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METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: July 17, 2017

In attendance: Mr. Paul Semelfort (Chair), Ms. Carolyn Bellamy, Dr. Philip Posner, Mr. Charles Crawford, Mr. Edward McEntee, Ms. Philippa Mezile, Mr. Patrick Sheehan, Ms. Darnise Bush, Mr. Steven Kaffen, Mr. Anthony Oberg, Mr. Herbert Tregar, Ms. Doris Ray, Mr. Franklin Torres, Ms. Hazel Brooks, Mr. Tino Calabia, Ms. Mary Kay McMahon

Call to Order

Mr. Semelfort called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 3:53pm.

Review of June 2017 Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved.

Review of July 2017 Agenda

The agenda was approved.

Customer Service and Outreach Report

Mr. Carlton Brown, Quality Assurance Administrative Services Manager, MTM, reported all public comments from the previous meetings were investigated, addressed with the appropriate service providers, and communicated to the customers.

Ms. Celisse Little, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, reported that she attended the Residence Council meeting at Manor Care Health Services in Adelphi, Md. on July 12. Information related to MetroAccess service was shared with approximately 12 attendees. Ms. Little was also able to address some concerns. The staff and residents at Manor Care Health Services were pleased with the information presented and requested that a representative from MetroAccess return in the future.

Dr. Posner requested fare increase data reports with a breakdown by month beginning July 2016. He also pointed out that ridership increase has remained below five percent.

MetroAccess Passenger Assistance Study

Mr. Donald Scruggs, Assistant Director, MetroAccess stated most agencies aspire to be free of incidents, injuries, and collisions. They focus their attention on collisions. He was asked to provide an analysis of non-preventable incidents; those things to which the operator holds no responsibility. Analyzing the data enabled MetroAccess to make changes to policy, such as, the way in which the vehicles are parked, and lighting enhancements to make vehicles more visible. Mr. Scruggs said that some of the data

focused on non-collision incidents as well. There was a slight increase in injuries that were related to non-collision events in May 2016. As a result of this data, Metro retained the consulting firm of Willis, Towers, Watson (WTS), to conduct an analysis to identify and recommend best practices, areas of improvement, ideas to consider and in the future. The consulting firm presented their findings to the Committee and the Board in March 2017.

Mr. Scruggs outlined their presentation and described the accomplishments made by MetroAccess, as well as future endeavors. He reported that a fair number of injuries occurs during the boarding and alighting process. The goal is to prevent those injuries. During the timeframe of January 2016 through March 2017, MetroAccess set a targeted monthly standard for preventable incident rate at 2.0 preventable incidents per 100,000 service miles. There was one month during this timeframe in which the goal was not met. In May 2016, the rate was 2.10. Continuing in a review of processes that could be improved upon, an analysis was taken of the 2015 and 2016 data of the vehicle boarding and alighting process. The analysis did not reveal a correlation between an operator's tenure to any preventable incidents. A review of the training programs was also completed, and it was determined that more robust and unified training was needed amongst the service providers. The current plan is to enhance the training programs according to the guidelines offered by the consultant firm.

WTW brought in occupational therapists to observe the boarding and alighting process at various pick-up and drop-off locations. They spoke with staff, attended training sessions, and reviewed the training curriculum. The firm prepared an analysis of all data collected while observing these particular aspects of MetroAccess service. Mr. Scruggs discussed one of the suggestions from the firm, which some contractors have begun to implement. He introduced the concept of commentary walking/driving. Commentary driving requires the driver to communicate what they are performing during training. This process is also conducted during boarding and alighting with a customer; communicating to the customer what is occurring throughout the interaction. He said the firm also suggested drivers while escorting customers to and from the vehicle, offer their arm on the customer's weak side while delivering door-to-door service. According to the firm's studies, providing support on the customer's weak side has decreased incidents of falls during this process. The use of a posey belt while escorting a customer during the door-to-door process was also suggested. Mr. Scruggs said the firm suggested a training module to help the driver understand certain customer impediments. In conclusion, Mr. Scruggs stated that an enhanced training curriculum will be completed by the end of the calendar year, focusing on many of the suggestions provided by WTW.

Questions from the Committee:

Mr. McEntee requested clarification on the use of the posey belt.

Mr. Scruggs said the occupational therapist recommended a belt be offered to ambulatory customers to provide support. Mr. Scruggs stated the use of a posey belt with ambulatory customers is not something MetroAccess is considering. He just wanted the Committee to know this was a suggestion from the consulting firm.

Ms. Ray suggested the use of the words “functional limitation” instead of the word “impediment.” She said, at times, during boarding, a customer with visual impairments may have to navigate around customers in wheelchairs. She asked if any ideas were discussed about moving visually impaired customers around a crowded vehicle. Ms. Ray asked how the commentary walk process would help deaf-blind customers, and how the disability community and the committee members may assist in developing the training curriculum.

Mr. Scruggs thanked Ms. Ray for her correction on the use of terms. He said the commentary walking is meant to address the issue which Ms. Ray mentioned. He said helping the drivers understand the functional limitations of customers is one of the training modalities being implemented and will assist not only the deaf-blind customer but all. Mr. Scruggs said at the moment, MetroAccess is only working with the consulting firm in developing the curriculum.

Ms. Brooks asked the cost of the study from the consulting firm.

Mr. Scruggs said he did not have that information.

Ms. Bush asked if bumps, pot holes, and other road issues were considered in the non-preventable injuries.

Mr. Scruggs said these injuries were addressed in the study. At this time, there has not been any specific training suggestions established.

A customer in the audience stated that the traveling distance between other vehicles on the road that a driver is trained to maintain is too much. She said it allows other vehicles to cut in front of the vehicle, which in turn, causes the driver to brake hard to avoid hitting the other vehicle. She stated that she notices when drivers need to brake hard, it triggers the Drive-Cam to come on. This may result in disciplinary action against the driver, though it was not their fault. She said urgent braking can also cause injuries to customers.

Mr. Scruggs said triggering the Drive-Cam does not mean the driver is in trouble. The Drive Cam may show that the driver attempted to avoid a

collision. It is used as a training and evaluation tool. He explained that in all driver training programs, drivers are instructed to maintain a four-second following distance. When this distance is not maintained, it may result in the driver coming in contact with the vehicle in front of them if that vehicle brakes suddenly. The standard traveling distance in normal traffic is four seconds, six seconds in rain, and eight seconds in snow.

Ms. Brooks asked if there was a change in the routing of MetroAccess.

Mr. Scruggs said there have been no changes to routing.

Ms. Ray asked about training for drivers regarding the amount of time it takes a driver to unload customers and walk them to the door, the number of times a dispatch agent calls the driver to inquire about a customer, informing visually impaired customers that a vehicle has arrived, and the lack of uniformity with tasks drivers perform for some customers but not all.

Mr. Scruggs said enforcing drivers to perform their required tasks is being done. He said the commentary walking will address the issues with assisting visually impaired customers. He stated sensitivity training will be enhanced while creating a training for drivers to understand functional limitations.

Mr. Scruggs advised the Committee that the new MetroAccess vans went into service on July 16. He said there are 24 currently in service, another 25 scheduled to go into service the weekend of July 22nd, and an additional 25 will be in service the weekend of July 29th.

Mr. Crawford asked about the meeting between WMATA and Ford regarding the new vehicles.

Mr. Scruggs said the meeting occurred which included the Ford quality vehicle manufacturer, and Transit Works. He said there is a possible prototype design that still needs to be validated. The idea that is being considered is a vehicle that would create an ambulatory door as high as the current MetroAccess vehicle door and as wide as the width on the current MetroAccess vehicle model.

Mr. Sheehan stated that he heard there was a recall on the new vehicles.

Mr. Scruggs stated an advisory notice was received regarding a drive shaft covering. The advisory stated that the drive shaft covering needed to be replaced every 30,000 miles. This advisory only changed the interval of replacement for this part. Mr. Scruggs said that there have been no failures nationwide before 50,000 miles.

Public Comments

Comments received were about the lack of respect other vehicles have for MetroAccess vehicles; late arrivals; the need for Road Supervisors at Georgetown Hospital; a request to allow drivers to have customer phone numbers; the need for more sensitivity training for staff; utilize customer feedback to improve service; length of time customers are on the vehicle; and a compliment for good service.

Committee Comments

Ms. Bush reported she was waiting on a vehicle that was late arriving. She said when she contacted Dispatch, she was given incorrect estimations of when the vehicle would arrive. She said it was a very hot day, and she has respiratory problems which could have resulted in serious consequences.

Mr. Torres advised customers to identify the vehicle number and the driver if a report of an incident is needed. He said enhanced training needs to occur to help the customers feel safe.

Ms. Brooks stated there appears to be a disconnect between MetroAccess staff and the drivers. Drivers are frustrated by the number of trips they are given and the trip insertions, and customers are unhappy with the service as vehicles are late or not showing up.

Ms. Ray stated technology exists with certain local taxi companies that will allow the driver to contact the customer and should be considered for MetroAccess.

For detailed descriptions and resolutions of public comments made during the meeting, please refer to the July 2017/AAC MAS July Meeting located at <https://www.wmata.com/about/accessibility-advisory-committee/subcommittee.cfm>.

Meeting adjourned at 6:03pm.