

## Paratransit Advisory Committee (PAC)

### May 24, 2016 Meeting Minutes

**Meeting commenced at 5:25 p.m.**

**PAC Attendees:** Lyudmila Demikhovskaya, David H. DePorte, Edward S. Friedman, Ketrina Hazell, Mindy Jacobsen, John Moynihan, Marisa Mia Ragozino, Ellen Rubin, Tucker B. Salovaara, RueZalia Watkins, Stan Weinblatt

**Absent:** Thomas J. Coppola, Jean Ryan, Ken Stewart, Sharada Veerubhotla

**NYC Transit Staff Attendees:** Brandon Anderson, Thomas J. Charles, Thomas Chin, Michael Cosgrove, Donna Fredericksen, Eddie Griffith, Lynda Edmond, Patricia Ibarguen, Michael Levy, Steven Lo Piano, Denise Ann McQuade, Tejpal Prajapati, Cassandra Lubin-Richards, Russell Schmid, Kenneth Stuart, Chantal Sealy Walker

**Guests:** Quemuel Arroyo (DOT), Carlos Duque (MOPD) and Alex Elegudin (TLC), Frank Camp (GCS)

**Introductions** – David H. DePorte, PAC Chair

Mr. DePorte reminded the PAC and attendees that since he is blind he would appreciate if those present would introduce themselves and provide their titles. He also asked PAC members and attendees to raise their hands and ask to be acknowledged. Brandon Anderson, a Paratransit staff member, kept track of those wishing to be recognized for Mr. DePorte.

**Announcements**-Vice President Thomas J. Charles

Vice President Charles announced that he was retiring and introduced his replacement Steve LoPiano. Vice President LoPiano informed the committee that he had been the General Manager for Brooklyn Division and had 40-years of experience in transportation and had worked previously in Paratransit. Vice President LoPiano further stated he had spent a lot of time mentoring with Vice President Charles and would do his best to continue moving Paratransit forward.

PAC members expressed astonishment and sadness at his departure and thanks for his hard work and service improvements during his 10 years with Paratransit. Mr. DePorte reminded PAC members that they would be limited to one question or one comment at a time.

**I. Approval of Minutes** – PAC Chair David H. DePorte

Mr. DePorte called for the approval of the March 15, 2016 minutes and asked if PAC members had any corrections or changes to the minutes. Hearing none, Ellen Rubin moved to approve minutes and Stan Weinblatt seconded the motion. PAC Liaison Denise Ann McQuade informed the new PAC members that they should abstain from voting since they were not present at the March 15 meeting. Minutes were approved unanimously with five abstentions: Edward S. Friedman, Ketrina Hazell, Marisa Mia Ragozino, Tucker B. Salovaara, RueZalia Watkins.

**II. AAR Service Report** – Vice President Thomas J. Charles

- Vice President Charles said in view of the City Comptroller's Audit he would be referencing the Audit when reporting on the February, 2016 statistics compared to January 2016 statistics.
- The number of AAR registrants increased from 143,670 in January 2016 to 145,080 in February 2016, a 1.0% increase. However, the number of registrants increased 5.5% from 137,456 in February 2015 to 145,080 in February 2016.
- Trips completed increased from 480,278 in January 2016 to 504,463 in February 2016, a 5.0% increase. There was a 9.1% increase in February 2015 completed trips 462,191 compared to 504,463 completed trips in February 2016.
- Carrier no-shows in January 2016 were 782 and in February 2016 there were 756, a 3.3% decrease. Carrier no-shows in February 2015 were 1,314 compared to 756 no shows in February 2016, a 42.5% decrease.

- Total No-shows (carrier, customer and no-fault) in January 2016 were 11,558 and in February 2016 were 11,338, a 1.9% decrease. Total no shows in February 2015 were 12,659 compared with 11,338 in February 2016, a 10.4% decrease.
- On-time Performance (OTP) increased from 93.2% in January 2016 to 93.3% in February 2016, a 0.1% increase. There was a 3.5% increase in February 2015 OTP 89.8% compared to the February 2016 OTP of 93.3%.
- Appointments on-time increased from 86.0% in January 2016 to 88.0% in February 2016. The percentage of on-time appointments was 82.0% in February 2015 compared to 88.0% in February 2016.
- Average Reservation answering speed was 36 seconds in January 2016, 26 seconds in February 2016, and 50 seconds in February 15.
- Average Reservation talk time was 4 minutes 33 seconds in January 2016, 4 minutes 44 seconds in February 2016 and 4 minutes 28 seconds in February 2015.
- Average Travel Service answering speed was 12 seconds in January 2016, 16 seconds in February 2016 and 35 seconds in February 2015.
- Average Travel Services talk time was 2 minutes 21 seconds in January 2016 and 2 minutes 23 seconds in February 2016 and 2 minutes and 19 seconds in February 2015.
- Complaints were 2,144 in January 2016 and 2,416 in February 2016, a 12.7% increase. Comparing 2,598 complaints in February 2015 to 2,416 complaints in February 2016 there was a 7.0% decrease.
- There were 3.26 complaints per 1,000 boarding's in January 2016 and 3.48 complaints per 1,000 boarding's in February 2016, a 6.7% increase. Comparing 4.11 complaints per 1,000 boarding's in February 2015 and 3.48 complaints per 1,000 boarding's in February 2016, complaints decreased by 15.3%. The first quarter of 2016 monthly data indicates that complaints are trending downward.

- Commendations were 584 in January 2016 and 695 in February 2016, an increase of 19.0%. Commendations were 421 in February 2015 compared to 695 in February 2016, a 65.1% increase.
- Total boarding's were 657,980 in January 2016 and 694,394 in February, 2016 a 5.5%% increase. In February 2015, total boarding's were 631,880 compared to the total boarding's of 694,394 in February 2016, an increase of 9.9%. The increase in Boarding's includes registrants, PCAs and guests. PCAs boarding's have increased due to the aging of registrants who are in need of personal care services.
- AVL M has reduced the number of customer no-shows 40%.
- Our ability to track and have dispatchers make decisions about routes have reduced the number of trips with no-shows to 20%. A significant downward trend continues.
- The Comptroller alluded to possible manipulation by carriers. We have a paper trail and AVL M documenting our trips. There are areas that have skyscrapers and tunnels where AVL M does not work. Carriers reconcile from paper manifests when AVL M didn't have information. This provides a parallel system.
- Transportation companies are open to Transportation Network Company Apps. UBER in four years has taken significant share of trips in the city.
- Appointments on time are a very aggressive feature. We ask our customers to give appointments.
- Recently, we decreased our speed from 8 miles per hour to 4 miles per an hour.
- PAC had asked if the Mayor's lowering city speed program (Vision Zero) affected our trips. We responded that we didn't think it would but have found out that it did.

### **PAC Comments**

Edward S. Friedman asked if we get a report if the driver is not at the pickup location. Vice President Charles responded, "Yes." There has to be an explanation (an outcome). He clarified that AVL M shows whether a vehicle was at a location. Ken Stuart, Customer Relations Officer, responded we do have an audit trail.

Mia Ragozino asked if the 30-minute window is included in the measurement. Thomas Charles responded yes.

Mr. DePorte asked if the Comptroller's Audit was public and Vice President Charles responded, "yes."

### **III. Paratransit Topic** – Vice President Thomas J. Charles

E-Hail Apps that will connect us to taxi. We are working with TLC. The contract for E-Hail will be awarded in 2017 and it will allow our customers to connect to Green or Yellow Taxis.

Broker cited in the Comptroller's Report. We asked Brokers to incorporate technology into their vehicles that allows tracking. Sixty percent of drivers have this technology but drivers are resistant to it. Vice President Charles said in his experience franchisees don't get full cooperation from their drivers. Throughout the country ADA advises that Transit properties work to encourage outreach to car services. It is a work in progress.

(PAC member, John Moynihan, called in and announced that he had been delayed at his doctor's office and apologized for being late.) Mr. DePorte took a moment to inform the new members that John Moynihan is a long-time member of the committee who represents Yonkers and has had health problems preventing him from attending recent meetings. On behalf of the PAC, Mr. DePorte welcomed his return. Mr. DePorte's remarks were echoed by the rest of the PAC and Paratransit staff.

Twenty percent of trips are performed by car service. We still believe in the effort to engage this industry. Our brokers are currently working out their own Apps. This, too, is a work in progress. As for drivers, Vice President Charles stated he has seen big changes in attitude. These Apps. allow customers to rate the drivers performance and drivers rate customers and this information stays in the Apps. records. Car service companies are seeing that they need to incorporate this technology in cars and taxis. We hope we can encourage livery companies

to do the same. On Staten Island, livery companies are still not incorporating the new technology. We are looking at how we can improve livery performance. City commuting is increasing with Apps., E-Hail and streaming livery technology and in bringing in technology for blind and low-vision customers. As this competition increases, it will spur car service and livery to adopt the new technology. The Comptroller's office asked us to decrease Broker service. However, we are still committed to it.

Mindy Jacobsen asked if Paratransit is going to be working with taxi drivers and companies. It seems guide dog laws are not followed and it will be difficult for guide dog users to take taxis unless these laws are followed. Individuals who are blind and those who are guide dog users usually get stiffed by taxi drivers. Ms. Jacobsen said she hopes Paratransit can get real improvement for individuals who are blind and those who are guide dogs users. Vice President Charles stated NYC taxis drivers are getting a premium from the TLC for taking blind and those who are guide dog users and the TLC is investing in driver training.

Ellen Rubin asked when you talk about technology are you talking about Smartphones? Vice President Charles responded "yes" but we are working with Apps. at our base. We are working with E-Hail with Yellow and Green taxis and Uber. We will dispatch on behalf of our customers. In the far future, customers will be able to use their phones and bill us. Customers will still have to book through AAR.

Luda Demikhovskaya stated that people don't take taxis every day. Authorizing taxis could be very expensive. Vice President Charles responded we have brought this up. We have to find the right balance – 30% penetration in taxis. Since Transcare closed down late in February 2016, we found that one of our brokers had accessible Green Taxis on E-Hail. They will be dispatched by us and the driver won't know if a customer is from AAR. This is the same model we used with the Prepaid Yellow Taxi Pilot Program.

Tucker B. Salovaara stated that he had a driver tell him that he worked for AAR and that he could be his personal driver.

Mia Ragozino stated that she has reservations about Uber for people with intellectual disabilities. New York City is not moving to make Uber drivers their employees.

Someone stated drivers working for Uber still have to be certified by NYC.

Stan Weinblatt stated he was upset by the City Comptroller's negative audit because people believe what they read.

Vice President Charles said his strongest reaction was to the statement that we had a culture of uncaring. Vice President Charles didn't object to the audit being critical of his management but that we didn't care was untrue.

Quemuel Arroyo asked how have we been using 1700 UBER trips? Vice President Charles responded, we have drivers and vehicles from UBER for our testing now. We do this centrally because consumers won't have credit cards or cell phones. This is not a pilot but a proof of concept. UBER is the most responsive to it.

Quemuel Arroyo asked how have we been using 1700 vehicles. We have 65,000 drivers and 1700 vehicles, Lyft and Uber for our testing now. Can we do this centrally because consumers won't have credit cards or cell phones. This is not a pilot but a proof of concept. Uber is the most responsive to it.

Mr. Friedman asked if we had a sense of how many people use borough to borough trips. Vice President Charles said 75,000 taxi trips on an average month; 2,000 Taxi authorizations a day. We don't always get receipts turned in but now we see prepaid as the way to go.

Ms. Jacobsen took a moment to tell Vice President Charles that his latest endeavor to reach out to the taxi, car service and livery service in an effort to expand and improve transportation options for Paratransit customers was just one more initiative in a long string of efforts that he has tried to improve our service from a 2-day reservation period to listening to our needs and trying to meet them.

#### **IV. PAC Topic - Tejpal Prajapati**

AVLM System Slide Presentation

Carrier Dispatchers see vehicles on map on a screen and the vehicles are seen in different colors:

Green means the vehicle is running on time

Yellow means vehicle is delayed

Fuschia/Red means a 30-minute delay

Vehicle #

Last GPS  
Carrier  
Manifest/Route  
Vehicle Type

Vice President Charles explained when dispatchers see Fuchsia/Red, they need to take action. We've brought in carrier dispatchers and they have been trained. They have made 3% improvements. This is a mature system and it needs to be improved. Ninety-seven percent of our vehicles were equipped with rigid tablets. It will be easier for us if tablets standup.

MDT- Driver navigation screen looks for optimal route. Your GPS can take special instructions from you. Our system looks at entire trips on route. Our system considers other trips on system when making changes. We perform 6.3 million trips per year.

Mia colors are read by the computer. Vice President Charles, "Yes."

Mr. Salovaara stated that he can't understand what Mr. Prajapati said. Can customers look at map when they use Manage My Trip? Vice President Charles responded, "No."

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) give notification over customer's phones or computers of a vehicles arrival in approximately 15 minutes.

Mr. Friedman asked how often does the system get updated? An update will increase this to 30 seconds.

Mr. DePorte asked if the flashback function can tell when a vehicle arrived and left? Ken Stuart, Customer Relations Officer, responded, "Yes, we can."

Ms. Demikhovskaya said she had a question and comment. Does central dispatch (Travel Services #5) see their routes? Vice President Charles responded our carriers dispatchers can see their own routes. Travel Services sees all the carriers' routes. Ms. Demikhovskaya said her driver came close to her pickup time due to AVL. Vice President Charles responded that AVL takes the best route.

Ms. Ragozino asked are we putting out a response to the Comptroller's Audit. Vice President Charles stated a response was prepared and it has to go through a giant approval process.

Ms. Watkins asked, "How do you collect data that says you don't care. Years ago there was a hearing about AAR and it was data driven. I hope you will respond to this Audit and put the numbers in their proper context."

Mr. DePorte requested an update on our response to the Audit.

Mr. DePorte tabled: New Business item 1) Why is information provided by Travel Services' Customer Care Agents Often Inaccurate? for the July 19, 2016 PAC Meeting.

Mr. DePorte covered item 2) PAC Topic for July 19, 2016 meeting.

Mr. DePorte explained how the PAC members choose an Agenda Topic. Originally, members participated in a list serve and he was the first list serve operator. Mr. DePorte made two suggestions on how members could select an Agenda Topic: 1) By conference call where members will propose and discuss suggested topics. 2) Members can email suggested Agenda topics and the topic that has the most support will be the next PAC Agenda Topic.

RueZalia said she preferred a conference call. No other members objected to a conference call.

Mr. DePorte asked members to email him with suggested dates for the conference call no more than three weeks from now.

Mr. Weinblatt spoke highly of Vice President Charles tenure as our vice president.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 PM