

**MINUTES
VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE AC TRANSIT
ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC)
OCTOBER 11, 2022**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL and Introduction of Members and Guests

AAC members present:

Janet Abelson	Erika Bruhns, Vice Chair
Chonita Chew	Shawn Fong
David Fritz	Melissa Getz
Sandra Johnson	Daveed Mandell
Jim Robson	Tanya Washington
Barbara Williams	Hale Zukas (2:50)

AAC members absent:

Kiran Agarwal (excused)	Pamela Fadem (excused)
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Staff:

Tammy Kylo, Administrative Coordinator
Kim Ridgeway, Senior Program Specialist
Mallory Nestor-Brush, Accessible Services Manager
Robert del Rosario, Director of Service Development and Planning
Margaret Tseng, Customer Service Manager
Tony Gee, Public Info Systems Coordinator
Carissa Lee, Transportation Planner
Chris Durant, Assistant Director of Maintenance
Ramakrishna Pochiraju, Executive Director of Planning & Engineering
Nichele Laynes, Marketing & Communications Director

Guests:

Director Shaw, Board of Directors
Jumana Nabti, BART, Manager of Access Programs
Aaron Priven, MTC
Warren Cushman

3. ORDER OF AGENDA

The order of agenda was approved.

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

4.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Mandell/Getz and Robson approved the September 13, 2022, AAC meeting minutes. The motion carried by the following vote:

AYES – 9: Bruhns, Chew, Fong, Fritz, Getz, Mandell, Robson, Washington, Zukas
 ABSTENTIONS – 3: Abelson, Johnson, Williams
 ABSENT – 2: Agarwal, Fadem

5. REGULAR UPDATES

5.A. Service Planning and COVID-19 Safety Update

Robert del Rosario, Director of Service Development and Planning, reported that the Service Planning Department is in the middle of planning the December service changes, which has a huge focus on reliability as the District continues to work to increase the number of bus operators. One additional focus for the winter sign up is on late night service – The Owl Network. Staff is proposing adjustments to frequencies so that all Owl service runs on the same frequency; likely 30 minutes. Staff is also reviewing safety issues for passengers and bus drivers on the Owl Service, especially at transfer points and areas where operators can take restroom breaks. These proposed changes will go to the Board of Directors in 2 weeks.

The Service Planning Department is also working on a New Network Plan. Staff has been instructed to hire a consultant and the Board has approved a \$1 million expenditure for the plan. This plan will include a lot of outreach, of which the AAC is also a stakeholder. The goal is to implement the New Network in August 2024.

Robert, on behalf of Tabby Davenport, gave the COVID-19 Safety update. Masks are now optional on board all AC Transit buses. Masks and hand sanitizer are still available on board the vehicles. The District will continue to monitor these protocols, if the condition of the pandemic changes, with guidance from the CDC as well as state and local health organizations.

Daveed Mandell requested more frequent buses on the 79 line, and in the afternoon on the 12 line. He also reported that announcements on the 12 line, heading north, are not announcing at the correct locations. Robert replied that the 79 is back to the pre pandemic levels and will be reviewed as part of the new network for additional service. Line 12 is 20-minute frequency during peak hours and 30 minutes off peak.

5.B. Customer Service Quarterly Report

Margaret Tseng, Customer Service Manager, gave an overview of the Customer Service Quarterly Report, which highlighted the following:

- RTC Monthly Sticker Transition
 - Elimination of monthly stickers effective January 1, 2023
 - Campaign begins mid-October
- Call Center Updates
 - New recruitments
 - GoogleMaps Walking mode
 - 24x7 Call center service quote

Shawn Fong asked for clarification on the Flex calls received, considering Flex has been discontinued. Margaret replied that these were calls requesting for Flex service to be reinstated in Castro Valley and Newark.

Daveed Mandell requested that the AAC members be involved in the Customer Service training/testing of step-by-step instructions for people with disabilities.

David Fritz commented that he would like to see more vendors available to add the RTC funds electronically to Clipper. Margaret stated that they are reaching out to vendors, MTC, and partnering transit agencies.

5.C. Bus Stop Shelter Contract and Bus Stop Furniture Guidelines

Carissa Lee, Transportation Planner and Bus Stop Furniture Program Manager, gave a brief recap of the Bus Stop Furniture Guidelines, which were presented at the Joint Board of Directors/AAC meeting in July 2022. The purpose of the guidelines is to communicate a vision, and long term goals for bus stop shelters and benches, to internal and external stakeholders, establish bus stop shelter and bench design standards, and show the roles and responsibilities that local jurisdictions, transit agencies, contractors, and the public all have in supporting bus stop street furniture improvements.

Carissa also gave an update on the site conditions section of the guidelines, including ADA standards for locations; and the shelter and bench placement methodology. Because AC Transit has over 5,000 bus stops and it can cost around \$20,000 to install a shelter, a methodology was developed to help identify where to place shelters and benches. The recommendation is to add a shelter, if the location meets ADA standards, based on three factors:

1. Locations with high ridership and high wait times,
2. Neighborhoods with higher populations of people of color and low-income people, and
3. Social service locations within a quarter mile of a bus stop.

Carissa also gave an update on the Bus Stop Furniture Survey the Board of Directors directed staff to conduct in October 2021. The survey asked individuals to rate the importance of seating, weather protection, trash bins, lighting, maps and real time signage at the bus stops. Fifty-two percent of respondents said that digital signage or real time signage is most important at bus stop.

Finally, Carissa gave an update on the Transit Shelter Contract. On August 10th, the Board of Directors approved the solicitation of three contracts for the shelter program: Maintenance, Capital Work (i.e. Shelter installation), and Advertising. Staff will go back to the Board in November 2022 with an update on the progress of these contracts.

Feedback from the Committee and Members of the Public were:

- Concerns for signage for Blind and Visually Impaired People.
- Path of travel, especially when it's the responsibility of the City Government; including the landing areas for bus stops where there is grass, dirt, or uneven areas.

- The importance of both visual and audio information at bus stops.
- Vandalism of the shelters; staff should look into materials that are less easy to destroy.
- The number of shelters should connect to how far apart bus stops are.
- Ensuring any seating is wide enough for people to sit on.

Melissa Getz also encouraged AAC members to look at the attachments Carissa provided, including the full Bus Stop Furniture Guidelines, which will answer some questions they may have.

5.D. Discussion on Wayfinding - AAC

Daveed Mandell, AAC Member, gave a verbal presentation on Accessible Wayfinding. Daveed stated that what he is presenting is a result of conversations and correspondence with national and regional consultants, committee members, researchers etc. There is no set standard for accessible wayfinding, it is a local, regional and national issue.

Definition of Accessible Wayfinding Information:

- A. Websites, mobile applications, printed materials and/or signage that provide information and schedules regarding the location of bus stops or routes, and the location and/or status of transit vehicles.
- B. Textures, electronic beacons, design concepts, or any other product, service or procedure that is utilized to provide navigational assistance to, from or within a transit network.
- C. Websites and electronically prepared documents must meet all applicable provisions of Section 508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act or, Level AA success criteria set forth in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, whichever offers the greatest accessibility for people with disabilities.
- D. Printed information that is designed to be public-facing or that is likely to be requested by a member of the public must be made available upon request of a person with a disability in an alternative format that is accessible to that individual. In accordance with ADA requirements, consideration should be given to providing the document in the format requested by the individual making the request, but if providing a document in the requested format is not practicable, the agency should work with the individual to provide the document in a format that is accessible to that individual.
- E. Facilities and signage must meet applicable guidelines set forth in the ADA Accessibility Standards as promulgated by the US Access Board and/or California Title 24—whichever standard offers the greatest accessibility. Other products and technologies must meet all appropriate and applicable accessibility standards. However, currently there are no comprehensive legal national accessible wayfinding standards.
- F. All wayfinding information technologies and strategies, whether based on products, services or procedures, must be developed with ongoing input from all communities intended to be served by the agency, including traditionally underserved communities, communities of color, economically disadvantaged communities, older adults, people with disabilities, individuals and organizations who provide support or services within these communities, and professionals with expertise in areas relevant to accessible wayfinding.

Accessible Wayfinding Components:

- A. **Bus Stop Placement:** Bus stops should be placed near accessible, safe intersections. They should be easy to locate, and should not be jammed up against news racks, parking signs, trees, garbage cans and other obstacles. They should have clear paths of travel and should not be placed in congested areas. AC Transit must insist that jurisdictions comply with these requirements. It is the ultimate responsibility of the District to ensure that riders have easy and efficient access to all bus stops. The District must provide one standardized pole for all bus stops.
- B. **Bus Stop Displays:** All bus stop displays should be easily reachable and fully accessible. They should provide both visual and audible information. The audible information should be identical to what is offered visually. The information should be provided in several languages.
- C. **Bus Stop Locations:** Customer Service agents must be adept at giving clear, accurate information about where bus stops are located, including transfer points. Wherever possible, they should provide cardinal compass directions. They must also give information about transferring from one bus to another and at what stop.
- D. **Automated Computer/Phone Information Systems:** In addition to accessible websites and mobile applications, several transit authorities offer automated computer/phone information systems, such as Transportation Authority of River City (TARC) in Louisville, Ky; Minnesota Valley Transportation Authority (MVTA) in Minneapolis; and Valley Transit Authority (VTA) in Santa Clara County. Using such systems, riders can obtain a list of all routes, choose a route and follow it virtually in either direction, or choose a stop to hear expected arrival times. Those systems are available 24/7/365.
- E. **Tactile Bus Stop Indicators in the Built Environment:** Countries, such as Australia, have for decades embedded tactile directional bars in sidewalks to alert blind people that they have reached a bus stop. These bars, which are easily felt under foot or cane, lead to adjacent bus stop poles that contain accessible displays. The U.S. is just beginning to adopt these essential tactile bus stop indicators.
- F. **Smart Phone Applications:** Many countries, and several U.S. transit authorities, have adopted smart phone applications that map bus stops digitally and give easy-to-follow, accurate audible directions for locating bus stops.
- G. **Accessible Websites and Mobile Applications:** It is essential that websites and mobile applications be fully accessible and work with all screen readers and magnification programs on computers, tablets and smart phones.
- H. **Braille and Raised Print Plates:** It is possible, but not always necessary, to affix braille and raised print placards on bus stop displays. Because braille and raised print take up much more space than regular print, the most pertinent and relevant information must be included, which is not an easy decision to make.
- I. **High-contrast Indications and Large Print:** People with low vision require high-contrast bus stop indicators and large print information on bus stop displays.
- J. **Bus Stop Signage for Wheelchair Users:** Bus stop signage should be low enough to allow wheelchair users to easily read it. In most cases, redundancies should be provided, so that ambulatory riders don't have to bend down to read it.
- K. **Bus Stop Information for Cognitively Disabled Individuals:** Some people with cognitive disabilities require symbol- or pictorial-oriented bus stop information.
- L. **Bus Stop Information for Deaf People:** Many deaf and hard of hearing people prefer video-oriented bus stop information, as opposed to document-oriented information.

Daveed completed his presentation by recommending staff contact Dr. Billie Louise Bentzen, PH.D., COMS director of Research for Accessible Design for the Blind.

Public Comment:

Warren Cushman stated that if AC Transit were to adopt all of the items presented it would be a world class transit system when it comes to accessibility. He also stated that blind folks travel differently than one another, some use braille and others use audio.

Committee members comments:

- Appreciation for Daveed’s presentation and all the information he provided.
- Like the use of Smartphones for wayfinding, Smartphones are available to everyone, even through Government programs for low-income people.
- Would like to see the same technology that is used for the GPS system to assist with wayfinding.

5.E. Feedback on the Braille/Raised Letter for Bus Stop Identification

Tony Gee, Public Information Systems Coordinator, gave a brief overview of the Braille/Raised Letters for Bus Stop Identification presentation that was presented at the Joint Board of Directors/AAC meeting.

Tony presented the following options, explaining that the content would decide the cost which would, in turn, determine the number of bus stops that would have the information installed:

1. A plate that says “Bus”, and with distinguished bus stop poles from other signposts. This would be the most cost-effective solution. Though it would provide the least specific information, it would allow more bus stops to be covered.
2. A plate that includes bus line, numbers, and letters. This would provide the most immediately understandable information. But these numbers and line indicators tend to change more frequently, and so the maintenance costs and original installation would be higher.
3. Bus stop ID numbers. This information changes far less and also allows customers to access further information via the website or calling customer service. Bus stop ID numbers also distinguish particular bus stops from others.

After revisiting the proposal, Tony asked for feedback on the content of the brailled/raised letter plates, as well as suggestions on locations where the test cases would be installed.

Feedback from the Committee and Members of the Public were:

- A plate that just says “Bus” doesn’t help, especially in areas where more than one bus stops at a stop.
- Test cases should be in diverse areas of the service area, some rural, some suburbs and some city locations.
- Some test case locations should include California School for the Blind in Fremont, East Bay Center for the Blind, the Hatlen Center for the Blind, the Orientation Center for the Blind, Albany, the Ed Roberts Campus in Berkeley, BART stations, busy transit centers and throughout the city of Alameda.
- The Bus Stop ID numbers and raised print need to be in the large font throughout the service area.

- Less than 10% of Blind people use Braille.

Mallory explained that this is a pilot program authorized by the Board of Directors and that there is currently \$35,000 for this fiscal year to complete the pilot program. Mallory also stated that the bus stop IDs, because they can be tied into real time information, is a good way to go. That would mean a plate for each individual stop. But of course, since this is a pilot program, Tony is looking for suggestions on where the initial plates would be installed.

Daveed Mandell reported that the Vice Chair of VTA's Accessibility Committee has stated that braille plates were installed are on all of VTA's bus stops. Daveed suggested looking at the plates VTA has installed before making a final decision.

The Committee requested that this item be re-agendize to after Staff has gotten samples from VTA and can bring an update back to a future meeting.

5.F. Review of Lift/Ramp Road Call Report

The Committee reviewed the Quarterly ADA Complaints which compared ADA Complaints in 1st Quarter 21/22 (July 1 – September 30) to 1st Quarter 22/23. Tammy reminded the committee that all complaints are answered within 5 business days. If there is a driver related ADA complaint, the Superintendent pulls the video and a conference with the operator is requested.

5.G. Review of Lift/Ramp Road Call Report

The Committee reviewed the Road Call report for July 31 – August 27, 2022. There was a total of four (4) road calls; four (4) were chargeable. All vehicles passed the pre-trip inspection and thus any road call listed occurred in service.

6. STANDING REPORTS

6.A. Chair's Report

Chair Johnson reported that she attended the United Senior of Oakland and Alameda County (USOAC) 19th Annual Healthy Living Festival on September 29th at the Oakland Zoo. She said it was a good event, as usual, and encouraged people to attend next year.

6.B. Board Liaison Report

None.

6.C. Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC) PAPCO Report

None.

6.D. Service Review Advisory Committee (SRAC) Report

Kiran Agarwal was absent and will give the report at the November AAC Meeting.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

8. MEMBER/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tanya Washington and Chonita Chew thanked everyone who attended the United Senior of Oakland and Alameda County (USOAC) 19th Annual Healthy Living Festival at the Oakland Zoo.

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS & NEXT MEETING DATE

The next AAC Meeting will be held Tuesday, November 8, 2022 at 1:00 p.m. This will be a virtual meeting.

Future Agenda Items:

- Training Update regarding Manual Deployment [Requested by Pam Fadem on March 8, 2022]
- Accessibility and Safety Issues of BRT Lanes [Requested by Daveed Mandell on March 8, 2022]
- Inaccessible Transfer Points in the Service Area [Requested by Daveed Mandell on March 8, 2022]
- AC Transit Mobile App Inaccessibility [Requested by Daveed Mandell on March 8, 2022]
- Federal and State Guidelines for Underserved Communities [Requested by Pam Fadem on March 8, 2022]
- Lyft – Wheelchair accessible Vehicle presentation [Requested by David Fritz on July 12, 2022]

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Tammy Kylo

Secretary to the Committee