

Paratransit Advisory Committee (PAC)

January 17, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Meeting commenced at 5:10 p.m.

PAC Attendees: Thomas Coppola, David H. DePorte, Edward S. Friedman, Marisa Mia Ragozino, Ellen Rubin, Jean Ryan, Tucker B. Salovaara, Ken Stewart, Sharada Veerubhotla, RueZalia Watkins,

PAC Attendees by Teleconference Call: Lyudmila Demikovskaya, Ketrina Hazell, John Moynihan, Stanley Weinblatt

Absent: Mindy Jacobsen

NYC Transit Staff Attendees: Brandon Anderson, Karene Chao, Tom Chin, Michael Cosgrove, Lynda Edmond, Raymond Gaillard, Eugene Griffith, Anthony Griffith, Felicia D. Jones, Steven LoPiano, Cassandra Lubin-Richards, Kenneth Stuart, Shirley Teran-Marty, Juan Ulloa, Chantal Sealy Walker, Brenda Walker

Guests: Frank Camp (GCS), Alex Elegudin (TLC), Uwvie Obodo
PCA for Tucker B. Salovaara

Introductions – David H. DePorte, PAC Chair

Mr. DePorte informed the committee that some PAC members will participate in the meeting by phone. He reminded the PAC members of the rules and to raise their hands if they had comments or questions.

In addition, Mr. DePorte thanked Mr. Stuart for providing refreshments.

Announcements – Kenneth Stuart

Mr. Stuart wished everyone a Happy New Year and announced that this is our first PAC meeting without Denise McQuade who recently retired. Mr. Stuart introduced Shirley Teran-Marty as the new PAC liaison. He spoke briefly of Shirley's accomplishments with NYCT. He advised the PAC that Ms. Teran-Marty will coordinate all communication with Mr. DePorte and the rest of the PAC committee. Mr. Stuart also spoke about Donna Fredericksen who now handles publications including "On The Move" which is currently being printed, but is available on the MTA.info website. Mr. Stuart stated "We are working on creating an audio feature on the website which will allow a customer to press an icon to hear all the information. Our focus is to make it as user-friendly as possible."

I. Approval of Minutes – PAC Chair David H. DePorte

Mr. DePorte called for the approval of the November 15, 2016 minutes and asked if PAC members had any corrections or changes to the minutes. Mr. Stewart suggested the change "asked to be acknowledged" as opposed to "wait to be acknowledged." Mr. Friedman stated that his comments about the NYC Audits were not mentioned in the minutes. Mr. DePorte asked if there were any other comments, Mr. Stewart moved to approved as amended. Ms. Watkins seconded the motion carried unanimously except for abstention by Mr. Friedman.

II. AAR Service Report – Vice President Steve LoPiano

As requested by the PAC, VP LoPiano provided a summary of the Paratransit Report.

Registrants increased 4.6% comparing 143,026 registrants in November 2015 to 149,561 registrants November 2016.

Trips requested increased 1.4% comparing 632,935 Trips Requested in November 2015 to 642,106 Trips Requested in November 2016.

Early Cancellations increased 4.8% comparing 79,900 Early Cancellations in November 2015 to 83,773 Early Cancellations in November 2016.

Trips Scheduled increased 0.9% comparing 548,017 Trips Scheduled in November 2015 to 552,778 Trips Scheduled in November 2016.

Trips Completed increased 0.7% comparing 519,908 Trips Completed in November 2015 to 523,751 Trips Completed in November 2016.

Customer No-Shows decreased 2.8% comparing 8,428 Customer No-Shows in November 2015 to 8,191 Customer No-Shows in November 2016.

Carrier No-Shows decreased 52.1% comparing 1,551 Carrier No-Shows in November 2015 to 743 Carrier No-Shows in November 2016.

Total No-Shows decreased 12.6% comparing 13,215 Total No-Shows in November 2015 to 11,553 Total No-Shows in November 2016.

On Time Performance increased 1.0% comparing 90.0% On Time Performance in November 2015 to 91.0% On Time Performance in November 2016.

Appointments On Time increased 1.0% comparing 83.0% in November 2015 to 84.0% in November 2016.

Late Trips by Carrier decreased 17.9% comparing 38,757 Late Trips by Carrier in November 2015 to 31,822 Late Trips by Carrier in November 2016.

Complaints increased 3.3% comparing 2,612 complaints in November 2015 to 2,699 complaints in November 2016.

There was a 3.3% increase in complaints per 1,000 completed trips comparing 5.02 complaints per 1,000 completed trips in November 2015 to 5.15 complaints per 1,000 completed trips in November 2016.

Commendations increased 9.3% comparing 508 Commendations in November 2015 to 555 Commendations in November 2016.

Total Boardings increased 1.2% comparing 721,805 Total Boardings in November 2015 to 730,571 Total Boardings in November 2016.

PAC Comments

Ms. Ragozino questioned the reduction in No-Shows calling it a “remarkable statistic”. VP LoPiano responded that the decrease may have been brought about by a new concept being introduced. Carriers have been encouraged to return trips that were in jeopardy of becoming late or a no-show back to the Command Center. From there, the Command Center intervenes and takes corrective actions. Ms. Ryan wanted to make sure she understood the change in policy. Basically, if a carrier starts running late there will not be a domino effect impacting the downstream pickups of other customers.

Ms. Watkins stated that the process is murky when trying to change the pickup time and that Travel Service agents tend to state different policies to customers. Ms. Watkins has been told to call

back when she is ready and then it will take 45 minutes to find a trip. When you call back the trip is scheduled for an hour later.

Ms. Watkins proposed we put this on the agenda at some time. She asked, “When is a customer eligible to get a later trip? What is the process and what should be said?”

Mr. Chin and Ms. Walker emphasized the importance for a customer to contact AAR as early as possible if a later pickup is necessary; this will allow the scheduling units to use the tools available to create a new trip or provide taxi or accessible taxi.

Mr. Salovaara expressed how frustrating the process of getting a later pickup is, but acknowledged seeing an improvement to the service. VP LoPiano explained that AAR is an advance reservation system. AAR is working on creating a same-day service desk to deal with these matters. We are looking to improve our GPS and introduce a computer aided dispatch system so that it can give AAR greater flexibility. AAR is also working with NYC TLC to incorporate the use of taxis and accessible taxis through the use of e-hail providers to book trips in real time. It is still in the early stages of production but this concept would alleviate the issues that arise when someone needs a later pick up due to unforeseen circumstances.

Ms. Ryan asked, “If a customer cannot transfer from their wheelchair what assistance are they going to be given.” VP LoPiano mentioned TLC stated that by 2020, 50% of yellow cabs and 30% of green taxis will be accessible. With the new system, customers will not have to pay for the trip in advance. In addition, AAR will be allowed to monitor the trips through a GPS system and communicate to the customer any changes.

Mr. Salovaara asked about reinstating the Debit Card Program. VP LoPiano stated, “We couldn’t continue the program and believes

e-hail has the potential to provide a better service.” He explained that the bank that backed the debit card pulled out of the program due to concerns of privacy.

Ms. Ragozino wanted to know the names of the e-hail companies we are investigating and what the difference is between e-hail and broker. VP LoPiano specified that the two TLC approved e-hail companies are VeriFone and CMT. VP LoPiano was asked what the difference between e-hail and brokers was. The main difference is that broker trips are scheduled the night before.

E-hail is more flexible and links close vehicles to customers looking for rides. Customers will not have to pay the whole fee and submit reimbursement requests.

Mr. Friedman inquired if AAR has looked into other cities and their practices. VP LoPiano informed him that AAR has looked into other cities and materials supplied by the FTA.

III. Paratransit Topic – Scheduling Unit and Command Center
Anthony Griffith, Director of Scheduling and Brenda Walker, Superintendent of Command Center

Command Center- Scheduling

Anthony Griffith explained how the Scheduling Unit is responsible for using five types of routes to schedule trips. It utilizes two types of service including Dedicated and Non-Dedicated Service providers. Access-A-Ride provides two types of trips which are Demand and Subscription. For scheduling purposes, AAR service is comprised of seventeen zones. The Adept system establishes times for different geographic areas based on time of day, travel speed zones (e.g. Bridges & Tunnel crossings), street conditions and weather.

Command Center- Day of Service

Brenda Walker explained the five tools the Command Center Day uses to assist a customer on the day of service.

1. AVL/M/GPS
2. Dispatcher Alerts
3. Internet provided maps
4. Trip Mapping feature in ADEPT
5. Floaters

Ms. Walker explained how the Auto Reschedule function is used to locate another vehicle for a pickup, how routes are updated and monitored by the carrier base, how trip logs are coded and noted, and how AVL/M is used for vehicle location. Ms. Walker explained how Dispatchers monitor the routes and, in the event a route is delayed, they should call Command Center for assistance.

Mr. DePorte mentioned when a trip is late he has contacted Travel Service and often the agents have provided an uncommon street name and an unrealistic ETA. Mr. Chin replied, "That if Dispatcher Alert is used, a dispatcher can identify how late a route is running and the dispatcher can make any necessary changes before it impacts a pickup." Mr. Friedman stated that he has also experienced the same issues from Travel Service and that they are not providing helpful information.

Ms. Walker suggested customers use three key questions when calling Travel Services.

- 1) Am I the next pickup?
- 2) What borough is the vehicle in?
- 3) What two street names are in that area?

Ms. Walker mentioned that the agents use mapping functions to provide street information.

Ms. Veerubhotla had concerns about the constant change in Subscription pickup times and call back list. VP LoPiano stated, “That as the reservations are being booked the computer system is creating schedules and opening more routes, which is why a customer might get a call back.”

Ms. Watkins explained how some addresses are not appearing in our system which makes it difficult for a customer to book a trip. She also inquired about, “when will AAR scheduling incorporate the new NYC geography.” Mr. Chin replied that AAR often gets updated maps from our software companies. In the interim, our IT group makes adjustments by adding addresses in the Places Files and corrects geocodes errors. Anyone that notes a bad address or location should let us know and it will be addressed.

IV. PAC Topic – Kenneth Stuart- The Complaint Process

Due to time constraints the Complaint Process will be presented at the next PAC meeting.

Discussions and Member Feedback

V. New/Old Business

Ms. Watkins wanted to know if there is a mechanism or an easier way to report vehicle issues. Along the same lines, Ms. Ryan stated in the past when calling in a vehicle issue, she has found that Travel Service agents are not taking her calls seriously or escalating them to a supervisor. Mr. Chin explained that Ms. Ryan can call the Command Center at #5 where they will escalate the complaint to a Superintendent. The carrier will be contacted to determine if a vehicle should be taken out of service and our own S&C department also checks the vehicles.

VP LoPiano asked Lynda Edmond to explain what happens when a vehicle complaint is categorized as a safety related item. Ms.

Edmond explained the importance of calling the Comment Line at #8 where they will document the information. The complaint is categorized initially by the comment line associate based on the information provided by the caller. Safety related complaints are immediately escalated.

Felicia Jones explained that her associates create a RightNow incident and categorize it. Not all vehicle complaints are considered safety but many are. If the client is on the vehicle while the incident is taking place, the customer is transferred to Travel Services because this is considered an in service issue. Ms. Edmond and Mr. Stuart confirmed that an email is immediately sent to their attention as well as two other staff members alerting them that a safety complaint has been received. The safety complaint is then assigned to an employee to be investigated.

Frank Camp from Global Contact Service (GCS) clarified that Travel Service agents have been trained to escalated safety issues to a supervisor.

In addition, Mr. Stewart emphasized the need to train drivers to communicate better with the visually impaired customers. Mr. Salovaara said that drivers should be trained to deal with all disabilities.

Mr. Stuart announced that PAC members are welcome to attend the driver training classes held on Fridays at the Paratransit Headquarters in Long Island City and they may speak at the training. Mr. DePorte asked to be contacted by any PAC members who are interested. Ms. Teran-Marty will coordinate the attendance for those attending.

Ms. Ragozino suggested that the bi-monthly PAC meetings have an audio recording put on the website. This was supported by Mr.

Friedman. It was concluded that this topic would be discussed at the March meeting.

Closing

Mr. Stewart moved to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Watkins seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM