



COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT ACCESSIBILITY

Wednesday, July 11, 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

Emma Eljas
Sandra Gouveia
David Grant
Katie Heatley (Ex-Officio)
Troy Hernandez
David Julian
Martin Lasich
Aaron Morrow, First Vice Chairperson
Barbara Rhodes, Second Vice Chairperson
Thomas Slack
Barbara Stahl
Randy Tamez, Chairperson

Members Absent

Anthony Drummond, staff aide representing Ex-Officio Board Liaison Forrest Williams
Linda Gallo
Marjorie Jensen
Jeanette Law
Laura Michels

A quorum was not present and a Committee of the Whole was declared.

2. INTRODUCTION OF AUDIENCE MEMBERS

The Committee received introductions from the audience including: David Ledwitz, VTA Accessible Services Management Analyst; Michael Hursh, VTA Operations Deputy Director; Mark Thomas, VTA Technical Training Supervisor; Steve Newgren, VTA Operations Service Planning Management Analyst; Dan Smith, VTA Chief Operating Officer; Jerry Mikolajczyk, VTA Acting Chief Financial Officer; Ann Carey, VTA

Executive Assistant to the General Manager; Nancy Coss-Fitzwater, VTA Operations Policy and Administrative Manager; and Sam Lau, VTA Operations Deputy Director.

3. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

David Julian, Interested Citizen, requested to receive his Committee information in large print format. Michelle Garza, Board Assistant, responded that the distribution lists will be updated to reflect the change.

Member Grant arrived and took his seat at 1:05 p.m. and a quorum was declared.

4. Minutes of June 13, 2007

Chairperson Tamez referenced the June 13, 2007 CTA Meeting Minutes Agenda Item #9., Distribution of Information to CTA, noting that the discussion on VTA's Administrative Code is not reflected in the meeting minutes. Chairperson Tamez requested that the June 13, 2007 CTA Meeting Minutes include the discussion on VTA's Administrative Code.

The Committee deferred the Minutes of June 13, 2007 to the August 8, 2007 CTA Meeting.

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

5. Door-to-Door and South County Service Area Surcharge Deferment Information

David Ledwitz, Accessible Services Management Analyst, provided a brief overview of the Door-to-Door and South County Service Area Surcharge Deferment Information. Mr. Ledwitz reported on the deferment of the paratransit Door-to-Door surcharge and the South County Service Area surcharge.

Mr. Ledwitz stated that prepared script has been provided to VTA and Outreach Customer Service staffs to respond to questions about the deferment of both the Door-to-Door and South County Service Area surcharges. Mr. Ledwitz read the prepared script into the record: "The additional charges for South County Outreach paratransit customers who live more than 3/4 of a mile from a bus route, and for customers who receive door-to-door service, will continue to be deferred until further notice. Should you have any questions, please contact VTA's Accessible Services department at 408-952-4249."

Mr. Ledwitz stated that the Paratransit Riders' Guide will be updated to include information regarding the surcharge deferments.

Chairperson Tamez requested that the Door-to-Door and South County Service Area surcharges deferment information be made available on VTA's webpage. Mr. Ledwitz responded that staff will work on the request.

6. Mainstreaming of Individuals with Disabilities into VTA

Camille Williams, Accessible Services Manager and Staff Liaison, provided a brief overview of the Mainstreaming of Individuals with Disabilities into VTA. Ms. Williams reported that the Committee requested that staff provide information about how VTA integrates services for individuals with disabilities within the organization.

Ms. Williams stated that VTA has integrated elements of accessibility into transit, planning, and construction programs and projects. Ms. Williams reported that the Fiscal Resources Department created and provided VTA's Biennial Budget in an accessible format. VTA's Marketing Department is currently in the process of updating VTA's website and has solicited input from the disabled community. VTA's Technology Department is taking the lead to update software and provide training resources to make the process of creating accessible documents more efficient.

Ms. Williams noted that VTA's Congestion Management Program and Planning (CMPP) Division Community Design and Transportation (CDT) Program created and published a best practices manual in partnership with community stakeholders that incorporate principles of universal design. She stated that according to the CDT best practices manual the intent and consideration creates accessible travel environments for individuals with disabilities and senior citizens.

Chairperson Tamez referenced his response email to Agenda Item # 6., Mainstreaming of Individuals with Disabilities, noting that his interpretation of mainstreaming is that each department complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure that services are provided in the most integrated way. Chairperson Tamez stated that he views VTA's Accessible Services Department a segregation of services for individuals with disabilities.

First Vice Chairperson Morrow expressed his support of Chairperson Tamez's response to Agenda Item # 6., Mainstreaming of Individuals with Disabilities.

Member Stahl stated that she did not have the opportunity to review Mr. Tamez's response and requested clarification regarding the definition of "mainstreaming." Chairperson Tamez stated that the context of "mainstreaming" is that everyone receives the same level of service at the same point.

Chairperson Tamez commented that his response states that CTA is requesting services that are currently provided by the Accessible Services Department be provided in VTA's appropriate departments. He stated that the first level of customer contact should be VTA's Customer Service Department and other departments.

Member Grant expressed his support of Chairperson Tamez's response and stressed the importance of the Accessible Services Department to work collaboratively with the CTA.

Member Eljas stated that she believes that there is merit in both an Accessible Services Department working with individuals with disabilities and being treated equally as other customers. Member Eljas requested additional clarification regarding Chairperson Tamez's response regarding "mainstreaming."

Chairperson Tamez stated that the objective is to implement an organizational change and recommended that the Committee receive a monthly update on the status of “mainstreaming” of individuals with disabilities within VTA.

Member Gouveia stressed the importance of including the calling out of stops in Chairperson Tamez’s response. Chairperson Tamez commented that the response is a starting point for the Committee to determine the importance of needs to be addressed.

First Vice Chairperson Morrow expressed concern regarding the delay to begin VTA’s travel-training program.

Member Slack stated that he did not have the opportunity to review the response and asked Chairperson Tamez for a summary of the items and references that reflect the adversarial relationship between Accessible Service Department and CTA. Chairperson Tamez responded that it is his perception that the relationship has been adversarial.

Dan Smith, Chief Operating Officer, expressed concern and disagreement with Chairperson Tamez’s response and the statement regarding an adversarial relationship between the Accessible Services Department and CTA. Mr. Smith stated that VTA staff works diligently to serve all the communities to ensure that all customers receive the best service that VTA provides. Mr. Smith commented that VTA staff works diligently to address all customer concerns and service complaints.

M/S/C (Julian/Gouveia) to support Chairperson Tamez’s response to Agenda Item # 6., Mainstreaming of Individuals with Disabilities into VTA, and forward the information to the Board of Directors.

M/S/C (Julian/Gouveia) to request that Mainstreaming of Individuals with Disabilities be placed on CTA’s Regular Agenda as a reoccurring item to allow for Committee discussion and assist VTA to integrate working with individuals with disabilities into VTA as a whole.

7. Stop Request Activated Announcements

Steve Newgren, VTA Operations Service Planning Management Analyst, provided a brief overview of the Stop Request Activated Announcements. Mr. Newgren reported that Second Vice Chairperson Rhodes requested staff investigate modifying the “Stop Request” system to activate the next stop announcement.

Mr. Newgren reported that VTA’s current announcement technology relies on a Global Positioning System (GPS), which utilizes satellites to locate the actual position of each bus along the route. Stop announcements are activated when a vehicle enters into a defined geographic area known as a “trigger box,” surrounding the stop to be announced.

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

Mr. Newgren commented that the “Stop Request” system is designed to notify a VTA bus operator of a passenger’s request to stop at the next bus stop. The “Stop Request”

system was not designed to be integrated with the stop announcement system; therefore, merging the two systems would be difficult and costly.

Second Vice Chairperson Rhodes asked if a customer activates the stop request could the bus operator call out the next bus stop. Mr. Newgren responded that operators are required to call out certain stops. He stated that if the Annunciator System is not working then the operator is required to call out the stops from a call stop sheet.

Chairperson Tamez noted that ADA regulations state that operators call out enough stops so that the customer is oriented to the surroundings.

Member Grant queried about the problems related to invalid public annunciator identification malfunction. Mr. Newgren responded that staff resolved the problem by changing the character limit from 50 to 40. He stated that staff has conducted field checks and the bus stop announcement system is working properly.

Member Eljas asked how old was VTA's current communication system. Mr. Newgren responded that the communication system was put into service in October 2004.

Member Eljas asked when staff would consider implementing a new system. Mr. Newgren stated that he doesn't have any information when a new system will be implemented.

Sam Lau, Operations Deputy Director, referenced Second Vice Chairperson Rhodes' question regarding calling out the next bus stop when the stop request is activated, noting that this request would be very difficult and challenging since VTA has over 4,000 bus stops and each bus route has approximately 50 to 60 stops.

Mr. Lau responded that the ADA requires that a major change in direction or major transfer points are to be called out, but not every single stop.

Second Vice Chairperson Rhodes stated that it is difficult and challenging for individuals with visual disabilities to know where they are and to become oriented while traveling on the bus if the stops are not being called out. Mr. Lau responded that operators can contact Operations Control Center (OCC) to obtain route stop information for customers.

Member Slack asked if it is reasonable for a customer to request that the operator call out their stop. Mr. Lau responded that it is reasonable for operators to call out stops requested by customers.

Member Slack referenced an incident where a visually impaired individual was left off at the wrong bus stop and the individual was completely disoriented and required assistance to get back to the Santa Clara Valley Blind Center (SCVBC). Member Slack asked if there was something that the operators could be instructed to do to assist customers requiring assistance. Mr. Lau responded that operators can contact OCC to obtain location information for customers.

Mr. Lau stated that customers can request that the operator call out a specific stop. He stated if the driver is not aware of the location stop then the driver can contact OCC to obtain the appropriate information.

Chairperson Tamez requested that the Committee discuss the different levels of orientation and stressed the importance of addressing the issues to ensure that individuals are being left off at the appropriate bus stop.

8. Accessible Document Training

Camille Williams, Accessible Services Manager and Staff Liaison, provided a brief overview of the Accessible Document Training. Ms. Williams commented that staff has completed its first round of training to learn to create accessible documents. She reported that Second Vice Chairperson Rhodes participated in the first round of training.

Ms. Williams reported that staff is evaluating future training needs for the organization and will provide opportunities for CTA Members to participate in the training courses.

Ms. Williams asked the Committee to provide a list of members who are interested in participating in accessible document training. She stated that staff will contact these Members when training courses and dates have been scheduled. She noted that the accessible training courses will be scheduled during the week and will require a commitment of at least a full day. Member Julian volunteered to be added to the list for future training.

Member Julian left his seat at 1:50 p.m., the quorum was lost,
and Committee of the Whole was declared.

Chairperson Tamez expressed his concern that the Chairperson and Vice Chairpersons were contacted to participate in the Accessible Training courses, noting that the Committee does not serve in this type of capacity. Chairperson Tamez stated that it would be better to hire consultants to conduct the Accessible Training since they would be better prepared to illustrate how to create accessible documents. Chairperson Tamez recommended that the Committee establish an Accessible Document Training Subcommittee.

Ms. Williams stated that the purpose of the Accessible Training is to create accessible documents, but it is beneficial and valuable for the Committee to understand the limitations and types of technologies that are available.

Second Vice Chairperson Rhodes reported that she participated in three days of the Accessibility Training. Second Vice Chairperson Rhodes expressed her appreciation and noted that she was impressed with the participants who attended the training in an attempt to learn how to create accessible documents.

First Vice Chairperson Morrow requested information on the accessibility consultants. Ms. Williams responded that the consultants hired for the Accessible Training were Knowbility. Knowbility conducts an annual conference entitled, "Access U Accessibility Training," where corporate users are instructed on the process of creating accessible documents.

Ms. Williams continued that staff also worked with an individual from De Anza College, Assistive Technology Department, for accessible Portable Data Format (PDF) training.

First Vice Chairperson Morrow asked if the consultants are local and requested the consultants website address. Ms. Williams responded that the consultants are located in Austin, Texas and stated that the website address will be distributed to the Committee.

Chairperson Tamez recommended that the Committee establish a Subcommittee to provide reports and updates to the Committee.

9. Quarterly Update from VTA Technical Training

Mark Thomas, Technical Training Supervisor, provided a brief overview of the Quarterly Update from VTA Technical Training. Mr. Thomas reported on the External Announcements System, noting that the design of the system is to call out the Route Line and destination at every stop when the front door is opened. He continued that the External Announcements System has had some problems recently, but staff is currently working to address the issues.

Member Julian took his seat at 1:56 p.m. and a quorum was declared.

Member Slack asked when VTA's External Announcements System became available. Mr. Thomas responded that the system became available in the mid 1990's.

Mr. Thomas continued that the External Announcements System previously was mechanically triggered by the front door, whereas now it is triggered by the Advanced Communications System (ACS) Radio System.

Steve Newgren, VTA Operations Service Planning Management Analyst, commented that staff has checked VTA's bus vehicles and determined that the system has experienced a low percentage of problems associated with the External Announcements System.

Member Lasich stressed the importance for operators to call out stops for customers with visual disabilities. Mr. Newgren responded that operators are required to call out stops requested by customers.

Mr. Thomas suggested that customers inform the driver that their stop is near a specific main cross street.

Camille Williams, Accessible Services Manager and Staff Liaison, stated that operators can contact OCC to obtain route stop information and directions for customers.

Member Lasich asked if it were possible to program every bus stop announcement within the system. Mr. Newgren responded that it would not be feasible.

Chairperson Tamez stressed the importance to focus on better strategies to address the issues and concerns related to the Announcements System and "Stop Request" system.

Member Julian referenced an experience on Route Line 57 or 58, where the External Announcements System was announcing the wrong destination. Mr. Newgren stressed

the importance for customers to provide relevant information to VTA when reporting these types of incidents to ensure that the concern is addressed.

Mr. Newgren stated that the announcement system concern will be forwarded to staff.

Member Grant asked if VTA provides courtesy stops between stops for customers with disabilities and/or seniors. Mr. Thomas responded that VTA maintains the “night stops” program. Under this program, a driver may stop between regular bus stops to allow a passenger to disembark in a safer location. Mr. Thomas stated that the “night stops” program is in effect from dusk till dawn.

Member Grant stressed the importance to expand the “night stops” program to provide additional assistance for individuals with disabilities and seniors.

8. Accessible Document Training (continued)

Chairperson Tamez recommended that the Committee establish an Accessible Document Training Subcommittee to provide reports and updates to the CTA Committee.

M/S/C (Julian/Morrow) to recommend establishing an Accessible Document Training Subcommittee to attend Accessible Document Training and provide reports and updates to the CTA Committee.

Chairperson Tamez asked if there were any members willing to volunteer to serve on the Accessible Document Training Subcommittee to provide input and feedback to the CTA Committee.

Member Julian and First Vice Chairperson Morrow and Second Vice Chairperson Rhodes volunteered to serve on the Accessible Document Training Subcommittee.

Ex-Officio Member Heatley requested that OUTREACH Paratransit Services staff attend and participate in the Accessible Document Training.

REPORTS

10. Board of Directors Report

There was no Board of Directors Report.

11. Committee Staff Report

Camille Williams, Accessible Services Manager and Staff Liaison, reported that Community Bus Service began operating in the South County communities of Morgan Hill and Gilroy on July 2, 2007. Ms. Williams noted that VTA attended and participated in the Morgan Hill Independence Day Parade.

Member Eljas queried about the Community Bus Program. Ms. Williams responded that the Community Bus Program uses smaller more fuel-efficient vehicles on a fixed route.

Member Eljas queried about the Community Bus Program headways. San Lau, Operations Deputy Director, responded that the headways are between 15 to 30 minutes depending on the location and time of day. He stated that the Community Bus is similar to regular service with fixed routes.

First Vice Chairperson Morrow asked if the Morgan Hill and Gilroy Community Bus Program eliminated or replaced any fixed route service. Mr. Lau responded that the Community Buses replaced some service and provides service to existing routes.

Mr. Lau stated that Morgan Hill Community Bus Routes will serve the northern and southern portions of the city and both lines interconnect with Bus Line 68.

Member Slack queried about the Community Bus Program fare structure. Mr. Lau stated that Community Bus single ride fare will cost \$1 for adults and 50 cents for youths, seniors, and disabled customers. He noted that VTA offers free shuttle service for Great America and River Oaks.

12. Chairperson's Report

Chairperson Tamez reported that he was recently appointed to the City of San Jose Disability Advisory Commission (DAC), where he attended and participated in the July 9, 2007 City of San Jose DAC.

Chairperson Tamez requested that the City of San Jose DAC Report be placed on CTA's Regular Agenda as a standing monthly report provided by fellow City of San Jose DAC member and CTA First Vice Chairperson Morrow.

Member Julian reported that he represents the City of Santa Clara ADA. He requested that the City of Santa Clara ADA Report be placed on CTA's Regular Agenda as a standing quarterly report. Chairperson Tamez requested that Member Julian provide the quarterly City of Santa Clara ADA Report to the Committee.

On order of Chairperson Tamez, there being no objection, the Committee requested that City of San Jose DAC and City of Santa Clara ADA Reports be placed on CTA's Regular Agenda as standing reports.

OTHER

13. Announcements

Member Grant queried about the status of the Hope Center Shelter request for a bus shelter at Scott and Space Park in the City of Santa Clara. Mr. Newgren responded that Clear Channel is scheduled to begin installation of the bus shelter on July 17, 2007.

14. ADJOURNMENT

The Committee adjourned the meeting at 2:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle M. Garza, Board Assistant
VTA Board of Directors