



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
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METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: June 19, 2017

In attendance: Mr. Paul Semelfort (Chair), Ms. Denise Rush (Vice-Chair), Ms. Carolyn Bellamy, Dr. Philip Posner, Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Mr. Elver Ariza-Silva, Mr. Charles Crawford, Ms. Philippa Mezile, Ms. Darnise Bush.

Call to Order

Mr. Semelfort called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:00pm.

Review of April 2017 Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved.

Review of May 2017 Agenda

Dr. Posner requested an update on the Abilities-Ride program. Ms. Rush requested to have the committee give feedback on the new Ford Transit vans. The agenda was approved as amended.

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. Stephanie Newsome, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, reported that she and Ms. Janice Fitzhugh, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, attended the Prince George's County Older Americans Fair at the Department of Family Services in Camp Springs, MD on May 31, 2017. They provided 50 attendees with information regarding MetroAccess service and answered service-related questions. MetroAccess was invited to return for next year's event.

Michael Wilson Award Presentation

Mr. Conrad Marshall, Project Manager, Transdev, recognized operator Nicole Martin as the Michael Wilson Award recipient. Mr. Marshall provided a summary of Ms. Martin's statistical performance, accomplishments, and key contributions to MetroAccess Service.

Ms. Rush presented the "African Queen Award" to lead trainer Wilbert Johnson of Diamond Transportation. Ms. Rush stated she has known Mr. Johnson for 16 years. Over that period, Mr. Johnson has ensured that she made it to work on time and has always maintained his professionalism.

FY 2018 Work Plan Items

Mr. Semelfort suggested the reoccurrence of work plan topics related to the passenger assistance study, customer satisfaction survey, OCC trip insertion process, severe weather protocol, customer service annual update, and updates on the Abilities-Ride program. Mr. Semelfort also requested real-time Next Van updates be included in the work plan.

Dr. Posner recommended a presentation educating customers on cards for conditionally-eligible customers. He advised the committee that Metro provides group passes to individuals traveling through the transit system from out-of-state. Dr. Posner stated these same considerations should be afforded to MetroAccess customers. He said the committee should include the potential usage of MetroAccess customer passes on the work plan, and WMATA personnel should perform an evaluation and determine affordability.

Mr. Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, requested the committee provide clarity to the objectives and intentions of the proposed work plan topics. This will give staff an opportunity to provide feedback, evaluate action required to complete task, and prepare accordingly.

Dr. Banerjee inquired on the target date of the Abilities-Ride program.

Mr. Semelfort advised an update will be provided by Mr. Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning later in the meeting.

Mr. Crawford suggested development of a protocol to ensure the committee is involved in the evaluation of procurement processes directly related to MetroAccess.

Mr. Kent apologized that the committee was not satisfied with the acceleration of the MetroAccess Request for Proposal (RFP); however, there were no material changes to the contract; due to the volume of service issues encountered at the time, it was determined immediate action was necessary to move forward. As all nuances of the procurement process cannot be shared due to policy restrictions, the committee is welcomed to ask questions directly related to the delivery of service and contract requirements.

A comment from the audience inquired whether operators may be permitted to contact customers to improve on-time performance and customer travel time.

Mr. Semelfort thanked the customer for their comment and stated the committee will have additional discussion on ways to incorporate the proposed recommendations.

Suggested MetroAccess Customer Guide Inclusions

Ms. Allison Anderson, Operations Manager, MetroAccess, advised the committee on current updates to the MetroAccess Customer Guide. She said it currently includes updates to service hours for WMATA's Customer Relations Office, updates of useful numbers, details regarding the new MetroAccess card, and revisions to the Metro Sales Offices accepting cash payments for EZ-Pay accounts.

Mr. Semelfort suggested updating the new fare structure and service hours.

Ms. Anderson inquired if committee members had any recommendations on additions to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section.

Dr. Posner inquired on a frequently asked question for posey belt and seat belts.

Ms. Anderson stated the Customer Guide provides details related to both posey and seat belts; however, it is not listed under the frequently asked questions section. She advised that it could be added.

Ms. Bellamy suggested providing the protocol for obtaining an EZ-Pay refund.

Mr. Semelfort recommended including a list of Metrorail stations with assigned MetroAccess bus stop location information.

Dr. Posner suggested customers should be advised on the designated pickup/drop-off area at high-volume locations such as Verizon Center, FedEx Field, and the Nationals Ballpark.

Ms. Anderson thanked the committee for their feedback, and advised members to provide any additional updates within the next two weeks, as the revision is planned to be completed by late summer or early fall.

Ms. Bush advised that on her profile she is listed as traveling in a wheelchair with a PCA. Lately, when she attempts to book her trips, the fare appears to be slightly higher than usual. Ms. Bush inquired if the change in her fare is directly tied to the information in the system.

Ms. Anderson advised that traveling in a wheelchair with a PCA will not change the amount of a customer's fare. She also stated the information on Ms. Bush's bookings may be directly tied to Ms. Bush's subscription service. Ms. Anderson stated personnel will speak to her following the meeting for additional details, to make adjustments to the information listed in the system.

Ranger/GPS Mapping System

Ms. Nicole Murray, Project Controls Officer, MetroAccess, provided an overview of the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) customization process implemented on May 19, 2017. The MDT is an onboard computer that provides GPS mapping information on all MetroAccess vehicles. The MDT is the main form of communication for operators and the method by which they receive their manifest and trips. Enhancements were completed to both the MDT software and display screen. The most prevalent updates include removal of the scheduled time and inclusion of customer pickup window, expansion of the remarks space capacity to 250 characters, reformatting of the screen layout, and removal of all irrelevant data. By making these adjustments, operators are easily able to distinguish the start and end time of the customer's pickup window, easily view all pertinent data listed on the customer's profile, and see more descriptive instructions regarding the customer's trip. The fares for customers have been strategically placed at the bottom of the screen to ensure all information such as special instructions or waivers are reviewed by the operator. Ms. Murray advised that operators have provided favorable responses to the modifications.

Ms. Murray also advised on September 30, 2016 upgrades were completed to the MDT mapping. This update will reoccur annually to reflect new streets and housing developments within the service area. Additional projects underway include real-time updates of traffic conditions. These updates will provide operators with improved up-to-date navigation software to assist when traffic delays are encountered. Expected implementation is scheduled to occur by the end of the year.

Mr. Semelfort inquired if the MDT will advise the operator to arrive on the right or left side of the street.

Ms. Murray advised she will investigate and report back with her findings.

Ms. Rush stated that when traveling to her destination on Connecticut Avenue, NW the MDT only states you have arrived.

Dr. Posner suggested utilizing the same technology as Uber to track the location of the vehicle and/or customer. Also, develop a method to apply notations to trips on the intended entrance pickup at government buildings and hotels.

Ms. Murray advised her team is currently working on developing the vehicle location technology; however, this will follow the real time traffic updates.

Dr. Posner stated by providing the vehicle's location, a customer can account for the time it will take for the vehicle to arrive to their pickup location.

Mr. Ariza-Silva advised when contacting Where's My Ride (WMR), dispatch advises the customer to hold while an attempt is made to contact the operator. Mr. Ariza-Silva inquired if this process can be simplified to alleviate the delay.

Mr. Kent advised contacting the operator directly to check the status of a customer's ride provides an accurate assessment of the vehicle arrival time.

Ms. Bellamy stated the MDT does not provide the quickest route. The routing of her trips to Georgia Avenue does not make sense, frequently sending the operator in a large circle. The MDT should provide the same updates as available on cellphones. Ms. Bellamy advised when operators are contacted by dispatch for an estimated time of arrival this slows the vehicle down.

Mr. Kent advised staffs' leading focus was to ensure the current system in place is working as intended. These MDTs were installed to track the fleet and minimize the number of dispatchers overseeing runs. MetroAccess is well ahead of the industry in these features and advancements. Upon implementation of real time updates, the vehicle locations will be accurate. At that time, further discussion will take place on providing this information to customers.

Dr. Banerjee inquired on the possibility of utilizing technology to locate a customer through their cellphone.

Mr. Kent stated the release of cellphone information most likely will require an individual's consent.

A comment from the audience inquired if the routing provided and utilized by the MDT was based off pre-assigned bus routes.

Ms. Murray advised she does not believe the routing is based on bus routes. The external vendor NAVTEQ provides the trip itinerary; however, if the operator is familiar with the area and is comfortable taking another route they are welcome to do so.

Mr. Crawford inquired on the process operators utilize to determine their anticipated arrival time.

Mr. Kent advised when contacted by dispatch, operators provide a personal assessment on their estimated time of arrival. The mapping software on a commercial level is very limited in comparison to the software offered on cellphones.

Mr. Blake advised the committee there are no updates to report on the Abilities-Ride program. The last update provided to the committee instructed that the proposals were sent to WMATA's Procurement Office for review.

New Business

Ms. Rush inquired on if the committee will be given an opportunity to provide feedback on the new Ford Transit vehicles purchased. The committee should have discussed the design and capacity prior to purchase.

Mr. Crawford stated the stairway on the new vehicles was very narrow, and he was provided several instructions while entering the vehicle to avoid hitting his head.

Mr. Kent apologized to the committee for not being consulted on the van purchase. He advised strict industry limitations left Metro with a single viable option approval and purchase of the Ford Transit van. These vehicles were purchased to replace and retire older vans in the fleet. As there were no modifications that could be made prior to this purchase, communication has been initiated with Ford to arrange a meeting for customers to voice concerns for future acquisitions.

Public Comments

Comments received were regarding excessive on board time; circuitous routing; new Ford Transit van design; late trip credits; safety while riding the lift; getting off the vehicle on the correct side of the street; wheelchair tie downs; dispatch communication; and complaint investigation process.

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

Meeting adjourned at 6:12pm.