

Paratransit Advisory Committee (PAC)

November 10, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the PAC meeting date, time, and format was changed. A Zoom virtual meeting was conducted.

Meeting was called to order by Shirley Teran-Marty, PAC Liaison at 5:00pm.

1. Attendees on Conference Call:

PAC Members - Thomas Coppola, Ketrina Hazell, Sharlene Kraft, Billy Mitchell, Mark Anthony Phifer, Jean Ryan, Ellen Rubin, Tucker Salovaara, Sharada Veerubhotla, RueZalia Watkins

MTA/NYCT Paratransit - Brian Altschul, Tammie Francisque, Donna Fredericksen, Ami Freyberger, Raymond Gaillard, Eugene Griffith, Simone Harvard, Patricia Ibarguen, Diane McFarlane, Donald Raimondi, Margaret O'Halloran, Shirley Teran-Marty

Guest – Quemel Arroyo (MTA Chief Accessibility Officer), Rachel Cohen (MTA Accessibility Director), JP Alfred (LEAP founder), JC Alfred (LEAP founder)

MTA Chief Accessibility Officer, Mr. Arroyo expressed the importance of the PAC. He conveyed the message that tonight it is about engagement and how the Paratransit sub-committee in ACTA is very actively involved and vocal and would like to see the same with PAC. If anyone does not feel represented, and believes their voices aren't being heard he asked that they communicate this to him. This is also a call to action for those members who have been less involved. There is much interest in these types of committees and the point of contact they have with MTA. He expressed that the PAC's active voices will matter, not as individual riders alone but as representatives of the communities they serve.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the previous meeting minutes.

Access-A-Ride (AAR) Service Report

Prior to sharing September's service report, Mr. Raimondi responded to questions asked during the last meeting. Mr. Phifer inquired about the possibility of a coordinator being assigned to the college. AAR is looking into that assistance. Also discussed was the need for drivers to be courteous and helpful. A directive was sent out to all the vendors and primary carriers.

A summary of the August 2021 operating statistics from the Paratransit Report was sent to PAC members. VP Raimondi provided the September statistics. A copy is attached to these minutes.

PAC Member Discussion and Feedback

Ms. Hazell asked why appointment times have not been returned. Mr. Raimondi stated as performance improves, and the rate of no-shows decrease, appointment times will then be addressed. If a customer needs an appointment time at the time of reservation, they may request to speak with a supervisor. Customers have the availability to schedule appointment times when they use the MYmta app.

Ms. Ryan emphasized the need for the MYmta app to be updated. She feels the app isn't user-friendly. VP Raimondi recognized that the IT team is working hard to implement changes on the app.

Mr. Salovaara wanted to know why there aren't enough drivers for every ride. An industry-wide driver shortage is impacting service. AAR is working with its vendors to assist, and recruitment efforts have also been ramped up. The primary carriers are providing incentives anywhere from \$1,000-\$2,000. They are paying for all training, fees to get licenses, and promoting with TV commercials.

Ms. Watkins requested the meeting for the PAC be held after the MTA Board Meeting so that the most up-to-date statistics can be presented.

Paratransit Topic - No-Show/Late Cancellation Policy - Margaret O'Halloran

Officer of Eligibility & Compliance, Diane McFarlane, introduced Margaret O'Halloran, who explained the current updates regarding the CNS/Late Cancellation Policy. This update was made from a recent audit by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which found the policy did not meet their standards. AAR had to change this pursuant to the mandate from FTA.

Margaret O'Halloran alluded that FTA reviewed the older policy of seven points where a customer who receives a no-show or late cancellation violation could be suspended. The FTA added a new criteria, a customer's no-show or late cancels have to be 30% of the total trips a customer reserved in addition to the seven points.

A customer will receive a suspension appeal notice if they meet both criteria of having seven trips cancelled or no-show, and if the monthly total of trips reach 30% of trips.

PAC Member Discussion and Feedback

Ms. Watkins needed clarification as to how a constituent finds out what 30% of their ridership usage is? Ms. O'Halloran stated a customer should track the number of trips they take and if there were any issues experienced during service. During the appeal suspension the customer has the right to explain what occurred and a decision is made but AAR's goal is not to suspend.

Ms. McFarlane explained a customer will first receive a warning notice when a customer is reaching the two-prong criteria.

The new policy is on the AAR website

<https://new.mta.info/document/4571>

and in the Fall issue of On The Move

<https://new.mta.info/accessibility/paratransit/newsletter-and-announcements>

PAC Topic - LEAP (new E-hail Provider)

Non-Dedicated Service Operations Officer, Eugene Griffith provided an overview of how in the last two years AAR has started to transition the broker program. About 70% of the service is performed through this service to help increase capacity. A new RFP was approved, and three additional broker companies have been added. CTG has been incumbent for over 10 years, Arrow is a broker and lastly Sentry, a minority owned broker that started in October.

JP Alfred the founder of LEAP presented a PowerPoint Presentation introducing his company.

LEAP was founded by JC and JP Alfred, sons of a former Yellow Cab medallion owner, who instilled in them the values of hard work and respect for the industry as a whole.

Today, the sons have created a company that is passenger-focused and driven to help build on the service the MTA offers Access-A-Ride passengers. They were founded about a decade ago and roughly have 1200-1300 vehicle drivers that work for them at any given time. The company is looking to increase this number as the program expands and threshold increases.

The Cycle of Operations as to how the program functions is held in two tiers. There is a list of accessible passengers authorized to use the service under the provisions of the E-hail program. Those E-hail customers would download the app, schedule their trips, and those customers who prefer to call there is a 24/7 tactile customer care. The customer will receive an automated text message letting them know that the booking has occurred. After the trip is complete a customer care representative will contact the customer to find out the disposition for the ride, if there were any issues or what can be improved.

A customer can book the trip up to 48 hours in advance, and speak with staff members in English, Spanish, Urdu, Arabic and French. All trip information is confirmed, and a text message is sent directly to the passenger's phone, so they have a record.

Passengers pay \$2.75 cash directly to the driver. Customers who do not wish to call may use the app to schedule trips. The app also has ride preferences. This provides specific requirements, whether it is a call out and assist, door to door, lift requirement, and this information is sent to the drivers. The driver must acknowledge reading these requirements on the profile. As of right now Leap has 42 wheelchair accessible vehicles. The app will demonstrate the make and model of vehicle assigned. Once the ride is complete passengers can email the

receipt to themselves. Passengers may also request a preferred driver.

PAC Member Discussion and Feedback

Mr. Coppola inquired if the new brokers are designated a specific service area or is it just Staten Island? There has been discussion about how the broker service in Staten Island isn't performing up to standard. Mr. Griffith explained that Islander is primarily designated in Staten Island, and all the others service all boroughs. However, if a customer is traveling outside of Staten Island, they will most likely be assigned MVP carrier. Mr. Griffith would like to know exact issues customers are having since the random surveys conducted always have positive feedback.

Mr. Phifer inquired about whether a customer on the Pilot can try all three apps. Mr. Raimondi explained that preferably customers should be using one app, but if customers are having an issue with the current company, they can try another company.

Ms. Rubin questioned how can Arro fulfill service for both broker and E-hail customers noting that currently, drivers are not showing up due to driver shortages. Mr. Griffith stated that AAR has not seen any problems with Arro serving both E-hail customers and broker. However, all broker companies are experiencing this driver shortage. The companies are providing incentives to their drivers. The irony is that AAR brought on additional broker companies to address capacity, but the impact on the taxi industry is not benefitting us the way we thought it would.

Ms. Ryan asked what is the name of the app? The name is LEAP Passenger in the app store.

Ms. Hazell asked if the drivers speak different languages? JC explained the pool of drivers is diverse, but we cannot mandate English be the first language, as per the Taxi & Limousine Commission (TLC). Leap makes its best efforts to ensure drivers communicate well.

Mr. Mitchell asked if the program is available for all customers? VP Raimondi explained this program is for the 1,200 customers currently in the Pilot Program.

VP Raimondi asked those on the PAC that are in the Pilot to try LEAP.

New/Old Business

Ms. Teran-Marty informed PAC that she would email the 2022 PAC schedule. The PAC meetings will be moved to the Thursday following the Wednesday MTA Board meeting (alternating months).

Closing

A motion was made by Ms. Veerubhotla to end the meeting. Ms. Watkins seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:30pm.

Paratransit Report

Statistical results for the month of November 2021 are shown below.

Paratransit Operations - Monthly Operations Report Service Indicators							
Category	Performance Indicator	Current Month: November 2021			12-Month Average		
		This Year	Last Year	% Change	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Ridership	Total Trips Completed*	466,157	476,655	-2.2%	476,159	462,971	+2.9%
	Total Ridership	657,621	649,352	+1.3%	659,532	618,082	+6.7%
On-Time Performance	Pick-up Primary 30 Minute	94.0%	98.0%	-4.0%	94.4%	97.6%	-3.2%
	Pick-up Primary 15 Minute	81.0%	92.0%	-11.0%	84.5%	89.8%	-5.3%
	Pick-up Broker 30 Minute	84.0%	98.0%	-14.0%	91.7%	97.7%	-6.0%
	Pick-up Broker 15 Minute	67.0%	92.0%	-25.0%	77.2%	90.8%	-13.6%
	Appointment OTP Trips Primary - 30 Min Early to <1 Late (On-Time)*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	46.0%	n/a
	Appointment OTP Trips Primary - Early*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	47.0%	n/a
	Appointment OTP Trips Broker - 30 Min Early to <1 Late (On-Time)*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	31.7%	n/a
Ride Time	Appointment OTP Trips Broker - Early*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	61.3%	n/a
	Ride Time Variance Performance: Actual Trip Duration vs. Planned Trip Duration - At or Better Than Plan	77.0%	87.0%	-10.0%	83.4%	85.7%	-2.3%
	Average Actual Trip Duration in Minutes	39	28	+39.3%	32	30	+6.0%
	Max Ride Time Performance Primary	98.0%	99.0%	-1.0%	98.8%	98.9%	-0.2%
Customer Experience	Max Ride Time Performance Broker	96.0%	99.0%	-3.0%	98.8%	99.0%	-0.3%
	Frequent Rider Experience Primary*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	76.3%	n/a
Provider No-Shows	Frequent Rider Experience Broker*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	70.0%	n/a
	Provider No-Shows per 1,000 Schedule Trips Primary	2.49	0.69	+260.9%	2.55	0.60	+327.1%
Customer Complaints	Provider No-Shows per 1,000 Schedule Trips Broker	10.66	0.45	+2,268.9%	3.71	0.73	+409.0%
	Passenger Complaints - Transportation Service Quality Per 1000 Completed Trips	7.0	1.4	+400.0%	4.5	1.8	+151.9%
Call Center	Passenger Complaints - Non-Transportation Service Quality Per 1000 Completed Trips	4.0	0.9	+344.4%	2.3	1.2	+90.3%
	Percent of Calls Answered	86.0%	95.0%	-9.0%	90.8%	96.8%	-6.0%
Eligibility	Average Call Answer Speed in Seconds	225	58	+287.9%	138	40	+242.4%
	Total Registrants	164,075	161,284	+1.7%	163,266	162,257	+0.6%

*NOTE: The Drop-off On-Time Performance and Customer Experience metrics are not available to present monthly data comparison due to the temporary suspension of appointment time booking of trips associated with the COVID-19 pandemic which started in March 2020. Consequently, the current 12-Month Average rate for these two metrics cannot be calculated.

Note: 1) The percentage comparisons are the percentage point change instead of the percentage change.
2) Trip data and resulting metrics are preliminary and subject to adjustments.