



Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Metro's Travel Training Programs

**Omari June
Director, Acting
Office of MetroAccess Service**

APTA Bus & Paratransit Conference

May 2011



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 Travel Training 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**
 - **4,500+ expected to have received travel training by end FY 2011**
- **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 Travel Training 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 in addition to the in-house travel training offered by Metro**
- **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**



Travel Training Connection to Eligibility Process

- **Our Transit Accessibility Center (TAC) 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**



Travel Training Connection to Eligibility Process

- **A pilot program has colocated a travel trainer within the TAC who meets with all paratransit applicants to discuss the benefits of travel training and identify additional accessible transportation options in the region**
- **A travel training appointment is made if the customer expresses interest, but the majority of fully executed referrals come from external sources**
- **In partnership with various organizations, Metro also provides in-field enrollment in and production of Reduced Fare Program ID cards**





Conditional Paratransit Eligibility

- **Paratransit eligibility assessments based on trip specific environmental and customer health conditions commenced in July 2010**
 - **Day/Night**
 - **Winter/Summer**
 - **Variable Health**
 - **Functionally Conditional**
- **Conditionally eligible paratransit customers are encouraged to use fixed route when possible through the free ride program**



Fixed Route Accessibility

- **Metro conducts annual inspections of all 86 Metrorail stations for ADA compliance**
- **Metro has conducted an accessibility survey for 12,000+ bus stops that are served by Metro but are the property of local jurisdictions**
- **All new bus stops and relocated bus stops are required to be accessible**
- **Fixed route services are monitored for ADA compliance**



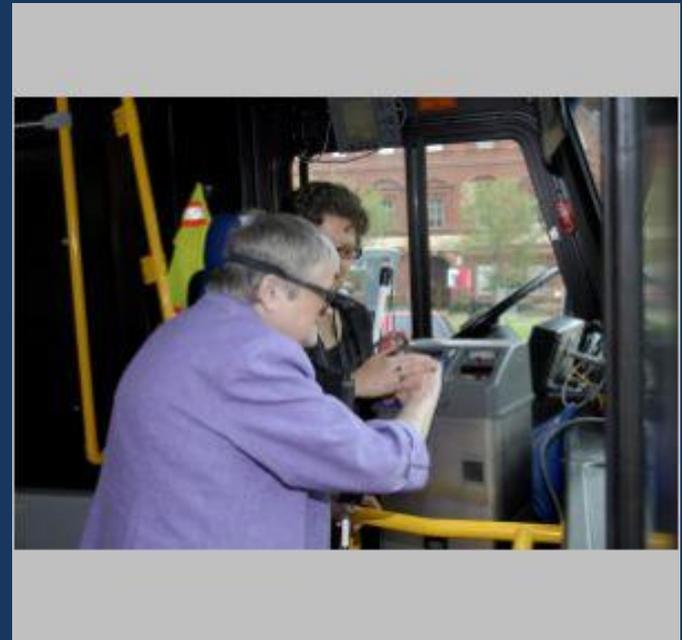
Targeted Bus Stop Improvements

- **A new program solicits descriptions of specific accessibility barriers at bus stops near frequently travelled locations from conditionally eligible paratransit customers**
- **Photos of the bus stop and GIS data are sent to Metro's planning department, which then coordinates with local jurisdictions to prioritize bus stop improvements that will remove barriers to accessibility**
- **When barriers to accessibility are removed, the planning department will inform the TAC, which can then update the customer's conditional eligibility**



Benefits of Travel Training for Customers

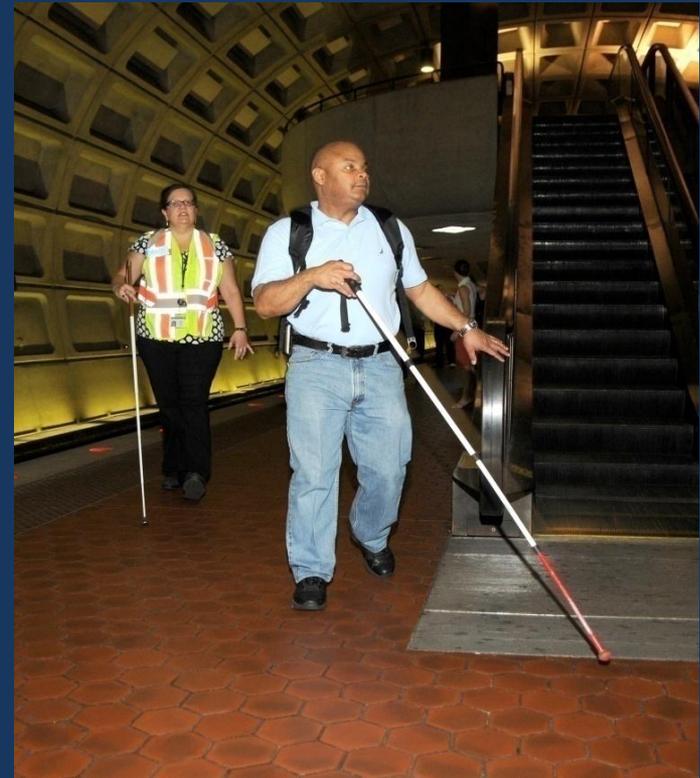
- **Independence**
- **Quality of life**
- **Flexibility with more numerous and convenient travel options**
- **Affordability (half-fare or free travel for those eligible)**
- **Effectiveness – 91% of our graduates indicated ongoing use of fixed-route services and decreased use of paratransit**





Benefits to Metro

- **Contributes to increased ridership – projected 14M RFP trips in FY11**
- **Contributes to increased RFP revenue – total of \$7.3M, FY10**
- **Decreased dependency on, and cost of, paratransit – \$38/trip saved each time fixed-route used – projected 600K free ride trips in FY11 (~\$22.8M saved)**
- **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**

