

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM ACCESSIBLE SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)

September 15, 2022

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Sotelo-Solis called the Accessible Services Advisory Committee meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. A roll call sheet listing the Accessible Services Advisory Committee member attendance is attached.

2. Approval of the March 10, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Chair Sotelo-Solis welcomed the newest members of the Accessible Services Advisory Committee. Ms. Debbie Marshall motioned to approve the minutes. Ms. Amanda Denham seconded the motion, and the vote was 14 to 0 in favor with Mr. Arun Prem, Mr. Juan Lopez, and Ms. Betsy Knight absent at time of vote.

3. Public Comments

There were no Public Comments.

4. Accessibility and the MUTCD (Jessie O'Sullivan)

Mr. Jessie O'Sullivan, transportation advocate and Policy Counsel at Circulate San Diego, presented on the National Association of City Transportation Officials' (NACTO) letter recommending changes to the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). He provided details on planning, educational programs, and the policy and advocacy Circulate SD stands for. Mr. O'Sullivan explained the MUTCD which sets standards for traffic control devices including striping, signage, signals, other road features, and contingent Federal funding. He also explained the issue of the many rules contained in the MUTCD that prevent local agencies from building accessible and safe infrastructure including safe and accessible routes to transit.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Sharlene Ornelas, ASAC committee member and paratransit consumer, inquired if during the presentation, it was mentioned whether or not traffic lights are installed for crossing a street unless they have more than 100 people crossing in one hour. Mr. O'Sullivan stated that this was correct and given as an example of the complex rules the MUTCD has specified, justifying pedestrian signals. Ms. Sharlene Ornelas stated that it is essential to have a traffic signal that is audible, especially for people with disabilities and whom are visually impaired, to know when they have a walk light signal on. Mr. O'Sullivan mentioned that the presentation was brought to the Accessible Services Advisory Committee by a grant that Circulate San Diego received through the County of Health and Human Services Agency and the Office of Traffic Safety before continuing with questions.

Mr. Jorge Rivas, ASAC committee member and fixed-route consumer, stated his confusion with the presentation and asked Mr. O’Sullivan if it was meant to be positive or negative due to the topics that were brought up. Mr. O’Sullivan apologized for any confusion during the presentation and noted that the MUTCD has a vast number of rules that are bad for pedestrian infrastructure and mentioned that there will be an MUTCD update that the National Association of City Transportation Official’s has sent a letter and campaigned to improve but has not been finalized yet. Mr. Jorge Rivas stated that as a visually impaired person and advocate for the ADA community, he would like to be involved as a lobbyist for something that would benefit the pedestrians and issue a better change in transit. Ms. Samantha Leslie, Deputy General Counsel at MTS, inquired clarification on what type of feedback or guidance Mr. O’Sullivan would like to hear from the Accessible Services Advisory Committee members. Mr. O’Sullivan stated the purpose of the presentation was to make people aware of the changes being made to the current draft of the MUTCD and participate by submitting comments to the National Association of City Transportation Official’s website. Chair Sotelo-Solis stated the city of National City has utilized Vision Zero for guidance in transit and specified the importance of the opportunity at hand to provide feedback and support the changes being made to the MUTCD.

Action Taken

No action taken. Informational item only

5. Taxicab Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Policy Survey Results (Leonardo Fewell)

Mr. Leonardo Fewell, MTS For-Hire Vehicle Administration Manager, provided an update on the process of the development the Taxicab Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) policy incentivized for the entry of Taxicab WAV’s into the San Diego For-Hire Transportation market. Mr. Fewell presented the results of multiple survey responses, completed by both passengers and taxicab drivers on Taxicab WAVs, and distributed via email “blasts” throughout the San Diego region from November 2021 through the end of January 2022. Mr. Fewell also explained the survey results from passengers including topics on the gender percentage of individuals with physical impairments that may require them to use a WAV; annual household income from 2020 to present; percentage of various ethnicities amongst the people who completed the survey; the percentage of Taxicab WAV service awareness in the San Diego region; the percentage of individuals that demand a better form of transportation; the likeliness to use a Taxicab WAV service; and transit options the passengers currently use. Mr. Fewell also provided survey results from the Taxi drivers such as the percentage of how many drivers believe in the importance for San Diego to have wheelchair accessible taxicabs and the multiple incentives necessary for increasing the number of WAV taxicabs.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Chair Sotelo-Solis asked Mr. Fewell for clarification regarding exactly who had been surveyed to make sure the audience knows whether they were passengers or drivers. Mr. Fewell stated that there were 124 passengers and 33 taxicab drivers that responded to the surveys. Chair Sotelo-Solis also asked exactly how many emails were sent via email blast. Mr. Fewell stated that he did not know the exact amount since students from San Diego State University had taken care of the email blast but he confirmed that the number was in the thousands. Mr. Jay Washburn stated that staff shared the surveys

with around 1,500 approved riders in the Access database to provide feedback. Chair Sotelo-Solis stated that she would like to move forward with these survey responses, but given the trivial amount of feedback received within in a short time-frame, staff may need to push for a more legislative approach either through the Board of Directors at MTS, SANDAG, or the taxicab unions to share the survey data. Chair Sotelo-Solis also asked if there was an incentive given to people who had completed the survey. Mr. Fewell stated there was no incentive given, but was communicated through the Taxicab Advisory Committee, San Diego Airport, and regulatory inspectors to promote the interest within the industry and acquire more participants to complete the survey. Ms. Samantha Leslie suggested for Mr. Fewell to discuss what the plan is for the data information and to inform the committee of how staff will utilize the survey results and develop strategies from it. Mr. Fewell stated that the purpose of the survey was to give the committee guidance on previously identified incentives from other cities and peer agencies on WAV's and develop recommendations on what incentives may work for the city of San Diego based on the survey results. Mr. Jay Washburn further clarified that there is a total of three WAV taxi's in the San Diego service area based out of the airport and for equity purposes, staff expressed their concerns on this issue and also stated that some taxi providers have been applying for grants through SANDAG to purchase WAV's.

Mr. Jorge Rivas asked what the current, smallest WAV is on the market, and how to get more of these vehicles as an incentive or a grant to the taxi drivers. Mr. Jay Washburn specified that MTS recently purchased 14 Dodge minivans that had been converted by Braun, a leading manufacturer in the industry for disability lifts and conversion of vehicles, but stated there are not too many current models available, and the cost of value to acquire and modify the vehicles is double the purchase point. Mr. Leonardo Fewell added that any modifications done to vehicles is cost prohibitive for a taxi driver and ultimately, staff would like to discover what incentives or programs can be provided to the taxi industry to purchase the vehicles out of pocket. Chair Sotelo-Solis stated that all taxis should be accessible to people with disabilities and the Taxicab Advisory Committee could make recommendations on this issue. She also asked what the cost was as an agency to purchase the 14 Dodge minivans and how many taxicabs are there in total including the three that are currently wheelchair accessible. Mr. Washburn stated that the cost was a range between \$65,000-\$85,000 pre-COVID, and currently there is a multi-year wait to purchase vehicles due to the supply chain demand. Mr. Fewell stated there are 655 taxis that are currently permitted, but 101 taxis are not operating for various reasons. Chair Sotelo-Solis asked for the presentation to be shared with other committees including SANDAG and expressed how she would like to see where MTS fits in comparison to other cities and states in regards to this service. Mr. Fewell stated that various cities have different target percentages for their fleet to be wheelchair accessible. For example, New York has a 50% target and Washington DC has a 100% target. Chair Sotelo-Solis asked if there is a set target goal for the city of San Diego. Ms. Samantha Leslie stated that there has not yet been a discussion about a particular number, but the goal was to take Mr. Fewell's research on peer agencies then compare it to the data of the survey results and how many passengers currently need this service, then decipher what an achievable goal may be. Chair Sotelo-Solis commented that the goal for San Diego should be 50% or around 200 of the current 655 taxicabs. Mr. Jay Washburn mentioned the Access for All Grant Program (AFA) provided by SANDAG that funds projects and programs that expand on-demand Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle services for individuals with disabilities in the San Diego region. He stated the program is funded by a ten-cent Access Fee collected from each Transportation Network Company

(TNC) trip in the county, including Uber and Lyft, where those fees are then collected and redistributed for use.

Action Taken

No action taken. Informational item only.

6. Potential Modifications to the EZ Access System (Jay Washburn)

Mr. Jay Washburn, Manager of Paratransit and Minibus, provided an update on the mobile application EZ Access, and its capabilities regarding trip booking and voice to text features. Mr. Washburn stated that the web and app both support text to talk functions for both iOS, Android, and web-based that include voice-over settings within the app as long as the user has the function turned on in their phone's settings. Mr. Washburn also stated that the feature is compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA, which is the universal accessibility standard for web content. He also stated that the features are compatible with commonly used screen reader technology and stated that the vendor who developed the software, Trapeze, has done a great job in making sure that both the web and mobile apps are accessible and meet all of the accessibility standards. He stated staff would be open to any feedback from the committee on additional features they may be able to provide. Mr. Washburn also mentioned one of the questions that had been previously asked about feedback from riders and stated that it has been around 98% positive, with the few negative results being from individuals that had difficulty logging in, or had compatibility issues with older operating systems and web browsers on their computers, but were easily able to trouble-shoot. He also mentioned that 10% of trips, and over 9% of the users that had called in each month are now being booked through the web or app. Mr. Washburn stated that the web portal has exceeded the grant estimate based by number of trips taken by 560%, the app portal exceeding by over 105%, and the automated dial out notifications sent out to clients has exceeded by 321% above the grant estimate.

Chair Sotelo Solis stated that the item is set for possible action and asked if this item needed to be moved forward or if it should be accepted and filed. Mr. Jay Washburn requested for the item to be accepted and moved forward.

Action Taken

Report accepted.

7. ADA Paratransit Reports

MTS Access and MTM monthly reports attached.

Action Taken

No action taken. Informational item only.

8. Fixed Route Reports

Fixed route monthly reports attached.

Action Taken

No action taken. Informational item only.

9. Committee Member Communications/Comments

Mr. Brent Boyd, MTS Manager of Service Quality for Trolley, provided an update on the virtual message sign features at the Mid-Coast corridor for any individual who has ridden or plans to ride the new Mid-Coast Blue Line, north of Old Town. He mentioned that there are new signs that include live schedules of the on-time arrival and departures for the trolleys, and also stated that these signs are newer compared to the 20-year-old signs seen at the rest of the Blue, Orange, and Green lines. He stated that MTS staff is in the process of switching over the rest of the system to the new LCD screens. He also mentioned that the new system will provide the ability to show crowd levels on the trolley using different colored icons; information on connecting services with busses; important messages conveyed from the agency such as bus bridges, shut downs, special event services, and promotional opportunities. Mr. Boyd also stated they have received grant funding from the California Cap-and-Trade Program to help enable the new system across the entire Orange line and are seeking additional funding opportunities to cover the rest of the Blue and Green lines.

Ms. Sharlene Ornelas, ASAC member and Paratransit consumer, asked Mr. Boyd how a visually impaired person would be able to view the new signage and expressed how important the information displayed on the signs needs to also be accessible to the ADA community. Mr. Boyd stated that even though the signs are visual, some do have the capability to make automated announcements to awaiting passengers, but staff are looking at this issue in more detail.

Ms. Sharlene Ornelas stated that she had recently filled out an application for recertification through NCTD Lift and that the application form has changed significantly. She mentioned that the questions on the form either need a yes or no answer from the applicant and may end up disqualifying the applicant from becoming eligible because they are not appearing to need the service. She stated that other options for an answer such as, "some of the time", need to be considered in the eligibility responses. Mr. Jay Washburn stated that he could look at the MTS Access application but mentioned that Ms. Sharlene Ornelas was referring to NCTD's application form. Chair Sotelo-Solis stated that staff will follow up with Ms. Ornelas on her concerns.

Mr. Jorge Rivas, ASAC member and Fixed-Route consumer, stated the signage located at the 24th street station in National City sometimes notifies passengers that the trolley will arrive in 20 minutes then arrives before said time. He asked staff if anyone else has mentioned anything about the signage. He also mentioned that the bus drivers, particularly servicing the bus stops in the South Bay, do not seem joyful. Mr. Rivas stated the drivers need more training in terms of where the busses are being parked when there is a wheelchair passenger. He asked if staff could pull bus drivers from the routes that service every 15 minutes in order to help other drivers not be delayed in service to their routes. Mr. Jay Washburn stated that there is a standard that the drivers are trained for the stopping and also stated that he would share Mr. Rivas' comments and any other information with the manager of the contracted division in South Bay. Mr. Brent Boyd mentioned that the signs located at the 24th street station are from a system that had been implemented relatively recent by the MTS IT department but staff is

continually working on resolving the issue as soon as possible and recommended for the committee to notify staff if they see any other issues with the signs and to also include the specific time and directions.

Ms. Amanda Denham, MTS Director of Support Services, reiterated what Mr. Jay Washburn and Mr. Brent Boyd commented regarding customer feedback, and mentioned that staff would like to make sure that they have productive investigations when drivers are not adhering to the training policies that are provided to them. She stated that staff would like to welcome and encourage the public to reach out to MTS customer service via phone or the online feedback portal that is available 24/7 with specific details to ensure the level of quality that riders deserve and are upheld throughout the service area. Chair Sotelo-Solis recommended for staff to include the information to MTS customer feedback near the public comment section on the Board and Committee webinar instructions.

Mr. Jay Washburn provided additional updates on the opportunity that was part of the Social Equity Listening Tour that held a special session for ASAC and SSTAC members. He mentioned that it went very well, feedback was given and will be part of the overall information that is presented to the Board of Directors. He stated that the MTS Access has been experiencing staffing shortages and cannot cut routes and services due to the FTA mandate to transport every passenger that calls in daily for every booked trip. He also stated that the provider, First Transit, has been doing everything possible they can to recruit by reaching out to multiple communities in the area, and have also stepped up their efforts with the Taxi provider by having them collect more rides to help ensure the customer service levels. Mr. Washburn mentioned that staff would like to make Access clients aware that they might be seeing more Taxis assigned to their trips as part of the program but the goal is to always ensure the safety, quality, and timeliness of service. He also welcomed the newest member to join the Access Appeals Board, Ms. Viri Salgado, ASAC member and Information and Outreach Intern at the California State Council on Developmental Disabilities. Mr. Washburn stated that Ms. Salgado will be a great addition, given her experience in the ADA community, and will help the Appeals Board to make good, informed decisions regarding appeals.

Chair Sotelo-Solis asked staff if there were any vacancies on other committees. Mr. Jay Washburn stated that there are none.

10. Next Meeting Date

The next Accessible Services Advisory Committee meeting schedule is scheduled for December 8, 2022 at 1:00 p.m.

11. Adjourn

Chair Sotelo-Solis adjourned the meeting at 2:29 pm.

/s/ Alejandra Sotelo-Solis
Chairperson
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

/s/ Carla Perez
Committee Clerk
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM
ACCESSIBLE SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC) MEETING
ROLL CALL

MEETING OF (DATE): 9/15/2022

CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 1:05 pm

ADJOURN: 2:29 pm

COMMITTEE MEMBER	(Alternate)		ORGANIZATION	PRESENT (TIME ARRIVED)	ABSENT (TIME LEFT)
Voting Committee Members					
Alejandra Sotelo-Solis (Chair)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	ASAC Chair	12:50 pm	2:29 PM
Casey Myers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letty Zuno	<input type="checkbox"/>	Access to Independence	1:00 pm	2:29 PM
Arun Prem	<input type="checkbox"/> Jonathan Albarran	<input type="checkbox"/>	FACT (CTSA)		
Debbie Marshall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Viri Salgado	<input type="checkbox"/>	State Council on Developmental Disabilities	1:00 pm	2:29 PM
Juan Lopez	<input type="checkbox"/> Edward Van Heel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transdev – Contracted Bus Routes		
Heriberto Gaytan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vacant	<input type="checkbox"/>	MTM. Inc.	1:00 pm	2:29 PM
Todd Lordson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jorge Malone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	San Diego Regional Center	12:59 pm	2:29 PM
Vacant	<input type="checkbox"/> Kasey Markoski	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	San Diego Center for the Blind		
Justin Augustine	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kevin Marquez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	First Transit, Inc. (MTS Access)	1:00 pm	2:29 PM
Ashley Wiley	<input type="checkbox"/> Benjamin Gembler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SANDAG	12:59 pm	2:29 PM
Jana Schwartz	<input type="checkbox"/> Melissa Hernandez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	County of San Diego AIS	12:55 pm	2:29 PM
Vacant	<input type="checkbox"/> Vacant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caltrans		
Sharlene Ornelas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tanya Azevedo	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paratransit Consumer	1:00 pm	2:29 PM
Jorge Rivas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vacant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fixed Route Consumer	1:00 pm	2:29 PM
Brent Boyd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fabeann Soberg	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MTS Trolley	12:59 pm	2:29 PM
Belinda Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Amanda Denham	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MTS Bus	12:56 pm	2:29 PM
Monique Ball	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Allie Rice	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deaf Community Services	1:00 pm	2:29 PM
Betsy Knight	<input type="checkbox"/> Vacant	<input type="checkbox"/>	County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services		
Non – Voting Committee Members					
Carla Perez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	MTS Contracted Services	12:50 pm	2:29 PM
Jay Washburn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	MTS Contracted Services	12:50 pm	2:29 PM
Samantha Leslie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	MTS Legal	1:00 pm	2:29 PM

COMMITTEE CLERK: _____



PARATRANSIT
AND MINIBUS
MANAGER: _____

