

Paratransit Advisory Committee (PAC)

March 31, 2022

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.

Attendees on Conference Call:

PAC Members - Thomas Coppola, Luda Demikhovskaya, Ketrina Hazell, Jose Hernandez, Mark Anthony Phifer, Jean Ryan, Sharada Veerubhotla, RueZalia Watkins

Absent - Mindy Jacobson, Sharlene Kraft, Ellen Rubin

MTA/NYCT Paratransit - Brian Altschul, Lynda Edmond, Tammie Francisque, Donna Fredericksen, Natalie Garcia, Eugene Griffith, Simone Harvard, Patricia Ibarguen, Diane McFarlane, Chris Pangilinan, Nathasha Parris, Tejpal Prajapati, Donald Raimondi, Beverly Richards, Shirley Teran-Marty

Guest – Josh Gee, Director IT Product Management

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Watkins, PAC Chair conducted the meeting. A motion was made to approve the previous meeting minutes.

Access-A-Ride (AAR) Service Report

Opening remarks from the new Vice President Chris Pangilinan who introduced himself and provided a brief background about himself. He has worked with various transportation agencies for approximately 18 years in San Francisco, Chicago, and then with NYCT in New York. Most recently he worked at Uber and Transit Center. VP Pangilinan is a wheelchair user who travels with AAR, fixed route buses and subways. He is excited to join the Paratransit team and looking forward to seeing improvements in transportation for people with disabilities around New York City.

Jose Hernandez welcomed VP. He mentioned that changes are encouraged but urged strongly that they include input from the disabled community.

A summary of the January 2022 operating statistics from the Paratransit Report was sent to PAC members. VP Pangilinan provided the January statistics, noting it was a good month. A copy is attached to these minutes.

PAC Member Discussion and Feedback

Mr. Coppola asked if there has been an increase in the number of drivers? VP Pangilinan and DVP Raimondi confirmed there has been an increase in drivers for both dedicated and broker.

Ms. Demikhovskaya questioned if AAR is still tracking on-time performance based on pick-up times and appointment times? DVP Raimondi explained how appointment times during COVID were suspended because it impacted the availability of trips overall. During COVID, trips were completed faster because there was less traffic. At this time appointment times are not being factored in, but we hope to resume those statistics. If a customer needs to schedule an appointment trip, the request can be escalated to a supervisor or a customer can book it through the app.

PAC Topic - Update from StrageGen

Brian Altschul, Technology Project Management Officer provided an update on the StrageGen project. In 2018, AAR replaced two systems Automatic Vehicle Location Management (AVLM) and the Scheduling and Dispatch System, awarded to StrageGen Systems. This is the same company that provides our current Scheduling Software. This system provides a real-time traffic feature, new mobile data terminals, MDT and improved routing and navigation for drivers. As of today, the AVLM is mostly completed. MDTs are on all dedicated operated vehicles. There are still some outstanding items such as Flashback, which is used to investigate trips. Also, it provides the advantage of seeing real-time traffic. In addition, real-time scheduling of computer aided (RTS CAD) is being tested. He is hoping the system will be completed by end of 2022.

Mr. Hernandez stated the project was awarded a substantial amount of money and wanted to know how much is remaining? He submitted a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request but hasn't received any feedback. DVP Raimondi informed Mr. Hernandez that the law department responds to that request and staffing issues may result in a delay. Officer of Eligibility, Ms. McFarlane also mentioned once a FOIL request is made a customer will receive an automated confirmation.

Ms. Ryan expressed concern that the system works for the carriers, but most AAR trips are now being performed by broker. She questioned how this will impact broker, and asked whether this scheduling system can book trips immediately or does the system continue to schedule trips the day before? Mr. Altschul noted in terms of scheduling trips both carriers and broker receive trips. The difference being that carriers have the MDT in the vehicle and broker drivers send back location information regarding their vehicles. The operations side of the service isn't designed to schedule same-day. The MDT system does place new trips onto routes in real time.

VP Pangilinan also mentioned that his focus is to create a more flexible scheduling system.

Mr. Coppola questioned whether broker service will receive AVL software, and asked if he would be able to call AAR for ETAs? Mr. Altschul advised broker vehicles are not receiving this equipment. However, 90% of broker vehicles do provide tracking information to the Command Center.

Ms. Watkins requested that the PAC committee prepare additional questions specific to this topic and have them answered during the next meeting?

Paratransit Topic - Update of MYmta and the MY AAR App

Mr. Josh Gee, Director of IT Product Management introduced himself and his team with a PowerPoint Presentation. This Digital Service Team started 2.5 years ago with MTA, which includes designers, product managers, content strategists and engineers. They support the MYmta app (including Access-A-Ride), new.mta.info, Live Subway Map and Elevator & Escalator Lookup.

The Access-A-Ride app is tested on a bi-weekly basis, gaining feedback from riders, and coordinating with the AAR team to discuss issues, bugs, and feature enhancements.

The team manages the “front end,” i.e., information displayed, app flow, entering information. This is the functionality presented to customers. The “back end” provides trip information and changes, driver behavior and path, login/information storage, account details and information, and the integration with services like OMNY.

A few changes are being made to create a cleaner experience:

- Change in trip map
- Change to pick-up time display
- Refactoring for stability and improved ability to update account information.

When a customer books a trip, they will see a straight line from pick-up to drop-off with the time, as opposed to only seeing the pick-up and drop-off address currently displayed.

On the tab that displays “Upcoming trips” it will show the pick-up time instead of the requested time.

The AAR team is launching a new user management and trip booking, most of the changes are going to be done at the back end.

- Improvement in stability and performance
- Easier tools for updating customer account information, especially password.
- Display OMNY integration
- Previewing ride before submitting official request
- Enhanced broker information in the ride screen (pending work on the back end)

PAC Member Discussion and Feedback

Ms. Veerubhotla wanted to know if the app was user-friendly for customers who are visually impaired? Mr. Gee emphasized how the team will focus on this, test the changes, and may reach out to customers.

Ms. Ryan suggested a contrast color is important since other images are behind the ping so people with low vision will be able to identify the address.

Mr. Hernandez asked how difficult it would be to show Google App routing options when the system already has two fixed addresses? Also, when using the MYmta app there isn't an option or tab that shows which train stations are accessible. Mr. Gee explained that AAR uses Google for its place and location but not for routing purposes. At the current moment the routing system uses Tom-Tom. Mr. Gee will work with the MTA Accessibility group on adding an accessible icon to the train station on the app.

Ms. Hazell asked if there would be a feature where a customer could message the driver, especially for customers who have a speech impediment. Mr. Gee noted it is something they can review.

Ms. Watkins stated how the line displays show the distance between the driver and pick-up and it gives customers a visual detail. Mr. Gee explained how the line will appear when the trip is enroute so the customer can identify the distance.

Mr. Phifer wanted to know who is responsible for providing updates about elevator outages at accessible subway stations, and asked if a notice could appear on the app. Since this question was not an AAR topic, PAC Chair Ms. Watkins advised that a response will be given by the correct department.

AAR Updates

DVP Raimondi mentioned incentives are being leveraged for the broker program. AAR is still working closely with dedicated carriers on hiring more drivers. OMNY is a new project AAR is focusing on which will be replacing the AAR ID card. This system will allow customers to create an OMNY account then add money for contactless payment.

The turnaround time for taxi reimbursement is now 30 days if a customer submits an online request.

Ms. Veerubhotla stated she is unable to add her pre-tax payment as an option in OMNY. Many NYC and federal workers have this program so she would like to know how OMNY is going to implement this payment? DVP Raimondi advised Ms. Veerubhotla that OMNY is reviewing different payment options. An employer can set up an OMNY account so employees may use a debit card.

New/Old Business

Ms. Teran-Marty informed PAC the next meeting is on Thursday, May 26th from 5:00pm-6:30pm.

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 March 2022 are shown below.

Paratransit Operations - Monthly Operations Report Service Indicators							
Category	Performance Indicator	Current Month: March 2022			12-Month Average		
		This Year	Last Year	% Change	This Year	Last Year	% Change
Ridership	Total Trips Completed*	531,547	494,856	+7.4%	470,090	396,943	+18.4%
	Total Ridership	752,692	669,737	+12.4%	663,297	528,587	+25.5%
On-Time Performance	Pick-up Primary 30 Minute	95.0%	98.0%	-3.0%	93.7%	97.8%	-4.1%
	Pick-up Primary 15 Minute	84.0%	90.0%	-6.0%	82.6%	90.3%	-7.7%
	Pick-up Broker 30 Minute	92.0%	95.0%	-3.0%	90.4%	97.3%	-6.9%
	Pick-up Broker 15 Minute	76.0%	82.0%	-6.0%	74.8%	89.6%	-14.8%
	Appointment OTP Trips Primary - 30 Min Early to <1 Late (On-Time)*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Appointment OTP Trips Primary - Early*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Appointment OTP Trips Broker - 30 Min Early to <1 Late (On-Time)*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Appointment OTP Trips Broker - Early*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ride Time	Ride Time Variance Performance: Actual Trip Duration vs. Planned Trip Duration - At or Better Than Plan	79.0%	87.0%	-8.0%	81.0%	87.3%	-6.3%
	Average Actual Trip Duration in Minutes	37	29	+27.6%	35	28	+23.2%
	Max Ride Time Performance Primary	98.0%	99.0%	-1.0%	98.5%	99.0%	-0.5%
	Max Ride Time Performance Broker	99.0%	99.0%	0.0%	98.6%	99.0%	-0.4%
Customer Experience	Frequent Rider Experience Primary*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Frequent Rider Experience Broker*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Provider No-Shows	Provider No-Shows per 1,000 Schedule Trips Primary	1.24	0.74	+67.6%	2.72	0.63	+335.3%
	Provider No-Shows per 1,000 Schedule Trips Broker	3.71	1.19	+211.8%	5.24	0.66	+691.6%
Customer Complaints	Passenger Complaints - Transportation Service Quality Per 1000 Completed Trips	3.4	1.7	+100.0%	5.1	1.6	+226.2%
	Passenger Complaints - Non-Transportation Service Quality Per 1000 Completed Trips	3.2	1.0	+220.0%	3.0	1.1	+172.7%
Call Center	Percent of Calls Answered	94.0%	97.0%	-3.0%	89.8%	96.8%	-7.0%
	Average Call Answer Speed in Seconds	85	29	+193.1%	155	35	+347.8%
Eligibility	Total Registrants	167,924	161,366	+4.1%	165,425	161,678	+2.3%

*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.