

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM

ACCESSIBLE SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)

July 18, 2024

[Clerk's note: Except where noted, public, staff and Committee member comments are paraphrased. The full comment can be heard by reviewing the recording at the [MTS website](#).]

1. **Roll Call**

Chair George Gastil called the Accessible Services Advisory Committee meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. A roll call sheet listing Accessible Services Advisory Committee member attendance is attached as Attachment A.

2. **Public Comments**

There were no Public Comments.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

Committee Member Debbie Marshall moved to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2023, MTS Accessible Services Advisory Committee meeting. Committee Member Zaccary Bradt seconded the motion, and the vote was 10 to 0 in favor with Todd Lordson, Samantha Stephan, Irene Santiesteban, David Marino, and Rose Napoleon absent.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. **PRONTO Online Reduce Fare Application Update (Israel Maldonado and Amanda Denham)**

Israel Maldonado, MTS Director of Fare Technology and Operations, presented on: the updates for the PRONTO Online Reduced Fare Application. Mr. Maldonado explained that MTS launched PRONTO three (3) years ago and at the time all reduced fare requests could only be done in person. MTS now offers customers an online option for reduced fare requests. Since December 5, 2023, over 23,000 accounts have been verified online. In order to help customers with verification, MTS has extended the temporary expiration date to September 20, 2024 for any card tapped once in the last 18 months. Amanda Denham, Director of Support Services, provided an overview of how this has affected Support Services. It has allowed PRONTO to hire four (4) more full time employees bringing the average wait time from three (3) minutes to 35 seconds. While some online applications are auto approved with a government ID, others must be manually reviewed by staff for approval. A survey was conducted with feedback of 700 responses where 71% stated the online application was somewhat or very easy to use. There were a few challenges that have already been addressed with an outcome of 75% of customers stating it took less than 15 minutes to complete the online application. Mr. Maldonado discussed next steps where institutions will be able to provide reduced fare to their clients without needing to involve MTS, expiration emails will go out 30, 60, and 90 days prior to expiration, and continuation of the monitoring of results to adjust as needed.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Debbie Marshall asked what institutions were being referred to and who they would be granted to. Ms. Denham stated they are part of the PRONTO Partners Program that provides passes on a monthly basis to people within their accounts. In this program, employers are able to confirm their employees eligibility without having to interact with the online application or have a PRONTO customer support agent assist them.

Committee Member Zaccary Bradt asked if we were able to capture the reasons behind the online abandonment rates. Mr. Maldonado stated that while the survey addressed some of these reasons, staff is currently working with vendors on ways to obtain this data. Committee Member Zaccary Bradt asked if schools will be able to be part of the Partnership Program. Ms. Denham stated that staff is currently working with various districts now and will have them involved in the testing phase as the institutional website is developed.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

5. MTS Access Update (Charles Posejpal)

Charles Posejpal, MTS Manager of Paratransit and Minibus, introduced himself and Brianne Graham as the new MTS Access team and provided an update on MTS Access Services. He discussed the 42% ridership increase from FY23, the 5% improvements of complaints from FY23, and while the eligibility numbers are down, the numbers in the past four (4) months have increased. Transdev has also increased their on-time performance times and driver pool. He confirmed the Youth Opportunity Pass (YOP) program has been extended to June 30, 2026, and this includes MTS Access certified clients. He lastly stated that MTS Access is also included in the free Coronado shuttle that runs until September 2, 2024.

Public Comment

There were no Public Comments

Committee Comment

There were no Committee Comments.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

6. Fixed-Route and Trolley Update (Brent Boyd and Bryan Killian)

Bryan Killian, MTS Manager of Transportation Communications & Technology, presented on Bus updates. He informed the Committee of the agency's weekly bus operator hiring events, trying to bolster driver numbers due to staffing shortages. He talked about detours due to construction scheduling to the upcoming Pride Parade and the Blue Line bus bridge. Brent Boyd, MTS Manager of Rail Planning and Performance, presented on Trolley updates. He informed the committee that the Copper Line was approved by the MTS Board. He also discussed the Blue Line bus bridge for the weekend, and the Comic-Con special event line and increased ridership coming up next weekend.

Public Comment

Rene Rodriguez – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Rene expressed frustration with the driver shortage and suggested for MTS to analyze data to have higher quality rides.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Hermes Castro acknowledged the lack of staffing and asked staff what are the biggest driver hiring obstacles. He also asked if there were individuals with disabilities that are driving for MTS. Mr. Posejpal stated that Transdev has been increasing their driver numbers and offer incentives to their employees. He was unsure if Transdev currently has any employees with disabilities but reiterated that there is no discrimination as long as they are able to perform the functions of the job. Committee Member Hermes Castro offered to connect offline about the youth program they have for kids getting their licenses and possibly helping get them employment and increase staffing. Mike Wygant, MTS Chief Operating Officer, acknowledged the staffing issue and the agency's continuous initiatives to attract more drivers. He explained the impact to the Paratransit operations are due to reduction in rides during COVID-19. Mr. Wygant welcomed any partnerships that could assist with driver staffing.

Committee member Debbie Marshall asked what is being instituted to help retain drivers if positions are difficult to fill. She asked for trends in retention and loss of drivers, in an attempt to fill the gap. Mr. Wygant noted employee outreach programs, along with Board authorized raises. He also informed the Committee that MTS invests in activities to bolster morale.

Chair Gastil acknowledged the issue of inflation and industry competition for drivers transporting goods versus people.

Committee Member Zaccary Bradt wanted to know about the agency's plans to utilize SB125 funding to bring back additional service. Mr. Wygant confirmed that Operations is working with Planning to add service.

Committee member Zaccary Bradt asked if the contactless payment would be marketed to Comic-Con attendees. Ms. Denham confirmed there would be a marketing campaign coming out tomorrow for contactless payments.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

OTHER ITEMS

7. Committee Member Communications

Chair Gastil reported he attended the California Association for Coordinated Transportation (CALACT) conference in San Diego back in April celebrating 40 years of CALACT.

Committee member Christian Hernandez stated they are in their Ride Facilitating Access to Coordinated Transportation (FACT) program but due to low funding they are limited to the number of trips they can provide, so they are using MTS, North County Transit District (NCTD), and other nonprofits as referral sources. FACT is hoping to re-attain funding, in the meantime, they will continue to refer to other agencies to fill the gap.

8. Next Meeting Date

The next Accessible Services Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for September 12, 2024, at 1:00 p.m.

9. Adjournment

Chair George Gastil adjourned the meeting at 1:39 p.m.

/S/George Gastil
Chairperson
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

/S/Brianne Graham
Committee Clerk
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

Attachment: A. Roll Call Sheet

SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM
ACCESSIBLE SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC) MEETING

ROLL CALL

MEETING OF (DATE): July 18, 2024

CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 1:01pm

ADJOURN: 1:39pm

COMMITTEE MEMBER		ALTERNATE		ORGANIZATION	PRESENT (TIME ARRIVED)	ABSENT (TIME LEFT)
Voting Committee Members						
George Gastil (Chair)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	ASAC Chair	1:01pm	1:39pm
Letty Zuno	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hermes Castro	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Access to Independence	1:01pm	1:39pm
Christian Hernandez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Arun Prem	<input type="checkbox"/>	FACT (CTSA)	1:01pm	1:39pm
Debbie Marshall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vacant	<input type="checkbox"/>	State Council on Developmental Disabilities	1:01pm	1:39pm
Todd Lordson	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jorge Malone	<input type="checkbox"/>	San Diego Regional Center	ABSENT	ABSENT
Samantha Stephan	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kimberly Taylor	<input type="checkbox"/>	San Diego Center for the Blind	ABSENT	ABSENT
Zaccary Bradt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Benjamin Gemblor	<input type="checkbox"/>	SANDAG	1:01pm	1:39pm
Alyssa Ahn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Daniela Turner	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caltrans	1:01pm	1:39pm
Jana Schwartz	<input type="checkbox"/>	Melissa Hernandez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	County of San Diego AIS	1:01pm	1:39pm
Irene Santiesteban	<input type="checkbox"/>	Christine Moore	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paratransit Consumer	ABSENT	ABSENT
David Marino	<input type="checkbox"/>	Eugenia Kainz	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paratransit Consumer	ABSENT	ABSENT
Rose Napoleon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rene Rodriguez	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fixed Route Consumer	ABSENT	ABSENT
Tarrence Lewis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Walter Castillo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fixed Route Consumer	1:01pm	1:39pm
Monique Ball	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wendy Merritt	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deaf Community Services	1:01pm	1:39pm
Kacie Rodvill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Betsy Knight	<input type="checkbox"/>	County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services	1:01pm	1:39pm

COMMITTEE CLERK: /S/Brianne Graham