

**Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities (ACPD)
November 12, 2024 – 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Microsoft Teams Remote Meeting**

MINUTES

Welcome and Opening Comments

Gabe Christie, ADA Manager, called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

Virtual Protocol/Roll Call

Gabe Christie, ADA Manager, reminded the committee of the virtual meeting protocols.

In Attendance:

1. Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities – General Members:
Earl Lee, Curtis Chong, Aly DeWillis-Marcano, Ericka Dubray, Kristina Ericson, Betty Elias
2. Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities – Ex Officio Members:
Joe Beaver – Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition, Dishon Spears – Colorado Center for the Blind
3. Access-a-Ride Paratransit Advisory Committee:
Cynde Vaughn, Jessica King, Josh Hursa, Julie Jennings, Malorie Miller (DRCOG), Melissa Fishburn, Richard Martinez, Robert Morris II, Sarah Lee
4. Public:
Ross Peterson, Romey Manzanares (Lardon)
5. Contracted Staff/Providers
Transdev: Laura Clark (reservations), Marcellinus Andrew (call center), Sarah Meredith (dedicated paratransit), Travis Menefee (dedicated paratransit)
MTM: Chip Fogleman (AaR), Sarah Bohar (eligibility and training)
6. RTD Staff:
Gabe Christie, Tim Dean, Steven Martingano, Michael Karol-Chik, William 'Bill' Sirois, Dave Jensen, Paul Hamilton, Steve Smith, Fred Worthen, Gretchen Vidergar, Marta Sipeki, Dana Steele, Jim Neff

Safety Moment

Gabe Christie advised attendees to be aware of Thanksgiving safety precautions, including frying turkeys safely, planning the day thoroughly, and winter-proofing your home.



Public Comment Period

No public comment.

Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities:

1. Updates:
 - a. No updates.

2. Discussion:
 - a. University of Denver Accessibility Review

Joshua Kaufman, ADA Coordinator, University of Denver, stated his office is conducting an accessibility review of the campus during the 2024-25 academic year. The focus is on physical access and integration of people with disabilities on campus, including access to public transit. Barriers include steep curb cuts, snow plowing on city-owned streets and sidewalks, and damaged or uneven sidewalks. Joshua said he has reached out to the Denver Commission for People with Disabilities regarding these issues. He explained that the university is currently constructing a wide, accessible "center spine" sidewalk to assist with moving through the campus.

Earl Lee, Chair, ACPD, explained that RTD only maintains the property owned by the agency. Julie Jennings stated that Denver has a Disability Rights Division that can assist the university with accessibility issues. She left the following contact information in the chat for Joshua's reference: <https://www.bit.ly/DenverDisabilityRights> and phone number 720.913.8450.

Joshua Kaufman, ADA Coordinator, University of Denver, asked if RTD's area of responsibility includes updates to physical access around bus stops. Gabe Christie, ADA Manager, responded that the agency's jurisdiction generally only extends to the stop itself, i.e. the "pole in the ground." In many cases, RTD does not own or have responsibility for the shelters, right of way or surrounding area. The adjoining sidewalk is generally the responsibility of the municipality unless the stop or station is on RTD-owned right of way. The ADA office will soon begin a review of all bus stops to determine their accessibility status and in which jurisdiction they fall.

Joshua Kaufman, ADA Coordinator, University of Denver, stated that his office has received feedback that people face barriers after they alight from RTD vehicles, including light poles, parking meters and bicycle racks, which make the sidewalks narrower and less accessible. Kristina Ericson explained that the issues Joshua brought up would be under the jurisdiction of Denver's Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DOTI). She explained that the city's Division of Disability Rights can help Joshua navigate and work with DOTI and put the email for the city's ADA coordinator (disabilityaccess@denvergov.org) into the chat for Joshua's reference. Kristina also left the following information in the chat: the email for Alison Butler, the current Director of Division of Disability Rights, is Alison.Butler@DenverGov.org.



b. Access-a-Ride (AaR) Vehicle ETA Tracking

Earl Lee, Chair, ACPD, stated that he relies on the Access-a-Ride (AaR) estimated time of arrival (ETA) tracking app on his phone, but it sometimes is not accurate. He relayed an example of checking the app to see that his ride should arrive in 40 minutes, only to see the ETA update to "arriving in 10 minutes" just 5 minutes later. Sarah Lee commented that sometimes the tracking errors are due to operators not hitting "arrive" when they pick up earlier customers, though sometimes the errors are due to slow Internet access.

Earl Lee, Chair, ACPD, stated that recently the 10-minute warning phone call has been coming in 5-15 minutes after boarding the bus. In the chat, Aly DeWillis-Marcano asked if the ETA tracking calls were made by the paratransit call center and whether anyone knew what software or system was used for that. No one provided an answer.

Earl Lee, Chair, ACPD, brought up an issue regarding the amount of time spent on Access-a-Ride (AaR) vehicles. Specifically, on a trip on October 29, 2024, he was in the AaR vehicle for more than two hours, and he raised concerns regarding the customers' and operators' restroom needs on such long trips.

c. Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) Availability

Joe Beaver, Ex Officio Member – CCDC, stated that on November 9, 2024, he attempted to use the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) program to book a ride to an appointment but was told during 3 phone calls that no vehicles were available in his area. He stated that on a separate incident, he booked Access-a-Ride (AaR) trip to Colorado Christian University and accidentally gave the address to the wrong building on campus. When the AaR driver dropped him off at the correct location, he suggested Joe should call dispatch to give them this new address for pick up. Joe called, but the dispatcher would not change the address for him. Due to this, he called Access-on-Demand for pickup, and he was charged full price for the trip; the first \$25 of the trip was not subsidized. Marcelinus Andrew asked Joe whether the dispatcher or the app tells him no WAVs are available. Joe responded the app said there were no vehicles in the area. Marcelinus suggested Joe should call dispatch when that occurs so that a vehicle can be dispatched to his location. Paul Hamilton stated that Joe Beaver does not seem to be enrolled in WAV, but he will follow up with both Joe and the committees about this issue.

d. ACPD Work Plan

Gabe Christie, ADA Manager, explained that he had met with the steering committee to develop an annual work plan, comprised of guidance and tasks, for the ACPD. The work plan will contain at least one goal from the steering committee and at least one goal from the ACPD membership for the year toward which the members will work annually. Members will take responsibility for completing these goals and staff will provide the necessary support and guidance to do so. Members will provide updates on these goals at each meeting throughout the year. Additionally, the Chair and Vice Chair will check in with the members' progress each month and report any needs or



concerns to Gabe.

The steering committee identified 3 goals for calendar year 2025, including engaging during the Downtown Rail Reconstruction project, adopting a resolution of support for renaming Civic Center Station after Rev. Wade Blank, and planning the celebration of the 35th anniversary of the ADA. Earl Lee, Chair, ACPD, asked if the Downtown Rail Reconstruction project will be covered by the Pedestrian Right of Way and Access Guidelines (PROWAG), since the project began before PROWAG was implemented. Gabe Christie, ADA Manager, briefly described PROWAG and said the agency is preemptively adopting PROWAG standards as to exceed the minimum accessibility standards. In the chat, Greg Martinez shared the following links which describe and explain PROWAG: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/08/22/2024-18496/transportation-for-individuals-with-disabilities-adoption-of-accessibility-standards-for-pedestrian>, <https://www.access-board.gov/prowag/> and <https://www.ada.gov/resources/small-entity-compliance-guide/>.

Gabe Christie, ADA Manager, asked the members for their suggestions for goals. Curtis Chong brought up that RTD .pdfs with graphs and charts are not formatted to be accessible to visually impaired people. He wants to work on making publicly available electronic documents accessible to everyone. Gabe added that this goal could include ensuring staff have the training to make accessible documents. Aly DeWillis-Marcano wants to provide the agency with formal recommendations on how to manage communication and signage when elevators are down. Greg Martinez suggested that the agency communicates and celebrates the barriers that have been removed in a given timeframe. Gabe explained that soon he will send a poll to members to vote on which goal or goals each person wants to work on. Action plans will be created before the Q1 2025 meeting.

e. Trail expansion on W Line

Joe Beaver, Ex Officio Member – CCDC, stated that a fence has been erected on the trail between Oak Station and Everett Court in Lakewood, which blocks his most direct route to the station. Greg Martinez asked in the chat whether it was a temporary maintenance issue or other project affecting the area. Gabe Christie, ADA Manager, responded that these may be questions for the facilities team.

f. Anne Hillyer Award for Integrity

Gabe Christie, ADA Manager, explained that the Anne Hillyer Award for Integrity was previously named the ADA Heroes Award and, prior to 2020, was given to employees who went above and beyond to provide service to customers with disabilities. The award has been renamed for a former ADA Investigator Specialist who was passionate about improving access for the community. After working in the ADA office for 4 years, she passed away from cancer in 2021. The award now honors employees who show the same integrity and commitment to accessibility and equity that Anne did. Gabe then described the commendations for first 4 awardees, who were selected in conjunction with Earl Lee, Chair, ACPD: Al Espinola, Felipe Munoz-Ramos, Hosie



Mitchell and Justin Homan. These awardees will receive a certificate and will be identified and honored at upcoming board meetings.

Access-a-Ride Paratransit Advisory Committee

1. Updates:

- a. Introduction of New APAC Members (2) – Richard Martinez and Robert Morris II
Robert Morris introduced himself.
- b. Q-Ryde Software – Eric Farrington, Senior Project Manager, Information Technology
The retesting of the QRyde web portal is still underway. QRyde is working to resolve functionality issues found and make further improvements. The testing and resolutions should be done soon.
- c. APAC/ACPD Joint Meeting Schedule – Gabe Christie, ADA Manager, Civil Rights
There will be one fewer Joint ACPD/APAC meeting in 2025 (two instead of 2024's three). ACPD wants to focus more meeting time to accomplish ACPD goals.

2. Discussion:

- a. Access-a-Ride Recommended Service Improvements
 - i. AaR 6-Minute Allowable Wait Time – Assistant General Manager – Bus Operations
Fred Worthen, Assistance General Manager of Bus Operations, provided an overview of the engagement work since the Peer Review Report, the draft RTD recommendations for paratransit programs, and the subsequent engagement process that will seek additional input on the initial recommendations. RTD is considering changes in AoD initial fares, per-month trip caps, subsidy amount, service area, and other elements.

Engagement efforts summer and fall 2024:

- Surveyed 21 transit agencies with similar on-demand premium paratransit programs
 - More than 80% have similar on-demand program and charge fares for on-demand, most have a cap on on-demand trips, and most have subsidies that range from \$4.50-\$60 per trip.
- Provided a web site and online feedback form – received 561 comments.
- Reached out to customer advisory committees, including ACPD, APAC and CAC.
- Two virtual feedback meetings and an in-person roundtable discussion with paratransit customers.
- Two surveys – Surveys looked at frequency of AaR and AoD use; the priority for customers among the fare, subsidy, cap for trips per month, service area, and frequency of service; customers trade-off preference between the trip cost (higher or lower) versus the subsidy amount and number of trips allowed. (lower or higher).
 - General survey – received 387 responses



- Statistically representative random customer sample – received 428 responses.

These engagement efforts provided data points to help RTD consider changes that support the majority of customers' needs and ensure the sustainability and equity of the paratransit programs.

Recommendations for the AoD program and relevant key data points (see slide deck for all charts and all data points):

- Fare: \$4.50 base fare/\$2.25 LiVE fare (currently \$0 base then payment for anything over \$25)
- Trip Cap: 30 per month (currently 60)
 - Data point – current per month usage: 60% of AoD users take 0-20 trips a month, 73% take 0-30 trips, and 9% take 31-40 trips a month.
- Subsidy per Ride: \$30 (currently \$25)
- Service Area: Mirror ADA service area (currently RTD area)
- Data point – service area usage: 92% of AoD trips are inside the ADA services area, 6% are in the RTD or PAN20 service area and 2% are outside all boundaries; and 40% of active AOD customer have taken at least one trip outside the ADA service area, of those two-thirds have done this less than once per month.
- Data point – Impact of AoD WAV resources out of ADA service area– when WAV resources are out of the ADA service area for AoD trips they are unavailable for AaR customers. Since RTD provides WAV vehicles, costs are incorrectly allocated, (AoD WAV costs are allocated to the AaR program), overstating AaR costs and understating AoD costs.
- Service hours: Mirror ADA service hours instead of 24/7 as they are presently available.
- The RTD's recommended scenario of: fare (\$4.50), subsidy (\$30/trip), and trip cap (30)
 - Data points – preference: This scenario was ranked first by 64% of survey respondents.

Recommendations for AaR:

- Recertifying every five years (currently every four)
- Modify on-time performance metrics to measure pick up and drop off instead of pick up only.
- Explore software modifications to support changes and productivity enhancements
- Contract modifications/enhanced contract management
- Suspension policy modification, (stricter rolling-year monitoring of violations instead of calendar year)



- Develop a fleet procurement plan with modified fleet mix (more sedans and mini-vans)

Next Steps and decision

- November 2024 – Share feedback from engagement and initial recommendations with RTD Board.
- December 2024 – Initiate a second round of feedback meetings, webinars, and feedback tools.
- January 2025 – Host customer meetings, advisory committee meetings and close the feedback tool.
- February-May 2025 – Share round two feedback and final recommendations with RTD Board for final decisions.
- May 2025 – Implement changes as part of May 2025 Service Change.

- ii. AoD WAV Program – Gretchen Vidergar, Acting Paratransit Manager, Paratransit
Question: Of the 6% that use AoD outside the ADA services area, how many need WAV resources? The cost savings for that 6% is approximately \$585,000 yearly, which doesn't seem a significant saving for offering WAV services, particularly for customer who are just outside the ADA or AaR service area.

Answer: The main reasons for limiting the AoD program to the ADA service area is for ensuring the availability of WAV resources for AaR riders and equity between AoD and AaR customers – equity of service available. When AoD WAV resources, provided by RTD AaR providers, are out of the ADA service area they are less available inside the AaR service areas. Currently, WAV riders wait two-and-a-half to three times longer than non-WAV riders. And the impact is more than the 6% implies.

Comments:

- Those who need WAV need more services whether in they are in the ADA service area not.
- RTD is also recommending incentivizing AoD providers (Uber, Lyft, ZTrip and Metro Taxi) to provide more WAV options themselves, therefore not relying exclusively on RTD's WAV resources.
- Due to COVID service reductions there are some AaR customers who no longer have fixed-route service within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, (removing those customers from the ADA service area), leaving only AoD as a service option. If AoD is reduced to the ADA service area these customers will have no services.
- COVID impacted all of RTD's customers. RTD is expecting to expand service areas in 2025, as ridership is returned/stabilized.

3. Future Agenda Items – Jody Erikson, Facilitator



2025 meetings: January 14, March 11 (Joint), May 13, July 8, September 9, and November 11 (Joint).

Closing Comments

No closing comments.

Adjourned at 12:00 p.m. – Gabe Christie, ADA Manager