

Paratransit Advisory Committee (PAC)

January 14, 2021 Zoom Meeting Minutes

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

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

Attendees on Conference Call:

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

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

Guest: Michael Anderson (TLC), Edward Friedman (MOPD), Commissioner Victor Calise (MOPD)

1. Approval of Minutes- A motion was made and the minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

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

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

PAC Member Discussion and Feedback

Ms. Ryan asked what was the percentage of wheelchair/scooter riders using AAR? DVP informed Ms. Ryan he would get back to her with those statistics.

Mr. Hernandez asked if the on-time performance improved since the start of Covid-19? DVP stated that AAR has seen an improvement of OTP since traffic patterns had decreased.

3. PAC Topic – New PAC Members

Ms. Rubin, Co-Chair introduced the three new PAC members, Jose Hernandez, Mark Anthony Phifer and Billy Mitchell. DVP Raimondi provided a brief background and welcomed the new members. Each new member also introduced themselves to the committee. A brief biography of each is as follows:

Billy C. Mitchell is originally from Wendell, North Carolina and calls himself a “North Carolinian New Yorker.” Billy, a single amputee, has been an AAR customer since 2007.

In the turbulent 1960’s Billy was active in the struggle for civil rights.

Billy graduated with honors in 1975 from North Carolina’s St. Augustine’s University with a degree in History & Government. There Billy served as a Lay Reader, sang and traveled with the College Choir. New York University awarded him a Martin Luther Jr. Fellowship in the school of Public Administration in Public and Nonprofit Management and Policy. In 1980, he accepted a position with the NY Urban League as a Vocational Counseling Supervisor and was assigned to the League’s Computer Training Center as a

Program Director where he retired in 1996. Upon completing his first year at NYU, Billy transferred to Long Island University to complete a master's degree.

Billy is a life member of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. (Zeta Zeta Lambda Chapter) Queens, NY. Billy has served in several positions in the chapter and has remained active since his initiation (28 years). Billy serves as Board Chair for Educators for Tomorrow (Charles Drew Day Care), Queens Village, NY. Chairman of the Alpha Phi Alpha Senior Center Board of Directors, member of Wesley E. Parrott Youth Programs, Vice Chair for Project H.Y.P.E. (Helping Young People Evolve) a mentoring program for middle school males, former Recording Secretary of the Queens Chapter of National Action Network. He is an active member of the St. Albans Congregational Church UCC of South East Queens, where he serves as a member of Wonders of Wisdom Retirement Group, and is President of the Fred Wilson Democratic Club in SEQ.

José Hernandez, a Bronx native, developed a passion for mentoring others when he sustained a spinal cord injury at 15 years old. Jose has dedicated himself to mentoring others with similar disabilities at nursing homes and rehabilitation centers. In 2011, Jose had the opportunity to go to Washington DC as part of United Spinal's Roll on Capitol Hill annual event. This trip ignited an interest in advocacy, and he has been back to DC frequently as well as advocating on state and city issues. Jose is currently the NYC Advocacy Coordinator for United Spinal Association and the President of United Spinal's New York City chapter. In 2019, Jose was appointed by Mayor Bill Del Blasio to be a Commissioner of the NYC Civic Engagement Commission to ensure that the city includes individuals with disabilities in all aspects of civic engagement.

Mark Anthony (Tony) Phifer has been an AAR customer for many years. Tony is a native of East New York Brooklyn and a graduate of Brooklyn College with degrees in Education (Guidance and Counseling) and Sociology. Tony has been the Director of Services for the Differently-Abled at Medgar Evers College for the past 21 years. His chief responsibility is ensuring compliance and providing accommodations and services to students, faculty and staff with disabilities in accordance with the ADA. Although he truly loves his job, Tony has also dedicated many years of his life to community service.

Tony serves the East New York Community as a member of the New York City Police Department's Auxiliary Police Unit for almost 30 years where he currently holds the rank of lieutenant. Tony also serves as a member of the Port Authority Bus Terminal Advisory Council. He previously served a supervising dispatcher for the Brooklyn College Emergency Medical Squad, and the Canarsie Volunteer Ambulance Corp. As a member of the Mayor's Office Taskforce on Disabilities Issues. He was part of the team that increased the penalty for illegally parking in spaces reserved for people with disabilities, along with increasing the awareness of domestic violence against people with disabilities in collaboration with the New York City Police Department. He was a member of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities Disability Mentoring Day Committee, the Brooklyn Borough President's Committee, and Co-Advisor to the CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities (CCSD). Tony is no stranger to AAR being born with cerebral palsy and was active in the AAR Paratransit Advisory Committee (PAC) in the past.

PAC Topic – Eligibility - Updates on Assessment Centers & Application Process

Ms. Diane McFarlane, Eligibility and Compliance Officer, stated that the Manhattan assessment center was reopened on November 16, 2020, Staten Island was reopened on November 19, 2020, the Bronx was reopened on December 16, 2020, and Brooklyn/ Coney Island will reopen on January 19, 2021. She further explained that prior to the assessment centers being reopened, all of the project managers ensured the applicable safety protocols were in place to ensure the safety of our applicants and staff.

All of the reopened centers are being operated at 25% capacity. Social distancing is enforced via six-foot markings on the floors. The centers have installed chairs with and without arms and have distanced them six feet apart. MERV13 filtration systems were installed, with the exception of Brooklyn/Coney Island that has an equivalent system. All are also equipped with sanitizer and wipes. Staff and applicant temperatures are checked daily and applicants and staff are required to wear facial coverings. Additionally, clear acrylic panels were installed and all assessment centers have been outfitted with automatic doors.

All customers whose AAR eligibility is about to expire will continue to have their eligibility extended at their current level in 60-day increments, until more full operations can safely resume. In the interim, the centers are primarily focused on assessing new applicants and recertifying customers who are seeking a higher level of eligibility.

The application process has not changed. If someone is scheduled to attend an assessment, they will receive the date, location and the AAR application to take with them to the assessment center. Since we currently only have 3 assessment centers open at 25% capacity with a fourth to reopen on January 19, we will try to schedule new applicants and applicable

recertifying customers to a center closest to their residence based on availability.

To reiterate, current customers will remain with their same level of eligibility.

PAC Member Discussion and Feedback

Ms. Watkins asked if customers will continue to receive transportation to assessment centers, and asked if the extension of service for current customers was communicated? Ms. McFarlane confirmed that yes customers will be taken to and from the location free of charge. The information about the extension of service has been communicated in the On the Move publication.

Ms. Ryan asked which borough does not have an assessment center. The Queens location has not been opened at this time however AAR will continue to take customers free of charge to the closest available assessment center.

4. Paratransit Topic - Resumption of Fare Collection and New Seatbelt Law

DVP Raimondi discussed the following two topics the first one being the resumption of the AAR fare. Starting Tuesday, January 19, 2021 customers will be required to pay the full fare of \$2.75. Customers may also use Transit Check to pay their fare. Guests will also be required to pay the full fare, but Personal Care Attendants (PCA) will still travel for free. Those customers who are enrolled in New York City's AAR specific Fair Fares program will

have to pay \$1.35. As a reminder, facial coverings are required. Also, we are still operating non-shared ride service.

The second update is the New Seatbelt Law which states

- The Taxi Seat Belt Law now requires seatbelts to be worn in the rear of the vehicle.
- The “Taxi Seat Belt Law” - NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law section 1229-c - was recently amended to eliminate the previous restriction that only front-seat passengers must fasten their seatbelts.
- The change took effect on 11/1/2020 and only applies to taxi and for-hire livery vehicles (ie: Broker service and E-Hail). Therefore, all passengers traveling in a taxi or for-hire-vehicle must wear a seatbelt wherever they sit in the vehicle or else they may be ticketed.
- The law provides a medical exemption for those passengers with a physical disability that prevents them from using a safety seat or belt; passengers with such an exemption should be prepared to demonstrate proof to the ticketing officer in the event they are stopped under this law. Possible proof includes a doctor’s note.
- For your safety, we strongly recommend that you wear your seatbelt or seatbelt/shoulder harness (if traveling in a wheelchair/scooter) even if you are traveling in a vehicle from our dedicated carrier fleet.
- Drivers offer assistance to customers with fastening and unfastening their seatbelts and seatbelt/shoulder harnesses for those using a wheelchair/scooter. Remember, always ask if you need assistance with your seatbelt.

PAC Member Discussion and Feedback

Mr. Phifer asked what happens if the seatbelts are not working in the vehicles? Mr. Michael Anderson from TLC stated that a complaint should be registered through 311. This will initiate a process where we will call the vehicle owner into our inspection facility and have the vehicle inspected. A ticket is also written.

Ms. Veerubhotla clarified that customers who travel on E-hail or Broker could be issued the ticket if they do not wear their seatbelt while sitting in the back seat.

Ms. Ryan has observed that it is not always a vehicle problem when a driver doesn't secure a wheelchair. It is a lack of effort made by the driver or the need for additional training. However, when you complain to 311 the category is limited to a vehicle or driver issue? It was suggested that we may be able to have TLC return for further clarification.

In addition, Mr. Griffith, Non-Dedicated Service Operations Officer, stated that a few months ago PAC member Jean Ryan raised the need for more driver training regarding wheelchair securement. Mr. Griffith stated at the time this concern was communicated to the broker companies and a campaign was subsequently started to bring all the vehicles in for securement inspection and drivers for refresher training on proper securement. This category was also added to the daily survey questions that are made to about 1,500 customers monthly and the results indicated high percentage of responses that drivers are following proper procedures. For proper follow up, we still need customers to communicate to AAR any instances where proper protocols are not followed.

Ms. Watkins expressed how taxi vehicles are often dirty, and asked how customers can report this? This information will be forwarded to TLC. Please provide the date and time you traveled.

Mr. Phifer asked if an electronic method of payment is being considered? DVP Raimondi explained that OMNY which is a contactless system will be rolled out on AAR at the end of 2021. This is an account-based system for which a customer must sign up. The vehicles will not have a reader. This could be a focus of a future meeting where we can invite the OMNY team to discuss the system with the PAC.

5. New/Old Business

Mr. Salovaara questioned if the On-Demand Pilot Program remains the same? DVP stated no changes have been made to the Pilot Program.

Ms. Rubin reminded PAC that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 4:30 PM.

Closing

There was a motion to close the meeting and the meeting was adjourned at 6:30pm.

Monthly Paratransit Advisory Committee Report (January 2021)

CATEGORY	January-2020	January-2021	Increase/Decrease Jan-20 vs. Jan-21
AAR Registrants	162,857	160,380	-1.5%
Trips Requested (Total)	864,295	550,343	-36.3%
Trips Scheduled (Total)	746,114	473,163	-36.6%
On-Demand Trips Completed	39,662	26,508	-33.2%
Trips Completed (Total)	684,618	446,701	-34.8%
Total Boarding	937,439	610,339	-34.9%
Trips Scheduled (Primary)	234,304	130,138	-44.5%
Customer No-Shows	7,546	4,887	-35.2%
<i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i>	3.22%	3.76%	0.53%
Carrier No-Shows	99	47	
<i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i>	0.04%	0.04%	-0.01%
No Fault No-Shows	1,502	765	
<i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i>	0.64%	0.59%	-0.05%
Trips Scheduled (Broker)	505,276	343,498	-32.0%
Customer No-Shows	10,982	8,423	
<i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i>	2.17%	2.45%	0.28%
Broker No-Shows	355	143	
<i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i>	0.07%	0.04%	-0.03%
Pick-up On Time Performance (Primary)	98%	99%	1.0%
<i>less than or equal to 30 minutes</i>			
Pick-up On Time Performance (Broker)	98%	98%	0.0%
<i>less than or equal to 30 minutes</i>			
Appointment OTP Trips (Primary)			
<i>On-time (30 minutes Early to < 1 minute Late)</i>	45%	Suspended	N/A
<i>Early (31 minutes to 45 minutes Early)</i>	49%	Suspended	N/A
Appointment OTP Trips (Broker)			
<i>On-time (30 minutes Early to < 1 minute Late)</i>	31%	Suspended	N/A
<i>Early (31 minutes to 45 minutes Early)</i>	64%	Suspended	N/A
Complaints	2,539	1,047	
<i>per 1,000 Completed Trips</i>	3.7	2.3	-1.4
Commendations	711	303	-57.4%

* January service continues to change due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Full service has been provided throughout the Pandemic. 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 January 2021. 2020.