

Mayor's Commission on Disabilities



**Mayor's Commission on Disabilities
October 27, 2010
At the League for People with Disabilities**

Mayor's Commission on Disabilities Public Forum Mobility State of the Mode (From curb to curb to door to door service)

Commission Chairman Lanie Vogelhut called the meeting to order and introduced David Greenberg, CEO of The League and chair of the MCD Transportation Committee. Each year the Commission works to educate people about the Mobility program. He introduced Sharon Smith, the new Director of the Mobility Program. Her goal is to provide safe, reliable, efficient service to all customers. Materials regarding the program were available, as was staff, to answer questions. Ms. Smith provided a PowerPoint program highlighting accomplishments, including travel instruction, interface with customers and partners, continued plans for added service, and incorporation of email notification into the program. She is working hard to become more proactive – to catch trips before they're late. There are a number of ongoing and upcoming projects, including a new phone system that will confirm trips and allow their cancellation the day before, Passweb, which will book rides on-line, on-line applications, use of geocoding technology to update maps and assure they are consistent with the service area, review of the run structure for the fleet, certification improvements, and continued community outreach.

On-time performance is around 90%, but the commitment is to do better. This year, there will be over 1 million trips, compared to about half that number 5 years ago. Data regarding completed trips, no-shows, and new clients were shared. Current ridership is 18,000 customers. Efforts to decrease on-hold time include a revamped system for scheduling repeat appointments, automated cancellation line, added staffing to the call center, etc. Ms. Smith expressed her hope that we can all work in partnership to overcome any future obstacles.

Questions and Answers followed.

How are drivers trained? All are required to take a rigorous training program including safety, sensitivity awareness and professionalism. They learn routes, and wheelchair and safety belt securement. When there are complaints, it is important to call and let Mobility know.

Clarification regarding policy when the ride is late arriving for pick up was requested. The driver is supposed to stay 5 minutes, even if he shows up late. Door-to-door service is provided whenever feasible (within 100 feet on sight-line). He is to go to the door, leave a door hanger if there is no response, and then return to the car to radio the control room to place a call to try to locate the rider.

Waiting time on the phone is often 20 minutes. Sometimes the call is disconnected, and you have to call back. When the dispatcher calls and says the ride will be there in 10 minutes, most of the time they aren't there in that time frame. Mobility has the ability to check the availability and location of vehicles, and staff have been directed to try not to underestimate the wait time.

Is there a way that dialysis centers could notify Mobility when someone is in the hospital? Patients are sometimes reluctant to call to cancel, because they are concerned about service not being restored in the future. Drivers are supposed to report back to supervisors when someone is not available, and the supervisors will call the family to determine when service will be needed.

Mobility staff have been rude on the phone, when riders called to inquire about a late ride. This type of feedback is important to Ms. Smith, and she will work to make it better. Each concern identified today will be addressed.

Why does my ride go all over town before it gets to my destination? Even with the best drivers, the route is often back and forth from east to west and back before it gets to the destination. A computer system batches ride requests. Analysts work to get rides off of the unscheduled board onto a route, but are expected to move them into a light route going in the same direction – the goal is to get people on time to where they need to be.

Drivers don't seem to know where the accessible entrance to City Hall is, despite instructions when booking the ride. This information about location can be added to the driver's manifest.

The Call Center needs sensitivity training, as well as the drivers. If calls were monitored by the supervisors, staff wouldn't talk to customers the way they do. Staff should take a break after a trying call, rather than take the next call with a negative attitude. It is the staff's job to be professional and respectful when they answer the phone.

How do you get door-to-door service? In April, Mobility switched from curb-to-curb to door-to-door. The driver has to be able to keep a visual of the vehicle, and can come up to 100 ft. to the exterior door.

Drivers will call and say they're outside, but they've gone to the wrong location. Mobility will reinforce with drivers that if they aren't sure of a location, they can call the control center to confirm the accurate location.

Rides can be as long as 3 hours. It is very important to call and complain, so this can be addressed.

Dialysis is a life-saving treatment. The time that you arrive determines how long the patient's treatment will be, so if the ride is late, treatment is shortened. Often, after dialysis, the patient doesn't feel well. Drivers need to be more considerate for dialysis patients, and get them to and from the center promptly.

How long does it take to process an application for Mobility? An interview should be held within 1-2 weeks of contact. Mobility will provide assistance with applications, if needed.

What happened to the on-line complaint system? It doesn't seem to be working consistently. Ms. Smith will verify that the system is working.

How do you get Taxi Access? If you're already certified for Mobility, why do you have to visit the doctor again to be certified for the taxi program. The Taxi program is separate, and has a separate application. Mobility will look into whether there is a way to avoid this duplicate effort for the customer. A customer can use both programs. However, the Mobility sedans are not part of the Taxi Access program.

Is there specific information that would help with complaint resolution? If you let Mobility know the date, time, and if known, the vehicle number and driver's name, it is all helpful in investigating a problem.

Customer service doesn't call back when they say they will. At the completion of an investigation, the rider will get a written response to their complaint.

Is there a time limit on complaints? No, although the ability to investigate older complaints will depend on how much information is available.

What happens if the driver is early, and only waits 5 minutes? The driver is expected to wait 5 minutes past the scheduled time. Riders should call this problem in to customer service.

Why is there a pick-up window now, instead of a pick-up time? This is to help drivers adjust for traffic and other conditions. There is still an effort to pick up riders as close to the start of the pick-up period as possible.

The program ended, with thanks to Ms. Smith and her staff for their efforts and information today. There was time for attendees to address specific concerns directly with Mobility staff.