

Paratransit Advisory Committee (PAC)

July 14, 2020 Conference Call Minutes

Due to the Covid19 Pandemic the PAC meeting date, time and format was changed. A WebEx conference call was conducted.

Meeting commenced at 3:00pm

Attendees on Conference Call:

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

MTA/NYCT Paratransit: Brian Altschul, Michael Cosgrove, Lynda Edmond, Tammie Francisque, Donna Fredericksen, Ami Freyberger, Eugene Griffith, Patricia Ibarguen, Felicia Jones, Diane McFarlane, Donald Raimondi, John Salerno, Shirley Teran-Marty

Guest: Edward Friedman (MOPD), Dino Nelovic (Vice-President of Islander Transportation), and Leo Yanchuk (Information Technology Consultant for Islander Transportation)

Introductions: Deputy VP Raimondi introduced NYCT staff and confirmed attendance of PAC members. David DePorte Chaired the meeting.

1. AAR Service Report – Michael Cosgrove, Vice President, Paratransit

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

PAC Member Discussion and Feedback

Ms. Ryan had a follow up question based on how the appointment time trips are being scheduled.

VP Cosgrove explained that a COVID 19 related reduction in demand, reduced traffic conditions and the move to direct trips without sharing rides allowed for optimum on time performance. In fact, schedules were running early. Adjustments were made back in the spring to the scheduling logic and travel time was reduced by 50% and appointment times were still running early. The system wasn't designed for the conditions that existed post the COVID epidemic. In order to avoid early arrivals we moved towards scheduling trips as pick-up rather than appointments; this helps avoid very early arrivals. He also mentioned that our new scheduling system will help in providing more accurate travel time. Mr. Altschul, Technology Officer, mentioned that implementation of the new scheduling system has already started at the carrier level and within the 1st quarter of 2021, the whole system should be integrated.

The new system will include the Department of Transportation (DOT) information regarding street closures, parades and any obstruction to traffic patterns. The drivers are now getting trained on the GPS system, and dispatchers will begin their training by the end of August.

Ms. Jacobson stated how she and other PAC members would like to be involved in the training of drivers. Ms. Fredericksen, Outreach Director explained that her team has created short clips of AAR customers which includes PAC member Ms. Veerubhotla. These clips provide information and education to drivers and carriers from the perspective of people with disabilities who travel via Access-A-Ride. VP Cosgrove noted that there will be additional opportunities for the PAC members to be involved in training.

2. Paratransit Topic - Broker Islander Presentation

Mr. Griffith, Non-Dedicated Services Operations Officer, introduced the Vice-President of Islander Transportation, Dino Nelovic. He explained how well the service is performing on Staten Island and how only less than 1% of customer complaints are about No-Shows. The survey feedback regarding overall performance has garnered great reviews.

Mr. Nelovic further explained how he has been in the transportation business for 30 years. At the current time the company has 200 vehicles that can be dispatched within Staten Island. Also, during this difficult time (COVID-19 pandemic), Islander continued to provide transportation to customers and adhere to safety guidelines.

- Drivers are provided constant COVID-19 training.
- Drivers have been given PPE, masks, sanitizer and wipes and vehicles are sanitized after each trip.

Mr. Yanchuk, IT Consultant for Islander Transportation explained how the company experienced zero technical downtime during the pandemic. Drug and alcohol testing continue to be conducted. For the past six months Islander has used the online management portal to track GPS for exact arrival times, accuracy of IVR calls, and dispatching of data same day.

Mr. Griffith explained that the transition from Voucher to Broker has allowed service to be booked through the AAR telephone number. Broker trips receive their schedule the night before and customers then get confirmation (vehicle number, color of vehicle and time). In addition, the benefit of computerized GPS, communication between broker and AAR, and the technology behind the service makes it efficient. All trips are traceable and recorded for accurate data.

Mr. Coppola questioned the training of drivers who interact with customers who have low vision or who are blind? Mr. Nelovic explained that drivers will receive a notification with instruction that a customer needs additional assistance. The driver must accept acknowledgement of this information before trips can proceed.

Mr. Nelovic explained that an agent associated with the broker center is on standby who calls the driver to confirm the information again. Drivers are reminded to get out of the vehicle, call out and assist and open the door for the customer. This process has been successful.

PAC Member Discussion and Feedback

Ms. Jacobson inquired about whether partitions interfere with the A/C ventilation in the vehicle.

Mr. Nelovic explained that before any vehicles start service the A/C vents in the back are checked for adequate air climate.

Ms. Ryan inquired how many accessible vehicles were in their fleet? Mr. Nelovic stated now they have begun with two vehicles and are working with NYCT to properly provide the service and increase their capacity.

VP Cosgrove clarified that while they are working on increasing the number of accessible vehicles, Access-A-Ride has a Dedicated Carrier located on Staten Island which has the capability to service trips that are accessible.

Ms. Rubin suggested as proof of identification a driver could receive a picture of the customer. This will allow a driver to identify and assist customers who are visually impaired as well as prevent fraud.

This feature has been in development, said Mr. Altschul. Paratransit will work with the Brokers and see if this technology can currently be installed into their system. Mr. Cosgrove added that Eugene Griffith will work on it with Mr. Altschul. We will also look at the primary carrier mobile data terminals.

5. New/Old Business

Ms. Rubin requested an update on status on fare collection.

Mr. Cosgrove offered that there were no immediate plans for the resumption of cash fare collection but that the PAC would be informed as things develop.

Ms. Jacobsen and Ms. Watkins wanted to know if there has been any discussion about when Phase II of the Pilot Program will begin.

VP Cosgrove stated at the current time there hasn't been any decision made about timing of the implementation of the second phase, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We will notify the PAC as soon as we know something and have a separate call.

Ms. Watkins mentioned some of her advocates have contacted her regarding the application process and how to appeal.

Ms. McFarlane, Officer of Eligibility & Compliance explained that currently all assessment locations are closed. If a customer wants to apply, they must call 877-337-2017. An agent will take their information and decisions will be made on a case-by case basis. Appeal decisions are also being reviewed, and determinations are being made.

Ms. Ryan and Ms. Veerubhotla inquired about whether any decisions have been made to start interviewing candidates for the PAC.

Ms. Rubin, Co-Chair explained that before the pandemic the committee was in the process of reviewing the resumes. They will start the process again.

Mr. Cosgrove offered that while attending training classes wouldn't be practical due to COVID 19, a separate forum for the PAC to interact directly with trainers to discuss their suggestions for driver training and hear what the carriers are currently doing regarding driver training.

Mr. Salovaara asked a question on returning to shared rides.

Mr. Cosgrove responded that we still don't have any date.

Closing

The meeting ended at 4:30pm.

Monthly Paratransit Advisory Committee Report (July 2020)

CATEGORY	July-2019	July-2020	Increase/Decrease July-19 vs. July-20
AAR Registrants	156,943	162,116	3.3%
Trips Requested (Total)	821,524	475,860	-42.1%
Trips Scheduled (Total)	713,964	408,494	-42.8%
On-Demand Trips Completed	33,790	20,919	-38.1%
Trips Completed (Total)	660,998	400,026	-39.5%
Total Boardings	877,614	522,170	-40.5%
Trips Scheduled (Primary)	295,569	151,207	-48.8%
Customer No-Shows	9,501	5,404	-43.1%
<i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i>	3.2%	3.6%	0.4%
Carrier No-Shows	384	65	
<i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i>	0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%
No Fault No-Shows	2,605	1,358	
<i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i>	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%
Trips Scheduled (Broker)	382,084	253,721	-33.6%
Customer No-Shows	9,241	5,442	
<i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i>	2.4%	2.1%	-0.3%
Broker No-Shows	439	171	
<i>As a % of Trips Scheduled</i>	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Pick-up On Time Performance (Primary) <i>less than or equal to 30 minutes</i>	96%	98%	2.0%
Pick-up On Time Performance (Broker) <i>less than or equal to 30 minutes</i>	96%	97%	1.0%
Appointment OTP Trips (Primary) *			
<i>On-time (30 minutes Early to < 1 minute Late)</i>	44%	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>	32%	Suspended	N/A
<i>Early (31 minutes to 45 minutes Early)</i>	61%	Suspended	N/A
Complaints	3,904	1,133	
<i>per 1,000 Completed Trips</i>	5.9	2.8	-3.1
Commendations	912	321	-64.8%

* July 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 July 2020.