

**MINUTES
VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE AC TRANSIT
ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AAC)
JANUARY 10, 2023**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL and Introduction of Members and Guests

AAC members present:

Kiran Agarwal	Erika Bruhns, Vice Chair
Chonita Chew	Pamela Fadem
Shawn Fong (1:11)	David Fritz
Melissa Getz	Daveed Mandell
Jim Robson	Tanya Washington
Barbara Williams	

AAC members absent:

Janet Abelson	Sandra Johnson
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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
Nichele Laynes, Marketing & Communications Director
Dan Talbott, Customer Services Administration
Tony Gee, Marketing Administrator
Beverly Greene, Executive Director of External Affairs, Marketing & Communications
Claudia Burgos, Director of Legislative Affairs and Community Relations
Ahsan Baig, Chief Information Officer, Innovation and Technology
Brian Muerle, Safety Administrator

Guests:

Director Peeples, Board of Directors
Vice President Shaw, Board of Directors
Mike Cole
Arlene Hipp

3. ORDER OF AGENDA

The order of agenda was approved.

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

4.A. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Fadem/Robson approved the December 13, 2022, AAC meeting minutes. The motion carried by the following vote:

AYES – 11: Agarwal, Bruhns, Chew, Fadem, Fong, Fritz, Getz, Mandell, Robson, Washington, Williams

ABSTENTIONS – 0

ABSENT – 2: Abelson, Johnson

5. REGULAR UPDATES

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

Robert del Rosario, Director of Service Development and Planning, gave an update on service planning. The main focus for the March 2023 sign up is the meet ups for the Owl Service. The 20th and Broadway transfer point will be moved to 14th and Broadway due to unsafe activity on 20th and Broadway late night. The City of Oakland has also closed streets in that area due to unsafe activity, which alleviates some harm for passengers and bus operators, but is also a barrier to access for buses. 14th and Broadway was the original location for this transfer point and is also a better location for operator restroom breaks and areas where road supervisors can be on site. The District is still in talks with operators regarding reliability improvements to be implemented later in the year.

The District entered into contract with a consultant for the New Network Plan. The New Network Plan will include a review the routes, route types, including the application of flex service, as well as service frequency. There will be no overhauling of the bus stop network but there will be a review of where bus stops are and if there are any recommended adjustments . The internal kick off meeting with the consultant is scheduled for next week. The AAC will be one of the groups that will be a part of the outreach efforts. The implementation of the New Network is August 2024.

Daveed Mandell asked staff to review bus stop transfers as part of what will be reviewed in the New Network Plan.

David Fritz asked for more information about Owl Service, “Transbay for Employees only”, and why AC Transit would duplicate BART Transbay service.

Robert responded that Owl Service is a service that runs midnight to 6 am and largely covers trunk routes. He also stated that the “employee only” buses are not AC Transit’s service.

Pam followed up that AC Transit’s service does not duplicate BART’s service; there are areas AC Transit’s Transbay serves that BART does not.

5.B. Customer Service Quarterly Report

Nichele Laynes, Marketing and Communications Director, gave an overview of the Customer Service Quarterly Report, which highlighted the following:

- Call volumes decreased from the previous quarter by 16%
- Top 5 Call Disposition
 - Travel information continues to be the main reason for customer contacting the Call Center.
 - Trip Planning calls averaged 288 per month.
 - Complaint/Commendation averaged 110 per month.

- No Answer averaged around 52 calls per month.
- Fare Info and Questions remained few with only around 36 per month.
- RTC Applications processed 4 quarter 2022
 - A total of 469 RTC applications processed.
 - Since the elimination of new/renewal applications fee, the total number of applications processed has been consistent for the last two quarters.

Nichele also stated that RTC stickers have been eliminated as of December 31, 2022. Outreach efforts to the public, riders, vendors, etc., began several months before the transition. These efforts will continue in January and February to make the transition as seamless as possible.

Nichele also reported that Customer Services Manager, Margaret Tseng, has left the District and management is currently recruiting for a replacement.

Daveed Mandell commented that customer service is courteous, but for the blind community, “they are useless”, because they cannot provide accurate information about where a bus stop is located. For instance, a particular agent could not give information on where he could transfer buses or which bus to take. Daveed stated that many people want local customer service and that renewing the contract with the agency in Iowa was a mistake. He plans to go to the Board of Directors meeting and demand local customer service.

Nichele stated that when the RFP was sent out, the District did not get significant responses from local call center vendors. The District will have to work within the framework of the current contract and keep trying to make improvements until the contract goes out for bid again.

Pam Fadem stated she was surprised to see the majority of calls coming in for route information and trip planning. Pam stated that she uses 511 and wondered if the marketing department could help get the word out about this service to free up some of the customer service calls.

5.C. Update on Bus Stop Braille/Raised Letter Signage

Tony Gee, Acting Marketing Administrator, gave an update on the Bus Stop Braille / Raised Letter Signage pilot project. Tony reminded the Committee that in August 2022, Aaron Priven presented a proposal for the project. Then in October 2022, the Committee suggested a number of areas that should be part of the pilot program (i.e., School for the Blind, Major Transfer points), eliminated some ideas for signage content, and suggested that Staff reach out to VTA to get a copy of their signage. Staff did reach out to VTA to send a sample, but the sign only said, “Bus Stop”. The Committee also received a presentation from BART on their wayfinding plan, which included bus numbers, braille, raised letters and a QR code.

At that time, the AAC wanted more information on the sign. The options were:

1. The sign would say “Bus Info” and would have QR code that leads to more information. The Committee wanted more information on the sign. This option was determined to be insufficient.
2. The sign would say “Bus Stop” and have the Bus Stop ID number as well in Braille and Raised letter. There would also be a QR code, or someone could call AC Transit or 511 and give the Bus ID number.

Staff is now looking for direction from the AAC on the best information to place on the sign, with the understanding that there is limited information that can go on the sign and understanding that this is currently a pilot program.

Mike Cole, a member of the public, liked option 2 best. He also stated that Bus stop ID numbers are crucial and gives tremendous information. He asked that Staff hold off on the QR code because that presumes people have the means and skills to access the code. He also doesn't believe that the amount of information, including Braille, would take up a lot of space on the sign. He encourages AC Transit to continue to use Bus Stop IDs.

Daveed Mandell says since he is the only blind person on the committee Staff should come directly to him with information, like the VTA sign, which although he suggested that AC Transit reach out to VTA, he didn't know it only said "Bus". He said using Bus Stop IDs is asking a lot of riders.

Diane Shaw, Board of Directors, asked if Staff is going to get more input from other groups, like the School for the Blind in Fremont.

Jim Robson agreed with the importance of the continued use of Bus Stop ID numbers; and to make the numbers as large as possible so they are readily identifiable to everyone. He also asked that the pilot program include mid-county and not just the Fremont and El Cerrito areas.

Tony responded that the Pole Crew has been made aware to install large font at the bus stops. He also responded that other stakeholders will be part of the outreach efforts and he will work with the Accessible Services Department to identify specific individuals who read braille, including Committee Member Daveed Mandell.

5.D. Review of Quarterly ADA Complaints

The Committee reviewed the Quarterly ADA Complaints which compared ADA Complaints in 2nd Quarter 21/22 (October 1 – December 31) to 2nd 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.

Director Shaw asked how an ADA pass-up is recognized. Tammy responded that the rider self identifies as an ADA passenger.

Pam Fadem clarified that it is not always everyone at the stop that gets passed up, at times it is only the person in the wheelchair.

Shawn Fong would like more information on what Refused Access is, as there were 4 last quarter and 1 this quarter. Dan Talbott, Customer Services Administration, replied that it could be multiple reasons. One example is a passenger may have an open drink in their hand and the driver won't allow them to get on the bus. Tammy will send the details to Shawn Fong.

Committee Members reminded everyone to call in a commendation when they see good behavior by an operator. The drivers wear their badge number on their sleeve, and you can report that number to identify the driver.

5.E. Review of Lift/ramp Road Call Report

The Committee reviewed the Road Call report for December 4, 2022 – January 2, 2023. There were a total of five (5) road calls, all of which four (4) were chargeable. All passed the pre-trip inspection and thus any road call listed occurred in service.

6. STANDING REPORTS**6.A. Chair's Report**

None.

6.B. Board Liaison Report

Director Peeples stated that next Board Meeting agenda includes:

- A Resolution for Hale Zukas and his 31 years of service.
- A presentation from MTC on the efforts to unify all of the bay area transit agencies.
- The Election of President and Vice President. Joel Young is the current Interim President and Diane Shaw is the current Interim Vice President.

Diane Shaw stated that she went to Janet Abelson's retirement party, which celebrated her 23 years of service with El Cerrito.

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

There was no PAPCO meeting this month. The next meeting is Monday, February 27th at 1:00 pm and will be a virtual meeting.

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

None.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mike Cole stated that the Automatic Voice Announcement (AVA) system on the buses is pretty good, but for something as vital as this it needs to be perfect, and it isn't. He urges the technical people to review trouble spots. One rule is that the next stop should not be announced until the current stop is cleared.

Arlene Hipp stated that she is speaking for seniors who use public transportation for grocery shopping and to run errands. She stated that there are no benches at grocery stores and posts offices. She understands that homelessness is a problem. She stated that seniors need seating at the stops and is hoping that there is some type of seating that people can sit on but not be used by the homeless. She said she is not discriminating against the homeless, but also don't want seniors to be ignored.

8. MEMBER/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pam Fadem thanked and gave appreciation to Vice Chair Erika Bruhns for stepping up at the last minute to run the AAC meeting in Chair Johnson's absence.

Jim Robson wanted to address David Fritz and his concerns with the availability of bus service in Castro Valley including Flex service. Jim encouraged David to go to the MAC meetings in Castro Valley and to look into other sources of transportation in Hayward and Alameda that area provided by Alameda CTC.

Tanya Washington voiced concerns that bus operators tend to have the AC turned on during cold days, but have the AC turned off on hot days.

Melissa Getz stated that she saw in *Next Door* that there is infighting between people who want to get to Monterey market and people who want to ride bikes. The city is looking to put bike lanes in, and people are complaining about how this will take away parking spaces. She wasn't sure if this has anything to do with the AAC, or if it was a marketing thing; but she is wondering why the bus is not an option for people who want to go shopping here.

Daveed Mandell announced that the Transportation Research Board is holding an annual meeting on Accessible Transportation and Mobility via Zoom and encouraged people to attend.

Daveed also stated that he agrees that some of the bus stop announcements are off, which he's mentioned before, which happens on the line 12. And before the bus goes out they need to make sure the AVA is stating the lines in the direction of the route.

Mallory stated that the information about the Board Meeting in which Hale Zukas will be honored was sent to Committee and encouraged them to attend. Mallory also stated that the February AAC meeting will include a presentation on driver recruitment and retention. Finally, in response to the question as to why Administrative Staff, Managers and the General Manager don't drive buses in order to get more service on the road is because it would violate the Collective Bargaining Agreement with ATU.

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS & NEXT MEETING DATE

The next AAC Meeting will be held Tuesday, February 14, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. This will be a virtual meeting.

Future Agenda Items:

- 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]
- Lyft – Wheelchair accessible Vehicle presentation [Requested by David Fritz on July 12, 2022]

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Tammy Kylo

Secretary to the Committee