



Mobility Center
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valleymetro.org
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Meeting Summary
VMAAG (Valley Metro Accessibility Advisory Group) Meeting
Thursday, November 17, 2022
WebEx / 2:30 – 4:00 p.m.

VMAAG Members Present

Catherine Morgan
Howard May
Kyle Straight

Not Present

Katie Griffith
Jean Moriki

Public Participants

De De Gaisthea
Cindy Garfio Inzunza
John Federico
Antionette Cooper
Barbara Paez
Rhita Bercy
Tina Sohl
Emmanuel Caddy
Debi Chatfield
Julia Meyer
Daniel Estrada
Katherine Schmidt
Joseph Bowar
Hezquias Rocha

Valley Metro Staff

Guillermo Gonzalez
Andrea Chacon
Willie Marks
Nichole Myers
Lee Ann Jones
Tyler Olson
Joseph Gregory
Carol Ketcherside
Angie DeVore
Dane Ryals
Brittany Hoffman
Erin Kuneyl
Miriam Cifuentes

Valley Metro Contractors

Brenda Kreitinger, MTM
James Rosa, MTM

- 1. Welcome and Introductions – Catherine Morgan (chair of VMAAG Steering Committee)**
- 2. Member Roll Call – Andrea Chacon, Administrative Assistant II, Accessible Transit Services, Agency Business and Technical Services, Valley Metro**
- 3. Invitation for Comments from the Public**
Members of the public are invited to provide comments on any item not on the agenda.
- 4. Review of July 28, 2022, VMAAG Meeting Summary**
Julia Meyer mentioned she will withhold her comments for the time being because she did not review the meeting minutes prior to today's meeting. She will observe for the time being.

Catherine thanked Julia for attending today's meeting.

No other comments were mentioned.

5. Fare Collection System Modernization Project – Tyler Olsen, Manager, Budget and Operations Financial Controls, Finance and Procurement Division, Valley Metro

Tyler Olson introduced himself and shared the excitement Valley Metro has regarding the new fare collection system. Tyler gave an overall update about the project as well as details about the mobile app and other upcoming phases of the project. Some of the reasons for a change are to offer better payment options for our riders with enhanced features, such as mobile ticketing and improved data collection. Revenue reports tell us how well our service is doing and have a true point of sale control. The new system will also have a great impact on recovering fares. We also wanted to phase the project in such a way that it would result in the smoothest transition for our customers moving from the legacy system that we have today to the new system.

Tyler talked about Valley Metro's current mobile app that includes real-time vehicle locations, trip planning, and other rider alerts for any service.

Tyler continued to describe the first phase, which is the mobile fare launch and Valley Metro plans on releasing that update this coming December or January. Fare readers have already been installed on the buses. Our phase 2 launch will roll out approximately 1 year later, which will have even more sales channels and benefits for our customers.

The mobile ticketing in the app will offer 1-way tickets and a day pass, these are both full and reduced fares. Vix's customer service, which is essentially another contract we have just to support this type of launch, will be right alongside us helping support customers.

Howard May asked if there will be advanced notice before we swap out the machines.

Tyler responded that there will be all sorts of service announcements. We will have the old validators and new validators working on both systems for a while. We haven't determined when the current passes will be invalid, but that will be included in the announcements as well.

Julia Meyer asked how this will affect the Platinum Pass program and hopes that fare collection will also be updated for the paratransit realm as well.

Tyler responded that the Platinum Pass will still be around with the new launch. Any Platinum Pass holder today would get new fare media to replace an existing pass because we're moving to a new vendor. The new system is built with open architecture, and we know how quickly technology changes. We wanted something that could still move with technology and not be outdated.

Tyler thanked Julia for her questions/comments.

Kyle Straight asked if security will still be checking fares on the light rail and how is that going to work.

Tyler thanked Kyle for his question and said yes, we will continue to have fare inspectors on the light rail and the streetcar beginning in May. The streetcar is free until May. The other piece with the new system is the fare inspection devices will be updated Android devices. The fare inspectors will just need a smartphone to operate which will be much easier than the devices they are using today.

Catherine thanked Tyler for his presentation.

6. Proposed April 2023 Service Changes – Joe Gregory, Manager, Service Planning, Capital and Service Development, Valley Metro

Joe Gregory introduced himself and mentioned the service planning department is currently in the month for outreach proposed changes and encouraged people to share any comments by emailing input@valleymetro.org, visit service change pages on Valley Metro's website, or call customer service.

Joe shared that the biggest change that Valley Metro is proposing in April is splitting the current route 35 and creating a new route, 36, that would travel north from the metro center transit center all the way up to the Honor Health center. This would also extend the Paratransit service area of Phoenix.

No one had any questions or comments for Joseph. Catherine thanked him for his presentation.

7. Customer Complaints Review – Willie Marks, Supervisor, Customer Service, Valley Metro

Willie reviewed the feedback on ADA, Fixed Bus, and Rail Services which entails service requests, kudos, and complaints. ADA and Light Rail Fixed Route continue to see an increase in complaints in July and August and then a decrease in September-October 2022. There is more fare vending machine complaints during the summer due to weather-related issues. Fixed Route Bus had a slight increase in complaints from July-October. Our operations managers are constantly working with operators and equipment to improve the customer experience and reduce complaints.

Willie shared that it is interesting that year over year there is a decrease in the number of complaints between July and October, however, the biggest concern recently is pass-ups.

Julia Meyer asked what "pass-up" means.

Willie explained that pass-up is when a customer is at a bus stop ready to board and for some unknown reason the operator continues the route and does not stop to board that passenger.

Julia thanked Willie and said, yes, that has happened to her before.

Willie apologized for the incident and advised the attendees to call 602-203-5000 and the agents will be able to file the reports.

Willie continued to explain that there continues to be an operator shortage and it takes time to train new operators and we're trying our best to get the number of complaints as low as possible. There has also been additional training with security to be more professional and courteous to the passengers.

No additional questions were asked.

Catherine thanked Willie for giving her report.

8. Paratransit and RideChoice Updates – Miriam Cifuentes Parker, Paratransit & RideChoice Program Supervisor, Accessible Transit Services, Agency Business and Technical Services, Valley Metro

This is Miriam's first VMAAG meeting after joining the ATS Department. Trevor did not attend the VMAAG meeting therefore, Miriam introduced herself and shared her professional background with the attendees.

Miriam addressed the Paratransit complaints which are mostly regarding on-time performance. We are currently working with our contractors to increase drivers and additional staff to help with delays as well as professionalism. We continue to work on complaint investigations and we're working on system-wide improvement with the contractors. We are focusing on operational enhancements that will bring us a better overall customer experience.

Miriam also provided an update on the RideChoice program. Based on the ridership, it seems like the program is experiencing slight growth. Trip complaints have mostly been regarding inaccuracies with addresses, payment concerns, and on-time performance. We are working with our contractor to find additional providers with wheelchair-accessible vehicles. We are hoping to secure more providers, giving everybody an opportunity for an equal type of transportation which should improve the on-time performance.

Julia asked Miriam about the RideChoice program and how it doesn't apply to Phoenix residents. Seems like it only applies to East Valley residents. Julia mentioned that Dial-a-Ride should also be part of the report to discuss all the options that are available. She mentioned that RideChoice causes confusion to residents who use Paratransit but cannot use RideChoice.

Miriam thanked Julia for her feedback and encouraged anyone to reach out to her.

Julia continued to say her biggest complaint with Paratransit is regarding payments for the Dial-a-Ride card. She said it causes confusion when tickets or the card can't be used for all Paratransit rides. She also mentioned she has had trouble with scheduling.

Andrea offered to share Miriam's contact information after the meeting for Julia to reach Miriam directly.

Andrea mentioned that a few people have their hands up and called on Tom Young.

Tom introduced himself and said Julia, I love your comment about including Dial-a-Ride in the data reports. Unfortunately, at this time, the only programs we can report on are the programs that Valley Metro manages directly. Tom mentioned he is more than happy to reach out to the City of Phoenix, the City of Glendale, and the City of Peoria to see if they would be willing to join this meeting and provide some of their statistics too. Then we can get a good picture of the entire Valley.

Guillermo chimed in regarding Julia's earlier comment about the Paratransit tickets and that Valley Metro accepts all tickets, but the City of Phoenix does not accept Valley Metro's paratransit tickets.

Julia thanked Guillermo for the clarification.

Catherine thanked Miriam for her presentation and welcomed her to the team.

Andrea reminded Catherine one more person had a question.

Cindy Inzunza said she had a general comment that the ridership in the afternoons with a regional partner is always late. Her concern is that there are people who get picked up at 3 o'clock that now don't get picked up until close to 6 o'clock. When she calls to get an ETA, she is told "we're working on it". She is concerned because it seems to be consistent in the afternoons.

Miriam thanked Cindy for sharing her concern and reminded people to continue to file complaints and suggested staying on at the end of the meeting for Andrea to share her contact information with Cindy as well.

Guillermo reminded attendees that regarding trip complaints, please give specifics: dates, and times, so we can follow up on those specific trips. Please make sure you are contacting Valley Metro directly and not the contractor.

Daniel Estrada also had a comment regarding the lack of service on fixed routes and dirty bus stops. He asked what Valley Metro is doing about the bus stops, specifically in the City of Phoenix area that is being occupied by the homeless and all the trash. He said it is supposed to be an hour wait limit at the bus stops. He is not riding the bus and knows of others as well because of the ongoing issues with the bus stops.

Willie chimed in and reminded Daniel to please call the customer service number and identify the location of the bus stop(s). As you indicated the bus stops are handled by each city. Willie said we'll need to know the location, and time of day you witnessed these incidents, and incident reports will then be reported to the appropriate city to follow through on the issue. She also said to let the agent know if you want a callback or an email response in regard to your concern.

Daniel continued to say he's called in a few incidences and has never received any follow-up. Willie said we do not solicit callbacks unless you specify you want a response by phone or email.

Daniel also said there is an issue with the Valley Metro app that sometimes shows a specific time of arrival and after a few minutes, it can say the ride was canceled or no driver was on the route.

Willie reminded him to call customer service and that we'll do our best to find another route.

Brittany Hoffman chimed in and introduced herself saying she works in Communications and wanted to follow up with Willie's comments. She explained that we are in the process of continually evaluating the app to get the most up-to-date real-time information. So, if what you're seeing on the road doesn't match the app, please give us a call. As for your safety concerns at the bus stops, Valley Metro and each of the cities are working together. If you see a crime happening at those bus stops, to please call 9-1-1 because we want to make sure your safety and the safety of our riders are our top priority.

Antionette Cooper chimed in and said it would be the Transit Enforcement Unit for the City of Phoenix.

Guillermo added that we can get Daniel's contact information to further discuss his concerns because we need to continue with the meeting.

Debi Chatfield explained she's had her hand up and has a question about RideChoice. She said her Paratransit rides have been late that she ends up canceling the ride and using her mileage plan with RideChoice. She asked if there was a way she could have mileage reimbursed because it is due to Paratransit not showing up or being excessively late. She said she depends on those miles as they are being eaten up by not being picked up by my Paratransit reservation.

Guillermo thanked Debi for her concern and asked that we get her contact information as well for our supervisors to contact her and address the issue.

Kyle Straight asked if he could ask a question. Andrea said Kyle has had his hand up for a long time. Kyle said he can wait until later because of the urgency to continue to move the meeting forward.

9. VMAAG Open Positions – Guillermo Gonzalez, Program Supervisor, Accessible Transit Services, Agency Business and Technical Services, Valley Metro

Guillermo explained that the Chair and Co-chair positions are voted on during our November meeting. Their responsibilities start at the December Steering Committee meeting. The requirements are that you need to be a member and be able to serve at least 1 full term as Co-chair. The chair and co-chair are responsible for current meetings and also run the steering committee meetings. The steering committee meeting is a meeting in which we collectively talk with all the members to find out their interests. What do they want to learn about? What concerns do they have? We will create an agenda together to best give you the information that you are interested in. It is the co-chair's responsibility to run the meetings in the absence of the chair as well as VMAAG committee meetings in the absence of the chair. Please note that the agenda, meeting summary, and meeting invite which is currently virtual. All of that's going to be coming from Valley Metro staff. We will provide all the support functions for the meeting.

Guillermo asked if there are any members that would be interested in the chair position.

Kyle Straight expressed interest.

Guillermo said we would need to have a commitment from you to attend the majority of the meetings.

Kyle said if he doesn't have any major technical issues, he will be available.

Julia asked how do you become a VMAAG member?

Guillermo explained that there is an application on Valley Metro's website and there will be an interview. We want to make sure our members are spread out throughout the Valley and not all in the same location.

Guillermo asked if anyone is willing to serve as Co-chair.

Catherine Morgan volunteered to be Co-chair.

Guillermo asked if there are any volunteers for the steering committee.

Daniel Estrada expressed interest.

Guillermo reminded Daniel that we appreciate his interest but that he needs to be a member to be part of the Steering Committee. Guillermo followed up by saying the new chair and co-chair will be updated on our webpage.

10. Comments by Members and Announcements

No additional comments or announcements were made.

Andrea reminded the few individuals to stay on after the call to make sure we have the correct contact information for follow-up purposes.

11. Next VMAAG Meeting – January 26, 2023, from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m.

12. Next Steering Committee Meeting – December 8, 2022, 2:30 – 3:30 p.m.
*VMAAG Members Only

13. Adjournment