



**WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

# Metro's Travel Training Programs

Christian T. Kent  
Assistant General Manager  
Department of Access Services

APTA Annual Meeting

October 2, 2010



## BACKGROUND

- Prior to 1997, Metro's focus on accessibility was mostly compliance-based and reactive until members of the disability community began requesting information
- As we shared information on Metro's accessibility features, we learned that they were of little use if the customer base did not know about them
- The "Metro is Accessible" outreach program was launched in December 2003, establishing partnerships with disability/senior organizations, social service agencies, and schools; and introducing **travel training**
- We also learned that many organizations were interested in providing their own travel training, so we began to conduct train-the-travel trainer workshops



## IN-HOUSE PROGRAM

- Our in-house program is delivered by a specialized team of five full-time professional staff who provide half and full-day system orientations for individuals and groups
  - 258 people received individual travel training in FY 2010
  - 1,514 people received group travel training in FY 2010
- Audience is not only people with disabilities, but also seniors, in view of their increased likelihood to experience disability later in life
- 540 service providers from 137 external agencies have participated in our train-the-travel trainer workshops
- Program recently augmented with a regional program to conduct more in-depth training for those who need it



## REGIONAL PROGRAM SPONSORED BY METRO

- Metro awarded a \$ 1.2M grant on June 17, 2009 under the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom Programs
- Grant funds a two-year regional travel training initiative in cooperation with three Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia
- Landmark public-private partnership focuses on fostering greater use of accessible fixed-route public transportation
- Grant will serve 600 people with significant disabilities during the two-year project



## PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

- Grant funding provides two full-time travel trainers to each of the three private non-profit CILs:
  - ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia
  - DC Center for Independent Living
  - Independence Now of Maryland
- Focus on travel training to employment and job-related activities includes partnerships with vocational rehabilitation agencies and The Arc organizations in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia
- Inclusion Research Institute is our research and evaluation partner

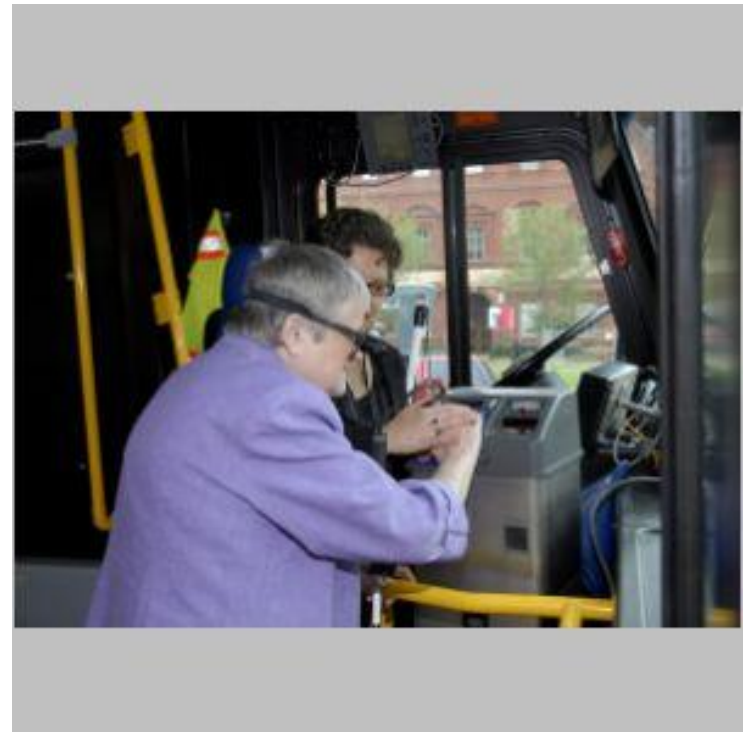


## CONNECTION TO ELIGIBILITY PROCESS

- Our Transit Accessibility Center is a fixed-route transit centered environment where customers are met with audiovisual information and consultation on the accessibility of Metro's services and availability of in-house and regional travel training
- Eligibility for the Reduced Fare Program (RFP) was merged into this office along with paratransit eligibility so that customers who do not qualify for paratransit could be evaluated for RFP
- Nearly all customers who are not found eligible for paratransit do qualify for RFP and pay only half-fare on fixed-route transit
- Each paratransit applicant is given more information on travel training during the interview process, and referrals are made if the customer expresses interest; but the majority of fully executed referrals come from external sources

# BENEFITS OF TRAVEL TRAINING FOR CUSTOMERS

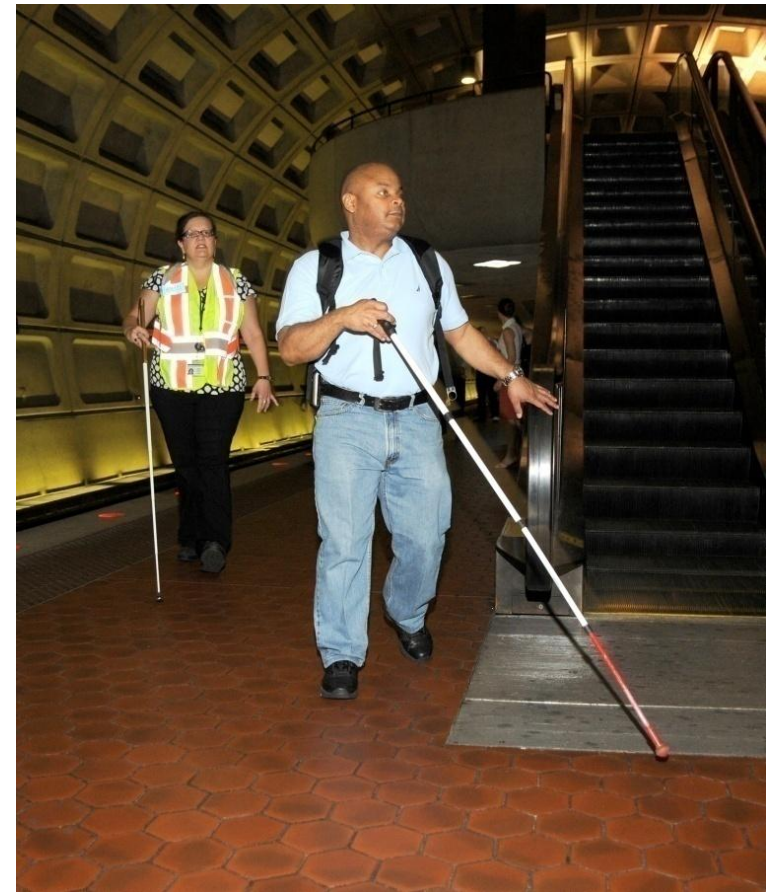
- Independence
- Quality of life
- Flexibility with more numerous and convenient travel options
- Affordability (half-fare or free travel for those eligible)
- Effectiveness – **91%** of our graduates indicated ongoing use of fixed-route services and decreased use of paratransit





## BENEFITS TO METRO

- Contributes to increased ridership – total of 14M RFP trips in FY 2010, up 16% from 2009
- Contributes to increased RFP revenue – total of \$7.3M, FY2010
- Decreased dependency on and cost of paratransit – \$38/trip saved each time fixed-route used
- Enhancement of company image
- Better community relationship
- Support of public transit use in general







## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about Metro travel training and outreach initiatives, please contact:

Rikki S. Epstein  
ADA Operations Manager  
Department of Access Services

202-962-1125  
repstein@wmata.com

[www.metroopensdoors.com/accessibility](http://www.metroopensdoors.com/accessibility)

