



COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT ACCESSIBILITY

Wednesday, March 7, 2007

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the Committee for Transit Accessibility (CTA) was called to order at 1:02 p.m. by Chairperson Tamez in Building A, Auditorium, Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), 3331 North First Street, San Jose, California.

ROLL CALL

Members Present

Anthony Drummond, staff aide representing
Ex-Officio Board Liaison Forrest Williams
David Grant
Katie Heatley (Ex-Officio)
Troy Hernandez
Marjorie Jensen
David Julian
Martin Lasich
Jeanette Law
Laura Michels
Aaron Morrow, First Vice Chairperson
Barbara Rhodes, Second Vice Chairperson
Thomas Slack
Barbara Stahl
Randy Tamez, Chairperson

Members Absent

Emma Eljas
Linda Gallo
Sandra Gouveia

Representing

City Group 1 – City of San Jose

Independence Network
OUTREACH Services
City Group 1 – City of San Jose
Silicon Valley Independent Living Center
City Group 2 – City of Santa Clara
City Group 3 – City of Saratoga
Community Options
Vista Center for the Blind & Visually Impaired
City Group 5 – County of Santa Clara
City Group 5 – County of Santa Clara
City Group 2 – City of Santa Clara
City Group 2 – City of Santa Clara
City Group 1 – City of San Jose

Representing

City Group 1 – City of San Jose
Los Gatos Senior Center
City Group 1 – City of San Jose

A quorum was present.

Member Michels took her seat at 1:03 p.m.

2. INTRODUCTION OF AUDIENCE MEMBERS

The Committee received introductions from the audience including: Marcella Rensi, Congestion Management Program and Planning (CMPP) Transportation Planning Manager; Karen Morris, Project HIRED; David Ledwitz, Accessible Services Management Analyst; Dan Smith, Chief Operating Officer; Abrar Ahmad;

Transit Communications Assistant Superintendent; Steve Newgren, Operations Service Planning Management Analyst; Joonie Tolosa, Operations Senior Management Analyst; Nancy Coss-Fitzwater, Operations Policy and Administrative Manager; Sam Lau, Operations Deputy Director; and Patrick Griffin, Marketing and Customer Service Supervisor.

First Vice Chairperson Morrow requested that VTA staff provide their department name with their introductions.

3. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Barbara Stahl, Interested Citizen, expressed her appreciation to OUTREACH Services for their excellent service.

Thomas Slack, Interested Citizen, expressed his support of Ms. Stahl's comments.

4. Minutes of February 7, 2007

M/S/C (Morrow/Stahl) on a vote of 10 Ayes to 0 Noes to 2 Abstentions to approve the Minutes of February 7, 2007. Members Jensen and Julian abstained.

BUSINESS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS/GENERAL MANAGER

5. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Overview

Chairperson Tamez noted that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Overview was deferred.

Camille Williams, Accessible Services Manager and Staff Liaison, stated that the ADA Overview was removed from the March 21, 2007 Transit Planning and Operations (TP&O) Committee Agenda and CTA to address issues.

6. Bus Stop Location Annunciator Information Update

Steve Newgren, Service Planning Management Analyst, provided a brief overview of the Bus Stop Location Annunciator Information Update. Mr. Newgren reported that in response to reports from customers and operators VTA and Orbital Transportation Management Systems (Orbital TMS) recently identified two issues that are have a negative impact on the automatic announcement system. These issues include: 1) abrupt termination of external announcements and 2) early activation of announcements prior to arrival at the stop.

Mr. Newgren commented that Orbital TMS is working on a solution for the first issue. He stated that then work will begin on the second issue once the first issue is resolved.

Abrar Ahmad, Transit Communications Assistant Superintendent, reported that on an interim basis operators were instructed to call out stops until the automated bus stop announcement system resumes normal operations.

NOTE: M/S/C MEANS MOTION SECONDED AND CARRIED AND, UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED, THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Ahmad commented that VTA operators are given a call out stop sheet that lists all the relevant stops that need to be called as part of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirement. Mr. Ahmad stated that VTA's Verification of Transit Training (VTT) program is an annual training for every coach operator, which encompasses a broad range of policies and procedures.

Mr. Ahmad stated that in accordance with ADA regulations operators announce bus stops along routes at major stops, transfer locations, and upon request by a customer. He stressed the importance for customers to provide information to customer service when reporting incidents to ensure that the incident is addressed.

Member Michels expressed concern that the volume, pitch, and quality of the voice used for the annunciator system on light rail vehicles is difficult for customers to comprehend. Mr. Ahmad responded that the entire system utilizes the same voice but noted that the Committee's concerns will be forwarded to Camille Williams, Accessible Service Manager and CTA Staff Liaison.

Member Slack queried if customer service receives many complaints related to the volume and quality of the annunciator system on the bus vehicles. Mr. Newgren responded that customer service receives more complaints about volume versus clarity. Mr. Newgren stated that once a complaint is received then technicians are directed to verify and adjust the volume levels on the buses.

Member Slack asked what percentage of the bus fleet has the annunciator system installed. Mr. Newgren responded that 100 percent of the bus fleet has the annunciator system.

First Vice Chairperson Morrow noted his disappointment in the vendor and annunciator system, noting that the system has experienced several problems since the installation in the bus fleet. First Vice Chairperson Morrow requested that staff look into the best practices related to the contractor and the problems with the system then report back to the Committee with the information.

Ex-Officio Member Heatley asked if the contract contains language to seek recourse for problems with the annunciator system. Dan Smith, Chief Operating Officer, responded that staff is currently in the process of having another contractor replace the current annunciator system.

Second Vice Chairperson Rhodes expressed concern that the annunciator system has experienced several problems since the beginning and suggested replacement of the contractors.

Member Grant asked how the stops are selected. Mr. Newgren responded that ADA regulations require announcement at major stops along a route, transfer locations, and when requested by a customer.

Member Grant asked how often the stops are reviewed and modified and queried about the complexity of the process. Mr. Newgren responded that the process is complex since all 400 patterns along every route would require information change.

Anthony Drummond, Staff Aide representing Ex-Officio Board Liaison Forrest Williams asked how long VTA has contracted with Orbital TMS for the annunciator system. Mr. Ahmad responded that VTA initiated the contract in 2000 and installation of the annunciator system began in 2004.

Mr. Drummond asked if the vendor contract was being renewed. Camille Williams, Accessible Services Manager and CTA Staff Liaison, responded that this item provides information that the Committee requested related to the system problems. Ms. Williams stated that system problems are not uncommon within the transit industry, noting that the issue is not related to the contract but the concerns related to the system. Ms. Williams stated that the problems with the system are being assessed and addressed.

Member Lasich asked how a visually impaired individual would know when they have arrived at their stop if the operators are not calling out the stops. Ms. Williams responded that a customer may request a courtesy stop notice from the coach operator.

Member Lasich expressed concern that the coach operators do not know the route stops. Ms. Williams stated that operators can contact Operations Control Center (OCC) to obtain route stop information.

Member Stahl asked if coach operators could call out and inform the customer of the route stop when they board the bus. Mr. Ahmad responded that the intent of the annunciator system was to achieve consistency. He added that operators are instructed to call the stops for the route and as a courtesy if requested by a customer.

M/S/C (Morrow/Stahl) to recommend that the Board of Directors review and reevaluate the contract as it pertains to the Best Practices to determine if the contractor has fulfilled the obligations toward VTA and VTA's customers.

Chairperson Tamez requested that staff provide an update to the CTA Committee when additional information is available.

7. National Conference on Disaster Planning for the Carless Society February 8 – 9, 2007 at the University of New Orleans

Camille Williams, Accessible Services Manager and Staff Liaison, provided a brief overview of the National Conference on Disaster Planning for the Carless Society February 8 – 9, 2007 at the University of New Orleans. Ms. Williams reported that the University of New Orleans hosted the conference to address how to protect and identify the needs of vulnerable populations before, during, and after a catastrophe.

Ms. Williams stated that much of the discussion at the conference revolved around ways to protect vulnerable populations. She commented that coordination between social service and transit agencies is necessary in the event of a catastrophe.

Ms. Williams noted key considerations during a catastrophe. These included: 1) the impact to individuals with disabilities or special needs; 2) creation of "buddy systems" in neighborhoods; 3) completion of community impact assessments; 4) creation of a plan on how to protect transit agency rolling stock; 5) development of a processing and tracking system for individuals who must evacuate; and 6) development of an emergency plan.

Member Slack requested that VTA staff prepare an evacuation action plan related to the information that was presented at the conference.

Second Vice Chairperson Rhodes queried about the strategies that the City, County, and VTA are conducting to prepare for a catastrophic event. Ms. Williams responded that the Santa Clara County Office of Emergency Services (OES) and the VTA Emergency Operations Center (EOC) work to address emergencies and disasters.

Ms. Williams suggested that the CTA Committee and VTA work collaboratively to develop a voluntary registry of individuals who are part of a vulnerable population.

Member Jensen suggested that VTA and OUTREACH work collaboratively to develop a registry of individuals identified as part of a vulnerable population.

Chairperson Tamez asked if OUTREACH could provide information related to where their customers are located in event that they require rescue. Ex-Officio Member Heatley responded, "yes", noting that she has been working with the County, various centers, and the Governors Office on emergency planning efforts.

Ex-Officio Member Heatley stressed the need to develop a plan to transport large numbers of individuals in the event of an evacuation. Ms. Williams responded that it is important to have other resources, such as school buses and over the road coaches available to transport individuals in the event of an emergency.

Ms. Williams stressed the importance to have social service and transit agencies involved with defined roles included in a disaster plan so that everyone is aware of the plan.

Member Slack requested that VTA's evacuation action plan be agendaized for a future CTA Committee meeting.

Member Grant noted the importance for VTA to remove bus seats in order to transport mobility device user in the event of an emergency. Member Grant stated that VTA's evacuation plan should focus on transporting large numbers of disabled individuals to other locations.

David Ledwitz, Accessible Services Management Analyst, stated that a consultant advised the County and VTA to develop a plan on how to deal with disabled individuals during an emergency.

Member Michels asked if there was a plan to establish an inter-agency council to work collaboratively with agencies to establish an emergency plan. Ms. Williams responded that the Silicon Valley Joint Venture Group consists of health care professionals, first aide responders, law enforcement officers, and other professionals to assist in the event of a major disaster.

Chairperson Tamez referenced the April 12, 2006 CTA Meeting regarding the Emergency Planning for Assisting Persons with Disabilities, noting that there was no emergency plan established. Chairperson Tamez requested that VTA and OUTREACH work together to develop ideas to establish an emergency plan to resolve issues. Chairperson Tamez requested that staff present the developed plan at a future CTA meeting.

8. Shelter/Stop at Scott in Santa Clara

Steve Newgren, Operations Service Planning Management Analyst, provided a brief overview of the Shelter/Stop at Scott in the City of Santa Clara. He noted that VTA will present the northbound stop to the City of Santa Clara for its consideration. Mr. Newgren added that the southbound stop has many complications that prevent the installation of a bus shelter.

Member Grant asked if it was possible to address the complications by moving the bus stop shelter further down the street. Mr. Newgren responded that there are many issues that prevent this request, noting that staff would work to place the shelter at the existing bus stop.

Mr. Newgren stated that he has been to the site location several times to evaluate the bus stop criteria, noting the only other option would be to speak with Clear Channel regarding the installation of a customer built shelter.

Member Julian referenced the Homestead and Lawrence area, noting that there are no sidewalks for bus stops. Member Julian requested that staff evaluate the site location to determine if the site fits the criteria for a bus stop shelter. Mr. Newgren responded that he would look into the site location and report back to the Committee.

Ex-Officio Member Heatley noted the importance to install bus stop shelters at heavily utilized locations. She added that this may increase the use of fixed route service. Mr. Newgren responded that staff is currently pursuing the installation of the bus stop shelter at the northbound Scott site.

9. FYTD 2007 Second Quarter Transit Operations Performance Report (July 1, 2006 – December 31, 2006)

Joonie Tolosa, Operations Senior Management Analyst, provided a brief overview of the FY 2007 Second Quarter Transit Operations Performance Report (July 1, 2006 – December 31, 2006). Mr. Tolosa commented that the FY 2007 Second Quarter Transit Operations Performance Report presents key performance information regarding the operation of the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA).

Mr. Tolosa reported that bus ridership increased 1.2 percent and totaled 15.8 million while light rail ridership increased 39.6 percent in total boardings through the second quarter of FY 2007. The average weekday ridership increased 42.3 percent with 34,186 in totaled boardings. He noted that the overall FYTD 2007 system ridership for bus and light rail increased by 8.8 percent.

Mr. Tolosa commented that the total transit operating expense through the second quarter of FY 2007 increased 2 percent to \$125.2 million. Cost of labor through the second quarter of FY 2007 was down 1 percent. Operating Expenses for supplies and services increased 14.3 percent. Supplies and services consist primarily of diesel fuel, parts, professional services, security services, utilities, and other operating expenses, and totaled \$27.5 million during the first six months of FY 2007.

Mr. Tolosa reported that Fare revenue collected during the first six months of FY 2007 was \$17.7 million, which is an increase of 2.5 percent compared to FY 2006. The farebox recovery ratio of FY 2007 was 14.1 percent, which is the same as FY 2006.

Paratransit ridership increased by 5.9 percent from 474,391 in FY 2006 to 502,254 in FY 2007. The net operating cost during the first six months of FY 2007 was \$12.8 million, which increased 4.8 percent compared to last fiscal year. This increase is due to increases in ridership and the cost of fuel, a 3 percent rate increase for paratransit service providers, and costs associated with the relocation of the paratransit vehicle facility in December 2006. The vehicle facility relocation to VTA property is expected to produce efficiencies resulting in cost savings in fueling and facility leasing costs.

Mr. Tolosa reported that the net cost per paratransit passenger trip through the second quarter of FY 2007 was \$25.42, which is a decrease of 1.1 percent from the \$25.69 net cost per trip recorded in FY 2006 and exceeds the established goal.

Member Grant referenced the Key Performance Indicators Bus Operations passenger concerns per 100,000 boardings and queried what staff was doing to reduce the number of concerns. Mr. Tolosa responded that when there is an increase in ridership there is also an increase in customer complaints and compliments.

Mr. Tolosa commented that overall system wide ridership passenger concerns have increased from FY 2004 to FY 2006, noting that staff will narrow the concerns to the specific type to determine the issues that need to be addressed.

Ex-Officio Member Heatley referenced the National Transit Database (NTD) reporting and asked why VTA does not report the actual cost per hour in the report. Mr. Tolosa responded that VTA's Transit Operations Performance Report is aligned to the NTD and the report contains only transit related information.

Mr. Tolosa commented that the report reflects direct transit-related operating costs based on the full-time equivalent (FTE) cost allocation methodology, which is in conformance with the National Transit Database (NTD) reporting methodology.

Member Jensen referenced the April 7, 2004 CTA recommendation for VTA to remove the Paratransit Services category from the farebox recovery ratio and requested that the fare structure be agendized on a future CTA meeting. David Ledwitz, Accessible Services Management Analyst, responded that federal regulations state that the paratransit fare cannot be more than twice the adult fare.

Mr. Ledwitz referenced the FY 2004 – 2005 Biennial Operating and Capital Budgets, noting the Board of Directors adoption of a resolution to establish new rates and fares for VTA bus, light rail, and paratransit services effective January 1, 2005.

Ex-Officio Member Heatley highlighted the formula to compute the paratransit fare and noted that the Committee would like the opportunity to review and discuss the formula. Ms. Williams responded that the fare process involves a public comment process, which would allow the public and the Committee the opportunity to participate and provide input and comment.

Chairperson Tamez stated that CTA's objective is to recommend that the Board of Director not increase paratransit fares at such a high level and to remove the paratransit fare from the automatic fare program formula.

Chairperson Tamez commented that at the April 11, 2007 CTA meeting the Committee will review how VTA raises fares according to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Member Julian expressed his concern that the public does not have the opportunity to discuss how much money is allocated to OUTREACH Services. Jim Unites, Operations Planning Program Manager, responded that the paratransit budget is part of VTA's Adopted Budget, noting that the information was distributed for public comment and presented to CTA.

Mr. Unites stated that the next two-year budget review will begin in July 2007 and will include a public hearing on the budget process for the public to have the opportunity to provide input.

Ms. Williams stated that the CTA will review the budget process in April 2007 prior to the presentation of VTA's Biennial Budget for Fiscal Year 2008 and Fiscal Year 2009 to VTA's Advisory Committees in May 2007.

Member Grant directed attention to the Key Performance Indicators Report and Accessible Service Operating Statistics Report, referencing VTA's 14 percent farebox recovery ratio to OUTREACH's 10 percent ratio.

10. Lifeline Transportation Program

Marcella Rensi, Transportation Planner Manager, provided a brief overview and history of the Lifeline Transportation Program. She highlighted the source of funds for the program and noted that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) rulings prohibited the use of program funds to subsidize transit passes.

Ms. Rensi highlighted three projects impacted by these rulings. She reported that two of the three projects were able to reorganize and reduce their scopes. Ms. Rensi stated that the VTA Program was entirely dedicated to subsidized transit passes and withdrew its program. These changes resulted in \$1,105, 487 in Lifeline Program funds available for reprogramming.

Mr. Drummond, Staff Aide representing Ex-Officio Board Liaison Forrest Williams, queried about MTC's decision to prohibit the use of State Transit Assistance (STA) funds to subsidize transit passes. Ms. Rensi responded that MTC's legal counsel determined that the STA legislation prohibited such a subsidy and noted that VTA has requested that MTC forward a written legal opinion to VTA's legal counsel.

Member Julian queried how the Auto Repair Assistance Program (ARAP) program would apply to individuals with disabilities. Ms. Rensi responded that the ARAP program assists low-income individuals within the Lifeline program.

Member Julian requested that the Committee receive a written report on the projects that received funds. Ms. Rensi responded that staff will provide the information to the Committee.

Ex-Officio Member Heatley commented that Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funding is predominantly used for low-income individuals in training to return to work.

Ex-Officio Member Heatley stated that the New Freedom program expands to serve programs for the disabled community.

Ex-Officio Member Heatley stressed the importance to identify projects that will serve senior, disabled, and low-income individuals.

First Vice Chairperson Morrow requested that the Committee receive the ARAP outline project scope. Ms. Rensi responded that the staff will provide the information to the Committee.

Ex-Officio Member Heatley stated that Santa Clara County's top priority is to identify funding for low-income programs; therefore, the County has been trying to get non-profit agencies involved and participate in those programs.

Chairperson Tamez stated that CTA's function is to serve as the paratransit coordinating council but stressed the importance to consider low-income individuals as well.

M/S/C (Julian/Morrow) on a vote of 11 Ayes to 0 Noes to 1 Abstention to review and recommend that the Board of Directors approve a revised scope and grant amount for the City of San Jose's Auto Repair Assistance Program (ARAP) in the amount of \$75,000 and issue a new Call-For-Projects (CFP) for the Lifeline Transportation Program. Second Vice Chairperson Rhodes abstained.

11. Coach Operator Training Quarterly Report

Mark Thomas, Operations Senior Management Analyst, provided a brief overview of the Operator Training. Mr. Thomas reported that staff has been working to address training and customer service sensitivity issues through the Verification of Transit Training (VTT) program. VTA's training program is a progressive nine-week training program, which involves many aspects of the responsibilities and duties of a Coach Operator.

Mr. Thomas reported that VTA provides Coach Operator Training updates relative to ADA regulations, sensitivity training, securement training, and customer service in order to provide quality service to customers with disabilities. Mr. Thomas stated that VTA Coach Operators are required to know their responsibilities when providing services to the community.

Member Grant expressed concern regarding exam question #10. "What procedure should the operator follow if a customer with a mobility device becomes violent or engages in illegal activity?" Member Grant asked if situations such as these have occurred with mobility device users. Mr. Thomas responded that operators have encountered situations where mobility device users were violent or engaged in an illegal activity on a bus.

Mr. Thomas stated that the Training Department implements and measures its effectiveness through presentations, hands-on demonstrations, testing, and course evaluations. Mr. Thomas briefly highlighted a few selected exam questions used in ADA Training to illustrate a sampling of the information VTA Coach Operators must know in order to provide effective service to the community.

Chairperson Tamez queried about exam question #2. "A service animal is an animal that?" Mr. Thomas responded that a service animal is an animal that provides

companionship to its owner, may be used to alert the owner of a ringing phone, may be used to fetch items, and may assist a person with limited sight.

Mr. Thomas noted that if a customer states that their animal is a service animal then VTA will accept the information as true.

Mr. Thomas stated that an operator is required to physically assist persons with a disability, noting that VTA personnel assist customers when necessary or upon request.

Mr. Thomas stated that customers with disabilities are allowed to travel with respirators and/or a portable oxygen supply on coaches.

Member Slack asked about the actions a driver would take in the event that a respirator and/or portable oxygen supply fails. Mr. Thomas responded that the driver would contact VTA's Operations Control Center (OCC) for assistance.

Mr. Thomas stated that any customer is allowed to use VTA lifts or ramps.

Member Stahl expressed concern and stated that there are situations when operators pass up mobility device users. Mr. Thomas responded that this practice is not an acceptable process and/or procedure. Mr. Thomas stated that if a coach is filled to capacity then the operator would notify OCC of the situation.

Mr. Thomas commented that VTA must provide alternative services to persons with disabilities when regularly scheduled headways exceed more than 30 minutes before the next accessible vehicle.

Mr. Thomas noted that operators are required to cycle the lift prior to pullout and by every operator assigned to the coach for any part of the day.

Mr. Thomas commented that operators check that the ADA tool kit contains a minimum of eight tethers, one or two Q-Straint detachable devices, cutting device, mirror, and hook tool. He highlighted the penalties imposed on VTA and the coach operator should operators not adhere to ADA procedures. Mr. Thomas noted that potential consequences are that VTA could be subject to fines by various regulatory agencies, operators could be disciplined up to and including termination, and VTA could lose funding and be subject to legal action.

Mr. Thomas noted that an operator should announce the route number and destination at all multiple-route stops and any stops requested by customers if the Annunciator becomes inoperative. Mr. Thomas stated that there is an external announcement of the route number and destination when the bus front door is opened, which is in compliance with ADA regulations. Mr. Thomas noted that transfer stops and all multiple-route stops are announced.

Mr. Thomas commented that an operator would follow procedures if a customer became violent or engaged in an illegal activity. Mr. Thomas stated that the procedures are the same for all customers whether or not if they utilize mobility devices.

Chairperson Tamez stated that several years ago the Board of Directors approved that VTA would go beyond ADA regulations and announce bus lines at single bus stops.

Chairperson Tamez asked if staff could confirm if the external bus announcement announced the route line at single bus lines.

Mr. Thomas responded that VTA's training program does not instruct operators to announce route destination at single bus line stops. Mr. Thomas stated that ADA regulations state that operators should announce the route number and destination at all multiple-route stops if the Annunciator system becomes inoperative.

Ex-Officio Member Heatley commented that spinal injury individuals may exhibit symptoms that appear to be violent due to extreme environmental conditions. Ex-Officio Member Heatley stressed the importance for operator sensitivity training to identify and determine if the individual is violent or has a medical condition.

Member Stahl expressed her appreciation to OUTREACH operators for their care and sensitivity towards their customers.

12. VTA Securement Task Force Meeting

David Ledwitz, Accessible Services Management Analyst, reported that the VTA Securement Task Force met on Friday, March 2, 2007 and reviewed two months of data. He provided a brief report highlighting: seven occurrences where individuals refused securement, commented on the data received from the customer survey noting appreciation for the securement from the operators, and reported that First Vice Chairperson Morrow requested that the Securement Task Force Subcommittee continue to maintain their monthly meetings.

First Vice Chairperson Morrow requested that the chart presented to the Securement Task Force Subcommittee be provided to the CTA Committee. Mr. Ledwitz responded that the chart will be distributed to the CTA Committee.

First Vice Chairperson Morrow expressed appreciation to Paulette Mulligan, Accessible Services Representative, and the Accessible Services department for their diligent work related to the survey. First Vice Chairperson Morrow reported that the survey provided positive feedback from the community. He stressed the importance to break down prior barriers and to create a new positive dialogue between the drivers and disabled community.

Member Slack queried about the seven-securement refusals and if the occurrences and reasons are being documented. Samuel Lau, Operations Deputy Director, responded that statistics are being kept on every single case related to securement refusals.

Mr. Lau reported that during the first two months there were 22,000 boardings with seven instances where securement was declined. He stated that if an individual declines securement then a road supervisor is contacted to speak to the individual regarding the securement refusal to determine the issues. Staff attempts to work with the individual to address the issues and offers assistance to coordinate the pre-tethering of the mobility device.

Member Julian referenced an incident where a Line 522 coach did not stop but noted that the second coach apologized and announced that the lift was inoperable. Member Julian expressed his appreciation for the apology and information from the second coach.

Mr. Ledwitz stressed the importance for customers to provide relevant information to VTA when reporting an incident to ensure that the incident is addressed.

Mr. Ledwitz stated that the VTA Securement Task Force Subcommittee will continue to meet on a regular basis and provide updates to the CTA Committee.

13. Web Site Developments

Bernice Alaniz, Marketing and Public Affairs Deputy Director, introduced Patrick Griffin, Customer Service Supervisor, who provided a brief overview of the Web Site Developments. Ms. Alaniz commented that Mr. Griffin will be manage the Web Site Development project as VTA moves forward.

Mr. Griffin reported that VTA is currently working on a phase redesign of its website to create a website that is functional and provides valuable resources for all Santa Clara County residents. The redesign will incorporate information obtained from the online survey, internal reviews, and through user input.

Mr. Griffin stated that a research firm conducted three focus groups to test initial changes to VTA's website on February 20, 2007 and February 22, 2007. He commented on the three following focus groups: 1) users familiar with VTA website and services, 2) non-VTA website or services, and 3) individuals with disabilities. Mr. Griffin commented that the intent of the focus groups was to obtain feedback on the look and functionality of the website during the development process.

Mr. Griffin stated that the intent was to ensure that the three focus groups had the opportunity to test the initial changes and provide input on VTA's website during the development of the website. He noted that a special feedback e-mail was set up for focus group 3 to allow further testing and input. Staff anticipates the initial findings from the research firm on March 19, 2007. The information obtained from the three focus groups were to make the focus of VTA's website on transit and less on the other aspects of VTA, a trip planner for all users, and to make it easier to locate a VTA contact phone number. Information obtained from individuals with disabilities was to organize the data in a logical manner so that readers do not have to go through the entire document, to use fewer graphics, and to allow user to adjust screen font size.

Mr. Griffin reported that staff is working to redesign VTA's Homepage website that incorporates the comments obtained by the focus groups. Staff is working to address the concerns brought forth to ensure a more accessible website. Mr. Griffin stated that the second focus group for individuals with disabilities is scheduled in early April 2007 and the participants will be provided with web exercises to test the website before attending the focus group. He noted that the intent is for the redesign of VTA's website to go live on July 1, 2007. Mr. Griffin noted that the CTA Committee may provide comments and/or questions by calling him directly at 408-321-7506.

REPORTS

14. Board of Directors Report

Anthony Drummond, Staff Aide representing Ex-Officio Board Liaison Forrest Williams reported that at the March 1, 2007 Board of Directors Regular Meeting, the Board approved all the Agenda Items.

Mr. Drummond reported that the Board took action to authorize the execution of task order contracts with up to nine engineering firms for engineering design consultant services for commuter rail, light rail, and bus rapid transit projects; extended the 8-Hour Light Rail Excursion Fare Pilot Program through June 30, 2007. This action will provide the opportunity to include public comment in the final staff recommendations as to whether the 8-Hour Light Rail Excursion Fare should be added to VTA's Fare Ordinance, and adopted a resolution certifying that the VTA is an eligible and responsible sponsor for the Capitol Expressway Light Rail Extension Project, which allows submission of applications for Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP).

15. Committee Staff Report

Camille Williams, Accessible Services Manager and Staff Liaison, reported that Accessible Services compiled information related to customers traveling experiences on VTA transportation services. Ms. Williams stated that staff continues to listen to customers and is working to address issues and concerns in a timely manner.

16. Chairperson's Report

Chairperson Tamez reported that the next National Transit Database (NTD) report distributed to the Committee will be more comprehensive and clear. Chairperson Tamez stated that TransLink ® is about 18 months away but VTA intends to work to ensure that when TransLink ® is installed in VTA vehicles that it is accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Chairperson Tamez reported that he and the First and Second Vice Chairpersons met with Michael T. Burns, General Manager, and Dan Smith, Chief Operating Officer, to discuss the role and responsibility of the Committee for Transit Accessibility (CTA). Chairperson Tamez stated that the CTA Committee serves in the capacity to advise the Board of Directors.

Chairperson Tamez commented that the CTA Committee does not have the authority to direct VTA staff.

OTHER

17. Announcements

Member Grant queried about the expiration date for the door-to-door service and Gilroy South County surcharge. Ms. Williams responded that staff will follow up and provide the information to the Committee.

18. ADJOURNMENT

The Committee adjourned the meeting at 3:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle M. Garza, Board Assistant
VTA Board of Directors