



PLANNING & PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
January 22, 1998

**SUBJECT: AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)
PARATRANSIT PLAN UPDATE**

Metropolitan
Transportation
Authority

**ACTION: APPROVAL OF THE ADA COMPLEMENTARY
PARATRANSIT PLAN UPDATE**

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the 1998 ADA Complementary Paratransit Plan Update (Attachment A).

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ISSUE

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The MTA, as a public transit agency, is required to have a plan indicating how it will ensure the provision of ADA-mandated paratransit service, with annual updates when there are significant changes to the plan.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Adopting the ADA Paratransit Plan Update helps to meet the ADA requirements of the MTA as a public transit agency. It accomplishes one of the tasks in the Revised ADA Transition Plan, adopted by the Board in August 1997. The 1998 Paratransit Plan Update has specific policy implications for MTA in two areas: the impact of fixed route accessibility problems, such as wheelchair-lift failures, on eligibility for ADA paratransit, and the impact of MTA budget decisions on Access Services Incorporated (ASI).

OPTIONS

Based on the above policy issues, staff believes adopting the Update is the only option.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding for the ADA paratransit service operated by ASI has been approved through the budget process. Historically, the MTA has committed funding to ASI annually from local sales tax revenues. For FY 1997-98, a total of \$30 million has been approved, representing approximately 85% of ASI's funding. The MTA currently projects increasing this annually based on the rate of inflation, which does not account for the 1% per month ridership increases projected by ASI. While the 1998 Update is based on the current funding plan, the MTA and ASI need to work on ways to increase funding or develop other alternatives to maintain ADA-compliant paratransit services. In addition, MTA staff is working with Caltrans to use federal Surface Transportation Program funds for funding ASI through the federal Section 5310 program. Staff hopes to have resolution of the federal issues related to this fund trade by early 1998.

BACKGROUND DISCUSSION

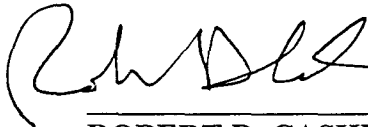
The MTA, as a public fixed route agency, must adopt a plan for ensuring the provision of comparable paratransit service for persons whose disabilities prevent them from using the fixed route system. The ADA Complementary Paratransit Plan Update for 1998 identifies the status and proposed changes in its previously-adopted plan to ensure ADA paratransit in the MTA service area. This Update incorporates ASI policies and issues. Two of these directly involve the MTA. One involves requests for ADA paratransit eligibility based on fixed route accessibility problems. When fixed route transit is not accessible due to wheelchair-lift failures, for example, persons may be conditionally eligible for the more expensive ADA paratransit. MTA Operations is implementing procedures to resolve fixed route accessibility problems, including increased training of maintenance staff and rider information on accessible service through the "Metro Wheels" program. The second issue is the impact of MTA funding decisions on ASI, which was discussed in the section of this report on Financial Impact.

In September, the Board authorized a public hearing on the Paratransit Plan Update on November 17, 1997. A summary of the public comments is included as Attachment B to this report. On November 20, 1997, the Access Advisory Committee, the MTA advisory committee focusing on issues involving transportation of persons with disabilities and seniors, voted to approve the Update with inclusion of issues raised during the public hearing. These issues included concerns about fares, service areas, and service provided by Access Services and accessibility problems experienced in using MTA and other fixed route systems.

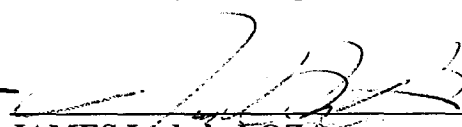
PREPARED BY:

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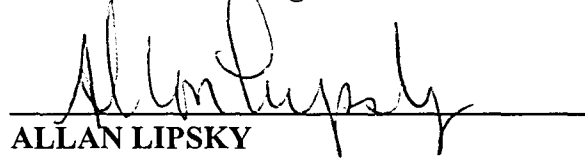
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[File: eb:ADA:Plan Update Board Rept rev 12/18/97]

Attachments

- A. Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority Americans with Disabilities Act Paratransit Plan Update and Issues for 1998
- B. Summary of Public Comments

ATTACHMENT A

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
COMPLEMENTARY PARATRANSIT PLAN UPDATE
1998**

December 11, 1997

INTRODUCTION

This document is an update of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit Plan.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) required fixed route public transit operators to provide service that is accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities. In addition, the ADA required public transit operators to ensure that persons with disabilities who are unable to travel to, board, ride, or disembark from an accessible fixed route bus or rail system have complementary paratransit service which is comparable to the fixed route service. This complementary paratransit service must be offered during the same days and hours as the fixed route service, with a comparable response time and fares, and covering the same geographic area as the fixed route service. There can be no restrictions on trip purpose nor constraints on the number of trips taken on the complementary paratransit system. Public transit agencies were required to submit a complementary paratransit plan in January 1992, with annual updates until the ADA paratransit system was fully implemented and compliant. The deadline for full implementation was January 1997.

In Los Angeles County, paratransit service meeting the requirements for ADA complementary paratransit service, is provided by Access Services Incorporated (ASI), a private non-profit public benefit corporation, and approximately 200 other public and non-profit paratransit providers. The 42 public fixed route transit systems in Los Angeles County except for the MTA, are member agencies of ASI. ASI has submitted a coordinated complementary paratransit plan and updates on behalf of its member agencies.

The MTA has submitted its own plan and annual updates. The MTA paratransit plan and updates identified the service provided by ASI and other paratransit providers as providing the required ADA paratransit service in the MTA service area, meeting all the standards and criteria identified in the ADA regulations by January 1997. While the MTA's legal obligation to prepare annual updates ended with full implementation of the ADA paratransit service, MTA has prepared the 1998 Update to identify MTA issues related to the ADA paratransit service. Because much of the MTA's compliance with the ADA complementary paratransit requirements is based on policies and service of ASI, the MTA's 1998 Update reflects policy issues and changes proposed by ASI.

ADA PARATRANSIT: MTA ROLE

Paratransit service in Los Angeles County is provided by more than 200 public and private non-profit paratransit providers. These providers have a wide variety of service areas, eligibility requirements, fares, funding sources, hours of service, etc. Most of these systems serve at least some individuals who are eligible for ADA-paratransit service. One of these systems, Access Services Incorporated (ASI), provides the countywide complementary paratransit service.

The MTA is the planning and programming agency for Los Angeles County, with responsibility for programming and administering local sales tax funds. Many local jurisdictions have used these funds to implement paratransit services in their communities serving both ADA- and non-ADA riders.

In addition to the local public paratransit systems, MTA has committed funding to ASI annually. Historically this funding has been from local sales tax revenues. For FY 1997-98, MTA has approved an agreement to provide \$30,000,000 to ASI. MTA staff is working on a proposal to use federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds for the ADA paratransit service through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 program. Since STP funds cannot be used directly to fund ADA paratransit service, the funds must be transferred to the Section 5310 program before being allocated to ASI. If federal issues regarding this fund trade cannot be resolved, the funding commitment will need to be met by MTA from local sales taxes. As the funding agency, MTA establishes conditions for funding and monitors ASI to ensure that ASI is providing paratransit service which meets the requirements of the ADA, to confirm the quality of this service in the MTA's service area, and to ensure the efficient and effective use of MTA funds. This plan update and the public hearing on it form one part of this ongoing monitoring effort. In addition, MTA staff meet regularly with ASI staff, and participate in ASI meetings. Finally, MTA will be conducting an evaluation of ASI, to be completed by March 1998.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The MTA is firmly committed to the full and timely implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. To that end, the MTA has actively worked with individuals and agencies to provide information and encourage the participation of persons with disabilities in the development and implementation of ADA paratransit service in Los Angeles County.

The two major elements to the MTA's public outreach and participation activities are (1) the public hearing on the ADA Paratransit Plan Update and (2) ongoing consultation with the MTA Access Advisory Committee.

Public Hearing

A public hearing was held Monday, November 17, at 10:00 a.m. A legal notice was published in the Los Angeles Times on October 18, 1997 and November 10, 1997. In addition, legal notices were published in the Long Beach Press, Los Angeles Daily News, and three papers serving major minority communities in the county: La Opinion, Rafu Shimpō, and Los Angeles Sentinel. Announcements of the public hearing were mailed to more than 1,800 individuals and agencies, including social service and health care agencies, transit agencies, providers of specialized transportation services, and other individuals and organizations who have indicated an interest in MTA services and activities for persons with disabilities. Approximately 25 persons attended the public hearing; 12 individuals testified at the hearing. In addition, written comments were received from two individuals.

Access Advisory Committee

The MTA Access Advisory Committee (AAC) is an advisory committee whose 20 members represent a wide range of disabilities and senior citizens' concerns. Committee members also represent a range of geographic areas and ethnic communities within the county. In addition to the members, committee agendas are regularly mailed to 125 individuals and agencies which have expressed an interest in receiving meeting notices.

The committee has regularly discussed issues involving implementation of ADA requirements and provision of transit and paratransit services for persons with disabilities. In addition, the committee specifically discussed the paratransit plan update at its November 20, 1997 meeting and voted to approve the 1998 Paratransit Plan Update with the inclusion of the summary of public comments. An average of 20 persons attended meetings at which ADA paratransit issues were discussed.

1998 ISSUES

The following is a list of issues related to ADA paratransit in Los Angeles County during 1998. The first two items, with specific relevance to MTA, are discussed here; the remaining items relate specifically to ASI policies and issues and are not discussed in detail in this document. More details on ASI's perspectives and options can be found in the 1998 Los Angeles County Coordinated ADA Complementary Paratransit Plan Update prepared by ASI.

ISSUES RELATED TO MTA ROLES

FY 1998 Budget Issues

MTA provides approximately 85% of ASI's funding. For FY 1998, MTA has agreed to provide \$30 million. MTA currently projects increasing this annually based on the rate of inflation. Because Inflation increases do not allow for ridership increases, maintaining the current level of funding for ASI may not allow for the maintenance of service at current levels. MTA and ASI will work on options for the coming year. The basic alternatives are:

- ASI ridership increases with no other changes, resulting in a need for additional funding to maintain ADA-compliant paratransit service.
- ASI reduces costs or implements increased efficiencies in partnership with MTA, enabling ASI to provide the projected level of service without an increase in funding above the rate of inflation.

ASI is currently experiencing ridership increases of 3.1% per month, in addition to cost increases related to inflation. In part, increases in ridership have depended on quality of service and newness of the service in a particular area. With a general increase in quality and full implementation of service in all parts of the county, ridership rates of increase have reached a stable level. Even ASI's most conservative estimates project continuing ridership increases at some level. ASI has developed three options, based on projected ridership increases of 1% per month and different levels of MTA subsidy. An increase in MTA funding for ASI would allow the current level of service with the projected ridership increase. Lower levels, whether at the current projection or slightly higher, would require the development of alternatives to maintain ADA-compliant paratransit service without service cuts.

Fixed Route Accessibility Problems and ADA Paratransit Eligibility

Eligibility for ADA complementary paratransit is limited to: (1) persons who cannot navigate the existing fixed route system(s) due to a disability, (2) persons who cannot use the existing fixed route system because it is not accessible, and (3) persons whose

combination of disability and environmental and/or architectural barriers prevents access to fixed route transit.

In Los Angeles County, all fixed route transit vehicles are equipped with wheelchair lifts and are accessible. However, in recent months several requests for ASI eligibility have been based on a lack of accessibility of the fixed route system, due to wheelchair lift failures and/or pass-ups by drivers of fixed route vehicles. Many of these accessibility problems involve service operated by the MTA.

MTA Operations has implemented new procedures to deal with these accessibility problems; these include:

1. increased training for maintenance staff specifically dealing with wheelchair-lift maintenance;
2. Transit Institute, an intensive two-day re-training of every bus operator;
3. "Metro Wheels" project utilizing volunteer regular riders in wheelchairs reporting on every attempted trip on MTA service, whether successful or unsuccessful;
4. operational standards to ensure that any vehicle known to be in service with an inoperative lift is followed by an accessible vehicle.

Through these and related efforts, MTA believes it has the ability to meet the demand of riders who use wheelchairs. MTA will continue to work with ASI to resolve accessibility problems on its service and thus eliminate the need to certify persons for ASI eligibility on the basis of non-accessibility of MTA routes.

MTA and ASI will also work with other fixed route systems to ensure ongoing accessibility of service on these systems.

ASI POLICY ISSUES

The following issues relate to specific ASI policies and issues raised in the ASI Plan Update. These are mentioned briefly here; more information on them is available through the Plan Update prepared by ASI.

Fare Policy

In March 1997, ASI implemented a distance-based fare for ADA-paratransit trips, paralleling the fixed route systems' use of express fares for longer, freeway trips. ASI proposes keeping the distance-based fare, and making necessary technical and training changes to assure that the policy works consistently throughout the county. In addition, ASI will analyze rider surveys to decide whether an alternative policy is required.

On-Time Performance and Denial Rate

ASI is developing independent tools to evaluate on-time performance and denials. Use of these independent tools should enable ASI to develop a more accurate picture of daily operations and identify resources to solve systematic problems.

Reservation/Confirmation Policy

In 1997, ASI replaced its two-hour confirmation window with a five-hour reservation and confirmation window on a trial basis. Based on the positive feedback received, ASI plans to make this policy permanent.

Service Quality Monitoring

In the past, ASI has noted differences in service quality as reported by contractors and riders' perceptions of service quality. Therefore ASI has implemented an ongoing program of independently surveying service quality, through telephone surveys, focus groups, and random rides.

Rider's Guide / Service Policy Simplification

ASI developed a Rider's Guide summarizing ASI policies and procedures. Over the next year, ASI plans to review and analyze the guide in an effort to shorten it and make it easier to use. In addition, updates and changes in procedures will be disseminated through quarterly community meetings and monthly newsletters.

Service Routes and Subscription Service

Since ADA paratransit service began in Los Angeles County, there have been two basic scheduling methods: real-time service and service routes. The real-time demand service closely parallels fixed route transit and provides riders with same-day service. Service routes, similar to subscription service, have been used to satisfy recurring trip patterns, generally through shared rides. Service routes have occurred when ASI was able to identify an efficient vehicle pattern matching up the recurring trips of two or more riders. However, subscription service has not been widely embraced by either riders or service providers. Therefore, ASI may modify the service route scheduling and instead implement standing rides. These would involve any rider with recurring trip(s) who has expressed an interest in having these recurring trip(s) scheduled automatically, as long as the standing rides do not exceed, in each service area, the 50% maximum allowable under ADA regulations.

ASI also plans to evaluate and test the efficiency of offering a portion of its service in a "next day" scheduling mode.

Mobile Certification Services

Currently, ASI offers applicants three methods enabling them to schedule and participate in the required in-person interview which forms the basis of all ASI eligibility determinations. These are: (1) individually scheduled interviews at one of 10 sites established by ASI; (2) group certifications, with interviews conducted for groups of six or more at such community facilities as senior activity centers, disability services centers, nursing homes, etc.; and (3) hospital outreach service, with interviews scheduled for patients at seven community hospitals. During the next year, ASI plans to field-test a mobile certification service which may make the process more readily available, convenient, and flexible in scheduling.

Review and Revision of Certification Interview Instrument

The basis of all ASI eligibility determinations is an in-person interview conducted by trained analysts who have education and/or experience in the fields of health or disabilities services. The interview instrument was initially prepared by a team of specialists and persons with disabilities in 1991, and has undergone minor revisions since then. Based on experience over the past six years, ASI plans to develop a revised interview instrument with the participation and collaboration of its certification contractors and appeals specialists, and with input from its Advisory Committee, community organizations, professionals in disabilities services, and applicants/riders.

ASI will also be working with one of its certification contractors, Orthopaedic Hospital, to evaluate the possibility of incorporating simple, functional tests as part of the in-person interview.

**MTA ADA PARATRANSIT PLAN UPDATE - 1998
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

PUBLIC HEARING

MTA: PARATRANSIT PLAN UPDATE / RELATIONSHIP TO ASI

The paratransit plan update is good.

MTA appreciates the support.

Urge MTA to have more oversight and accountability, to ensure provider responses to complaints about deficient service.

MTA staff has regular contact with ASI staff on issues and concerns. In addition, MTA is contracting with a consultant to evaluate ASI service and policies.

MTA should monitor ASI service and drivers.

MTA maintains regular contact with ASI, and contacts ASI staff on service issues and problems as these arise. In addition, MTA is contracting with a consultant to evaluate ASI service.

ACCESSIBLE FIXED ROUTE TRANSPORTATION

Fixed route bus drivers and supervisors do not realize that when a person with a disability is passed up, and the headway is more than 30 minutes, an alternative means of transportation, such as paratransit, must be arranged

This concern will be forwarded to MTA Operations to determine the best method of training bus drivers, supervisors, and dispatch staff on this requirement. Reminders will also be provided to the other public transit systems in the county on this issue.

PARATRANSIT SERVICE (GENERAL)

It is difficult to get paratransit in South Central Los Angeles.

MTA and ASI are working on ways to expand coordination of specialized transportation services in all parts of the county. There are transportation services in South Central Los Angeles which should be available as needed.

ACCESS SERVICES - SERVICE

Service in Long Beach area has improved recently. Service in the South Bay area has improved recently.

MTA is pleased that service has improved.

Some Access Services providers do not know who "Access Services" is.

ASI plans several steps during 1998 to improve service quality. MTA is forwarding this comment to ASI for further response.

There are still some deficiencies in service. As an example, both disabled ASI Board members have been left at different times by ASI providers.

ASI will be implementing several programs to monitor and improve service quality. In addition, quality of ASI service is included in the MTA evaluation of ASI. This concern is being forwarded to ASI for further follow-up.

ASI providers do not respond to complaints.

Response to complaints is one area included in the MTA evaluation of ASI. This comment is being forwarded to ASI for follow-up.

Concerns about lateness and abusive drivers.

MTA is concerned about these problems, and is forwarding the comments to ASI. Service quality is one of the issues included in the MTA evaluation of ASI.

Several persons participating in Easter Seal program in Van Nuys use Access Services; when one client is late this delays activities for all the clients in the program.

The impact of lateness on a program's scheduled activities will be forwarded to ASI. The issues of service quality and rider satisfaction will be included in the MTA evaluation of ASI.

Scheduling rides is a problem. Riders are not notified of a change in the pick-up time until after they call in to report vehicle lateness. Need better communication with riders.

Customer satisfaction and service quality will be included in the MTA evaluation of ASI. And ASI is developing procedures to monitor and improve service quality.

Reserved rides are often late; when rider calls concerning lateness, provider does not have a van on the way. If a vehicle is more than one hour late, believe fare should be reduced by \$0.50-\$1.00.

ASI is trying to develop an accurate estimate on lateness, and proposes specific steps to track on-time performance. MTA will work with ASI on improving communications concerning lateness. The comment is being forwarded to ASI for further response.

Access Services is improving.

MTA is pleased about service improvements.

Riders traveling from Rancho Los Amigos in Downey have major problems with delayed pick-ups; riders calling at 2 p.m. for a 4 p.m. pick-up are told they cannot be picked up until 9 or 10 p.m.

Service quality, including lateness and complaint-resolution, will be included in the MTA evaluation of ASI. ASI is proposing several strategies to better track on-time performance of its service providers. This concern is being forwarded to ASI.

ACCESS SERVICES - POLICIES: FARES AND COSTS

The maximum fare of \$4 is too much for a one-way trip

While MTA recognizes the impact of the fare on riders, the fare does meet the requirements of the ADA. It was originally adopted following input for the 1997 Paratransit Plan Update, and had the support of the ASI and MTA advisory committees.

Concern about fares.

MTA recognizes that the ASI fares may pose a hardship. However, the fares have been designed to meet ADA requirements. In addition, the fare structure increases the ability of ASI to provide ADA-compliant paratransit service for eligible riders.

Concern about use of express service fares as a basis for ASI fares; urge these higher fares be reduced.

MTA staff believes that the fare structure, including the use of express service fares as a basis for the distance-based fares, parallels the travel patterns of persons using fixed route transit and comply with ADA requirements.

Suggest looking into alternatives to help pay for transportation to medical appointments, to replace other more costly medical transportation. Suggest looking into other funding sources and special scrip for these appointments.

Agencies, including medical agencies, can purchase ASI scrip for ASI-certified riders needing transportation. MTA will forward this recommendation to ASI, and work with ASI to encourage agencies spending larger amounts on transportation to make use of ASI for eligible patients and clients.

ACCESS SERVICES - POLICIES: SERVICE AREA AND TIMES

ADA paratransit is supposed to be available in all areas served by fixed route. ASI does not provide service to Seal Beach, an area served by Long Beach Transit

MTA will work with ASI to ensure that the ADA paratransit service area is comparable to the service areas of all public fixed route systems.

ASI does not provide service from the San Fernando Valley to the Antelope Valley and Santa Clarita on weekends. Weekend service to these areas would allow visits to friends and relatives and trips to Magic Mountain.

The MTA recognizes the desire of persons to have weekend transportation to recreation and other areas. However, the ADA requires only that ADA paratransit service be provided during the same days and times that an area is served by fixed route transit.

ASI service area should be expanded.

MTA recognizes the desire of persons to expand their travel. However, at the current time, MTA and ASI are focusing efforts on providing an ADA paratransit system which complements the fixed route system and meets the requirements of the ADA. The current service area has been designed to meet the specific ADA requirements for complementary ADA paratransit.

MTA: VEHICLES

Concern about treatment of service animals on buses. Bus floors are dirty with gum and other debris which gets in fur of service animal.

This problem will be forwarded to MTA Operations to determine what steps might be taken to correct this problem. To some extent, there may be limited resolution to this problem, because dirt and gum accumulate while the bus is on its route. Staff will try to identify ways to remind bus operators and maintenance staff about the impacts of this dirt on service animals.

Wheelchair lifts break down frequently while in service, requiring all passengers to leave the bus.

MTA Operations is implementing procedures to improve wheelchair lift maintenance, which should reduce this problem. In addition, MTA will be acquiring new buses, which should have better wheelchair lifts.

Ongoing problems with non-functioning wheelchair lifts.

MTA Operations is implementing programs to improve the maintenance of wheelchair lifts. In addition, MTA is acquiring new vehicles which should have better wheelchair lifts than the older vehicles currently in MTA service.

MTA OPERATIONS: BUS OPERATORS

Buses don't pull up to the curb, making it difficult for people to board.

MTA Operations, through the recently-implemented Transit Institute, is re-training all bus operators, with a customer service orientation. Such ongoing reminders of the need to focus on MTA's riders should improve problems such as this.

Bus drivers are abusive to passengers, and don't use the kneeling feature of buses.

During the current fiscal year, all MTA bus drivers are going through a two-day Transit Institute, designed to increase drivers' sensitivity to the needs and concerns of bus riders. When incidents occur, it is important to report these to MTA with as much information as possible so the specific operator can be identified and corrective action taken.

On recent MTA bus trip, the door did not open until the fourth or fifth attempt by the bus operator.

Because of the need to provide service, many MTA buses currently in active service are older than the standard maximum 12 years. Unfortunately, mechanical problems are more likely to occur in these older buses. Fortunately, many bus drivers are willing to keep working with the equipment until it does work.

New bus operator did not adequately secure the wheelchair on the bus.

New bus operators go through an extensive training which includes ADA requirements and sensitivity training. And during Fiscal Year 1997-98, all MTA bus operators will go through the MTA's new "Transit Institute," a two-day retraining program which includes sensitivity to persons with disabilities. Specific problems are reviewed with individual bus operators when these problems are reported to MTA. This concern will be forwarded to MTA Operations for possible reminders to bus operators on securement of wheelchairs.

Rider with service animal has no trouble traveling on MTA in the San Fernando Valley and nearby areas, but has encountered problems with MTA bus operators in the southern part of the county, where operators overload buses and are rude to passengers.

MTA Operations is taking several steps to improve bus service, including a two-day retraining program for all MTA bus drivers. This retraining program focuses on a range of customer-service issues.

Problems getting accessible service in central and East Los Angeles areas. Drivers often pick up ambulatory passengers and then leave passenger in wheelchair. One time individual in wheelchair had to wait in a dangerous area for 1 ½ hours while 10 buses with non-functioning lifts drove by.

MTA Operations is taking several steps to try to improve the provision of accessible service in all parts of the MTA service area. These steps include improved maintenance of wheelchair lifts, increased monitoring of accessible service through a demonstration "Metro Wheels" program, and ongoing retraining of all bus drivers through the recently-implemented Transit Institute program.

MTA - BUS STOPS

Bus stop at Rose and Main in Venice has no room for a wheelchair between the bench and the curb.

Information on this bus stop has been forwarded to MTA Stops and Zones staff. Generally, bus stops are the direct responsibility of the cities in which they are located; MTA staff attempts to work with cities to identify and correct bus stop accessibility problems.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

MTA: BUS OPERATORS

Staff person working with ambulatory clients with mild to moderate mental retardation notes problems with bus operators: not stopping for developmentally disabled riders, requesting cash fare in addition to bus pass, and rude treatment.

MTA Operations has recently begun a Transit Institute, which during Fiscal Year 1997-98 will provide a two-day retraining for all MTA bus drivers. A large part of this retraining focuses on ADA and sensitivity to the needs and concerns of riders with disabilities. It is hoped that this will help improve the service provided to riders with developmental and other disabilities.

MTA: CUSTOMER SERVICE

Staff person working with clients with mild to moderate mental retardation has concerns about customer service follow-up of clients' complaints. Customer service representatives tell clients that without a driver badge number or bus number they cannot follow-up on complaints, even when clients provide route number, time, direction of travel. Writer considers this unfair to clients.

MTA is implementing several strategies to attempt to improve the general customer focus of MTA bus drivers. In addition, when complaints are received about specific bus operators, steps can be taken to focus additional retraining efforts on such bus operators and, if warranted, implement disciplinary action. However, in order to be sure that the correct bus operator is being targeted for such additional action, it is necessary to have a unique piece of information, either the bus or driver number. There are frequently several buses operating on a route during short periods of time. MTA will attempt to develop additional strategies for identifying drivers who have caused problems to bus riders with disabilities.

PARATRANSIT (GENERAL)

Senior citizen has concerns about restrictions on use of paratransit for seniors in the San Fernando Valley. Problems include: limits of when seniors can schedule pick-ups, lack of accommodations for shopping carts, delays in pick-ups for return trips, problems involved with long waits in bad weather.

Paratransit service in the San Fernando Valley is the responsibility of the Los Angeles City Department of Transportation (LADOT), which oversees the Cityride program. This complaint has been forwarded to LADOT for follow-up.

MTA ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTS

ACCESS SERVICES - SERVICE

Concern about ASI confirmation phone calls to rider at unreasonable hours; two calls have been received from ASI providers at 2:00 a.m. confirming individual's scheduled rides.

MTA agrees that confirmation calls at 2:00 a.m. are not reasonable, and will forward this complaint to ASI for follow-up.

Concern that deaf and hard-of-hearing are under-served by ASI.

MTA believes that ASI has taken necessary steps to meet the needs of persons with hearing impairments when those persons may be eligible for ASI. In most cases, a hearing impairment alone would not prevent an individual from using regular fixed route transit.

ACCESSIBLE FIXED ROUTE TRANSPORTATION

Bus operators and dispatch staff do not recognize the need for alternative transportation late at night, when a wheelchair-lift is not functioning and the wait for the next accessible vehicle is one hour.

This concern will be forwarded to MTA Operations to determine the best method of training and reminding bus drivers, supervisors, and dispatch staff about this requirement.