

**Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities (ACPD)
February 13, 2024 – 2:00-3:30 p.m.
Microsoft Teams Remote Meeting**

MINUTES

Welcome and Opening Comments

Committee Chair Earl Lee called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m.

Virtual Protocol/Roll Call

Gabe Christie, RTD's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Manager, reminded the committee of the virtual meeting protocols.

In Attendance:

1. Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities:

Earl Lee, Erik Dubray, Elizabeth 'Betty' Elias, Greg Martinez, Aly DeWillis-Marcano, Kristina Ericson, Curtis Chong, Brenda Carney, Nicole Campuzano

2. RTD Staff:

Gabe Christie, Carl Green Jr., Tim Dean, Dave Jensen, Erin Vallejos, Steve Smith, Brian Cousineau (for Steven Martingano), Paul Hamilton, Michael Karol-Chik, William 'Bill' Sirois, Jack Kroll

Safety Moment

Gabe Christie reminded the attendees of the importance of weather safety and ensuring proper precautions are taken in winter weather.

Public Comment Period

No public comment.

Updates for ACPD Committee:

- Civic Center Station Renaming
 - a. Jack Kroll, Executive Manager, RTD Board Office, provided an update on the possibility of Civic Center Station being renamed after Rev. Wade Blank. Jack requested policy suggestions from the committee regarding renaming RTD properties and stations after individuals. He explained that the current policy is a cumulation of three board actions from 1994, 2003 and 2011, and the board is seeking to write a new, comprehensive policy and process to be followed in the future. Currently, stations in the district are named after major intersections or geographic identifiers and there is no formal process for a member of the public to suggest a new name.

Betty Elias suggested that RTD implement an online form where members of the public can suggest a name and provide justification. Earl Lee asked about the criteria regarding renaming portions of streets after famous individuals. Jack Kroll, Executive Manager, RTD Board Office, responded that community support, in this case in the form of petition signatures, is one of the criteria. Earl suggested renaming the station “Reverend Wade Blank Terminal at Civic Center Station”, which would be similar in framing to Wewatta Pavilion and Chestnut Pavilion at Denver Union Station. Jack responded that when other transit agencies rename stations they are given both the honorific name and the geographic identifier, which is the option RTD would pursue.

Betty Elias was concerned that renaming a station could lead to public protest if the Board did not ensure the individual was a positive member of the community. Jack Kroll responded that name suggestions may go to a committee in the future, which would include RTD employees, advisory committee members and historians to ensure that research is done into every aspect of the individual’s history and character. Betty suggested reaching out to the historians at History Colorado on this matter.

Other Matters

- Customer Safety and Police Response
 - a. Earl Lee described several recent experiences he has had relating to safety and security at RTD and requested the committee’s feedback on the topic. He stated that near the end of 2023, an elevator on the west side of Lincoln Station was out of service, with a sign nearby directing customers to call Customer Care about the issue. Earl called Customer Care, who transferred him to Security, who dispatched a bus bridge to take him to his bus on the east side of the highway. He described this as a positive experience and encouraged others to follow the same procedure.

Earl Lee described a policy to play music at Union Station to deter presumed unhoused individuals from loitering in the area. While he had heard the music at Union Station previously, music was not playing on Wednesday, February 7, and he asked whether that policy had been changed or suspended. No response was given.

Curtis Chong questioned whether it was common for customers to feel unsafe on light rail. He asked what a customer could do when faced with a safety or security concern if the operator could not be reached. Brian Cousineau, Commander, Transit Police, responded the Transit Watch app, which is advertised throughout the district, was made for the purpose of reporting immediate safety concerns. Brian explained that submitting a concern through the app was similar to calling 911, and the concern would be immediately forwarded to the dispatch center so officers can be sent to the location. While customers can call 911 directly, the call would be sent to the nearest dispatch center, not necessarily one in the jurisdiction of the incident’s location.

Brian Cousineau, Commander, Transit Police, gave an update on the police department’s long-term plans. In 2022, the police department had fewer than 20 sworn officers and relied on Allied Security for enforcement in the district; however, Allied Security officers did not

have enforcement powers or arrest authority. As of February 2024, the department has 77 sworn officers, with intent to have more than 100 sworn officers by the end of the year and more than 200 sworn officers within the next three years. The current growth in the department has allowed the police officers to have a larger presence throughout the district and take enforcement action. Brian states that many customers and business owners near Union Station appreciate the police presence and feel safer due to it.

Betty Elias brought up concerns about using public transit late at night, citing Denver's rate of human trafficking and the possibility of being kidnapped while entering or exiting public transit. She said she has never seen a police officer late at night, which could exacerbate customers' fears. Brian Cousineau, Commander, Transit Police, responded that within the next two months the police force will be transitioning to 24/7 service and coverage. Betty suggested that emergency buttons could be installed in each rail car, so that the operator could immediately know a customer was experiencing a safety concern. Brian responded that each rail car and bus has video cameras whose live feed can be accessed by dispatchers when a customer submits a concern on the Transit Watch app, which can then be passed to the responding officer.

Earl Lee questioned whether RTD's police force had the authority to make arrests. Brian Cousineau, Commander, Professional Services, responded that RTD officers have the same arrest powers as any police officer in the state. However, RTD arrests are often handed off to local law enforcement due to RTD's current lack of detectives, property evidence technicians and holding and processing facilities. Two detective positions and a property evidence technician position have been budgeted for 2024. A property and evidence room is in the process of being built. Brian stated the committee and private citizens could help the department's growth by voicing support for building a police facility.

Brian Cousineau explained that because RTD does not have these facilities, arrests and evidence are handed over to local law enforcement agencies. However, in recent weeks, various agencies have resisted assisting or taking over RTD arrests, which has caused narcotics and other evidence to be thrown in the trash rather than stored or disposed in safer ways. As of Thursday, February 15, the police force has installed drop boxes for narcotics that need to be disposed and destroyed.

- Multiple Stops on Access-on-Demand
 - a. Curtis Chong explained that current Access-a-Ride customers can use Access-on-Demand, a program where Uber, Lyft, Z Trip, and Metro Taxi will take customers on up to 60 trips per month, with the cost subsidized up to \$25 per ride. Recently customers have told Curtis that RTD is sending emails stating that while Uber's app allows customers to input multiple stops for an Access-on-Demand ride request, RTD's policy does not permit that. Curtis stated he has been told this policy inconveniences blind customers and that the policy was changed due to customers abusing access to multiple stops. He is frustrated that the policy statement is difficult to find on the Access-on-Demand page. He questioned how many Access-on-Demand customers were abusing the system compared to the total number of eligible Access-on-Demand customers. Betty Elias stated that using multiple stops was very useful for

her ability to ride independently. She stated RTD should turn off the “multiple stops” feature only for the customers who abuse it. Curtis explained that this would be difficult to implement, since each company uses a different platform and procedure for requesting rides.

Betty Elias stated in November 2023 she had an incident where she waited for an Access-on-Demand ride for over five hours because the ride requests kept timing out. She also stated that Metro Taxi does not offer accessible taxis after 3 p.m.; this could lead to people being stuck at a location if they were not able to contact another service. Greg Martinez suggested forming a working group to discuss these issues.

Paul Hamilton, Senior Manager, Paratransit Services, explained that Access-on-Demand was never intended to provide more than 60 one-way trips per month. Currently, the policy is provided on the website, in literature provided to Access-on-Demand customers and in customer guides. While multiple stops have never been permitted under policy, Uber allowed it without informing RTD. Uber does not seem to have a way to turn off the feature. Curtis Chong responded that the policy references “multiple stops” and “one-way trips” in imprecise and confusing ways. The policy seems to conflate a one-way trip with one or more stops during the trip and a round-trip with one or more stops during the trip.

- ACPD Membership Recruitment
 - a. Gabe Christie, ADA Manager, provided an update about the recruitment of new members to the ACPD. Gabe stated that the applications were open from January through the end of March and the committee had three openings to fill. He stated he will send the application to the committee members along with the minutes and urged the members to share the application with community members who would like to be in dialogue with RTD. He intends to start assessing applicants in April, choosing new members by late May or early June and onboarding members before the 4th of July. Additionally, Gabe explained that the Access-a-Ride Paratransit Advisory Committee (APAC) had open applications and he will announce when the Citizens Advisory Committee opens applications. He will send out each application to all committee members.
- RTD Board of Directors Elections
 - a. Jack Kroll, Executive Manager, RTD Board Office, announced that eight RTD Board of Directors seats are up for election in November 2024. He encourages those interested in running for the seats to reach out to himself or the Board office, as well as to the Colorado Secretary of State office, for further information. He explained that the minimum requirements are to be 18 years old, a U.S. citizen, live in the district and to secure a minimum 250 ballot signatures between May 16 and July 11, 2024.

Jack explained the process by which Jamie Lewis was appointed to the Board. Former Director Kate Williams resigned due to personal matters. Because most of the residents in Williams’ district live in Denver, Mayor Mike Johnston was able to appoint Williams’ replacement, subject to the approval of City Council.



Closing Comments

- Earl Lee emphasized that the current police presence at Union Station has resulted in a significant change to the area compared to previous years.

Adjourned at 3:35 p.m. – Earl Lee