

**Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities (ACPD)  
October 8, 2024 – 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Microsoft Teams Remote Meeting**

## MINUTES

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### Welcome and Opening Comments

Gabe Christie, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Manager, called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

### Virtual Protocol/Roll Call

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

In Attendance:

1. Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities – General Members:  
Earl Lee, Curtis Chong, Kristina Ericson, Nicole Campuzano, Greg Martinez, Aly DeWillis-Marcano, Brenda Carney
2. Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities – Ex Officio Members:  
Joe Beaver – Colorado Cross Disability Coalition, Catrice Thomas – Atlantis Community, Dishon Spears – Colorado Center for the Blind
3. RTD Staff:  
Gabe Christie, Tim Dean, Carl Green, Steven Martingano, William 'Bill' Sirois, Erin Vallejos, Erik Wright, Gretchen Vidergar, Stuart Summers, Steve Smith, Michelle Merz-Hutchinson, Marta Sipeki, Jack Kroll, Joni Hardy, Jake Stoudenmire, Fred Worthen, Brian Notman, Sherry Gillespie
4. RTD Board Members:  
Jamie Lewis, District A

### Safety Moment

Gabe Christie reminded the attendees to stay vigilant while crossing streets as the days get shorter and visibility decreases earlier in the day.

### Public Comment Period

No public comment.

### Updates for ACPD Committee:

No updates provided for the committee.

## Other Matters

### 1. Access-on-Demand peer review update

- a. Fred Worthen, Assistant General Manager of Bus Operations, presented an overview of the agency's paratransit programs and the current findings of the paratransit customer feedback and engagement surveys. Fred described the differences between the Access-a-Ride (AaR) and Access-on-Demand (AoD) programs and explained the timeline of AoD's rollout and progression through the end of 2023. He explained that late 2023, the agency became aware that Uber, which is one of AoD's service providers, allows ambulatory customers to request multiple stops when booking a ride. This is not an option available through all service providers, which includes Lyft, Metro Taxi and zTrip, or to customers who use mobility devices. In December 2023, employees notified all paratransit customers that multiple stops were never allowed under the AoD program, and paratransit customers cannot utilize this service. However, RTD cannot require Uber to turn off multi-stop functionality, so employees must manually monitor service usage to ensure the service is not used.

Fred Worthen, Assistant General Manager of Bus Operations, assumed oversight over paratransit operations in February 2024; concurrently, General Manager and CEO Debra A. Johnson commissioned a paratransit peer review, facilitated by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). During the peer review, a panel of subject matter experts assessed the Access-a-Ride (AaR) and Access-on-Demand (AoD) programs through interviews with both employees and customers, as well as examining data. The peer review's full report, including findings and recommendations, can be found at the RTD Paratransit Peer Review website.

Regarding paratransit customer metrics and satisfaction, Fred Worthen, Assistant General Manager of Bus Operations, discussed the proportion of customers who use Access-a-Ride (AaR) or Access-on-Demand (AoD) only, compared to those who use both services. Additionally, he explained that customer satisfaction with both services has increased from 2022 through 2024. In surveys, AaR customers reported that the factor most important to them is vehicles arriving in the scheduled window; AoD customers' most important factor is fare price. Regarding the cost of AoD service, Fred explained that average cost per trip, as well as the monthly program cost, has increased significantly since the service's launch.

Stuart Summers, Chief Communications and Engagement Officer, discussed two paratransit customer surveys which ended on Oct. 8, 2024; the surveys were hosted at the RTD Paratransit Peer Review website. The results of the surveys will be shared with the Board of Directors in November 2024. Additionally, Stuart discussed a survey of 15 peer U.S. transit agencies that provide paratransit services to determine how these agencies handle fares for paratransit services. The results of this survey will also be shared with the Board of Directors in November 2024. Finally, Stuart stated that all paratransit customers and community stakeholders are invited to share feedback at the RTD Paratransit Peer Review website through 11:59 p.m. on Oct. 25, 2024. Future virtual and in-person meetings sharing the information from this presentation will be held for Atlantis and Imagine, along with one meeting held for all customers, but the dates and times were not announced. All the feedback and survey results shared with the Board of Directors in November will guide policy-



related decisions the Board is considering. Any policy recommendations the Board adopts will be put in place as part of the May 2025 service changes.

Nicole Campuzano asked what the agency hoped to find or share from the survey and feedback results. Fred Worthen, Assistant General Manager of Bus Operations, explained that these tools are being used to understand customers' needs, concerns and priorities in order to make policy recommendations to the Board that balance those needs with the paratransit services' operational and fiscal sustainability needs.

Curtis Chong commented that Access-on-Demand (AoD) is already inequitable compared to Access-a-Ride (AaR) because customers do not need to preemptively reserve rides in order to use AoD, and AoD does not have the same pickup windows as AaR. He asked if data had been collected regarding the frequency of multi-stop usage in AoD service, to compare with these other types of inequity. Fred Worthen, Assistant General Manager of Bus Operations, stated that while they did have this data, it was irrelevant to the determination that customers should not use Uber's multi-stop functionality. Curtis then asked if there were data regarding the ride time for a customer who uses a wheelchair compared to a customer who does not. Fred reiterated that data was irrelevant to this policy decision.

Earl Lee, Chair, commented that in a different meeting, he was told that Access-on-Demand (AoD) uses a separate set of vehicles and operators than Access-a-Ride (AaR) and asked whether this was true. Fred Worthen, Assistant General Manager of Bus Operations, clarified that the groups of drivers and vehicles are intermixed, because they all work for the agency; however, AaR operators will not be reassigned to AoD to the extent that it would negatively impact AaR services. Earl then asked if all four AoD service providers offer wheelchair-accessible vehicles. Fred stated that he did not believe they all did, but requested that Gretchen Vidergar, Acting Manager, Paratransit Services, answer the question. Gretchen stated that zTrip has accessible vehicles, and Metro Taxi only offers accessible vehicles during the day, not in the evening. She stated that Lyft does not have wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

Catrice Thomas stated that one of her consumers at Atlantis Community struggles with some Uber drivers who do not assist her with entering the vehicle or folding her wheelchair, and asked which Access-on-Demand (AoD) service this consumer should use. Gretchen Vidergar, Acting Manager, Paratransit Services, stated this customer should be using the agency's Wheelchair-Accessible Vehicle (WAV) service rather than standard Uber services through AoD and explained that the customer should contact Access-a-Ride (AaR) to be put into the WAV program.

Curtis Chong brought up that Access-a-Ride (AaR) only transports customers within the district boundaries and within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of a fixed route, and asked whether the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile rule would affect a customer's eligibility to use AaR services if their residence was outside of the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile limit. Fred Worthen, Assistant General Manager of Bus Operations, stated that a customer's pickup and drop off locations must both fall within  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile of a fixed route, but the rule does not come into effect when a customer is applying for AaR. Gretchen

Vidergar, Acting Manager, Paratransit Services, clarified that an AaR service customer who does not live within  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a fixed route cannot be picked up or dropped off at their home address, but they will be advised to either use Access-on-Demand (AoD) or find a public location within that  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile distance at which they can be picked up. Curtis asked if any of the AoD service providers were subject to service hours or service boundaries, other than the district boundaries, the way AaR is. Fred confirmed they were not. Curtis stated that AoD's lack of service hours and service boundaries was another disparity compared to AaR; he claimed that people who would otherwise not think to apply for paratransit are now doing so just to access AoD since it lacks AaR's restraints and boundaries. Fred acknowledged that the peer review recommended reviewing the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile enforcement on AaR.

## 2. Access-on-Demand customer survey inaccessibility concerns

- a. Jake Stoudenmire, Manager, Market Research, stated that the AoD customer survey had accessibility issues when the survey initially launched. This was the first public sampled survey the agency has used that was hosted by Qualtrics rather than SurveyMonkey. While Qualtrics has a feature to review surveys for accessibility issues before launch, this feature was not activated. Once it was noticed that the accessibility review had not been completed, the survey was reviewed, the accessibility issue was identified and corrected, and the survey was resent to customers. Moving forward, in addition to the inbuilt Qualtrics accessibility review, Market Research will work with the Gabe Christie, Manager, ADA, to conduct a manual accessibility review of all internal and external surveys. Gabe explained that, as well as conducting the manual accessibility reviews, he will also develop internal resources and training for the Market Research team outlining inaccessible methods and processes available in Qualtrics that must be avoided.

## 3. Revitalization of the ACPD

- a. Gabe Christie, Manager, ADA, discussed the interim results of an ongoing ACPD member survey, which show that the members believe the meetings' structure, timeliness, and agenda topics are done well; additionally, the members believe communication from RTD leadership and clarity of the committee's goals, objectives, and decision-making process could improve. Due to this feedback, Gabe worked with Carl Green, Director, Civil Rights Division, to develop suggestions for revitalization. Gabe's first proposal, to address the issue of goal clarity, is to develop an annual work plan detailing the committee's projects from one year to the next. Gabe also proposed that Ex Officio members should gain voting rights and expanding Ex Officio membership from three members to six. This change would allow people who represent organizations that serve people with disabilities more avenues to discuss issues and affect change for the whole community. This change would also foster continuity for the committee, so that new members can be more easily brought up to speed on prior and ongoing projects and institutional knowledge is not lost when members' terms end. Gabe's next proposal was to alter the meeting calendar so that meetings are held once per quarter or at most six times per year, with the schedule to be determined by the members' needs. The final proposal was to clearly delineate the roles of the Chair and Vice Chair so that the duties for each role are clearly outlined in the charter.

Curtis Chong and Aly DeWillis-Marcano expressed excitement for these proposals. Aly asked



about the current makeup of the committee's membership. Gabe Christie, Manager, ADA, explained that currently the committee is supposed to have 13 "general" or voting members and 3 non-voting Ex Officio members. With the new proposal, the committee would still have 13 voting members, but 6 of those members would be Ex Officio organizations. Aly then asked about the committee's current voting policies. Gabe explained that according to the charter, the committee votes on what advice the committee wants to formally provide to the agency, as well as the Chair and Vice Chair positions.

4. Station naming conventions update

- a. Jack Kroll, Executive Manager, RTD Board, announced that the Board Office has opened applications on their website to propose an honorary name for an RTD property or station. Jack stated that the committee's requests to rename Civic Center Station after Rev. Wade Blank was an impetus for this application process. He also announced that the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is accepting applications through Friday, October 25, 2024, and he requested people reach out to their friends and connections to apply to the CAC.

**Closing Comments**

Earl Lee, Chair, adjourned the meeting at 3:30 p.m.