MARTA MAC MEETING - Transcript

07/11/2023

>> No‑show and appeals committee. Did I ‑‑ okay, no‑show and appeals committee, we had five customers ‑‑ I mean, five people to come before the committee. Two of the situations were overturned. Two ‑‑ one went to appeal and the other two ‑‑ one was still pending and the two we upheld. And that was the no‑show and appeals committee. And Denise is Paula on this call?   
>> Yes, Paula is on the call, but she didn't have anything to report. Is that correct, Paula?   
>> That is correct, yes.   
>> And we'll go right to --

>> To Keith.

>> -- Mr. Keith Chambers, if he's available.   
>> Yes, he's on the call.   
>> Okay. Mr. Chambers, you can go right ahead, sir.   
>> Cruising right through it. Yeah, for the project update ‑‑   
>> Keith, Keith, you're really very low.   
>> Yeah.

>> I don't know why.   
>> I can barely hear. Is that just me?   
>> Yeah, I can barely hear him.   
>> No, it's not just you Denise.   
>> Okay.   
>> How is that? Is that not any better?

>> Just a tiny bit.   
>> It's real low.   
>> Back to this, let me see.   
>> That's better.   
>> Is that better?   
>> That's better.   
>> Okay. Let me get more towards the computer then. If you can hear me okay, project update, there are only two elevators being replaced currently. One is at North Springs No. 1. This will return to service by this Friday. Mobility shuttle support has been in place for this for the duration to Sandy Springs, and this is the last elevator needing this type of support. And I can't say enough thanks to Mobility and Kaleisha and her team for the support over this one and the last several years while doing these priority elevators in the stations that need the mobility support. And then the other one is Medical Center No. 2. The elevator will be completed by next Friday. Then the last four elevators in the stations -‑ five elevators are at Sandy Springs which there are back‑up elevators for those, so there's two on each platform. And the rest are in parking garages, headquarters, and a few maintenance facilities. It is nice to see the customer impact for this project winding down as we started this project in June of 2017 and since then have replaced nearly 100 elevators in the system since then, and we're having really good results with the new equipment. They're safer, they're more reliable so, you know, we're winding down on this project. We have a lot of escalators left to do, but as far as the elevators go, five more in the customer impact area and then we're on to the other areas, and they're going to wind up replacing the 111 elevators. In about a year and a half, we'll complete the project. So they're doing really good. It's one project at MARTA that's been on schedule and on budget, which I can't say a whole lot for a lot of other ones, but this one is one of those rarities that's been on schedule. So I know, you know, Jordan and myself, we worked hard years ago on this, you know, trying to make sure that they met requirements that supported the ADA community but, you know, in the last few years, it's been kind of seamless with the participation of Mobility and this and that. So but that's really the only update I have right now. Working on some other things that aren't in progress yet but maybe more to come next meeting.   
>> Mr. Chambers, we want to thank you for your report. Are there any questions for Mr. Chambers?   
>> I don't see any.   
>> Seeing none, then we'll move right on. Thank you, Mr. Chambers, for your report.   
>> Yeah. I apologize for the microphone issues, but hopefully you heard me clearly.   
>> You're clear now Keith.

>> Okay.   
>> Okay. And we'll go right to bus operations, Ms. Vickie Dewberry. Ms. Dewberry?   
>> Give me one second please.   
>> Okay.   
>> Ms. Dewberry? Hello?   
>> Yes. I was having a issue, I'm sorry. So the report that I have was the exciting news from bus transportation about our MVT system. Our turn‑by‑turn directions have actually started today in the garages. What we're doing is they're implementing the turn‑by‑turn directions one garage at a time, and today actually started (indiscernible). They have the (indiscernible) equipment and 59 buses, and so we're excited about the fact that the operators will get turn‑by‑turn directions which will be very helpful in that the operators won't get lost because we do have a lot of new operators. So we're real excited about that, and it should turn into excellent customer delivery, you know, with the customers.   
>> Okay. Was that it, Ms. Dewberry?   
>> That's it. That's all I have for today. If anyone has any questions, I'll be happy to take those at this time.   
>> Questions?   
>> Any questions from the committee members for Ms. Dewberry?   
>> I see no one talking.   
>> Okay. Hearing none, then we'll move on to Ms. Angelita, and I don't want to mess up that last name, and she's going to give us report.   
>> Okay. Good morning, everyone.

>> Good morning.

>> Good morning. My name is Angelita Armour. I'm the customer service field representative for Mobility, and I will be providing you with the ADA link customer service complaints for the month of May 2023. Starting with the authority‑wide complaints, we have 597. Of the 597, we have 232 ADA link complaints, which is a percentage of 38.9 percent. Of the 232, we have 128 of those that are ADA valid complaints, which is 55.2 percent. Next we have a breakdown by department. Starting with Mobility we have 219; Mobility reservations we have 7; Mobility maintenance we have 0; bus operations we have 4; and vertical transportation and station maintenance we have 1 which is a total of 232. Next we have the top complaint categories. We have ‑‑ first we have the late pick‑ups of 72; late drop‑offs at 45; 18 no‑shows; 13 tone of voice; 10 discourteous; 8 vehicle stopping location; 5 of no or slow response request assistance; and 4 for improper stop or not at curve. Next we have the top non‑mobility complaints. Starting with incorrect reservations information at 5; we have 1 pass‑up, and 1 elevator non‑mobility complaint. Review floor lift, the walk lift board at 0. Next we have accommodations, last but not least. We have 65 of those authority‑wide, and 22 mobility accommodations at 33.8 percent. That concludes the ADA link customer complaints at this time. Anyone have any questions?   
>> This is Bob Lossie. Do I have everything working now? Can you hear me?   
>> Yes, we can hear you Bob.   
>> Okay. I had a question that I think I know the answer to, and I think I've asked it before. The numbers are rising but also the numbers of riders are increasing since COVID is opening up, and I know that you're struggling with finding people to work for MARTA as well. Do you think that it's the growing growth problem that you're having right now the reason that the numbers are going up?   
>> Absolutely. That does impact the service quite a bit when we're adding ‑‑ continuously adding people on to the service on a weekly basis, so that definitely is going to be a higher number with the numbers growing and, you know, things with the traffic and other elements.   
>> And I know the country is having problems right now adjusting to so much, but do you see it getting any better or it's still the same struggle right now?   
>> I would say as time progress. I mean, we're doing ‑‑ for Mobility and transportation alone we're having challenges throughout the ‑‑ you know, like you said, the world, the states or whatever, but I would say it would get better, but it's very challenging at this moment. It's a very challenging thing even with the ‑‑ not just with bus transportation but the airlines as well. So it's a challenging thing throughout the whole world as I would say.  
>> And it's not meant to give you an excuse for things, but it's just to be aware of what the challenges are, so we appreciate that.   
>> No problem. Thank you so much.   
>> Our next presenter is going to be Richard Gonzalez from Mobility, so he's going to be giving us more information about that too, Bob.   
>> Great.   
>> Yeah. And we can question him Bob when we get him on the line and ‑‑   
>> He's there.   
>> ‑‑ hopefully ‑‑ are there any more questions for Ms. Armor? I hope I didn't destroy that name.

>> No.

>> Angelita Armour.   
>> Yes, that's correct.   
>> Okay. Thank you so much, Ms. Armour.   
>> Thank you so much.   
>> Okay. Next we'll have Mr. Richard Gonzalez over MARTA Mobility. Mr. Gonzalez, welcome.   
>> Thank you, sir. This is my second meeting. My (audio distortion). I was a deer in the headlights because --   
>> His sound is not good.   
>> Your sound is going down the drain.   
>> So hopefully this is what it would be like ‑‑   
>> I can't hear him.   
>> Can you get a little bit closer to your microphone?

>> Really? Oh ‑‑

>> You were good before, but now you're low.   
>> If I can say, it seems like the signal might be broken because the visual image is broken as well.   
>> I can see him. I can see you, but I can't hear you, Richard.   
>> Okay. Can anybody else here me? I'm sorry. I'm looking for a volume.

>> Now it's working.

>> Anybody else?

>> I can hear fine. And see your image froze again.   
>> Oh, it has to be ‑‑ let me shut off my -- I'm going to stop my camera and maybe that will help somewhat, I don't know. How about now?   
>> That's better.   
>> Okay. So I'm going to share my screen. I'm used to Teams. Let's see if I can do this one correctly.   
>> I'm having difficulty hearing him.   
>> I have just a real quick little Power Point, a little Power Point, and I will be open for questions. And I like to give a big ‑‑ a forest overview and then, you know, I don't get too close to the trees, but in the future, if you want me to have these presentations focus on a certain aspect of operations, let me know, I'd be more than happy too. Once again, MARTA Mobility. I am ‑‑ please call me Rick, Rick Gonzalez. I am the director of Mobility. Last time as I stumbled around introducing myself, I gave a little bit of my background. I'm going to try to do a little bit better today. So I started off in paratransit in Palm Beach County for Palm Tran. For ten years I worked for them. I started off what was called a service coordinator which was, you know, a lot of outreach, a lot of active investigations, a lot of customer complaints. So I was there for ten years; I learned a lot about paratransit. From there I went over to the private side for First Transit, Inc., a company no longer existing, it was bought out by TransDev. I was a project manager for them for five years. I did multiple projects, Palm Beach County. I worked in Broward County for a couple months, which is just south of Palm Beach County in Florida. The Miami International Airport, I ran the shuttle service for there. And then I went out to Texas, the great state of Texas, and I worked four years for them in fixed route for many of those years and then they moved me back over to Mobility to assist with the transit on‑demand startup. Now, I just want to take a look at our quarterly OTP numbers because it seems like at Marta they really concentrate on the OTP, and I just want to compare our numbers from last year at the same time. Our average for this quarter is 85.66 percent. Last year was 83.25 was the average. Now, the target is 90. The goal is 90, but MARTA calls or they label acceptable anything between 85 and 90. We're shooting for gold. We want to get gold. Right now we're at 85.66. And what are we doing to try to push towards that 90 percent on-time performance with our partners, well, we're purchasing ‑‑ MARTA itself is purchasing 15 more mobility vans. Once again, we have a ridership that's growing daily, and we're kind of bumping up against our capacity so within eight weeks, we'll have 15 new vans out there on the road that will help. The providers Transdev and A‑National are aggressively hiring new bus operators. Thank you Ms. Armour who pointed out that every trans agency from airlines to fixed route buses to smaller buses to, you know, transit services, everybody is having hiring problems and that's because we're having a great job market. So it used to be really easy to hire people for this industry, now you have to ‑‑ like I said, the word aggressive is appropriate with job fairs, hiring bonuses, and also, A‑National and TransDev, they are getting aggressive on retention. So also, UZURV has been added to the service, and that is a kind of like a Lyft and Uber plus. The UZURV drivers are also drivers for Uber, and Lyft but they receive extra training, and they receive a little bit more supervision in their service. They're still contractors. Mind you, they are contractors, and any time they can unfortunately tell a rider I'm not going to take you or any time they can refuse a trip. And, you know, our recourse is to say well, we don't want that guy on the service. And we haven't ran into that yet here at MARTA, and you can't tell every one of these subcontractors to jump in a lake, we're not going to use you anymore because pretty soon you're going to lose -- you're not going to have anybody to do the service. So I talk too fast, and I talk too loud, but that's what I have for you this month. Next month we'll ‑‑ you know, I'll bring something else to the table. I'm a big view kind of guy. So does anybody have any questions for me?   
>> Bob, do you have any questions for Mr. Gonzalez?   
>> Bob Lossie. I have a question, if I may.   
>> Okay. Bob, go ahead.   
>> Okay. The U-Z-U-R-V, is that like a mini van that has a ramp accessibility on it?   
>> Well, sir, excellent question. No. They are by in large ambulatory only vans. SUV or a mini van here or there but no ramps. So unless you can ‑‑ if you are using a mobility aid, unless you can transfer to a seat, this service would not be for you.   
>> And as far as future thing, and I'm sorry I don't have the information, the correct term for it, but it's my understanding that Uber services in other cities has a specific department for wheelchair accessible vehicles. Is there -- as fast as Atlanta is growing, is there any chance that that might be happening at some point?   
>> I apologize for putting an onus on you. I have not heard yet of any successful programs like that where they have subcontractors that have wheelchair accessible vans. Like I said, I've worked with Uber in south Florida and Dallas, and I have yet to see that. If you are able to help me identify a trans agency or an area that has that program. And, you know what, I will reach out to Uber itself because at this time, I have not heard of any accessible programs where there are paratransit vans on the road with contractors, with that kind of T&C contractor.   
>> Yes, I'll get that correct term, it's like a three‑letter term for it, and send that to you and let you know where. Well, I happen to also be on the Board of United (inaudible) Atlanta or Georgia, and it's the president of the Board that told me he's used it in his travels across the country, but Atlanta does not have it.   
>> That would be a kindness, sir, if you were able to identify a city that does. Thank you. I appreciate that.  
>> Absolutely.   
>> Bob, is that your question?   
>> Yes, thank you.   
>> Okay. Is there anyone seeking the floor to ask Mr. Gonzalez? If not, I have several concerns that I would like to speak to Mr. Gonzalez about.   
>> No other questions I can see, Bob ‑‑ Robert.   
>> Okay. Mr. Gonzalez, Robert Smith, chair of the MAC committee. There have been several concerns about the mini vans that MARTA has purchased. We were told by the past director that the committee was going to get a chance to view them, we never did. The issue is getting into the mini vans that you have purchased, the step being a lot higher for some patrons. And I know the vans and things are used for ambulatory patrons, but when they have walkers or any other type of device such as if they have gone to the grocery store, they're still ambulatory but they have these other types of devices that they have. And we were told also that people were going to get a prior notice that the van they was going to be transported in a mini van instead of the big vans. I know all of it was to improve the on‑time performance along with the other ride share that we have, UZURV, I believe, and with that implemented, it was to improve the on‑time performance overall. Do you or have you had these complaints sent to you? If so, what are the plans to deal with them? I think there's been suggestions about adding a step stool, but I think that might be a little dicey in putting a stool there, but have you had any of those things brought to your attention?   
>> Thank you, sir, for that question. First things first. As far as viewing the vans, I will reach out to the vendor, and I will see about getting that model van available for us to observe, and I will work with you, sir, to set up a time and place so that way you can follow around it and kick the tires and such. So that will be part 1. Part two, if you're saying that there are vans in service right now that have that issue, we do have a fleet of leased vehicles that we're using right now to help fill the gap for our vehicle shortage, so those will be rotated out once the new vans are in place and performing service for the agency. And as far as notifying the client what type of vehicle is going to be coming for them, I don't know anybody who does that, and as long as it's wheelchair accessible, and as long as it meets the ADA requirements, I don't know anybody else who does do that. And mind you, I have worked at agencies before where they do use a stepping stool. And in Palm Beach county, there's a provider that uses these high‑top vans, but they have ‑‑ they use a stepping stool to help people to go up into it. And mind you, the vans that we will be getting, they have ramps, so if someone is ‑‑ if someone does need that assistance they could -- they don't really close they ramp, but it can be used. But take advantage (audio distortion). I will ‑‑

>> Lots of feedback for some reason.   
>> What's that, sir? I apologize.

>> I can't hear clear.   
>> He was saying that he's going to get back to you about your question.   
>> Yes. So I will do that indeed. I will let up van for us to tour, and I will ‑‑ and I will ‑‑ you know, I will look into more of the ‑‑ I haven't seen any complaints about the vans being inaccessible. That's not what runs across my desk, you know, especially when they do the HEAT reports. That one -- and my apologies (inaudible) happening more than not and I'm not noticing, but at this time, I have not seen that type of complaint ‑‑ that type of complaint.   
>> Okay. Then Mr. Gonzalez, I think I got some of it or most of it, and I'm pretty sure Denise would ‑‑ so with that, are there any other hands or questions?   
>> Yeah, I see Jorge Ria has a question. Jorge, what's your question?   
>> Jorge.

>> He's in the attendees list. You have to unmute him.   
>> I thought I had unmute him. Okay. Let me try. Unmute. Jorge, attendee, has a question. Jorge, what's your question.   
>> Thank you. Yes. So I just want to understand about these vans. So are these vans just used for people with mobility difficulties not for people in a wheelchair?   
>> It's for people with disabilities that are eligible for mobility.   
>> So nobody in a wheelchair can be use of this van?   
>> Right.   
>> Okay. I ‑‑ something that I wanted to clear up. Yeah, I seen that Uber they have a system for wheelchair users, so it's in the tab on the app. And I have not been using here in Georgia because apparently here in Georgia there is not anybody doing that service, but I have been using it in other countries where it's just a click in the app where you just click for the wheelchair and then the car that comes and pick you up is being accessible. So that would be good.   
>> Send Jorge to Mr. Gonzalez. What is your question for him?   
>> Okay. So is ‑‑ Mr. Gonzalez, can you hear me?   
>> Yes, sir, I can. Yes.   
>> Okay. So is this system going to because, you know, in a few years from now, the city of Atlanta is going to house the workup and it's going to be a lot of people going around. Is the system going to be implement? How are you guys are preparing for that?   
>> Well, we do, like I said, have 15 additional wheelchair accessible vans will be here within two months, and I have a meeting actually this week with UZURV, and I will bring that up to them about (indiscernible). Again, these are all contractors. Every single one of these individuals have worked with UZURV is a contractor that has been drug tested and has received the expert training that one should have if you're going to help perform in a paratransit mobility service. But I will ask them and get their feedback on getting wheelchair accessible vans within their service. But thanks, that's a good question, sir.   
>> Okay. Thank you.   
>> Thank you Jorge for that question. Are there any more?   
>> Bob?   
>> Yes, thank you.   
>> Bob has a quick ‑‑ okay. Go ahead, Bob.   
>> Yes. This is a -- I don't know what the stool is that they use for the van, but just to give you some input of what it's like for somebody that needs assistance, if I ‑‑ in my personal home, I have a stool that has bolted to the side of it a handle that you can hold on to while you're on the stool. It gives you a lot more feeling of stability when you step up to step into the van versus trying to hold on to the frame of the van or trying to hold on to the seat or something like that, and I was wondering if they have just a regular little stool like, you know, I grew up with in the kitchen in my family's home or is it actually an accessibility type of stool, and if it's not, can that be added? And also, the dispatch office, when a van goes that's not wheelchair accessible goes to a location, does the dispatch office have the ability to see what that person's disability is, you know, the potential rider so that they know that oh, they're in like a wheelchair so they're not going to be able to use this. Is there a way that they would know in advance before they send it out and somebody finds out at the door at the time of pick up that it's not usable?   
>> Yes, sir, very much so. They have ‑‑ your user mobility aid, that is listed on your account, so if that ever happens when they say yeah and they get to the door and the person has a wheelchair and they're not able to transfer, that's a mistake. Something ‑‑ you know, something happened wrong, and I would ‑‑ and matter of fact, if you are using a wheelchair, you can't even schedule a non‑wheelchair accessible vehicle, Trapeze won't let you. So something happened like that, let us know so I can address it. .   
>> Okay.   
>> Thank you, Bob. Are there any more questions, Denise?   
>> I don't see any.   
>> Okay, then. Mr. Gonzalez, we appreciate you coming in answering questions from the committee and the committee members. And Denise, could you give us our next date that we will be meeting?   
>> It looks like September the 12th.   
>> September the 12th.   
>> Yes.   
>> If there is nothing else to come before this committee, the MAC committee, I call this meeting adjourned.   
>> Thank you for coming everyone.

(End of meeting.)