

CAT Ad Hoc: Communication Standards
September 29, 2022
11 AM-Noon

Attendees:

CAT

Jan Campbell
Annadiana Johnson
Kris Meagher
Dave Daley
Claudia Robertson

TRIMET STAFF

Margo Moore- ATP Director
Eileen Collins- LIFT Service Delivery Manager
Joseph Camper – Coordinator, ADA Compliance
Elise Soumokil- LIFT Admin Assistant

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Sadie Taylor- 29 yrs old, legally blind, TriMet rider.

Meeting began at 11 AM

Joseph received an inquiry/complaint from Sadie who was concerned about the audio announcements not announcing enough bus stops. This led Joseph to look into DOT and FTA regulations and compare them to TriMet's internal announcement policy.

Found 3 things:

1. DOT says stops have to be announced at major intersections and destination points. Would be good for TriMet policies to include this language (it does not currently). DOT does not define "major intersection and destination points", so TriMet would have define the terms after adopting them in its own policies.
2. TriMet's criteria do not state that bus operators must announce stops at the request of individuals with disabilities if the ASA system stops working.
3. The other criteria – first stop on each new street, last stop in every fare zone, and the mid-point of one-mile span – may be insufficient to permit individuals with visual impairments to orient themselves to their location.

Joseph wanted to hear from CAT if addressing these three issues with TriMet's current policies would provide the supports visually impaired riders need to successfully navigate our system.

Dave expressed his concern that adopting the policy of announcing at major intersections would result in fewer stops being announced that are currently.

Kris shared that at times multiple riders will ask the operator to announce stops.

Annadiana said the first and baseline announcement not being made any longer and nothing is being announced until 11th or 12th in the middle of Cornelius. One time she asked the bus driver to tell her when he got to a specific stop and the operator said "I will try to remember to do that." She asked if this meeting will include discussion of the audio announcements on max as well.

Joseph's Replies to CAT member concerns:

-The DOT regulation and FTA circular are really the guiding light for stop announcements for TriMet's fixed route line. The most important part of announcing any stop is that it assists the agency in orienting riders with physical impairments to where they are. The DOT and FTA are really concerned about orienting riders to their locations.

- If TriMet had an audio announcement for every stop this would solve the issue of operators having to remember to announce rider's stops. This would also solve the issue of inconsistent announcements which has been observed by CAT members. Joe said he has not analyzed the issue of announcements on Max.

-Joseph said he noticed while riding TriMet that it was often hard to hear the automated stop announcements on the bus, so this is another issue to be looked into.

Claudia said it is time to rewrite TriMet's announcement policy as fare zones no longer exist. She also said there were times when operators flat out refused to announce stops. She said there seems to be no consequences for operators doing so.

Sadie brought two main questions to today's meeting:

Do people making policies have experience working with the blind?

Does TriMet have any plans to better support visually impaired riders other than audio announcements? Sadie has experienced other transit agencies provide audio that announces every stop, so it seems unacceptable that TriMet is not doing the same.

Joseph's Responses:

He was unaware that fare zones no longer existed as he is still new to the agency. He does not know if the people who wrote TriMet's policies around this issue had experience working with visually impaired individuals. As for other agencies announcing every stop, Joseph said the department of transportation does not require transit agencies do so.

Sadie shared that she frequently gets lost when using the TriMet system. Sadie said the max seems to announce every stop unless it is malfunctioning, but buses regularly do not announce all stops.

Dave said it seems obvious that TriMet has the tech to announce every stop because line # 2 today pretty much announces every stop.

Annadiana shared that some riders have a hard time seeing the words on the reader board on buses. She said she'd seen glitches with max system announcements. She said one time the Max operator had to restart the train to reset the announcements when it started giving the wrong stops.

CAT members discussed the worry that having every stop announced would cause too much chatter/noise. It was also brought up that other types of announcements, like the reminder to wear a mask, sometimes overlaps with the stop announcements. Sadie suggested that "chatter" could be limited by getting rid of the other announcements such as the reminders to pay fare.

CAT members requested copies of the DOT regulations, verbiage from the ADA addressing this issue, and TriMet policies on stop announcements.

Joseph recognized the general consensus among attendees of today's meeting that every bus and max stop should be announced. He shared that TriMet IT has a new vendor for the stop announcements and TriMet's technology has likely improved. Joseph will reach back out to people in IT and provide summary of what was discussed today.

It was decided that the next meeting on this topic be rolled into the wayfinding ad hoc.

Joe will share information with Sadie about tomorrow's wayfinding meeting at 10 AM so she can attend. More information about CAT meetings can be found at TriMet.org/CAT.

Meeting adjourned at 11:48