

## MINUTES

### MEETING OF THE SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM (MTS)

#### ACCESSIBLE SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)

September 14, 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 1:00 p.m. A roll call sheet listing ASAC member attendance is attached.

#### 2. **Public Comments**

There were no Public Comments.

#### 3. **Approval of Minutes**

Committee Member Jana Schwartz moved to approve the minutes of the June 15, 2023, MTS ASAC meeting. Committee Member Debbie Marshall seconded the motion, and the vote was 10 to 0 in favor with Sharlene Ornelas, Monique Ball and Jorge Rivas absent.

#### DISCUSSION ITEMS

#### 4. **Public Security and Passenger Safety Research and Updates (Al Stiehler and Julia Tuer)**

Julia Tuer, MTS Manager of Government Affairs, presented on the results of the 2022 Customer Satisfaction Survey pertaining to safety, cleanliness, and the behavior of other passengers. Ms. Tuer explained the project's purpose was to learn what changes would make a difference in improving the customer's overall transit experience. The results of the survey found that customers were primarily concerned about: improving safety on board and at stops, the behavior of other passengers, and the perceptions surrounding equity of fare checking on the trolley and potential biases. She further explained the Security Focus Groups, that consisted of 16 participants, including one individual with a disability, recruited from Customer Satisfaction Survey respondents and divided into two focus groups, segmented by stated gender preference to facilitate open and candid discussion. The key findings addressed personal safety as high importance, deferred trip making due to safety concerns more likely among women, women traveling after dark feel less safe, avoiding locations that are perceived as unsafe, women perceiving riding transit as less safe than men, the key elements of a safe environment while waiting for transit, strategies that are used to enhance personal safety, and the participants overall perception of security. Al Stiehler, MTS Director of Transit Security and Passenger Safety, provided an overview of the department regarding initiatives that are currently underway and intended to enhance the transportation environment for passengers and employees. Mr. Stiehler discussed the following items: outreach personnel overview, bus enforcement and camp team challenges, additional outreach efforts, and the next steps taken by MTS security to enhance the approach to security efforts and visibility.

#### **Committee Member Comments**

Committee Member Todd Lordson thanked staff for their presentation and commented that he has witnessed people relinquish their bus passes in turn for a more expensive service, due to not feeling safe walking to and from public transit. He also mentioned how some contracted

mobility trainers have chosen not to perform certain trainings because of the location and time of day.

Committee Member Samantha Stephan asked staff if there were any incentives in place to help change the increase in consumers that have declined using transit services. Mr. Stiehler stated that staff are being respectful of the rider's decision on whether or not they choose to ride transit because of their safety and are continuing to work towards building a trusting relationship with their riders.

Chair George Gastil stated it is a characteristic of the population in which homeless individuals have not accepted services, but admires Mr. Stiehler's approach to building a relationship with those individuals to hopefully break through to them.

Committee Member Jana Schwartz stated that she agreed with most of the key findings from the focus groups and asked staff if the recent encampment ordinance has had an impact on transit services. Mr. Stiehler stated that the ordinance is too new to have data on any specific changes seen around the transit centers.

Chair George Gastil mentioned the Board of Directors had recently approved the addition of 34 new Code Compliance Inspectors (CCIs), six (6) Code Compliance Supervisors, one (1) Assistant Field Operations Manager, one (1) Administrative Support Professional and create five (5) Code Compliance Dispatcher positions during the prior Board of Directors meeting.

Committee Member Samantha Stephan commented that she felt the focus groups were well represented. She asked about impacts due to the encampment ordinance.. Mr. Stiehler commented it's too new to have any data on that.

### **Public Comments**

Wendy Merritt – Representing Deaf Community Services Advocacy provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Wendy asked staff how the security officers communicate with the deaf and homeless community and questioned if they use American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters to communicate.

### **Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

## **5. ADA Paratransit Reports**

Jay Washburn, MTS Manager of Paratransit and Minibus, provided an update on MTS Access services. He stated that the Youth Opportunity Program has been extended until June 2024 and informed the committee members of the recently open and additional positions to the committee for Paratransit and Fixed Route consumers and/or their advocate. He also mentioned the extension to the Access certification period for new certifications and re-certifications beginning on October 1<sup>st</sup>, making the change from a 3-year industry-standard certification to 5 years. Mr. Washburn also provided an update on the changes made to the reservation window and noted that 45% of the trips booked in August were booked within the three to ten-day reservation window, showing a positive impact on the rider's utilization of the change. He also updated the committee on the current service levels following the recent work stoppage, lessons learned, the three-year labor agreement between First Transit and the local Teamsters, current staffing levels at First Transit, and introduced the new WAV sub contracted providers, which included Care-7, San Diego Medical Transportation, Telekom, Teleclinic, and FACT, that were brought in to assist during the work stoppage period and help maintain customer service levels. Mr.

Washburn mentioned the new program that has been implemented for the utilization of the Access minivans, increase in online web-portal users, updates to the PRONTO fare program regarding accessibility, and the active bill sponsored through the Legislature and awaiting the Governor's signature that will allow MTS to bill Managed Care Providers for the Paratransit services provided by MTS.

#### **Committee Member Comments**

Committee Member Christian Hernandez provided an update on behalf of Facilitating Access to Coordinated Transportation (FACT) regarding their new specialized transportation service, *RideFACTNOW*, for San Diego County residents with disabilities using mobility devices in need of wheelchair accessible vans (WAV) that began on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023.

#### **Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

### **6. Fixed Route Reports**

Brigette Ponce, MTS System Safety Specialist, provided an update regarding the construction, delays, and weekend shutdowns occurring at the Imperial Transit Center. Keith Vann, MTS Manager of Service Operations, did not have any updates but welcomed questions from the committee members.

#### **Committee Member Comments**

Committee Member Todd Lordson asked staff if there were any updates regarding the concern he raised during the last meeting for the online reduced fare web portal application. Samantha Leslie, MTS Deputy General Counsel, mentioned that staff had addressed this concern at the prior Board of Directors meeting and are planning to launch a small pilot in October 2023 for the reduced fare online application, but can ask staff to also provide a visual step-by-step presentation at the next ASAC meeting.

Committee Member Debbie Marshall mentioned a location at Balboa and Ruffin Road that did not have a sidewalk or bus stop and asked staff what the process was on deciding where bus stops are placed with accessibility in mind. Mr. Vann stated that for the implementation of new stops, accessibility is one of the main concerns. He stated that staff works with the Passenger Facilities team to help identify spots and provide ideas to make the area accessible to all. Jay Washburn stated that there have been cases in the past where a bus stop had to be moved due to riders of the ADA community not being able to easily access the stops, but in other cases may potentially qualify those riders to use Access services when the accommodations cannot be met at the bus stops. Ms. Marshall also asked staff if they are looking into the issue of possible transit rider and bicyclist related accidents with the new bike lane installation near bus stops. Mr. Washburn noted that staff has worked diligently with the City of San Diego to ensure Access busses are able to enter the bike lanes quickly and safely when dropping off passengers.

Committee Member Todd Lordson asked staff if there were a running list of stops that require modifications or if an investigative report can be conducted to review any modifications needed at bus stops. Mr. Vann stated that individuals can contact customer service for bus stop modifications then staff will further investigate the specific locations. Mr. Washburn also noted that members can reach out to Carla Perez, Supervisor of Minibus and Paratransit or himself with their concerns and clarified there is a current running list of bus stops.

Committee Member Samantha Stephan mentioned these issues are more City of San Diego based and provided staff with the City of San Diego ADA Coordinator, Todd Hood, contact information.

Committee Member Zaccary Bradt asked for a status update on bus operator staffing in comparison with service levels. Keith Vann stated there is still a shortage in bus operators, but recently witnessed the largest graduation class since the past several years with 17 graduates. He also mentioned MTS has hosted several hiring fairs with hopes to make offers to at least 20 candidates during each event.

**Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

OTHER ITEMS

**7. Committee Member Communications**

Jana Schwartz provided an update on behalf of the Age Well Initiative with the County of San Diego that specifically focus on transportation, noting the next meeting held on September 20<sup>th</sup> including a guest speaker from MTS, Ariel Kroll, that will be presenting on the travel training programs conducted by MTS staff.

**8. Next Meeting Date**

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

**9. Adjournment**

Chair George Gastil adjourned the meeting at 1:53 p.m.

/S/George Gastil  
Chairperson  
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

/S/Brianne Graham  
Committee Clerk  
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

Attachment: Roll Call Sheet

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

ROLL CALL

MEETING OF (DATE): September 14, 2023 CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 1:00 pm

ADJOURN: 1:53 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	12:50 pm	1:53 pm
Hermes Castro	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Letty Zuno	<input type="checkbox"/>	Access to Independence	1:00 pm	1:53 pm
Christian Hernandez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Arun Prem	<input type="checkbox"/>	FACT (CTSA)	1:00 pm	1:53 pm
Debbie Marshall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mary Ellen Stives	<input type="checkbox"/>	State Council on Developmental Disabilities	1:00 pm	1:53 pm
Todd Lordson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jorge Malone	<input type="checkbox"/>	San Diego Regional Center	1:00 pm	1:53 pm
Samantha Stephan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kimberly Taylor	<input type="checkbox"/>	San Diego Center for the Blind	1:00 pm	1:53 pm
Zaccary Bradt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Benjamin Gembler	<input type="checkbox"/>	SANDAG	1:00 pm	1:53 pm
Alyssa Ahn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Daniela Turner		Caltrans	1:00 pm	1:53 pm
Jana Schwartz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Melissa Hernandez	<input type="checkbox"/>	County of San Diego AIS	1:00 pm	1:53 pm
Sharlene Ornelas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tanya Azevedo	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paratransit Consumer		
Jorge Rivas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vacant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fixed Route Consumer		
Monique Ball	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wendy Merritt	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deaf Community Services		
Kacie Rodvill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Betsy Knight	<input type="checkbox"/>	County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services	1:00 pm	1:53 pm
Non – Voting Committee Members						
Carla Perez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	<input type="checkbox"/>	MTS Contracted Services	1:00 pm	1:53 pm
Jay Washburn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	<input type="checkbox"/>	MTS Contracted Services	1:00 pm	1:53 pm
Samantha Leslie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(no alternate)	<input type="checkbox"/>	MTS Legal	1:00 pm	1:53 pm

COMMITTEE CLERK: /S/Carla Perez