

AGENDA

Service Animal Subcommittee Meeting

Wednesday April 29, 2009

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

AON CENTER

707 Wilshire Blvd, 6th Floor

Los Angeles, CA 90017

<u>Time</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Disposition</u>	<u>Pages</u>
	1. Call to Order	Action	
	2. Roll Call	Action	
	3. Minutes from January 22, 2009	Action	3-8
	4. Public Comment – 3 minutes per speaker		
	5. Review of Service Animal Related Complaints	Information	
	6. Best Practices Document – Riders refusing to Ride with Service Animals	Discussion/ Possible action	9-10
	7. Revised Service Animal Securement Device Proposal	Discussion/ Possible Action	
	8. New Business Raised subsequent to the posting of the agenda.	Action	
	9. Adjournment	Action	

Note: *The Agenda is available in alternative formats if requested at least three (3) days prior to the meeting. Assistive listening devices are available at the meeting. Sign language interpretation and other reasonable accommodations are available, consistent with the ADA guidelines, with at least three - (3) days' notice.*

Please note that the Public Comment time is established for members of the public to address the Service Animal Subcommittee on any matter within its jurisdiction subject to appropriate decorum. All persons wishing to make public comment must complete a yellow Public Comment Form and submit it to the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee.

Public comment is limited to three (3) minutes per speaker and the total time available for public comment may be limited at the discretion of the Chairperson.

The Subcommittee will not respond during the meeting to matters raised under public comment. Pursuant to provisions of the Brown Act, no discussion or action may be taken on these matters unless they are listed on the agenda, or unless certain emergency or special circumstances exist. The staff will respond to all public comments in writing prior to the next Subcommittee meeting.

Persons wishing to speak on matters listed on the agenda will be allowed to speak for not more than three (3)-minutes immediately prior to the Subcommittee's discussion on an item. The Subcommittee may request staff to investigate and/or schedule certain matters.

MINUTES

Service Animal Subcommittee Meeting

Thursday, January 22, 2008

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

AON CENTER

707 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 900

Lower Bank Level

Los Angeles, CA 90017

1. Call to Order - Action

Chairperson, Ken Metz, convened the meeting on Thursday January 22, 2009, at 10:00 a.m. AON Building, LBL 707 Wilshire Blvd.

2. Roll Call - Action

Subcommittee members present: Ken and Pamela Metz, Bob and Ruth Ann Acosta, Abigail Vincent and Michael Arrigo

Subcommittee members absent: Patricia Lafrance

Access Services' staff members present: David Foster, Faustino Salvador, Galen Hale, Louis Burns and Evie Palicz.

Provider staff members present: N/A

Others Present: Melissa Hudson and Aisha McKinney and Belinda Zelickson

3. Minutes from June 12th 2008 Meeting - Action

Ken Metz requested motion for approval; Pam Metz made a motion to approve, Bob Acosta seconded.

4. Public Comment – 3 minutes per speaker

Public Comment Summary

Ms. Melissa Hudson

Talks about a trip she had where she received a call-out letting her know the vehicle had arrived, but once she went outside to meet the driver no one was there. Ms. Hudson called OMC and was told the driver was only a couple of minutes away. Ms. Hudson stated that she didn't get picked up until an hour later and was very frustrated with getting misleading information about her trip.

These types of incidents lead Ms. Hudson to believe that the drivers do arrive to the location on time, but some may not want to pick up a rider who has a service animal.

Mr. Foster explained that many riders, including riders without service animals experience the same type of issues. To help prevent these types of incidents, Access has added another tool (Google Earth) to help investigate these types of complaints. Google Earth allows Access the ability to tell where a driver is in relation to a rider waiting to be picked up. Google Earth has reduced the number of valid and in-valid no shows.

Ms. Aisha McKinney

Explains a trip she had where the driver arrived with two passengers already in the vehicle, once Ms. McKinney boarded the vehicle, the driver told her that he would be picking up two more passengers. After hearing the driver make those comments, Ms. McKinney was immediately concerned since there was very little room left in the vehicle after she boarded. They eventually arrived to the next pick-up location, where the driver noticed he wasn't going to have enough room in the vehicle to pick up the next passenger, the driver finally called in to dispatch to request assistance. Another vehicle was sent to the pick-up location to fulfill the trip. Ms. McKinney doesn't understand why capacity issues can't be recognized sooner to help prevent these types of events.

Mr. Foster discusses the new software that's currently being tested for operation to be implementation in the near future. Mr. Foster explains how

the software is able coordinate trips while minimizing capacity issues. The program recognizes riders with service animals or wheelchairs to help provide a vehicle that can help accommodate necessary needs.

Ms. Pamela Metz

Mentioned a trip where a passenger who boarded the vehicle complaining about her service animal. The rider continued to make inappropriate comments towards her service dog, such as “If your dog comes near me, I’m going to hurt it”. This rider continued to make these types of comments to both Ms. Metz and the driver, but the driver never made an attempt to stop the irate passenger.

Ms. Metz is concerned that some riders may not be mentally fit to handle this service. The safety of the passengers should be taken into consideration when screening riders for the service. Ms. Metz feels everyone who uses the services should understand that this is a share ride service and that includes people with service animals.

Mr. Michael Arrigo

Mr. Arrigo wanted to comment on Ms. Metz’s experience and explain how disappointed he was to hear about service animal riders being subjected to inappropriate behavior by fellow riders. This situation could be an example of fellow riders not being aware of all Access Services policies and the types of service that’s provided.

Mr. Arrigo suggested ways of trying to educate riders on the types of passengers who use the service, such as service animal riders. Most riders of the service are unaware service animals are considered passengers as well and their owners have the right to travel with them using the service. Mr. Arrigo explains how Access could use the community meeting as a way of educating riders, providing information about service animals in general and how important they are to riders that need them.

Mr. Foster discusses different outlets Access has provided on educating riders about service animals. Articles have been written in the newsletter explaining how service animals are not harmful. Also recordings have been added, so while riders are on hold they can listen to information regarding service animal riders. Along with these informational tools, the rider guide

explains in more detail about the type of service Access provides and the type of environment to expect while using the service.

Mr. Ken Metz

Mr. Metz wanted to discuss a situation a service animal rider had with his trip. The rider was in the vehicle with another passenger who said they were allergic to dog and wanted to be dropped off first. This passenger wasn't scheduled to be dropped off before the rider with the service animal, but insisted the driver drop him off first. The driver granted the rider's request and dropped him off first due to the rider's claim that he was allergic to dogs.

Mr. Metz expresses concern that this may be happening more often and explains how this isn't fair to riders who have service animals. Drivers shouldn't alter their trips for these types of reasons. This rider filed a complaint, but Mr. Metz is concern with the response process after it has been taken. As of now, postcards are sent to riders who filed a complaint as a confirmation that the complaint is or has been investigated.

Mr. Metz stated that complaint postcards are not in alternate format, such as Braille for the vision impaired. Mr. Metz would like to see a better response to complaints (provide more information on how the complaint was handle) and alternate formats of complaint responses.

Mr. Burns (Access Service Customer Service Administrator) informs the committee that Access is currently working on adding tools that can provide alternate formats when sending information to riders who may be vision or hearing impaired.

Mr. Foster discussed the new driver exam, which has recently been implemented. The driver exam is intended to insure English proficiency and knowledge of policies. New driver will be required to get a passing grade before they will be allowed to work within the service. The test list questions on what a driver should do once he or she has arrived to the pick up location.

5. Review of Service Animal Related Complaints

Capacity issues continue to be a problem for service animal riders. Sedan type vehicles sometimes arrives with 2-3 passengers already inside, making it very difficult to get both the rider and their service animal in the vehicle safely. Vehicles that are sent to pick up service animal rider should be able to accommodate these types of trips in a safe manner.

Recently, more and more service animal riders have encountered fellow riders complaining about their service animals. In some cases trips have been alter or re-routed, to help avoid conflict between passengers. The committee is concern that most riders may not be educated enough about the service and how it works. All riders should be made aware of the different types of riders and their needs, so that everyone can be respectable of one another.

The committee makes a motion to have dispatch coordinator supervisors at the next meeting to discuss ways of how to handle situations where a rider is complaining about rider's service animal.

Mr. Foster will check the availability of dispatch coordinators to attend the next Service Animal Committee Meeting.

6. Software Update

Mr. Foster wanted to mention the new software which is scheduled for testing sometime in February. Several test will be ran to insure the new software makes a smooth transition and the service continues to operate as usual.

The software will allow for ASI to centralize all scheduling, routing etc. to one system to help improve inefficiency with the service. Capacity issues should decrease over time with the new software being able to recognize riders with mobility devices, service animals or other special needs.

9. Adjournment – Action

Meeting Adjourned

Next meeting is scheduled for April 29th, 2009 at 10am located at the AON Wilshire Building, in the 6th Floor conference room.

April 27, 2009

To: Service Animal Subcommittee

From: David Foster, Project Administrator

Re: Best Practices Document – Riders Refusing to Travel with a Service Animal

Issue:

At the January 2009 Service Animal Subcommittee meeting the committee asked what procedures are in place when a driver encounters a situation where a service animal user and a non service animal user are to share a vehicle and the non service animal user is refusing to travel with the service animal.

Recommendation:

For discussion and possible action, staff has drafted a best practices document to provide guidance to the contractors in resolving these situations.

ACCESS PARATRANSIT

A SERVICE OF



Implementation Date

May 1, 2009

Riders Refusing to Travel with Service Animals

#RES.012

Please use the following procedure when a shared ride includes a service animal user and a non service animal user who refuses to share the vehicle with a service animal or requests that the driver perform the drop offs out of order so that the non service animal user can be dropped at their destination first.

In some cases the Access Services Service Animal Subcommittee reports that the person with the service animal is made to wait for another vehicle in an effort to avoid a confrontation. The non-service animal user should be the one inconvenienced by waiting for another vehicle if they refuse to travel with a service animal since Access Paratransit is a shared ride service, allergies are not a disability as outlined in the federal regulations and it's a rider's civil right to travel with their service animal. Therefore when this type of situation arises, the following best practice should be adhered to:

1. Driver contacts dispatch for guidance
2. Dispatch informs driver to advise non service animal user that they will be required to wait for another vehicle to be dispatched or they can ride with the service animal
3. If non service animal user still refuses to travel with service animal then dispatch shall instruct driver to ask the non service animal user to exit the vehicle and wait for another vehicle to be dispatched.
4. Driver transports service animal user to their destination
5. Dispatch files incident report and faxes to OMC so non service animal user can be counseled with respect to Access Paratransit policies and rules of conduct.