



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
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METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: December 19, 2016

In attendance: Mr. Paul Semelfort (Chair), Ms. Denise Rush (Co-Chair), Mr. Edward McEntee, Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Mr. Patrick Sheehan, Ms. Carolyn Bellamy, Mr. Charles Crawford and Mr. Steve Kaffen.

Call to Order

Ms. Denise Rush called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:03pm.

Review of December 2016 Agenda

Ms. Rush asked that time be allotted to review a letter with the committee during new business. The agenda was approved as amended.

Review of November 2016 Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved.

Customer Service and Outreach Report

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

Ms. Rush inquired on the status of the Michael Wilson award. Ms. Celisse Little, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, commented that potential candidates are being evaluated and will be brought forth soon.

Mr. Crawford asked if the complaint filed last month regarding the customer who was refused transportation due to her perfume has been resolved.

Mr. Brown said the complaint has been addressed and resolved.

Proper Use of Seatbelt Extenders

Mr. Alan Davis, Fleet Maintenance Officer, MetroAccess, explained the two types of seatbelt extenders. He stated that there is an extender for securing a wheelchair and an extender for the vehicle seatbelt. Mr. Davis said that most people believe the seatbelt extenders are interchangeable, but he explained that they are not. He said all vehicles are equipped with at least one of each extender. The seatbelt extender repositions the shoulder harness, ensuring that the belt is not positioned uncomfortably across the passenger's neck. He also explained that it is unsafe and not approved to use the posey

belt as a seatbelt extender or restraint. Mr. Davis stated that his intention was to have a platform that would allow him to demonstrate the seatbelt extenders, however, there were some technical problems that prevented the delivery of the platform. He will revisit this topic at a later time when he may provide a demonstration of the seatbelt extenders.

Comments from the MAS:

Mr. McEntee asked if the driver should contact dispatch if the seatbelt extender is not functioning properly.

Mr. Davis affirmed that the driver is required to contact Dispatch in this case. He reiterated that the posey belt is not to be used in lieu of the seatbelt extender.

Mr. Crawford requested that people speaking during the meeting identify themselves so he is aware of who is speaking. He asked if it was possible to ensure all vehicles have the proper equipment before they go into service.

Mr. John Gray, Acting Project Manager, MV Transportation, stated that a pre-trip inspection is required of all drivers prior to going into service for the day.

Ms. Bellamy commented that it inconveniences the customer when they have to wait for a Road Supervisor or new vehicle to arrive to their location if an extender is not available. She suggested that the vehicles have two of each seatbelt extenders.

Mr. Mark Nash, Field Operations Manager, MetroAccess, commented that all service providers must ensure the operators do not leave the garage without all of the equipment needed for their workday. The comment regarding the need for two of each seatbelt extender would be taken into consideration.

Meet Your Service Delivery Provider-Transdev

Mr. Conrad Marshall, Project Manager, Transdev, provided a brief overview of Transdev and their operation. Mr. Marshall explained that Transdev is a global corporation with 100 years of public transportation expertise. He said this company operates in 20 countries and 5 continents. Their paratransit service is currently operating in 40 cities including Baltimore, Las Vegas, Washington, DC, and New Orleans.

Transdev has been serving as a contractor with MetroAccess since May 2013. They operate approximately 50 percent of the service and average 330 routes daily, including taxi sub-contractors, which account for five percent of the trips performed. Transdev employs 527 operators, 44 maintenance staff, 55 safety/training staff, and 34

operations and support personnel. All Transdev mechanics are Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certified. The safety/training staff are required to complete transit education units and paratransit transportation related education units. New operators receive 40 hours of classroom training, 40 hours of skills and behind the wheel training, and 40 hours of cadet training. Operators are also required to complete annual refresher training. He said the Road Supervisors are a critical part of the operation. They are on the road observing the operators and perform 400 to 500 observations weekly, focusing on customer safety.

Transdev's facility is located in Hyattsville, Maryland and houses 336 vehicles. Mr. Marshall provided details into Transdev's various employee incentive programs. He stated they also provide two catered events a year to include staff and their families; free shuttle bus service to and from local metro stations; turkey and ham vouchers during the Thanksgiving holiday; and hold a safety Olympics where staff receive incentives for safety, attendance, and customer service.

Mr. Marshall concluded his presentation by stating that Transdev has made a commitment to provide high performance and safe travel for MetroAccess customers. He also acknowledged that there are areas that require improvement and Transdev is working very hard to make those improvements.

Comments from the MAS:

Mr. Crawford stated that he feels that service providers need to ensure their workers know what their required to do. He asked how the providers gauge if an operator needs disciplinary action.

Mr. Marshall explained that policies, procedures and directives dictate the disciplinary actions to be carried out when personnel are not in adherence to the policy.

Mr. Gray commented on the disciplinary practices for the Operations Control Center stating that MV hires for attitude and trains for aptitude. He said their training class has a graduation rate around 30 percent. During the training they are able to observe attitudes and customer service. When staff are unable to show basic customer service skills during training, they are removed from the class and terminated with the company. This also pertains to attendance. New hire attendance is great in the beginning, but as time goes on they disregard timeliness and begin to show up to training a couple minutes late. Steadily, the lateness increases and MV makes the decision to terminate employment, as the practice of lateness will most likely not change once they are transferred to the control center floor. When they begin training on the floor in the control center, MV works with the employee to

develop their skills increasing their speed and accuracy. The work on the floor is evaluated to determine their skill set and aptitude to perform the work at the level required for a fast paced environment. Supervisors and managers are able to make an assessment of these skills within the first 90 days, and many staff are terminated due to their lack of aptitude. Past 90 days, problems that typically occur are related to attitude where coaching, counseling, and retraining are necessary.

Mr. Banerjee asked if Transdev provides training on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policy. He asked if Transdev is a sub-contractor for MetroAccess; if they provide taxi service and how much service is provided by taxi; and how many vehicles are wheelchair accessible. He also asked if Transdev has submitted a proposal for the current request for proposal (RFP) for Abilities-Ride.

Mr. Leroy Hayford, Financial Manager, MetroAccess, stated that Transdev is a primary contractor for MetroAccess, not sub-contractor. He said all of the service providers are required to follow the MetroAccess contract, which strives to meet or exceed the ADA requirements for paratransit service. The terms that each provider abides by are MetroAccess terms, not the company's terms.

Mr. Marshall said they oversee the taxi sub-contractors that comprise five percent of total MetroAccess trips. All other vehicles are MetroAccess vehicles and are ADA compliant. He said he is unaware whether Transdev has submitted a proposal for the Abilities-Ride contract.

Mr. McEntee was curious about the policies in Europe pertaining to paratransit.

Mr. Marshall stated that he could not answer that question, as he had no knowledge of the practices in Europe.

Ms. Bellamy commended all of the service providers for working hard to provide service to MetroAccess customers. She said that she feels that customers often complain too much and do not always treat operators with respect.

Ms. Rush asked about Transdev's on-time performance and what they are doing to retain operators. She also agreed with Ms. Bellamy that it's a partnership between the customer, the operator, and management, and all have to work together to improve the service.

Mr. Marshall said Transdev is currently in negotiations with the operator's union for wage increases. They are meeting with the operators to understand what is important to them and attempting to meet their needs. They are

attempting to contract with a local daycare provider to assist operator personnel with daycare needs. He said he is open for suggestions from the committee on how to improve their turnover and retain good employees. He states he knows Transdev's on time performance is not acceptable, but they are committed to resolving the issues and providing the service MetroAccess customers deserve.

Ms. Rush said that the Office of Eligibility must make it clear to customers during the assessment appointment the purpose of MetroAccess and that it is public transportation. She said there are some customer issues that are legitimate, but there are others that point to a lack of understanding and increased expectation.

Ms. Bellamy expounded on Ms. Rush's comments saying the committee and customers gripe and complain instead of helping find solutions and thanked MetroAccess, service providers, and staff.

Mr. Crawford stated he agrees with the sentiments regarding being appreciative of the service; however, it is not fair for customers to have to endure poor service and not voice their concerns.

Mr. Sheehan commented about on-time performance and the need for improvement. He said that with on time performance at just above eighty percent he is sure the service providers are being assessed certain liabilities. He stated that it would make sense that service providers consider the difference in pay afforded by other companies. They should make an attempt to match or beat the pay, retain operators, and prevent the liability assessed against them when they do not meet performance standards. He said some concrete plans must be in place to prevent on-time performance from declining more.

Mr. Hayford stated that over the past two months there has been a decline in on-time performance. He said driver shortage is a macro issue.

Mr. Marshall said the driver shortage is not isolated to the Washington, D.C. area, but nationally. Lucrative opportunities from other companies have contributed to this issue. Mr. Marshall agreed with Mr. Sheehan stating that his comments made sense.

Mr. Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, commented MetroAccess has a minimum on-time performance of 92 percent. He agreed that there is competition in the community attracting MetroAccess operators for employment. Mr. Kent stated he understood the committees concerns about on-time performance. The transportation industry in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area has changed and the network of support from taxi

service has diminished. With transportation network company growth, WMATA is challenged to create new transportation strategies. WMATA introduced the RFP for Abilities-Ride to respond to increased ridership and the decrease in the number of companies providing assistance. It will take time to incorporate these new strategies to see a change in service and the on-time performance. He assured the committee that WMATA is taking the decrease in on-time performance seriously, and working to resolve the issues to provide quality service to the customer. Mr. Kent commented the service providers are in negotiations with their operators' unions to increase pay and provide other benefits and incentives. WMATA applauds their efforts and are working with the providers as much as is possible. He said he would prefer for operators to be late picking up a customer during this time than to rush to get to a customer by driving in an unsafe manner.

Mr. Sheehan commented that the AAC and MAS understands the problems and want to partner in discussions and solutions of the issues.

Public Comments

Comments received were with regard to: chronically late trips; paying operators reasonable wages and benefits; disrespectful drivers; the need to listen when customers complain and to give good customer service; a customer frequently late for treatment; the safety and cleanliness of vehicles; an observation of three occasions between November and December when a vehicle broke down; a question of why some customers seem to be more valuable than others; an operator smoking outside of the vehicle; lack of communication with dispatch staff; trips removed from the manifest; customer needing money returned to their EZ-Pay account; and recording drop off times, not just pick up times.

For detailed descriptions and resolutions of public comments made during the meeting, please refer to the December 2016/AAC MAS December Meeting located at <https://www.wmata.com/about/accessibility-advisory-committee/subcommittee.cfm>.

Meeting adjourned at 6:06pm.