

Paratransit Advisory Committee (PAC)

March 11, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the PAC meeting date, time and format was changed. A Zoom virtual meeting was conducted.

Meeting was called to order by Ms. Ellen Rubin, Co-Chair at 4:30pm.

Attendees on Conference Call:

PAC Members: Thomas Coppola, Lyudmila Demikhovskaya, David DePorte, Ketrina Hazell, Jose Hernandez, Sharlene Kraft, Billy Mitchell, Mark Anthony Phifer, Jean Ryan, Ellen Rubin, Tucker Salovaara, Sharada Veerubhotla

MTA/NYCT Paratransit: Brian Altschul, Lynda Edmond, Tammie Francisque, Donna Fredericksen, Ami Freyberger, Eugene Griffith, Simone Harvard, Patricia Ibarguen, Diane McFarlane, Stephanie Palmadesso, Donald Raimondi, Shirley Teran-Marty

Guest: Michael Anderson (TLC), Malcolm Cain (TLC), Theadora Paulucci (TLC), Naomi Silkowitz (TLC), Yesenia Torres (TLC), Quemuel Arroyo (MTA Chief Accessibility Officer), Edward Friedman (MOPD), Commissioner Victor Calise (MOPD, MTA Board Member)

Approval of Minutes- A motion was made to approve the previous meeting minutes.

Access-A-Ride (AAR) Service Report - Donald Raimondi, Deputy Vice President /Acting Vice President, Paratransit

provided a summary of the January 2021 operating statistics from the Paratransit Report. A copy is attached to these minutes.

PAC Member Discussion and Feedback

Mr. Salovaara asked if appointment times can still be made online and through the app. Mr. Altschul, Technology Project Management Officer confirmed that when using the website or app, customers may request an appointment or pick-up

PAC Topic – TLC WAV & FHV Disability Training

Malcolm Cain, Director of Inclusion and External Affairs from the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) introduced himself and presented the PowerPoint which included an overview of TLC's Office of Inclusion and discussed their new passenger assistance training course. The course targets and educates drivers on how to properly secure passengers in wheelchairs and provides customer service training skills, specifically when transporting customers with disabilities, seen and unseen. An explanation of the complaint process was also provided.

Yessina Torres, Accessibility Outreach Coordinator explained how the Office of Inclusion was created by City Council and the NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission to ensure the riding public receives equal and courteous service from taxi drivers and for-hire vehicle operators. The Office of Inclusion also maintains constant communication with groups, advocates, and organizations as to what obstacles customers are encountering, and how they can work together to find solutions. Their mission is to reduce and eliminate service refusal and ensure that no one faces discrimination by a TLC driver.

The next slide was the introduction of Thea Paulucci, Education & Inclusion Initiatives Manager who explained the new requirement that TLC drivers must follow. This Passenger Assistance and Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Curriculum was created in 2011. After much feedback, it was revised and re-released in January 2021 and is now being implemented. The curriculum provides a wider range of training for different disabilities. The trainings include discussions about Accessible Dispatcher and Access-A-Ride broker service. Techniques include the use of scenarios and role playing to teach drivers the importance of listening to the customer needs.

TLC created videos to assist drivers with:

- Pre-trip inspection
- When to start and stop the meter
- How to assist with payment

TLC also created printed and digital materials that explain how to use the two types of accessible vehicles (i.e., Toyota Sienna and Nissan NV-200). Also used is a guide to Do's and Don'ts when interacting with customers who travel with service animals.

Michael Anderson, Director of Financial Analytics reiterated the AAR's complaint process highlighting the PAC member's direct access (via e-mail or phone) to Paratransit management and Outreach staff if they have any concerns about their or their constituents' AAR service.

Naomi Silkowitz, Supervising Attorney, Office of Inclusion & Prosecution also explained how to file a TLC complaint for service refusal or unsafe conditions: 311 App, 311 website or calling 311 directly. When filing a complaint with TLC provide the medallion or license plate number along with date, time and location.

What happens next after a complaint is made?

- A TLC prosecutor will contact customer.

- TLC will identify the driver and a prosecutor will contact you to discuss the complaint.

PAC Member Discussion and Feedback

Ms. Ryan and Ms. Veerubhotla asked if there is a way to identify whether the ramp is or isn't working because many times drivers arrive on location and say the ramp isn't working? When a vehicle is out of service how long does it take? A TLC representative stated the driver may get a monetary fine if they are making false statements that a ramp is not working. If a vehicle complaint is registered a driver has 7-10 days to bring the vehicle in for inspection.

Ms. Ryan also mentioned how some drivers are unaware of how to correctly complete the 4 tie-down process used to secure a wheelchair. Ms. Paulucci stated the new curriculum focuses on retraining drivers on how to correctly secure a customer's wheelchair.

Ms. Rubin and Ms. Kraft stated that many drivers, due to their lack of English proficiency, are unable to communicate street names and direction to passengers who are blind. Ms. Paulucci stated there isn't a national language and the city requires TLC to translate everything to the top 10 languages. We cannot require English proficiency; we provide drivers with many resources for free or low-cost English classes. TLC senior leadership understand the priority in addressing this concern.

Mr. Phifer inquired about whether the app had an option to select which accessible vehicle could be dispatched to a customer. Sometimes one wheelchair fits better in one vehicle vs. another vehicle. Also, some of the vehicles are dirty and it is not suitable for a service animal? Ms. Paulucci explained that the AAR app selects a vehicle, there isn't an option. Any issues with dirty vehicle should be reported to 311.

Mr. Salovaara asked since the partitions have been installed into vehicles, due to the pandemic, how often are the ventilation systems checked? A TLC representative explained how the ventilation system is based on the maintenance guidelines on the vehicle which is the driver's and company's responsibility. Mr. Salovaara expressed that re-training of a driver should be considered rather than dismissal. Ms. Paulucci noted that with new curriculum introduced this January, retraining maybe an option.

Paratransit Topic – COVID Safety Protocol Update

DVP Raimondi discussed how Access-A-Ride continues to be vigilant and maintain safety protocols to protect against COVID-19. The protocols will remain in place for as long as we are required, and we thank everyone for remaining vigilant, getting vaccinated and wearing a mask. All the vendors are still required to follow and comply with CDC requirements. All the Dedicated vehicles are disinfected daily, the drivers get temperature checks. On the broker service similar disinfection requirements are met. As a reminder to all face coverings are required for all trips for both customer and driver. AAR is still operating as non-shared ride service. Customers may ride with a PCA or guest for a maximum of 2 passengers per vehicle. Of course, we are making accommodations for an additional passenger when requested. We have curtailed feeder service and reduced the time gap between drop-off and pick-up times. We also offer special transportation for those who identify as COVID positive or symptomatic. There are no updates at this time regarding the E-hail Pilot and it continues to be maintained as is.

We are working closely with large vaccine locations to ensure successful drop-offs and pick-ups.

The four assessment center locations are now open: Manhattan, Staten Island, Bronx, and Brooklyn. We maintain safety protocols at all locations along with 25% capacity.

New/Old Business

DVP Raimondi requested PAC to consider following the same Operating Statistics that are provided for the MTA Board in monthly Committee Reports. These reports focus on the customer experience and use the same format that is published on the MTA Dashboard.

Ms. Ryan: What is the percentage of AAR wheelchair users: 14%

Ms. Hazel: Creation of a system for TLC and AAR allow for successful communication between drivers and those customers with speech delays. VP Raimondi and Mr. Friedman discussed communication methods such as texting and note pads to assist.

Ms. Rubin announced the next PAC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 13, 2021 at 4:30 PM.

Closing

A motion was made to end the meeting, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:00pm.

Monthly Paratransit Advisory Committee Report (March 2021)

| CATEGORY | March-2020 | March-2021 | Increase/Decrease Mar-20 vs. Mar-21 |
|---|------------|------------|--|
| AAR Registrants | 162,973 | 161,366 | -1.0% |
| Trips Requested (Total) | 619,541 | 617,828 | -0.3% |
| Trips Scheduled (Total) | 489,810 | 533,086 | 8.8% |
| On-Demand Trips Completed | 27,309 | 26,918 | -1.4% |
| Trips Completed (Total) | 478,946 | 501,713 | 4.8% |
| Total Boarding | 649,703 | 676,594 | 4.1% |
| Trips Scheduled (Primary) | 165,510 | 145,106 | -12.3% |
| Customer No-Shows | 7,477 | 5,331 | -28.7% |
| <i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i> | 4.52% | 3.67% | -0.84% |
| Carrier No-Shows | 85 | 120 | |
| <i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i> | 0.05% | 0.08% | 0.03% |
| No Fault No-Shows | 1,650 | 825 | |
| <i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i> | 1.00% | 0.57% | -0.43% |
| Trips Scheduled (Broker) | 331,694 | 383,990 | 15.8% |
| Customer No-Shows | 7,859 | 11,363 | |
| <i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i> | 2.37% | 2.96% | 0.59% |
| Broker No-Shows | 273 | 458 | |
| <i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i> | 0.08% | 0.12% | 0.04% |
| Pick-up On Time Performance (Primary) | 98% | 98% | 0.0% |
| <i>less than or equal to 30 minutes</i> | | | |
| Pick-up On Time Performance (Broker) | 98% | 95% | -3.0% |
| <i>less than or equal to 30 minutes</i> | | | |
| Appointment OTP Trips (Primary) | | | |
| <i>On-time (30 minutes Early to < 1 minute Late)</i> | Suspended | Suspended | N/A |
| <i>Early (31 minutes to 45 minutes Early)</i> | Suspended | Suspended | N/A |
| Appointment OTP Trips (Broker) | | | |
| <i>On-time (30 minutes Early to < 1 minute Late)</i> | Suspended | Suspended | N/A |
| <i>Early (31 minutes to 45 minutes Early)</i> | Suspended | Suspended | N/A |
| Complaints | 1,533 | 1,919 | |
| <i>per 1,000 Completed Trips</i> | 3.2 | 3.8 | 0.6 |
| Commendations | 439 | 365 | -16.9% |

*March service saw significant changes due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. While full service has been provided throughout the pandemic, March saw a reduction in demand along with a reduction in traffic conditions. To further promote the safety of our customers and operators, shared ride service was also suspended. As a result, appointment time booking of trips would have led to excessively early drop offs and has been temporarily suspended. Customers can still book trips with a pickup time.

* 'Drop Off Trips' have been temporarily suspended since March 2020, and therefore excluded in the 'Customer Experience' Reporting for March 2021.