Customer Services, Operations, and Safety Committee

Board Information Item IV-A

June 26, 2008

Communication Initiative

**Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority
Board Action/Information Summary**

☐ Action ☒ Information	MEAD Number:	Resolution: ☐ Yes ☒ No

PURPOSE

To provide the Committee a status update on WMATA communication initiatives underway.

DESCRIPTION

WMATA has implemented more than ten communication initiatives based upon comments from customers, communication matrix team, Riders Advisory Council (RAC), Board members and employees. These initiatives are focused on clear, consistent and honest communication with our customers during any type of service interruption which could be an emergency, sick customer, etc.
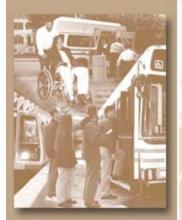
FUNDING IMPACT

None

RECOMMENDATION

None

Communication Initiatives

Presented to the WMATA Board of Directors:

Customer Service, Operations, and Safety Committee

June 26, 2008

Background

- The Committee was briefed in October 2007 on WMATA's assessment of communication to customers:
  - Planned events: relatively smooth with shared expectations
  - Unplanned service interruptions: focus on incident not customers
  - WMATA created unrealistic expectations: shuttle bus service

- Re-focused efforts on clear, consistent, and accurate communication with customers during any type of service interruption

- Critical component is being accurate about what WMATA can and cannot do

- During the past months, WMATA has pursued a culture change and taken into consideration:
  - Customer complaints
  - Communication Matrix Team
  - RAC comments
  - Board member comments
  - Employee comments

Prompt Communication

Comment:

Customers not promptly being told what is occurring in the
Metro System

Implemented:

- "We Stop We Tell" - System wide procedure published October 2007 to all employees
- If a train is stopped for any reason that is not a scheduled stop, an announcement is made immediately by the train operator
- If a bus is stopped for any reason that is not a scheduled stop, an announcement is made immediately by the bus operator

Goal:

- Customers informed of all unscheduled stops that result in service disruptions
- Updates given every two minutes for the duration of the unscheduled stop
- Basic accurate information provided to customers based upon what is known at the time
- Operators maintain communication with Operations Control Center via radios

Customer Liaisons

Comment:

No one directly focused on communicating with public

Implemented:

- Created customer liaison positions for Operations Control Center
- Staffed core hours and special events
- Directly responsible for communicating and/or creating messages to the public regarding any delay on the Metro System

Goal:

- 100% focus on accurate and professional communication to customers
- Prompt dissemination of Metrorail service disruption notices to internal and external clients using Regional Incident Communication Command System (RICCS)
- Provide current Metrorail and Metrobus status information and elevator outages on the WMATA media hotline
- Improve bus communications regarding incident impact and establishment of bus bridge

E-alerts and Website Messaging

Comment:

Timeliness and accuracy of E-alerts and website notifications

Implemented:

- Matrix team reviewed E-alert procedure and frequency November 2007
- E-alert is transmitted for all Metrorail service disruptions resulting in a 10-minute delay; sent immediately if disruption is severe in nature (e.g. person on the tracks)
- E-alerts for Metrobus will be in effect by July 2008
- E-alert is transmitted for MetroAccess major service disruptions
- Metrorail line delays posted at the top of WMATA's website
- Metrobus major service disruptions (i.e. unscheduled street closures) posted at the top of WMATA's website

Goal:

- Service Disruption Reporting System updated so the delay message scrolls across WMATA's webpage
- Same message distributed to E-alert subscribers
- PIDS updated; delay message sent to all mezzanines/platform displays at a frequency of once every three minutes
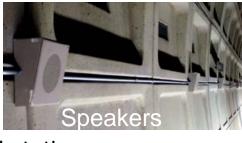
Public Address Upgrade

Comment:

Poor quality of station announcements

Implementing:

- Upgrading the Public Address System in 38 underground stations
- Completed 29 of 38
- Remaining 9 to be completed by December 2008

Goal:

- Clear announcements in upgraded stations
- Ability to use wireless microphones

Speakers

Pylon Speakers

Station Manager Tools

Comment:

Station Managers lack communication tools

Implemented:

- All stations with the completed Public Address System upgrade have been equipped with microphones - published operating procedures and guidelines October 2007
- Portable handheld radio assigned to every Metrorail kiosk – completed January 2008
- Standard operating procedures and guidelines on the use of the radios published January 2008 to Station Managers
- Station Managers are responsible for monitoring appropriate radio channels while on duty and promptly responding when called by OCC

Goal:

- Station Manager flexibility to make announcements from anywhere in the station and stay in touch with OCC outside of the kiosk
- Facilitates communication with customers during special events, major delays and crowded conditions – demonstrated effectiveness during Papal visit, Nationals opening, Cherry Blossoms
- Handheld allows the Station Manager to obtain information from OCC which is then communicated to customers via the microphone

Station Manager Interaction

Comment:

Increase Station Managers' assistance

Implemented:

- Training for all Station Managers to ensure they are always ready to effectively and efficiently monitor, communicate and take action
- Station Mangers Emergency Response training classes commenced June 4, 2008

Goal:

- Consistent approach by all Station Managers
- Hands on training to ensure Station Managers are prepared to confidently address all situations

Station Specific Maps/ Evacuation Maps

Comment:

Lack of geographical area information and transportation alternatives for customers

Implementing:

- Using updated bus map information developed station specific "take-one" pads that show all buses that service the area and points of interests near the station Public address announcement made at affected station

- Reviewed draft with RAC April 2008 and incorporated their comments

Goal:

- Maps in stations by July 1

- Provide customers with bus route information, landmarks and points of interest in the vicinity of the station

Evacuation Map

Signs

Comment:

No mechanism to let customers know a station is experiencing problems prior to spending the fare

Implemented:

- Procuring additional magnetic signs that can be placed on the fare gates to let customers know that there is a situation and customers cannot enter

Goal:

- Prevent customers from spending funds to enter a Metrorail station when the system is experiencing a significant service interruption

MAJOR DELAY ON METRORAIL
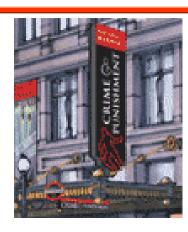
⚠️

SAVE A FARE CHARGE

Outreach to Organizations

Comment:

Additional assistance for customers during a major service disruption

Implementing:

- WMATA is partnering with:
  - Downtown DC Business Improvement District "Downtown SAMs" specially trained safety, hospitality and maintenance teams, uniformed in red, white and blue. They provide a roving concierge service, assisting visitors, residents and workers with maps, directions and other pertinent information.
  - Golden Triangle Business District – hospitality ambassadors who create a friendly and welcoming neighborhood for workers and visitors in the central business district of DC.

Goal:

- Additional personnel available to assist with our customers

Bus Shuttles

Comment:

No standard/permanent location for bus shuttles in Metrorail System

Implementing:

- Analyzing standard/permanent location and identifying mechanism for bus bridges at Metrorail stations (e.g. orange pole, etc)

Goal:

- Provide clear direction for customers and bus drivers

Evaluations

- How WMATA is evaluating our progress
  - Debriefs after disruptions and events to obtain lessons learned
  - Level and type of customer complaints
  - Media coverage

- We will continually work to improve communication with the riding public