



Customer Service and Operations Committee

Board Information Item III-A

October 9, 2014

Bus Stops and Pathways Accessibility Update

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Board Action/Information Summary

Action Information

MEAD Number:
201028

Resolution:
 Yes No

TITLE:

Bus Stops and Pathways Accessibility Update

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:

To brief the Board on actions taken since this Spring to achieve the Board-adopted bus stop accessibility standards and to describe the next steps to be taken in collaboration with the jurisdictions to track inaccessible stops; make priority improvements; report progress toward meeting the Board endorsed goal for number of improved stops; and, advance regional coordination of this subject.

PURPOSE:

To inform the Board on Metro's progress in making the region's bus stops accessible to improve safety and mobility for customers with disabilities while reducing the demand for paratransit service.

DESCRIPTION:

In March and April of this year, staff made presentations to the Board in which the challenge of bus stop accessibility was discussed and the Board adopted a new standard for accessible bus stops. Since that time:

- Accessible bus stop data has been refreshed by the jurisdictions, and the number of inaccessible stops has been significantly reduced.
- The grant program administered by Metro's Bus Services is being applied toward the improvement of priority stops identified by Access Services for the reduction of dependence on paratransit service.
- A new database architecture for Metro's bus stop inventory is being developed to allow for jurisdictions to make updates directly and for customers to append their own comments.
- The Board endorsed an annual goal of improving 1% of the region's inaccessible bus stops, and the Accessibility Advisory Committee will track specific progress on this goal and provide an annual report to the Board in July 2015.
- The regional discussion on this subject will take the form of a workshop to be held in Spring 2015, led by the Regional Bus Stop Task Force and facilitated by the Council of Governments.

Key Highlights:

Progress on the Board's goal of improving 1% of inaccessible stops each year (approximately 68 per year) will be measured by a combination of improvements made by the jurisdictions and by Metro through its New Freedom grant funds.

- Metro has identified 57 priority stops for which bus stop and pathway improvements will potentially yield investment returns in the form of a reduction in MetroAccess ridership. The stops were selected because they directly contributed to the eligibility of current MetroAccess customers.
- Using New Freedom grant funds, Metro will begin improvements at five of these stops. Metro is collaborating with the jurisdictions to confirm completion of improvements previously made to 15 stops and 3 others that were pending on the priority list.
- In support of Prince George's County's grant-funded effort to improve bus stops, Metro has shared a list of 304 bus stops for their consideration.
- Montgomery County has provided a detailed bus stop report with updated data, including the number and locations of inaccessible stops in the County. The new number is 245, down from more than 3,000. The County plans on moving forward to improving as many of the remainder as possible.

Background and History:

An accessible bus stop and pathway can be the difference between a paratransit-eligible customer taking an independent ride on Metrobus instead of MetroAccess, thereby saving a jurisdiction over \$50 on the cost of that trip. If the demand of a typical frequent MetroAccess user can be reduced by half, (i.e., 200 trips per year), the first year savings alone would amount to \$10,000, which could pay for part or all of the cost of a bus stop improvement.

There are more than 6,800 inaccessible bus stops throughout the region. As with most accessibility features, an accessible bus stop not only provides greater mobility for people with disabilities, but it is also a safety benefit to all customers. It is cost prohibitive to improve all of them at once; however, each one is potentially contributing to MetroAccess demand. Given the variance in trip cost between Metrobus and MetroAccess trips, Metro proposes prioritizing bus stop and pathway improvements based on the potential correlation of reducing MetroAccess demand.

Metro has developed a comprehensive plan to identify and prioritize specific inaccessible bus stops that have the potential to greatly reduce demand for MetroAccess service by customers who live or travel near the inaccessible stops. The plan includes:

- Enhancing Metro's standard for an accessible bus stop, (the Board adopted a new standard, to include accessible pathways to and from stops, in April 2014);

- The establishment of an annual goal for improving bus stops, (the Board endorsed a goal of 1% of inaccessible bus stop to be improved annually);
- A renewed effort by Metro to use available grant funds to improve priority stops; and,
- Increased collaboration with jurisdictional partners.

Discussion:

The goals of this initiative are centered on three outcomes: (1) realize the improvement of at least 1% of bus stops annually to meet Metro's new accessible bus stop standard; (2) improve the safety of the region's bus stops; and (3) reduce demand for MetroAccess service by improving access to the region's accessible fixed route services.

The attainment of the Board's goal of improving 1% of the region's inaccessible stops per year would enable Metro to reduce MetroAccess demand by 12,000 trips per year, yielding a potential savings of up to \$600,000.

Current Efforts:

Efforts underway include: (1) planning and design work for the first set of bus stop improvements using New Freedom grant funding; (2) collaborating with the jurisdictions on the status of other priority stops; and (3) planning for the development of a regional bus stop accessibility database.

Next Steps:

- Metro will initiate construction of the first set of improvements at the identified priority bus stops;
- Metro will confirm completion of improvements reported by the jurisdictions;
- Metro will begin reaching out to all MetroAccess customers living within 250 feet of newly improved stops. Travel training will be offered where needed, and a 12-month assessment of those customers' MetroAccess trips will be conducted.
- Metro will develop and maintain a Regional Bus Stop Accessibility database. The jurisdictions will be given collaborative access for designated staff to report status updates of their respective stops. The public will also be able to provide comments or observations about each stop but not alter the data. Metro will use the data to assist the Accessibility Advisory Committee in its annual report to the Board on the progress of bus stop accessibility, as well as provide updates to the Board on its endorsed goal of 1% annual improvements in the number of accessible bus stops.

Staff will continue to collaborate with the Regional Bus Stop Task Force on all of the activities throughout the course of this initiative, and a regional workshop will be convened in Spring 2015.

FUNDING IMPACT:

None.

TIMELINE:

Previous Actions	April 2014 – Board adopted revised bus stop accessibility standard Ongoing – Collaboration with the Regional Bus Stop Task Force and jurisdictional staff
Anticipated actions after presentation	October 2014 – Start development of the Regional Bus Stop Accessibility database, expected completion March/April 2015 April/May 2015 – Regional Bus Stop Accessibility Workshop will be held

RECOMMENDATION:

- None; this update is for information.



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Purpose

- To inform the Board on Metro's progress in making the region's bus stops accessible
 - Improves safety for all customers
 - Increases mobility options for customers with disabilities
- To outline the strategy for attaining the Board's endorsed goal of improving 1% of inaccessible stops (68) annually





Progress

- Bus stop data improved – many more stops now listed as accessible
 - 6,800 – down from over 10,000
- Priority stops identified by ACCS are being improved
 - Jurisdictions improving 18 other stops – 15 complete, 3 pending
 - New Freedom grant being applied to upgrade 10 stops





Next Steps

- New architecture for bus stop database that jurisdictions can update directly (Spring 2015)
- Workshop led by Regional Bus Stop Task Force, and facilitated by Council of Governments (Spring 2015)
- AAC to provide annual report to Board on status of 1% improvement KPI (July 2015)

