



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

Accessibility Advisory Committee

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: November 17, 2014

In attendance: Mr. Paul Semelfort (Chair), Ms. Carolyn Bellamy, Ms. Heidi Case, Ms. Doris Ray, Dr. Phil Posner, Dr. William Staderman, Mr. Edward McEntee, Mr. Patrick Sheehan, Ms. Mary Jane Owens, Mr. Tappan Banerjee, Ms. Phillipa Mezile, Ms. Marisa Laios, Mr. Charles Crawford, and Mr. Elver Ariza-Silva.

Call to Order

Dr. Phil Posner called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:01pm.

Review of November 2014 Agenda

The agenda was approved without amendments.

Review of October 2014 Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved without amendments.

Customer Service & Outreach Reports

Ms. Sara Morris, Senior Administrative Coordinator, MTM, reported that all public comments from the previous meetings have been addressed.

Ms. Janice Carpenter, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, reported that there were four outreach events during the month of November. Fresinius Medical Care Center in Lanham, United Planning Organizations Senior Housing Fair, Arlington County Department of Human Services Aging Information Exchange Outreach, and The National Federation of the Blind Annual Conference. All events were well attended and information regarding MetroAccess was shared with the attendees.

Work Plan Update

Dr. B. Moore-Gwynn, Accessibility Advisory Committee Coordinator opened the discussion asking the committee for additions to the MetroAccess 2015 work plan.

Ms. Ray commented that the grandfathering policy should be opened to include other customers.

Ms. Bellamy commented that opening the grandfathering policy up would be costly and problematic.

Dr. Posner shared what the leadership committee discussed with the Board regarding the grandfathering policy. The leadership committee asked for a cost analysis and restrictive criteria for making exceptions to the policy.

Ms. Ray commented that Fairfax County residence who are in the WMATA compact area, reside along the silver line and are customers should be grandfathered. Some of

these individuals were not customers of MetroAccess prior to the date of July 2010, but now reside in nursing homes, and are in need of MetroAccess service to their locations.

Mr. Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, addressed two topics regarding MetroAccess grandfathering, as well as changes to the bus service and it's the impact on MetroAccess eligibility.

The Committee members inquired about the fairness of the grandfathering policy to a MetroAccess customer who moves to a particular area to utilize MetroAccess, but loses the privilege when Metro changes a bus stop or route.

Mr. Kent said that the Board's Vice-Chairman has requested a memo from Mr. Kent explaining the history of the grandfathering policy and how this policy came about. This means that the AAC has clearly advised the Board of their issues with the policy and the possible need for changing policy.

Regarding changes to bus service, the Office of Bus Planning committed to consulting with MetroAccess prior to making changes to bus stops or routes that may impact the MetroAccess service area.

Ms. Case asked if there were safety standards for transporting customers with damaged wheelchairs. Is the driver able to refuse to transport a customer due to the condition of a customer's mobility device?

Ms. Allison Anderson, Operations Control Center Manager, MetroAccess, stated that the "Customer Guide to MetroAccess" explains that it is the customer's responsibility to ensure that their mobility devices are in good working condition prior to boarding a MetroAccess vehicle. The guide also states that MetroAccess reserves the right to refuse transport if unsafe.

Ms. Owens commented that drivers have difficulty securing her wheelchair. She asked if there are requirements for wheelchairs.

Mr. Omar Brown, Operations Manager, MetroAccess, responded by stating that operators are trained to secure any type of wheelchair at certain strong points of the wheelchair. There may be occasions when a driver has difficulty securing a chair that is unfamiliar, since there is no standardized wheelchair, nor is there a single set of manual of procedure for securing all wheelchairs. With safety as a priority, operators will not move the vehicle until all passengers are secured.

Mr. Banerjee suggested having a hook extension to assist in securement of the wheelchair's.

Ms. Bellamy commented that customers do not keep their wheelchairs in proper working condition. She said when customers attempt to board a vehicle with a wheelchair that is not working properly, it delays the vehicle and causes the route to run late.

Mr. Ariza-Silva asked if the operator training is extended to the taxi providers that transport MetroAccess customers. He said that in his experience the operators of the taxis do not provide the same service as the operators of the MetroAccess vans.

Mr. Brown commented that the operators of the taxis companies contracted with MetroAccess receive the same training and are required to adhere to the same policies.

Mr. Posner commented that MetroAccess has arranged specific pick-up locations at large event venues to assist MetroAccess customers. He stated that this has been working well. He raised an issue that another committee member had when attending an event at a venue. He asked if there was a way to ensure that customers were made aware of the pick-up location at Concert Hall and other such venues when they are dropped off.

Ms. Anderson responded that MetroAccess has been able to institute a plan to alleviate the confusion of the pick-up points at some large venues. This plan has not been instituted at the Verizon Center but will be expanded. She said that until this can be fully instituted, customers must clearly communicate with the reservationist their picked-up and drop-off location.

Ms. B Moore-Gwynn summarized the topics for addition to the work plan:

- Grandfathering policy – the impact on new customers and to develop criteria for the exception.
- Door to Door service with contract taxi providers - what training is provided.
- Large venue pick-up and drop-off locations.
- Bus service changes and its impact to MetroAccess customers.

These additions were approved by the MAS committee.

Compact: Bus Service

Mr. Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, cited some less expensive alternatives to MetroAccess and outlined their requirements. This information is located on page 23 of the Customer Guide. He said that some committee members are interested in looking at ways to have other local transit operations follow suit of the current list of providers.

Ms. Ray reported that the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities had a discussion with the Department of Transportation and the Dash bus to ascertain the reasons why they are not in the Metro compact nor provide discount service to MetroAccess customers.

Dr. Posner added that customers who are conditionally eligible do not have smart trip cards.

Mr. Ariza-Silva explained that when he was riding a bus in Springfield, VA, he was told that he needed to have a Metro Smart trip card to pay the reduced fare.

Ms. Ray stated that the Reston, VA community has a smaller bus system and there may be other small community buses that could become a part of the compact.

Mr. Blake suggested that the MAS observe how the Dash bus service resolves the issue of accepting free or reduced fare from MetroAccess customers and allow that to inform them in advising other bus services. He commented that there are challenges with providing a MetroAccess Smart trip card to conditionally eligible customers and that Metro will seek assistance from the AAC to address the challenges.

Mr. Sheehan asked that discussions regarding MetroAccess customer utilization of bus and rail for free be raised at the MAS first.

Mr. Blake reminded the committee that conditionally eligible customers utilizing the free ride benefit should not use the emergency gates when entering and exiting Metrorail stations. He urged individuals to change their perspective and the culture to ensure that this benefit is being utilized correctly.

Public Comments

Comments were received with regard to: booking; incorrect trip data entered by Reservation staff; trip delays while waiting for a replacement vehicle; issues raised at previous meeting had not been addressed; taxi driver training; driver training for blind and low vision customers; wheelchairs securement not being secure; drivers needing mini vacuums to clean vehicles; and the need for drivers to receive more map reading training to assist when GPS system is not working.

Comments from the Committee members

Drivers need map training and knowledge of the Metropolitan area, and trips scheduled with an appointment time are late.

Mr. Kent apologized to Mr. Crawford for his experiences being late to his destinations when he has booked his trips by appointment time. He explained that having customer's book trips by appointment time and having the appointment time met is very important and is taken seriously. There are internal measures in place to observe the on-time performance by appointment time, as well as pick-up time. He also explained that when trips are booked by appointment time the system chooses the pick-up time and that time is made well in advance to ensure the appointment time is met. Mr. Kent stated that there are times when the issues that prevent the vehicle from arriving on time for a requested pick-up time, like traffic, can also be an issue for meeting a requested appointment time.

Mr. Kent commented that there was some confusion regarding a report that was provided to the committee. He said some were stating that the report that was being provided on the MetroAccess website was different then what was presented to the

WMATA Board. He recommends having a discussion at the next Board meeting regarding the committee receiving the same information that the Board receives for congruency.

Mr. Semelfort requested having the pick-up and appointment time statistics presented at a MAS meeting and to have this added to the work plan.

Ms. Ray thanked staff for agreeing to ensure that the training is being adhered to for contracted taxi providers. She also stated that map reading is crucial to the operator's position and continued training in this area is necessary.

For detailed descriptions and resolutions of public comments made during the meeting, please refer to the November 2014 Complaint Resolution Report located at http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm.

Meeting adjourned at 5:43pm.