

Ms. O’Konek said every customer will receive a PCA card so they can decide if and when they need a PCA.

Ms. Mezile asked who would address customer issues related to the card while attempting to enter a fare gate.

Mr. Frank Roth, Director, Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach, said customers should see the station manager to resolve any card issues, as all customers using SmarTrip® cards do now. The station manager is able to check the card in the system to see if there are funds on the card. The customer would contact the Eligibility Office for a replacement card, rather than the SmarTrip® office.

Update on Budget Process

Dr. Posner stated the budget process started on October 13, 2016, with a pre-budget presentation to the WMATA Board Finance committee. He said they requested staff to come back at the November Finance meeting with their revisions. Hearings on the budget will take place in 2017. Dr. Posner emailed the MAS committee the original budget presented to the Finance committee. He said there will be discussion regarding options including requiring local jurisdictions to pay more; a ten percent increase in bus, rail and MetroAccess fares; elimination of bus routes; closing rail stations during off peak hours; and eliminating subsidies. He asked the MAS committee to be prepared to organize a fare policy work group at the AAC meeting. He urged members to talk to their WMATA Board representative explaining the problems on MetroAccess.

Ms. Rush asked about the ten percent increase and what that equates to in dollars for MetroAccess riders.

Dr. Posner said WMATA staff proposed the bus fare be raised from \$1.75 to a \$2.00 flat rate. For the rail fare change, WMATA wants to increase the distance multiplier by 1-2 cents per quarter of a mile. He said MetroAccess fare would always be double the cost of the same trip on bus and rail. Dr. Posner said MetroAccess maximum fare would remain the same, but the base MetroAccess fare could increase to \$4.00 if these proposed changes took place.

Dr. Banerjee asked about the one-cent sales tax on the local jurisdictional services.

Dr. Posner said there was nothing accepted on the suggestions proposed.

Ms. Case said she saw a news report on a meeting with Maryland Governor Hogan, Virginia Governor McAuliffe, and District of Columbia Mayor Bowser who debated the one-cent sales tax. She said Mayor Bowser was in support of the tax stating that it would be directly funded to WMATA.

Ms. Bush was concerned about the ten percent increase for MetroAccess riders. She stated that DC to DC trip fares are very inconsistent.

Abilities-Ride Meeting Update

Mr. Crawford discussed the pre-bid conference that occurred on October 14, 2016 stating many vendors attended. At the conference Mr. Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, presented the programmatic functions of Abilities-Ride. Mr. Crawford said he found the discussion related to part 5 of the proposal very enlightening and important. He explained that the service would be comprised of one or multiple vendors, and could be from the local area or a nationwide business. The pay structure would be such that a fare of \$20 or less would cost the customer \$5, with WMATA paying the balance. For a fare over \$20, WMATA would pay \$15 and the

customer would be responsible for the \$5 and any remaining balance. Reference to smartphones and computer applications were made; however, comments were also made regarding equity for persons utilizing landline phones. The deadline to submit questions pertaining to the proposal is October 20, 2016. These questions should be sent to jwcumpian@wmata.com. The deadline for submitting proposals in response to the Request for Proposal (RFP) is two o'clock pm on November 9, 2016. He applauded Carol Tyson for raising questions that represented concerns of the disability community.

Mr. Semelfort commented that he was excited about the incentives WMATA is offering to providers for accepting trips with mobility devices. He said he was also happy to see previous MetroAccess providers showing interest in submitting an RFP. Mr. Semelfort voiced safety concerns with one of the entities who may have interest in submitting an RFP, and stated that he hoped they would not be considered.

Mr. Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, stated WMATA procurements are a free and open competition, and WMATA could not discourage an organization from participating in the RFP process. There is an element in the evaluation criteria for past performance. He encouraged everyone to examine the RFP, especially the requirements for interested companies and the evaluation process. Mr. Kent acknowledged how well Mr. Crawford summarized the meeting and Ms. Tyson for her advocacy for the disability community.

Ms. Rush expressed some confusion and asked what happens if an incident occurs which causes a customer to be on board the vehicle for two hours or more. She asked if it is a taxi provider, is it on a meter and who pays the additional cost? Ms. Rush then asked if there is a percentage of vehicles for Abilities-Ride that are required to be wheelchair accessible.

Mr. Kent said questions should be brought to the attention of JWCumpian@wmata.com. He said anything he offered would merely be speculation. When a fare is quoted to a customer, the customer pays that fare regardless of the time it takes for the trip.

Ms. Rush brought forth a motion to have committee members send her any questions related to the proposal.

Mr. Semelfort asked that the questions be sent to him via email by noon on October 19, 2016. He would then provide the list to the committee on the evening of October 19th for final review. After the final review by the committee, he will format the questions and send them to Mr. Cumpian by October 20, 2016.

Dr. Banerjee asked if Abilities-Ride would put MetroAccess out of business, and if MetroAccess will provide the vehicles for Abilities-Ride.

Mr. Kent said that Abilities-Ride will not replace MetroAccess as MetroAccess is an ADA mandated service. He also explained that the vendors are expected to provide vehicles for Abilities-Ride service and MetroAccess will maintain its fleet of vehicles.

The motion to send questions related to the proposal to Mr. Semelfort by noon on October 9, 2016 was approved by the committee.

Dr. Posner posed questions for Mr. Sheehan, asking if there would be a centralized place to call to schedule a ride if there are multiple vendors, and will the fare be the same for each vendor. Will the customer need to pay upon boarding the vehicle, or will there be an account set up where customers can add funds and have funds deducted for trips.

Mr. Crawford commented that he was impressed with the RFP.

Mr. Kent said he could not answer any of Mr. Sheehan's questions as some of the questions are dependent upon the way the awards are made, which is dependent upon the vendors who propose and what they propose under their business model. He encouraged the committee to add those questions to the list being assembled for WMATA procurement.

Mr. Kent suggested that a line item on the agenda for new business be added. He said this could serve as the designated time for committee members to make comments during the MAS and AAC meetings without being subject to time limits as with public comment.

Travel Coordination with Centers

Mr. William Proctor, Field Operations Manager, MetroAccess, explained that staff would like to work with the committee to hear suggestion or concerns regarding services provided to centers, such as the ARC.

Ms. Anderson expounded on what Mr. Proctor said stating there have been issues related to customers arriving to centers before the center is open.

Mr. Kent said the purpose of this endeavor is for the committee to provide insight on what they may have observed with regard to how these centers are served, how customers using these centers take trips or any other information to help MetroAccess better serve customers at these centers.

Comments from the MAS:

Ms. Laios suggested talking to the activities director at the centers. She also said she would be willing to assist as she attends some of the centers.

Mr. Ariza-Silva asked if subscription trip service may help with customers at the centers.

Mr. John Gray, Acting Project Manager, MV Transportation, explained how subscription trip templates are organized for customers at the various centers. They attempt to locate 2-4 customers traveling to the same center at approximately the same time. A variable is built into the template to account for traffic, or customer delays. Subscription department staff talk with the centers to get times of openings and closings and then discuss this with family members to come to an agreement for pick-up times.

Ms. Bush stated the Department of Disability Services hosts a quarterly vendor fair. She suggested that a representative from MetroAccess attend to make contact and speak to customers.

Dr. Banerjee asked why the cost share of Abilities-Ride is not based on a percent.

Mr. Kent said in WMATA's study of subsidy programs they learned that devising a subsidy that is priced very low will produce large demand. Parallel pricing would stabilize MetroAccess service.

Mr. Semelfort asked where customer comments and complaints will be routed when Abilities Ride begins.

Mr. Kent said each company will be responsible for customer service.

Ms. Rush asked what procedures are in place when a vehicle is taken by a customer with other customers on the vehicle. She asked if the kill switch was used in the most recent incident.

Mr. Alan Davis, Acting Fleet Maintenance Officer, MetroAccess, explained that vehicles have a kill switch that locks the vehicle in park to prevent the vehicle from being taken.

Mr. Kent said the vehicle lock switch is installed on the vehicles but was not activated during the most recent incident.

Public Comments

Comments received were with regard to: a law suit filed in Chicago against Uber for discrimination; issues regarding MetroAccess trips to/from the National Rehabilitation Hospital's free exercise program for people with disabilities; a concern for MetroAccess

operator safety; accountability for customer violence from WMATA, Transdev, and MV; fluctuating fares; poor signage for MetroAccess and unsafe pick-up and drop-off locations at the African American Museum; no record with WMR for a return trip; and an inquiry to whether a Title VI analysis was completed for the Abilities-Ride RFP.

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

Meeting adjourned at 6:02pm.