



Executive Committee

Information Item IV-A

June 13, 2024

Gender Equity Framework

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Board Action/Information Summary

☐ Action ☒ Information

Document
Number:
205615

Resolution:
☐ Yes ☒ No

Presentation Name:

Gender Equity Framework

Project Manager:

Mira Patel

Project Department:

Performance, Data, and Research

Purpose/Key Highlights:

Staff will provide an introductory briefing on a framework to elevate gender-diverse perspectives and integrate them into decision-making for Metro. The specific initiatives that will be introduced align with the Service Excellence Strategic Transformation Plan Goal. Specifically, Objective 1C: "Convenience."

Interested Parties:

None

Background:

In 2018, the Board adopted the current mission statement: provide safe, equitable, reliable, and cost-effective public transit. In 2019, staff formed a Transit Equity Working Group to advance projects and policies to build a more equitable transit system. Through the Academic Research Partnership with Massachusetts Institute of Technology starting in 2021, exploratory analysis on women's distinct travel patterns on Metro showed the need for increased awareness and consideration in our planning and operations. In 2022, Metro committed to the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) Racial Equity Commitment Pilot Program. In 2023, Metro hired a Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer. Metro's Strategic Transformation Plan specifically states "while Metro has and will continue to take actions addressing equity through service and employment, it is critical that the agency's commitment to equity is institutionalized because if equity is not considered in decision-making processes, transportation can unintentionally play a role in creating and reinforcing the region's inequities."

Discussion:

This presentation is an opportunity to engage the Board about the importance of gender equity work, and how it will improve the customer experience by ensuring that gender-diverse perspectives and feedback are elevated and institutionalized in Metro's plans, policies, and programs.

Women make up the majority of trips on Metrorail, Metrobus, and MetroAccess, and are a core ridership base. Additionally, industry research highlights differences in women's travel patterns and needs. Prompted by this research, transit agencies worldwide are reassessing their practices through a gendered lens to better serve all customers. Inspired by LA Metro's efforts, the Gender Equity Framework aims to incorporate gender-diverse perspectives into decision-making by enhancing visibility, disaggregating metrics by gender, collaborating with diverse stakeholders, and promoting equitable initiatives.

Key Initiatives

As ridership continues to increase on Metrobus, the team is exploring ways to improve passenger flow and increase capacity. Removing two non-ADA seats to create a multi-use space with priority for open strollers helps alleviate congestion in aisles and ADA priority spaces. If no stroller is present, the multi-use space may also be used for carts, luggage, and large items, or extra standing capacity. This effort mimics a similar intervention that New York City Transit has taken in the last year and a half that has garnered positive customer feedback. There are 20 buses currently outfitted with the multi-use space and deployed on routes recommended by a joint study with MIT on caretaker travel. The testing period began in early May and will run until early November 2024.

Funding Impact:

No funding impact at this time

Previous Actions:

None

Next Steps:

Metro will gather feedback from bus operators and customers on the multi-use areas during the initial phase of testing that will last until early November 2024. Customers can provide feedback via an on-board QR code linking to a short survey that will be used to inform improvements during the next phase of the project.

The Gender Equity Framework will continue to benchmark global best practices, collaborate with internal stakeholders, and implement solutions that advance the Strategic Transformation Plan while infusing gender-diverse public and employee

feedback.

Recommendation:

Information Only

Gender Equity Framework

Executive Committee





Service Excellence

Deliver safe, reliable, convenient, equitable, accessible, and enjoyable service for customers.



Talented teams



Regional opportunity and partnership

Opportunity: Gender Equity Framework – Multi-Use Spaces on Metrobus

Strategic Objective:

Convenience. Deliver frequent and accessible service that modernizes and enhances the customer experience

Transformation Initiatives:

Modernize and enhance end-to-end customer experience for user-friendliness and attractiveness

KPIs:

Customer Perception/Satisfaction

Metrobus crowding

“It is **critical that the agency’s commitment to equity is institutionalized** because if equity is not considered in decision-making processes, transportation can unintentionally play a role in creating and reinforcing the region’s inequities.”

–**Strategic Transformation Plan**

Women are a core ridership base

Women take more trips on Metro...



74% of trips on MetroAccess



58% of trips on Metrobus



51% of trips on Metrorail

...and are more likely to:

Travel off-peak

when transit service is typically reduced

“Trip-chain”

or travel shorter distances to a variety of locations

Feel unsafe

while traveling to or waiting for transit

Depend on transit to travel

And live in a car-free household

Service cuts and fare increases disproportionately impact women

Gender-expansive people (those who identify outside of traditional gender roles) take 1-2% of trips on Metro (compared to women/men). Their perspectives will be visible and considered as part of this effort, particularly in relation to safety and anti-harassment initiatives.

LA Metro's research provides a foundation

"The Gender Action Plan (GAP) is (Los Angeles) Metro's commitment to view all policy, planning, and design efforts through a gender lens that recognizes the diversity of its riders"





– Los Angeles Metro, 2022



Key themes driving LA Metro's action plan

- Safety
- Station, Stop, & Vehicle Design
- Fare Policy
- Service Frequency & Reliability

WMATA's Gender Equity Framework elevates gender-diverse perspectives and integrates them into decision-making, furthering Strategic Transformation Plan goals

-  **Improve visibility** of gender equity
-  **Disaggregate** key metrics by gender
-  **Collaborate** with gender-diverse stakeholders
-  **Advance** gender equitable initiatives

WMATA initiatives improving the experience for women and gender-expansive people

Gender Equity Framework

Safety

- Transit Ambassadors*
- Courtesy Stops*
- Camera visibility and station lighting improvements*
- Increased security personnel presence
- Crisis Intervention Specialists

Station, Stop & Vehicle Design

- Open Stroller Policy*
- Multi-use spaces for strollers, carts, large items*

Fare Policy

- Metro Lift program*
- Free/reduced fare transfer policy

Service Frequency and Reliability

- 24/7 Metrobus service (DC)
- Increased service during off-peak times

**Similar strategies outlined in LA Metro's Gender Action Plan*

Multi-use spaces on Metrobus

Addressing Mobility of Care on Metrobus

Exploring improvement to bus customer experience by enhancing stroller accessibility and passenger capacity

Mobility of Care

- Definition: travel implications of daily tasks by individuals with care responsibilities for children, seniors, people with disabilities
- Trip purposes: daycares, schools, nursing homes, medical appointments, grocery shopping
- Daily tasks continue to be **mostly performed by women**, even as men increase participation

Previous State

Congestion issue: blocked aisles



One stroller/caretaker occupies ~3 ADA seats



Improvement

Removing two seats creates dedicated area



Multi-use space can increase standing capacity



New York MTA stroller pilot serves as a blueprint



Designated open stroller area pilot began in October 2022 and expanded in April 2023.

Program goals include:

- Evaluating use of stroller space
- Getting rider feedback on seating options
- Soliciting bus operator feedback
- Identifying safety concerns and opportunities to improve
- Refining cost estimates



Designated Open Stroller Areas are designed for one stroller.

Source: "Bus Open Stroller Program", MTA website

20 buses deployed in testing during initial phase

Actions Completed

- Briefed key external stakeholder groups: Riders' Advisory Council, Accessibility Advisory Committee, Joint Coordinating Committee
- Obtained feedback from operators and mechanics at multiple divisions

Testing Plan

- Selected priority routes based on MIT Mobility of Care research
- Collecting customer and bus operator feedback to inform improvements
- Timeline: Testing from May until November

Exterior decal identifies retrofitted buses with multi-use space



Window decals indicate priority and provide feedback forum



Vision: A world-class gender equity leader

How do we achieve this?

- Apply a gendered lens to existing Strategic Transformation Plan initiatives
- Benchmark global best practices and connect with industry peers
- Continue internal cross-collaboration with a focus on engaging front-line staff
- Develop gender-diverse public outreach plan to inform innovative solutioning

Long-term funding solution will bolster vision