

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM (MTS)

ACCESSIBLE SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)

June 15, 2023

[Clerk's note: Except where noted, public, staff and board member comments are paraphrased. The full comment can be heard by reviewing the recording at the [MTS website](#).]

1. **Roll Call**

Chair George Gastil called the ASAC meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. A roll call sheet listing ASAC member attendance is attached.

2. **Public Comments**

There were no Public Comments.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

Debbie Marshall moved to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2023, MTS ASAC meeting. Chair George Gastil seconded the motion, and the vote was 14 to 0 in favor with Sharlene Ornelas, Monique Ball and Kacie Rodvill absent.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. **Update on Access Services (Jay Washburn)**

Jay Washburn, Manager of Paratransit and Minibus, provided an update highlighting recent changes to Access eligibility and reservation guidelines, along with an update on the current services levels due to the strike. Mr. Washburn updated the committee on the automated phone notifications, reservation web portal, mobile application, cashless fare system, travel training programs, automated ride tracking through the app, free rides for new EZ Access users, reservation window extension from two to ten days, and the extension of eligibility certifications from three years to five years starting in October. He also discussed the current work stoppage between First Transit and the local Teamsters Union operating out of Copley Park Division that began on May 22, 2023. Mr. Washburn stated that First Transit had experienced a two-day work stoppage on April 26 and 27 from employees honoring the picket lines in support of the Teamsters Employees from El Centro. He then stated that staff are working hard to keep riders informed by sending email blasts and robocalls, as well as utilizing several subcontractors to provide additional service to the MTS Access community. He further stated that approximately 55% of daily service is being covered and informed ASAC that negotiations are ongoing and taken by a day by day basis. Mr. Washburn explained the next steps coming out of the work stoppage including maximizing trip completions, operators returning back to work (labor negotiations), determining what drivers are returning to work, continuing to supplement staffing levels, and maintaining the utilization of subcontractors.

Committee Member Comments

Chair George Gastil commented that people really appreciate the reservations window being changed to ten days and will make a huge difference to individuals scheduling medical appointments and other important trips.

Casey Myers asked if the ten-day reservation window would be applied to both individuals calling over the phone and booking through the app. Jay Washburn clarified that it is for all platforms. Ms. Myers reiterated that the eligibility certifications changing from three to five years

is great and asked if individuals with permanent disability would potentially become eligible for a one-time certification process. Mr. Washburn stated that there have been conversations about the topic but the overall decision was made to have a five-year certification process for all individuals.

Jorge Rivas asked why MTS could not bring the contracted divisions in-house. Mr. Washburn stated that he could not give Mr. Rivas an answer for his question but suggested for him to listen to the recent MTS Board of Directors meeting held that day since there had been lengthy discussion on that same topic. Chair George Gastil stated that the Board will be looking into what the ramifications and costs would be if they were to be pulled in-house rather than contracted out.

Todd Lordson thanked staff for the changes made to the reservation window and eligibility certifications. Mr. Lordson also mentioned that he had sent staff feedback from one of his employees, Viri Salgado, regarding her not being allowed to select multiple mobility devices through the reservation web portal. Jay Washburn stated that he received the feedback and forwarded it over to First Transit and the software company to look over. Mr. Lordson also informed staff of an incident that occurred with one of the new subcontractors and mentioned the drivers had been telling clients they had to pay on the app and could not pay with a ticket or cash.

Jana Schwartz asked for clarification on the 55% of daily service coverage, calls that are being sent regarding ride cancellations, and the determination on which individuals are receiving rides during the strike. Jay Washburn stated that they cannot prioritize trips or ask clients what a ride is for under Federal law. He stated it is purely based on the resources available, routes built to take as many trips as possible, and the computer system maximizing the utilization of those resources. Ms. Schwartz questioned if there could potentially be individuals who would continue to not get serviced based on where they live and some individuals would receive service based on logistics. Mr. Washburn stated that all resources are being looked over including how many routes can be built to service as many people as possible.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

5. Potential Revisions to the Accessible Services Advisory Committee Membership Guidelines (Samantha Leslie)

Samantha Leslie, Deputy General Counsel, recommended that ASAC forward a recommendation to the MTS Board of Directors to approve the proposed revisions to the ASAC Membership Guidelines. Ms. Leslie stated that staff proposes to remove the following representatives as voting members: Caltrans, trolley, fixed-route bus, fixed-route bus contract services, complementary paratransit services, and complementary paratransit eligibility contract services. MTS staff also proposed to add one (1) additional fixed route passenger and one (1) additional complementary paratransit passenger to the existing one (1) fixed route passenger and one (1) complementary paratransit passenger. She stated that the entire proposal would reduce the number of voting members of ASAC from 18 to 14.

Committee Member Comments

Chair George Gastil commented that he liked the idea of including more riders on the committee and asked if there would be any way of knowing these individuals would be able to attend the meetings. Samantha Leslie stated that all applicants are informed of their commitment to the

meetings. Jay Washburn clarified paratransit members would have free transit to and from the meetings. Chair George Gastil asked if the open positions also apply to friends or family members of riders. Ms. Leslie stated the applications could be accepted by representatives of the riders as well.

Casey Myers stated her support for the recommendation.

Action Taken

Ashley Wiley moved to recommend to the MTS Board of Directors to approve the proposed revisions to the ASAC membership guidelines. Casey Myers seconded the motion, and the vote was 14 to 0 in favor with Sharlene Ornelas, Monique Ball and Kacie Rodvill absent.

6. ADA Paratransit Reports

MTS Access and MTM monthly reports attached.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

7. Fixed Route Reports

Fixed route monthly reports attached.

Committee Member Comments

Jorge Rivas commented that he had read an article in the LA Times regarding ridership dropping drastically and has started to see a similar trend in San Diego. Mr. Rivas mentioned that he has also noticed the environment at the transit stations not being the best and would like to know how staff plan to resolve these issues.

Brent Boyd commented that safety and security issues at the transit stations have been a huge topic of conversation at the MTS Board of Directors meetings and has been occurring in transit all over the country. Mr. Boyd stated that ridership for light rail vehicle (LRV) in particular has gone down, but are above pre-COVID levels with 10% of the ridership benefitting from the Mid-Coast extension. He also mentioned that San Diego was reported to have the highest light rail ridership out of every agency in the country according to the National Transit Database.

Chair George Gastil reiterated that this topic has been part of a major discussion at the MTS Board of Directors meetings and the safety and security issues San Diego has been facing may be related to several different factors.

Jorge Rivas asked staff if the transit stations still have ticket checkers since there had been multiple occasions where him and other riders had not been asked for their ticket. Chair George Gastil stated that he always gets asked for his ticket.

Todd Lordson mentioned for this topic to also be discussed at other committees outside of ASAC such as San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Social Services Transportation Advisory Council.

Ashley Wiley stated that SANDAG has also looked into the issue and have been attending meetings alongside MTS staff conducted by University of San Diego (UCSD) regarding homelessness in transit. Ms. Wiley also stated that SANDAG staff plan to address the topic in their regional plan with the help of MTS staff.

Jorge Rivas stated that he has had many issues with other riders playing their personal music too loud and asked if staff could add a message in the automated system notifying riders to use personal headphones when needed.

Samantha Stephen motioned to make a mandatory announcement for the trolley line colors at transit stations and for the arrival of buses due to its current inconsistency.

Public Comments

Wendy, representative for Deaf Community Services Advocacy- Wendy commented on behalf of the deaf and blind community stating they do not feel safe riding transit. She mentioned that not all operators assist riders with cognitive disabilities when boarding the trolley or buses. She then asked staff if there are visible aids posted for riders who are deaf. Brent Boyd asked what type of visible aids Wendy was referring to. Wendy clarified if there were some sort of subtitled or captioned signs for riders to read. Mr. Boyd stated rider's rules, visual aids, and live times are posted at all stations. Wendy also asked if braille was provided. Mr. Boyd stated braille signs are not posted inside the trolley vehicle's but are posted at the platforms indicating the direction and line of each station. Wendy also asked how security could be improved to support individuals who are deaf and blind. Mr. Boyd suggested for a representative from the security team to attend the next ASAC meeting in order to answer any further questions on the topic. Samantha Leslie also stated to have this topic added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

OTHER ITEMS

8. Committee Member Communications

Arun Prem announced the introduction of the AFA Cycle-1 grant, Ride Facilitating Access to Coordinated Transportation (FACT) Now service. Mr. Prem updated staff on the new specialized transportation service for San Diego County residents with disabilities using mobility devices in need of wheelchair accessible vans (WAV) and welcomed staff to reach out if they had any questions.

Todd Lordson asked staff if MTM had been experiencing any dull time due to the strike. Jay Washburn stated they are fully staffed, eligibility assessments are going forward, and virtual assessments have been reinstated due to the lack of ability to bring individuals to their appointments. Mr. Washburn also stated there has been no delay in any individual getting their eligibility certifications done in the required timeframes, thanks to Heriberto Gaytan and his team.

Jay Washburn added he would like ASAC members to provide suggestions to staff regarding different outside organizations who would be willing to present during the meetings and become more actively involved. Chair George Gastil asked staff who to contact if they had recommendations or suggestions. Mr. Washburn stated he would be happy to facilitate any provided.

Chair George Gastil mentioned that the Chair of the MTS Board of Directors, Stephen Whitburn, will be attending the next ASAC meeting on September 14, 2023.

Jana Schwartz thanked staff members Ariel Kroll, Community Engagement Specialist, for providing valuable travel training information and Carla Perez, Supervisor of Paratransit and

Minibus, for following up and providing information that had been requested regarding the Senior Reduced Fare Program. Ms. Schwartz also asked what restroom facilities were available at transit stations. Jay Washburn added that the topic of restroom facilities has also been discussed at the Board meetings. Brent Boyd mentioned a webpage located on the MTS website had been established listing all available restrooms and stated that the restrooms located at the Old Town and East County stations are managed by the A-Mart and re-enforced to allow transit riders to utilize them.

Todd Lordson asked if the Senior, Disabled, Medicare (SDM) identification forms would be increased to five years, similar to the eligibility certifications for MTS Access riders. Jay Washburn mentioned the question has already been raised and more feedback would be provided to him once the meeting has concluded.

Jay Washburn asked committee member Juan Lopez to provide an update for Transdev Southbay division on their status with the Union. Juan Lopez stated the Board had approved additional funding to use towards the agreement between Transdev Southbay and their local Teamsters Union and are hopeful to have all drivers back to work soon. Mr. Lopez also mentioned they are currently covering around 12% of service with only 80 out of the 400 drivers it takes to cover all routes, but they are addressing all concerns that have come out of the strike.

Chair George Gastil thanked staff for all of their efforts during the strike and also thanked the parties involved during the negotiations and their efforts to resolve any issues. Chair Gastil also emphasized the importance for MTS to not intervene during negotiations and leave it up to the negotiating parties of the collective bargaining process to decide.

Brent Boyd provided an update from trolley regarding the construction occurring near the Green Line at the 16th and Imperial Transit Center and stated they are building a new platform to help improve the operational flexibility and service during special events. He also mentioned closing times associated with the Green Line that will only have an impact on the Gaslamp and Imperial stations during a few weekends in June, July, and August.

9. Next Meeting Date

The next ASAC meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2023, at 1:00 p.m.

10. Adjournment

Chair George Gastil adjourned the meeting at 2:01 p.m.

/s/ George Gastil
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): June 15, 2023

CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 1:01 pm

ADJOURN: 2:01 pm

COMMITTEE MEMBER	(Alternate)	ORGANIZATION	PRESENT (TIME ARRIVED)	ABSENT (TIME LEFT)
Voting Committee Members				
George Gastil (Chair)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	ASAC Chair	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Casey Myers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letty Zuno <input type="checkbox"/>	Access to Independence	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Christian Hernandez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arun Prem <input type="checkbox"/>	FACT (CTSA)	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Debbie Marshall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vacant <input type="checkbox"/>	State Council on Developmental Disabilities	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Juan Lopez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Edward Van Heel <input type="checkbox"/>	Transdev – Contracted Bus Routes	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Heriberto Gaytan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Daisy Castillo Stussi <input type="checkbox"/>	MTM. Inc.	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Todd Lordson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jorge Malone <input type="checkbox"/>	San Diego Regional Center	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Samantha Stephan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kimberly Taylor <input type="checkbox"/>	San Diego Center for the Blind	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Justin Augustine	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kevin Marquez <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	First Transit, Inc. (MTS Access)	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Ashley Wiley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Benjamin Gembler <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SANDAG	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Jana Schwartz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melissa Hernandez <input type="checkbox"/>	County of San Diego AIS	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Sharlene Ornelas	<input type="checkbox"/> Tanya Azevedo <input type="checkbox"/>	Paratransit Consumer		
Jorge Rivas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vacant <input type="checkbox"/>	Fixed Route Consumer	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Brent Boyd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fabeann Soberg <input type="checkbox"/>	MTS Trolley	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Belinda Kelly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amanda Denham <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MTS Bus	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Monique Ball	<input type="checkbox"/> Allie Rice <input type="checkbox"/>	Deaf Community Services		
Kacie Rodvill	<input type="checkbox"/> Betsy Knight <input type="checkbox"/>	County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services		
Non – Voting Committee Members				
Carla Perez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (no alternate) <input type="checkbox"/>	MTS Contracted Services	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Jay Washburn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (no alternate) <input type="checkbox"/>	MTS Contracted Services	1:00 pm	2:01 pm
Samantha Leslie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (no alternate) <input type="checkbox"/>	MTS Legal	1:00 pm	2:01 pm

COMMITTEE CLERK: 