



Meeting Summary
VMAAG (Valley Metro Accessibility Advisory Group) Meeting
Thursday, June 24, 2021
WebEx / 2:30 – 4:00 p.m.

VMAAG Members

Present

John Federico
Mary Hartle
Michele Stokes

Not Present

Kathryn Chandler
Katie Griffith
Howard May
Jean Moriki
Toni Young

Interpreters

Crys Lentz
Matthew Brown

Public Participants

Emanuel Caddy
DeDe Gaisthea
Randall Kidd
Mark Peterson
Hezquias Rocha

Valley Metro Contractors

Jhashe Holloway, Transdev
Latasha Williams, Transdev
Brenda Kreitinger, MTM
James Rosa, MTM

Valley Metro Staff

Moriah Bedient
Jessica Brooks
Julie Cruz
Robert Forrest
Guillermo Gonzalez
Steve Henry
Brittany Hoffman
Becky Johnson
Diana Kebbekus
Carol Ketcherside
Nichole Myers
Tyler Olson
Dane Ryals
Larry Sanchez
Lisa Scott
Wyatt Skar
Tom Young

1. **Welcome and Introductions - Wyatt Skar, Supervisor, Accessible Transit Services, Agency Business and Technical Services, Valley Metro**
2. **Member Roll Call - Lisa Scott, Administrative Assistant II, Accessible Transit Services, Agency Business and Technical Services, Valley Metro**
3. **New Members Introduction - Guillermo Gonzalez, Program Coordinator, Accessible Transit Services, Agency Business and Technical Services, Valley Metro**

Guillermo introduced the following new members joining VMAAG, as of July 1, 2021.

Randal Kidd is a teacher at the Phoenix School for the Deaf with connections in the west valley. He is very excited about participating and being an advocate for the deaf community.

Catherine Morgan is retired from the City of Glendale library, and has been a lifelong transit user. Catherine even uses it when on vacation. She will be a wonderful addition to the panel.

Kyle Straight is in the advisory group with the Northwest Extension Light Rail project and has worked with Valley Metro. Kyle is an advocate for safety and accessibility on the transit system. He is also an avid transit user and is excited about joining VMAAG.

To become a member of the VMAAG panel you must complete an application, which is reviewed by VMAAG panel members who then conduct interviews with potential candidates. Recommendations are presented to Scott Smith, Valley Metro CEO, for final approval. Currently, VMAAG has openings for new panel members: please contact Guillermo Gonzalez at 602-716-2033 or via email at ggonzalez@valleymetro.org for more information.

4. Invitation for Comments from the Public

This is the time when members of the public are invited to provide comments on any item not on the agenda.

No comments

5. Review of May 27, 2021 VMAAG Meeting Summary

It was noted the meeting summary were documented properly.

6. Valley Metro Customer Complaint Review - Diana Kebbekus, Valley Metro Customer Service Manager, Customer Service, Operations and Maintenance

Diana gave an overview comparison of the number of ADA fixed route and light rail complaints for April/May 2020 through April/May 2021.

No comments

7. Fare Collection System Modernization Project - Moriah Bedient, Valley Metro Marketing Manager, Community Relations, Communications and Strategic Initiatives Division and Tyler Olson, Valley Metro Manager, Budget and Operations Financial Controls, Finance and Procurement Division

Tyler gave an overview of the plans to update Valley Metro's fare collection system to include fare media with better payment options and better revenue tracking features. Also, the system will include incorporating Valley Metro's reduced fare process to allow for a smart card that will eliminate the need for operator and fare inspection.

Moriah gave an overview of the mobile app and explained the first release of the mobile app the ability to track bus and light rail and receive real time service alerts. The mobile app is anticipated to release on July 1, 2021. Valley Metro's marketing efforts are going to begin after the July 4th weekend. The mobile ticketing launch is September 2022 and smartcard launch May 2023.

Comments

It was encouraged that the smart card has a tactile difference to differentiate the card from other smartcards for blind customers.

Michele Stokes – I asked a whole lot of questions via email prior to the meeting, and I appreciate the responses received and it was very helpful. I really appreciate the quick turnaround in answering the questions. There was a different diagram that was shown in the response and I would recommend including that diagram in the future PowerPoints.

8. Valley Metro App & Transit Book Evolution – Jessica Parks, Valley Metro Community Outreach Program Coordinator, Communications and Strategic Initiatives Division

Jessica explained that Valley Metro will be moving away from the traditional printed transit book to a digital presence with online tools such as the Valley Metro website and the RideKick app also possibly in July the Valley Metro app. The October 2021 Transit Book will be last mass transit book printing. There will also be extensive community transit education to inform and help communities with this transition.

Comments

Wants to ensure that all disabled communities are included in the outreach.

Concerns that customer service agents will not be available during times some routes are running and is there a possibility, with the elimination of the bus book, that customer service extends their hours as well.

Michele Stokes – With regard to targeted outreach on slide 40, in addition to the blind and low vision community, there are a lot of other disability communities that could benefit from your outreach and I will put some of them, I mentioned to you, in the email and also in the chat so you can see some of them might be of value. Especially, your developmental disability organizations, because of the amount of training, including travel training that some individuals need, having something physically in the hands sometimes helps. Making sure that there is outreach to those communities, outreach to the colleges disability resource centers and also there is a whole group of ADA coordinators that get a lot of complaints and questions about accessible transit and may be another outreach group. The Arizona ADA Coalition and some of the schools that serve those with disabilities, as well as the school for deaf and blind and low vision communities. There might be some outreach that might be helpful to the disability community.

Randal Kidd – I also have others to add to the list.

Lisa Scott – I will go ahead and send this list to you and if anyone else has any more ideas of places that would benefit from this, please just email me and I will make a list for the presenters.

Emanuel Caddy – Is customer service available during the same time that the routes are running?

Diana Kebbekus – Our customer service hours are 6:00 am to 8:00 pm, Monday through Friday and 7:00 am to 7:00 pm on Saturday and 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on Sunday. So, there's a period at night that we are not available when the buses are running.

Emanuel Caddy – Mornings as well, right?

Diana Kebbekus – Yes, we start at 6:00 am.

Jessica Parks – We are still working out the specifics and the communications up front will be imperative to ensuring people have the information beforehand.

Diana Kebbekus – The other option they do have is the IVR, if they have a bus stop ID, they can get the information for the next bus time from that standpoint. These options are outside of our hours.

Emanuel Caddy – Consider how people, that do not use computers or own a smart phone, will get information when the customer service office is not open.

Jessica Parks – I think it's a good thing to consider, to find that little window. I would say that again, we want to try and make sure the system map, which has a lot of the frequency and lines listed on the back and on the front is available, so people can pick those up and have those at home. I know we have RideKick, if they are able to text, and get that information.

Michele Stokes – Along those lines, I think since a lot of the existing support, not just the book will be eliminated, you might want to think about extending your customer service time to match the service patterns. Even if it's a limited staff and you are probably not going to get a lot of calls at 6:00 am, but at least have somebody who can answer the phone because what was said is absolutely correct. There's a lot of times when we're using the bus on an emergency basis, oh my car is down I need to get to work. It may not be late at night or early in the morning it's going to be it's a barrier that can be removed by adding even limited customer service, but that that's something I think you can try out and see. But you may not be getting enough calls at 6:00 am to justify it, but at least consider.

Diana Kebbekus – I appreciate that feedback. We certainly weren't receiving much volume in the mornings or late at night. And that's obviously why the city's determined that it made more sense to cut back our hours. But we definitely can look at this. I'm curious to see how many people will use that app, because that app will be a great tool for them early in the morning and late at night as well. Thank you.

9. Title VI presentation by Robert Forrest, Valley Metro Manager, Environmental Program, Capital Development Division

Robert gave an overview of the Title VI Policies that Valley Metro must follow as a recipient of Federal funds. This policy ensures that we do not discriminate based on race, color or national origin or exclude them from participating in or being denied benefits of our system.

Comments

There was an inquiry as to whether this also pertained to disabled individuals, Title VI is specific to discrimination due to color, race or national origin.

There is concern regarding local and express fares. We are looking closely at the way that we increase fares for both local and express routes.

The question was raised about the process of analysis on proposing a fare on circulator that currently doesn't charge a fare. Neighborhood circulators are not part of the regional fare policy so that would be left strictly up to the cities.

Chat Room asked about requirements to do a similar evaluation regarding disparate impact or disproportion burden impact regarding people with disabilities?

Robert Forrest replied that Title VI is actually very specific to discriminating against somebody because of their color or their race or the national origin.

Chat Room asked is disabled individuals a protected class?

Robert Forrest – Unfortunately, no, not underneath Title VI.

Carol Ketcherside – But there are other laws to protect services that are provided the people with disabilities and that's a whole different set of requirements. That's just not the focus of this particular regulation and law that we are talking about today.

Tom Young – Thank you, Carol.

Emanuel Caddy - asked about the demographics comparing local and express routes

Robert Forrest - What we are going to be looking at how that fare increase is going to be impacting those who are purchasing that fare compared to everybody else that's within that system.

When we compare looking at the express and we know that the express buses have a much higher fare than they do for the local riders that are using the local buses. I also have to compare increasing the fares on express riders to the local riders I cannot allow the local fares to be raised at a much higher percentage than it would be for the express for the very reason that you're just referring. The fares that the express riders have are subsidized fares. That's the case in point that we had back in 2013 when we went through and did our last fare increase. We found that we were increasing the local fares at a much higher percentage and we had to go back and correct that.

John Federico – I have a question about the one slide where it mentions that the city of Phoenix and Valley Metro do the analysis for fare changes. What about a hypothetical example of a city that has a free neighborhood circulator and there's a proposal to establish a fare for that. What is the process like in that situation?

Robert Forrest – That's a very good question and I think we're kind of facing that as we speak. Valley Metro is responsible for providing a Title VI program for services that we actually provide. Any services that Valley Metro provides, we are responsible for doing any analysis whether that's service changes or fare equity changes. The City of Phoenix does the same and is responsible for what services they provide. If there is a member city that is providing their own service, that Valley Metro does not contract out we are responsible. If you go through and read through the circular, if they're not providing a certain level of service, they're basically exempt from doing some of the analysis or providing some of the policies that we're having to provide.

Carol Ketcherside – Robert, correct me if I'm wrong. I believe that neighborhood circulator is not part of the regional fare policy.

Robert Forrest – I believe that is correct.

Carol Ketcherside – So they are strictly up to the cities.

Robert Forrest – Correct. Unfortunately, that's outside of doing the analysis for making some fare changes, because it's not a part of that program. Thank you very much.

Michele Stokes – Is there a way to recommend, as opposed to require, cities do this type of evaluation on circulator routes?

Robert Forrest – I would think that they would want to do that, but we Valley Metro would not be in the position to force them to make those analyses. I think it would be the right thing to do, but they're going to go through and they're going to follow whatever FTA has in there and their circular as to who is required to do what aspect.

10. Paratransit and RideChoice Updates by Wyatt Skar, Valley Metro Paratransit & RideChoice Program Supervisor, Accessible Transit Services, Agency Business and Technical Services

Wyatt provided a comparison of the April/May 2020 post pandemic performance metrics for Paratransit and RideChoice through April/May 2021.

No comments

11. Comments by Members and Announcements – No comments

12. Next Meeting – August 26, 2021 from 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

13. Adjournment