

Existing System and Potential Future Enhancements

Technical Enhancements to Operational System

G-Tel

When Metro announced the intention to latch the turnstiles at rail stations persons in the disabled community raised concerns that some people with disabilities who previously were able to access the trains would not be able to tap to gain access. In consultation with the disabled community The Office of Civil Rights and Wayside Systems developed a G-Tel, a hands free system that allows an individual with a disability to contact the Rail Operations Control center in order to have the accessible turnstile remotely opened. Metro is the only transit operation with such a system designed to facilitate the entry into our gated stations by persons with disabilities.

New Bus Design

The Office of Civil Rights and Operations jointly worked on redesigning the interior of new buses to make them more convenient and safer for persons with disabilities and older adults. Among the features now incorporated in every bus are:

- Q-Pod wheelchair securement systems
- Rear facing wheelchair positions that do not require securement
- Blue floor to demarcate areas for wheelchairs older adults and persons with disabilities
- Relabeling of priority seating areas as either reserved for wheelchairs or reserved for older adults and persons with disabilities
- Use of special custom fabric to better identify reserved seating areas
- Addition of a single flip up seat to accommodate walkers in addition to two wheel positions

Tactile Pathways & Directional Bars

Metro is the first U.S. transit agency to adopt the practice of installing tactile pathways to lead the visually impaired from the property line to a safe location on the train platform adjacent to where the doors on the train will open. This system is in general use in many countries around the world and increases safety and convenience for the blind, persons with visual impairments and older adults who may find it difficult to navigate stations. The tactile pathways are being installed on the recently opened Expo and Foothill extensions and all future rail lines. In addition all stations on the network are being retrofit by Operations with direction bars which identify where the car doors will be located when the train pulls into the station. This makes using the system more convenient and safer for the visually impaired.

Wayfindr

Wayfindr is an innovative new way finding system that uses Bluetooth beacons and a smartphone app to help the visually impaired navigate complex terminals such as Union Station or 7th and Metro Center. This is a joint project of the Office of Civil Rights and

Countywide Planning (Union Station) The system was developed by the Royal London Society for Blind and funded by Google. The system is currently being designed and installation in Union Station should be complete in 2017. It will be the first such system in a major bus and rail station in the United States.

Enhanced Bus Operator Training/Accessibility Fairs

In 2013 Metro Operations expanded the training provided to all bus operators to ensure that they are knowledgeable about the requirements of the ADA, that they know proper wheelchair securement technique and are sensitive to the needs of persons with disabilities. Refreshers are now provided every year. In addition the Office of Civil Rights now offers a program of Accessibility Fairs that visit each division to reinforce sensitive issues, knowledge of ADA responsibilities and wheelchair securement skills. The Accessibility Fair includes an agency wide wheelchair securement competition with prizes and trophies to recognize superior skills.

Mystery Rider Program

The Mystery Ride program managed by the Office of Civil Rights has been enhanced and expanded in recent years to ensure that a statistically valid check is made on the ADA compliance of our bus operations. The observers report on items such as courtesy towards individuals with disabilities, use of the ramp and kneeling features, wheelchair securement and handling of service animal requests. Bus operators may receive commendations, counseling or discipline based on the observations of the Mystery Riders.

New Light Rail Vehicles

The Kinkisharo light rail vehicles now being delivered to Metro incorporate several new features designed to improve accessibility and usability for persons with disabilities and older adults. These include designation of reserved seating pairs (rather than individual seats) for persons with disabilities or older adults, four positions for persons in wheelchairs instead of two with separate areas for bikes and luggage, blue colored floor to denote reserved areas for persons in wheelchairs.

Next Bus Information

Metro has been installing Next Bus signage at major bus stops such as Patsaouras Plaza to inform passengers about the next bus arrival times. In addition to the visual information Metro ITS has designed a system to also provide a 'push to listen' feature which allows persons with visual impairments to also obtain this real time schedule information.

Improved Visual Information Systems

The Transit Passenger Information System (TPIS) in Red and Purple Line was recently upgraded by ITS. The upgrade included making the text larger and ensuring sufficient color contrast was provided to make the message more legible and easier to read by persons with visual impairments and older adults.

Hands-free Intercoms

Metro currently provides emergency and passenger information intercoms at all rail stations. The current units are ADA compliant, but do require a patron to use their hands to physical push a button located up to 48 inches above the floor to activate the system. A new intercom unit was specified by the Office of Civil Rights and designed by Creative Services. It is now being installed in new stations and includes a hands free activation system for persons with disabilities. Someone in a wheelchair or with limited reach range can now bump a 4" X 30" kick plate to activate the intercom and seek assistance.

Braille Stops & Fleet Numbers

Neither the ADA nor California Title 24 requires transit agencies to provide Braille information at bus stops, or Braille fleet numbers on board vehicles. Stops and Zones has installed Braille stop information at 500 of the busiest bus stops and all bus and rail vehicles have fleet numbers posted in Braille to help visually impaired customers report complaints or commendations.

ADA Complaint Process

Since 2011, the OCR, Customer Relations, Operations and ITS have worked together to improve the handling of complaints from passengers with disabilities. Improvements have been made in the receipt, classification, recording, investigation, oversight and notification of complaints involving persons with disabilities.

Discounted Fare Programs

Federal Department of Transportation regulations require that Metro provide half price transit fares during off peak periods to older adults and persons with disabilities. As a result of funding obtained through local propositions Metro has significantly exceeded this minimum discount required by the Federal government. Currently older adults and persons with disabilities receive an 80% discount on single cash off peak fares, and a 57% discount on cash peak fares. In addition an 80% discount is provided for monthly passes and a 65% discount is offered on day passes which are valid at all times.

New Lighting Criteria

In response to concerns raised by the community regarding the level of lighting in new rail stations the Office of Civil Rights engaged a lighting consultant to develop Metro lighting design criteria. The design criteria are being applied to new stations and rehabilitation projects to ensure that the lighting types and levels are designed to minimize issues for persons with visual impairments.

Rancho Los Amigos Shuttle Service

The regular Metro bus routes serving the Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center in Downey are among the most popular services in the region for individuals using mobility devices. In order to respond to this demand for additional accessible capacity for mobility devices, Metro partners with Access Services to provide a dedicated shuttle service with a small bus capable of transporting up to five persons in mobility devices at the same time. The service operates Monday through Friday on a

regular schedule between the Metro Rail Willowbrook (Rosa Parks) Station on the Green and Blue lines, and Rancho Los Amigos, thus relieving the demand for accessible spaces on Metro routes 117 and 120.

Outreach Enhancements to Operational System

Pilot Mobile Customer Service Centers

Metro Customer Programs and Services have launched a Mobile Customer Service Center. The Mobile Center will allow Metro to visit drop in centers, senior centers or senior residences in order to make it easier and more convenient for older adults and persons with disabilities to sign up for reduced fare TAP cards.

Senior Transportation Expo

The first annual Senior Transportation Expo was held at Union Station on October 11, 2016. About 300 older adults were invited to attend and hear presentations, and visit displays booths from Metro, municipal transit operators, Access Services and other transportation providers. The presentations and displays covered tips on using transit and alternative transportation systems. Metro had a new bus and the mobile customer service center on display. Signups for reduced fare TAP cards were also available.

Abilities Expo

Each year the Office of Civil Rights joins with Access Services to provide a large presence at the Abilities Expo. The two agencies jointly staff a booth providing information on services available, installation of wheelchair tether straps and the staff provides answers to questions and concerns regarding the use of public transportation for persons with disabilities.

On the Move Riders Club

The Office of Civil Rights initiated development of the On the Move Riders Club to provide travel training for older adults. Management of the program was turned over to the Community Relations program since their mission is more closely aligned with the promotion of outreach in the community.

New Passenger Orientation

The Office of Civil Rights and Operations developed a program to introduce transit to riders who have recently become disabled. Metro staff and a bus visit the Rancho Los Amigos Hospital and the Braille Institute to provide an opportunity for individuals to practice boarding and alighting from actual Metro buses and receive information about using Metro. It also provides an excellent opportunity for operators to become familiar with different types of mobility devices and individuals with different types of disabilities.

Disabled Community Outreach

The Office of Civil Rights works with various groups including the Regional Centers, Service Dog Training Organizations and the Abilities Expo to bring Metro to the community. The events provide an opportunity for members of the disabled community to meet with staff from Metro to discuss their mobility address and learn about the

programs and services provided by Metro. Metro also facilitates the training of service dogs aboard our bus and trains in support of riders with disabilities.

Videos and Video Vignettes

In FY 2016 the Office of Civil Rights produced three videos and 19 video vignettes describing the accessibility features of our system and how to use them. The videos and vignettes are available on Metro.net and 2,500 copies of the content on DVDs were distributed free of charge to agencies and community groups that work with passengers with disabilities.

Potential Future Initiatives

In addition to the many enhancements that have been introduced since 2011 the Office of Civil Rights in conjunction with other departments at Metro is pursuing several additional initiatives to improve the accessibility of our system for persons with disabilities and older adults. These initiatives include:

Operational

Hands-free Elevators

In order to access underground or elevated it necessary for patrons in wheelchairs to utilize elevators. Person with limited or no use of their arms or hands may be unable to push the call and control buttons on elevators. Metro is investigating the installation of a hands free system to call the elevator and automatically direct the car to the appropriate floor. This system would improve the independence of our patrons with disabilities.

Stronger Signage for Reserved (Priority) Seating

Federal Department of Transportation regulations currently require transit agencies to identify areas in buses and railcars for priority seating for persons in wheelchairs, older adults and individuals with disabilities. The federal regulations do not mandate that passengers yield these seats when requested to accommodate persons with disabilities or older adults. In 2014 the California legislature passed Senate Bill 413 which enabled transit agencies to post signage indicating that yielding the seats is mandatory. Metro is monitoring the success of agencies in San Diego, San Diego and Sacramento that have implemented this rule. A recommendation may be brought forward if other California agencies are able to report improved compliance with the priority seating requirements.

Mandatory Wheelchair Securement

Metro is the only major transit property in California that does not require mandatory wheelchair securement on board transit buses. Every other major transit property in California including Santa Monica Transit, Foothill Transit and Long Beach Transit in Los Angeles County require wheelchairs to be secured before the bus leaves the stop. The use of seatbelts must remain optional based on the choice of the passenger. The Office of Civil Rights is working with Operations to implement mandatory forward facing wheelchair securement when about 70 percent of the bus fleet is equipped with Q-Pods or other similar systems that offer fast and easy securement. Mandatory forward facing securement will significantly improve the safety of passengers using wheelchairs and

other passengers on board Metro buses. New buses are also being equipped with rear facing wheelchair positions that allow passengers to safely ride without securement in the rear facing position if they prefer.

Further Bus Enhancements

The Office of Civil Rights is working with Operations to ensure that additional accessibility improvements are included in the interior design of future bus acquisitions. The current options being evaluated include:

- Knurled stanchions located adjacent to reserved seating for persons with disabilities and older adults so that persons with visual impairments identify the location.
- The Office of Civil Rights is recommending that a limited number of new buses be purchased with more than two wheelchair positions in order to reduce the pass up of persons in wheelchairs on lines that are heavily used by patrons in wheelchairs. Several transit properties such as Muni in San Francisco, the RTA in Las Vegas and Valley Transit in Phoenix are purchasing buses with 3 and 4 wheelchair positions per bus to respond to the increase riders with disabilities due to the aging population.

Grade Crossing Protection

The California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) requires that light rail pedestrian crossing be protected with swing gates when they are located at stations in dedicated rights of way but are not equipped with automatic gates. The Commission requires that these gates swing out away from the tracks, which means they must be pulled by pedestrians. This effectively creates a barrier for persons without full use of their arms. In FY 2017 Metro will initiate discussions with the PUC on a redesign of the protection that maintains safety but does not create a barrier for persons with disabilities.

Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) & Metro

The Office of Extraordinary Innovation (OEI) is negotiating with TNCs through the Unsolicited Proposal Process to implement new first and last mile options to support Metro transit services. The Office of Civil Rights is working with OEI to ensure that any new pilot or permanent services are fully ADA compliant. Countywide Planning and Development worked with OEI to submit a grant proposal for funding to develop a pilot ride sharing program under the FTA Mobility on Demand Sandbox Program that partners with TNC.

TNCs & Access

The Office of Extraordinary Innovation is working with Access Services to identify if there are opportunities to incorporate TNCs and/or microtransit options into the family of services that are offered under the ADA Paratransit banner or as supplemental service to improve mobility for persons with disabilities by increasing coverage, span of service or reducing the booking window. Through the use of these services, we have the potential to provide same day or on-demand mobility services for our customers at

competitive rates.

Outreach

Countywide Forum on Coordination and Integration of Transportation for Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

The Consolidated Transportation Services agency at Access Services, in conjunction with Metro is planning for the first annual County Wide Forum on Coordination and Integration of Transportation for Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities. The forum will include consultant specialists in gerontology and mental health as well as local governmental and non-governmental providers of transportation to older adults and persons with disabilities.

Mobile Wheelchair Strapping and Marking

The Office of Civil Rights is introducing a free Mobile Wheelchair Strapping and Marking Outreach Program in FY 17. This program will install straps or provide markings on wheelchairs to enable passengers to have their wheelchairs be quickly and correctly secured when they ride a Metro bus. This will help supplement a similar program currently being provided by Access Services at its eligibility facility.