

access

AGENDA

Service Animal Subcommittee Meeting

Thursday, August 6, 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. Update - Identification and Testing of Securement Device Proposed	Discussion/ Possible Action	
	7. New Business Raised subsequent to the posting of the agenda.	Action	
	8. 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.

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 April 29, 2009

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

AON Building

707 Wilshire Blvd.

6th Floor, Conference #1

Los Angeles, CA 90017

1. Call to Order - Action

Chairperson Ken Metz convened the meeting at 10:05 a.m. on Thursday, April 29, 2009 at the administrative offices of Access Services located at 707 Wilshire Blvd. Los Angeles.

2. Roll Call - Action

Subcommittee members present: Ken and Pamela Metz, Bob and Ruth Ann Acosta

Subcommittee members absent: Michael Anthony Arrigo, Abigail Vincent and Patricia Lafrance

Access Services' staff members present: David Foster, Faustino Salvador, Galen Hale, Alfredo Torales and Connie Jimenez, Matthew Avancena, Arun Prem, Phillip Rice and Charace Thompson

Provider staff members present: Gino (Road Supervisor, Global)

Others Present: Keith Tomlinson (Guide Dogs for the Blind), Becky Tsurumoto (ASI Rider)

3. Minutes from January 22, 2009 Meeting – Action

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

4. Public Comment – 3 minutes per speaker

Public Comment Summary and Response

Becky Tsurumoto

Ms. Tsurumoto described a ride she took in February where a driver made a sudden stop and caused her guide dog to topple over on its side. She was unable to prevent her dog from sliding because she was riding in an older model minivan with high back seat and footrest therefore, she could not reach her dog. She expressed her support for the floor mat option to avoid her dog from sliding.

Pamela Metz

Ms. Metz also described a trip she and Mr. Metz took going from their home to Kaiser in Montebello. She stated that the driver seemed to be in a hurry and made several sudden stops causing her guide dog to slide all over the minivan. She expressed her concern regarding the amount time the drivers were allowed in between calls.

Discussion

A discussion ensued regarding the footrests in the older minivans and Mr. Foster explained that the newer minivans were redesigned with a lower back seat eliminating the need for the footrests. He also stated that the older minivans with the footrests were being replaced with the newer models.

Pamela Metz

Ms. Metz commented that she called reservations to schedule her rides going from one region to another and was advised that she needed to call the other provider to schedule her return trip. Ms. Metz stated that she called the other provider and the same operator answered her call. She questioned why she had to call back if both providers were located at the same call center.

Mr. Foster explained that the call center for the West/Central and San Gabriel regions were located at the same site however, they were separate contractors and were required to report phone statistics for each individual region. He added that sometimes a driver from the West/Central region would pickup a trip in the San Gabriel area and vice versa.

Ruth Ann Acosta

Ms. Acosta expressed her concern regarding the complaints process. She

stated that she had received postcards stating that her complaint was received, however it did not state whether the issue was resolved or the outcome of the investigation.

Mr. Foster replied that under the current complaints process, the rider would receive a postcard depending on the type of complaint. He added that in some cases, the rider would receive a more formalized response. He explained that there were some changes made to the process and per Mr. Metz's request, the process would be reviewed at the next Service Animal Subcommittee Meeting. Mr. Foster concluded his explanation by stating that the complaint information would be available online in the near future.

Bob Acosta

Mr. Acosta commended MV Transit's staff for updating his file to include a note stating to enter the condo complex for his pickup and drop off location.

Pam Metz

Ms. Metz commended San Gabriel Transit for their on-time performance and professional drivers.

Ken Metz

Mr. Metz asked Mr. Estrada, (San Gabriel Transit Road Supervisor) if the drivers were allowed to make changes to their assigned route if it seemed more reasonable.

Mr. Estrada replied that they are supposed to follow the route that was given however, if they felt that the route should be adjusted they could contact the dispatcher and request approval of a change. He reviewed the process of how drivers load and unload the trips.

Mr. Metz commended a San Gabriel Transit driver number 5063 for waiting with him until a situation involving a wrong address was cleared up.

Becky Tsurumoto

Ms. Tsurumoto stated that she had been having trouble getting the requested time for her trips and asked what the best time was to call for an early morning ride.

Mr. Foster replied that in the past, the call takers would manually block a certain amount of rides in order to distribute the calls evenly within the hour. He explained that the current software automatically offers the best available time within an hour of the requested time.

Discussion

A discussion ensued regarding the best time to call for an early morning trip and the consensus was to call later in the day to schedule a ride for early morning.

Ken Metz

Mr. Metz discussed a ride he had over the weekend scheduled to be picked up from UCLA at 6:35 p.m. He explained that at 6:50 p.m. he received a call from the dispatcher and was advised that the driver was at the location and was looking for him. The dispatcher informed him that if they had any further questions they would contact him but he did not receive another call and was not picked up until 8:50 p.m. Mr. Metz asked if there were designated stand locations for pickups at UCLA.

Faustino Salvador, (ASI Dispatch Coordinator) replied that there were 7 stand locations at UCLA for pickups and dropoffs.

Keith Tomlinson, (Guide Dogs for the Blind)

Mr. Tomlinson expressed his concern regarding the guide dogs being frightened during certain rides, which could affect their performance. He explained that these kind of incidents could reduce their working ability by 4 to 5 years. He thanked staff for addressing these issues and for the opportunity to participate in the discussion.

Mr. Metz asked Mr. Tomlinson for his opinion on the use of a leash ring or a harness to secure the dog from sliding in the vehicles.

Mr. Tomlinson stated that a harness would be a good option to consider since it would secure the dog by its body. He also expressed his support for the floor mats to prevent sliding and to reduce heat.

Mr. Metz skipped items 5 and 6 and moved onto item 7.

7. Revised Service Animal Securement Device Proposal

Mr. Foster presented staff's report. He stated that the animal securement item was presented to the Board of Directors and they expressed their support for the harness as a securement option.

DISCUSSION

A discussion ensued regarding the type of material used on the minivan floor and the issue of the floor getting too hot for the dogs to lie on during the summer. The consensus was that additional testing would be required to determine if this was an area of concern.

Mr. Foster stated at the Board of Directors meeting the Board supported the committees recommendation to provide mats to those individuals who requested them however, the harness option seemed to be a quick way to alleviate the problem. He added that TPAC expressed their concerns about choosing the floor mat option due to potential accidents that could occur such as riders tripping over the mat.

A discussion ensued regarding liability and who would be responsible for carrying the harness.

Access Services Director of Strategic Planning, Arun Prem concurred with the TPAC committee that the liability issue was an area of concern and suggested further discussion with someone more experienced in this field. He also suggested that the Service Animal Subcommittee meet with TPAC to work on this issue together.

Mr, Metz expressed his support to meet with members of TPAC and recommended that members of the CAC be included in the discussion as well.

Mr. Prem agreed with Mr. Metz suggestion that both TPAC and CAC be included in the discussion, he also felt that they can work more efficiently if they understood each other's perspectives.

Motion: Bob Acosta made a motion that the Service Animal Subcommittee work jointly with TPAC and CAC to find a solution to prevent the sliding of service animals and to present the recommendation to the Board at the

next Board of Directors meeting, Ruth Ann Acosta seconded. Motion was approved.

Mr. Metz asked Mr. Prem when the next regularly scheduled TPAC meeting was and asked if the Service Animal Subcommittee could meet with TPAC before their meeting.

Mr. Prem replied that he would add the Service Animal Subcommittee item to TPAC's agenda for discussion.

5. Review of Service Animal Related Complaints

Access Services Project Administrator, David Foster presented staff's report to the Service Animal Subcommittee by stating that for the quarter there were 7 complaints related to Service Animals. He gave a brief description of each complaint. He added that vehicle capacity continued to be problem but mentioned that the new software program should improve this issue. He described two complaints where the riders were asked to exit the vehicle in order for others passenger to be loaded. Lastly, he reviewed a complaint by Cindy Flerman where the driver asked the other passenger who was not riding with a service animal if he/she was allergic to dogs. Mr. Foster explained that this sets a false expectation to the rider and can give the impression that they can choose whether or not to travel with a service animal, which was incorrect. He stated that this was a driver training issue.

Ms. Metz described a pickup she had on March 17, 2009 from Paramount Studios to her home where the share ride passenger was travelling in an oversized wheelchair. She stated that the wheelchair was very large and took up most of the space in the minivan leaving limited room for her, Mr. Metz and their service animals.

Mr. Foster replied that in this situation the passenger's file could be reviewed to verify the size of his mobility device to make sure that it did not exceed the 30x48 guidelines. He added that the new software included a section where the wheelchair size would be noted for better routing purposes.

Discussion

Mr. Tomlinson suggested that a portion of the Driver Training Program include Guide Dog users to provide the drivers with more of a hands on approach as to how they can better assist a service animal user. He added that there were also several videos available through Project Action that would be beneficial to the training program.

Ms. Metz expressed her support for Mr. Tomlinson's suggestion to include hands on service animal interaction during the driver training program.

Mr. Foster stated that the ASI driver training program includes several service animal related questions on the exam which they must successfully pass before they are allowed to transport Access Services passengers.

6. Best Practices Document - Riders Refusing to Ride with Service Animals (#Reso.012)

Mr. Foster reviewed the staff report. He stated that at the last meeting a discussion ensued regarding shared ride passengers refusing to ride due to allergies or because they feared service animals. He stated that because of that discussion, a Best Practice Document was developed to provide guidelines for the dispatchers to follow if the situation should occur. The document will be reviewed by the operations department and the providers to ensure that it could be implemented. The title of this document is "Riders Refusing to Travel with Service Animals". The document states the following:

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 off 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 contact 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 an incident report and faxed to OMC so non-service animal user can be counseled with respect to Access Paratransit policies and rules of conduct

8. New Business Raised Subsequent to the Posting of the Agenda

Mr. Metz reminded the committee of the motion made earlier to meet with TPAC and CAC to discuss a solution that would prevent the dogs from sliding in the vehicles.

Mr. and Ms. Acosta announced that they would be out of town at the end of July.

9. Adjournment – Action

Motion: Ms. Acosta made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Acosta seconded the motion, the meeting adjourned at 11:47 a.m.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday August 6, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. at the AON Building.