

**Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County
(METRO)**

**ADA Complementary Paratransit Service
Compliance Review**

August 16–20, 2010

Summary of Observations

Prepared for

Federal Transit Administration

Office of Civil Rights

Washington, DC

Prepared by

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with

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1 Purpose of the Review

Public entities that operate fixed route transportation services for the general public are required by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) to provide ADA complementary paratransit service for persons who, because of their disability, are unable to use the fixed route system. These regulations (49 CFR Parts 27, 37, and 38) include six service criteria that must be met by ADA complementary paratransit service programs. Section 37.135(d) of the regulations requires that ADA complementary paratransit services meet these criteria by January 26, 1997.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is responsible for ensuring compliance with the ADA and the DOT regulations implementing the ADA. As part of its oversight efforts, FTA, through its Office of Civil Rights, conducts periodic reviews of fixed route transit and ADA complementary paratransit services operated by Federal grantees.

The purpose of these reviews is to assist the transit agency and FTA in determining whether capacity constraints exist in ADA complementary paratransit services. The reviews examine related policies and standards such as those measured by on-time performance, on-board travel time, telephone hold times, trip denials, and any other trip-limiting factors. The reviews consider whether there are patterns or practices of a substantial number of trip limits, trip denials, early or late pickups or arrivals after desired arrival (or appointment) times, long trips, or long telephone hold times, as defined by established standards (or typical practices if standards do not exist). The examination of patterns or practices includes looking not just at service statistics, but also at basic service records and operating documents, and observing service to determine whether records and documents appear to reflect true levels of service delivery. Comments were also gathered from local disability organizations and customers. Technical assistance is provided to assist the transit agency in monitoring services for capacity constraints.

FTA conducted a review of ADA complementary paratransit service provided by the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) in Houston, Texas, from August 16–20, 2010. Planners Collaborative, Inc. and TranSystems Corporation, both located in Boston, Massachusetts, conducted the review for the FTA Office of Civil Rights. The review focused primarily on compliance of METRO’s ADA complementary paratransit service with the requirement in the DOT ADA regulations that this service be operated without capacity constraints (49 CFR § 37.131(f)).

Sections 37.123 through 37.127 of the DOT ADA regulations require that a process be established for determining who is ADA paratransit eligible, and that eligibility determinations are made consistent with regulatory criteria. Section 37.129(a) requires that ADA complementary paratransit be origin-to-destination service. Section 37.131(a) requires that ADA complementary paratransit service be provided in all geographic areas where non-commuter fixed route service is provided. Section 37.131(b) requires that “next-day” service be provided. Section 37.131(c) requires that ADA complementary paratransit fares be no more than twice the full fixed route fare. Section 37.131(d) requires that ADA complementary paratransit service be provided without restrictions or priorities placed on trip purpose. Section 37.131(e) requires that ADA complementary paratransit service be provided during all days and hours that fixed route service is provided. Section 37.139(g) requires that plans for ADA complementary paratransit

service address efforts to coordinate with other public entities that have contiguous or overlapping ADA complementary paratransit service areas.

The review also examined METRO's ADA complementary paratransit service with respect to the requirements related to eligibility determinations, rider assistance policies, and ADA complementary paratransit service criteria.

This report summarizes the observations and findings of the on-site review of METRO's ADA complementary paratransit service. Chapter 2 explains the approach and methodology used to conduct the review. Chapter 3 then describes key features of transit services provided by METRO—fixed route bus and ADA complementary paratransit service. Chapter 4 provides a summary of the findings that are also presented at the end of the remaining chapters. Chapter 5 includes observations and findings related to rider assistance policies, service area, fares, trip purposes, days and hours of service, and coordination with other public transit entities. Observations and findings related to the eligibility-determination process are presented in Chapter 6. Observations and findings related to the requirement that the availability of service to ADA paratransit eligible persons not be limited, as well as additional observations on response time, are then presented in Chapters 7 (Telephone Service), 8 (Reservations), 9 (Service Performance), and 10 (Resources). Recommendations for addressing some of the findings are also provided.

FTA provided METRO with a draft copy of the report for review and response. A copy of the correspondence received from METRO on June 14, 2012, documenting its response to the draft report, is included as Attachment A.

2 Overview

This review focused primarily on compliance with the DOT ADA requirement that ADA complementary paratransit be operated without capacity constraints. The regulations identify several possible types of capacity constraints. These include waiting lists for trips, limits on the number of trips provided, and patterns or practices that result in a significant number of trip denials missed trips, untimely pickups, or excessively long trips. Capacity constraints also include any operating policies or practices significantly limit the amount of service to persons who are eligible for ADA complementary paratransit.

To assess each of these potential types of capacity constraints, the review focused on observations and findings regarding:

- Trip denials and “wait-listing” of trips
- Trip caps
- On-time performance
- Travel times

This review also includes observations and findings related to five other sets of policies and practices that could affect access to ADA complementary paratransit service:

- Rider assistance policies
- Service area, response time, fares, trip purposes, and service times
- Efforts to coordinate with other ADA complementary paratransit services in the area
- ADA complementary paratransit service eligibility process
- Telephone capacity

The review also addresses scheduling, dispatching, operation of service and an analysis of resources as a potential contributor to capacity constraints.

2.1 Pre-Review

A notification letter from the FTA Office of Civil Rights was sent to METRO’s President and Chief Executive Officer, George Greanias, on June 30, 2010, confirming dates for the review and requesting information needed by the review team be sent in advance of the review. The notification letter is provided in Attachment B.

Based on the information received from METRO, the review team examined key service information prior to the visit. This information included:

- A description of how METRO’s ADA complementary paratransit service is structured
- Public information describing METRO’s ADA complementary paratransit service
- METRO’s standards for on-time performance, trip denials, travel times, and telephone service

As requested by FTA, METRO made additional information available during the visit. This information included:

- Copies of completed driver manifests

- Six months of service data, including the number of trips requested, scheduled, denied, or canceled, no-shows, missed trips, and trips provided
- Breakdown of trips requested, scheduled, and provided
 - Detailed information about trips denied in the previous six months, including origin and destination information, day and time information, and customer information
 - Detailed information about trips identified in the previous six months with excessively long travel times
 - Telephone call management records
 - Records of rider comments and complaints related to capacity issues including: trip denials, on-time performance, travel time, and telephone access

In addition, the review team contacted several riders, disability advocates, and disability agency staff to get comments on their experiences with METRO's ADA paratransit service.

2.2 On-Site Review

An on-site review of the ADA complementary paratransit service took place from August 16–20, 2010. The on-site review began with an opening conference, held at 9 a.m. on Monday, August 16 at the METRO offices at 1900 Main Street, Houston. METRO representatives attending the meeting included:

- George Greanias, then Acting President and CEO of METRO
- Andrew Skabowski, METRO, Senior Vice President Service Delivery
- John Sedlak, METRO, Executive Vice President & Director of Partnering Strategy
- Edith Lowery, METRO, Director of Grant Programs
- Art Jackson, METRO, Director of Transportation Programs
- Michael Andrade, METRO, Manager of METROLift Services
- Susan Clark, FTA Office of Civil Rights
- Theresa Sullivan, then FTA Office of Civil Rights
- William Jones, then FTA Regional Civil Rights Officer (by telephone)
- Russell Thatcher, TranSystems Corporation (Team Leader)
- Tom Procopio, TranSystems Corporation
- David Chia, Planners Collaborative

Ms. Clark opened the meeting by thanking METRO for opening its office and operations to the review. She stressed that the review team would make every effort to complete the review with as little disruption to the METRO operation as possible. She also invited METRO staff to contact her directly should they have any questions or concerns about the review. Ms. Clark stated that the main purpose of the review was to assess compliance with requirements of the ADA. She also pointed out that the review team had significant experience with ADA complementary paratransit operations and encouraged METRO to utilize the review team for technical assistance.

Bill Jones underscored that the review was intended to assist METRO in strengthening its services. He also provided his contact information and invited METRO staff to contact him if they had any questions about the review.

Ms. Clark mentioned that preliminary findings would be provided at a closing meeting on Friday, August 20, 2010. She encouraged METRO to ask questions about the preliminary findings as well as possible approaches for addressing any issues that might be identified.

Russell Thatcher of TranSystems (the review team leader) then presented the schedule for the on-site review including the parts of the operation that would be observed each day. A copy of the review schedule is provided in Attachment C.

Following the opening conference, the review team met with METRO staff to discuss the information sent in advance as well as the information and material that was available on site. METRO policies and procedures were discussed.

For the remainder of the day on Monday, the review team discussed the process in place at METRO to record and respond to consumer comments and concerns and requested consumer comments.. METRO provided the review team with a report of comments compiled between July 1, 2009, and June 30, 2010.

The review team also began gathering information about the process used by METRO to plan and budget for ADA complementary paratransit services. Finally, the review team gathered information needed to analyze compliance with the ADA complementary paratransit requirements related to service area, fares, days and hours of service, and rider-assistance policies.

In the early afternoon on Monday, the review team toured the METROLift call center and started the review of telephone, MACS and MACS-WEB technology. A review of hold time reports and call center staffing was begun at this time. The review team also began the observation of the trip reservation process.

On Tuesday morning, the review team continued its observations of the trip reservations process at the call center. The review team sat with selected reservationists, listened to calls from riders, and recorded observations on the handling of trip requests. The review team also listened to recordings of riders calling in the previous evening to check on their final, scheduled trip time. The review team met with the lead scheduler to discuss procedures used to develop final runs, run structure and to review a report of requested/estimated and final scheduled times. The review team worked with METRO staff to prepare reports on no-show and missed trips for a sample period. The review team also began to analyze on-time performance by examining completed driver manifests.

On Tuesday afternoon, the review team began the analysis of long paratransit trips and comparing on-board travel times with those on the fixed route service. The review team also began a review of the eligibility-determination process, including a review of a sample of determinations as well as no-show and service-suspension records. The review team also observed the dispatch process and the handling of "Where's My Ride (WMR)" calls. The review team interviewed dispatchers and WMR agents.

On Wednesday morning, the review team continued its analysis of on-time performance, travel time, no-show and missed trip policies and eligibility determinations. On Wednesday afternoon, the review team visited the First Transit facility to review the driver-training program and to

interview drivers. The review team also examined fleet information, daily vehicle availability, operating spare ratios, pullout records, and run coverage. The review team returned to the METROLift offices and observed dispatch and WMR operations during the afternoon peak period.

On Thursday morning, the review team continued its examination of on-time performance and on-board travel times, no-show policies, and information about the tabulation of rider no-shows. On Thursday afternoon, the review team visited the Yellow Cab facility to review the driver training program and interview drivers. The review team examined fleet information, daily vehicle availability, operating spare ratios, pullout records, and run coverage. The review team made additional observations of the dispatch operation at the METROLift call center in the late afternoon.

On Friday morning, the review team tabulated the various data that had been gathered and prepared for the exit conference. The exit conference took place at 2 p.m. at the METRO office at 1900 Main Street. Attending the conference were:

- George Greanias, then Acting President and CEO of METRO
- Andrew Skabowski, METRO, Senior Vice President Service Delivery
- John Sedlak, METRO, Executive Vice President & Director of Partnering Strategy
- Edith Lowery, METRO, METRO, Director of Grant Programs
- Art Jackson, METRO, Director of Transportation Programs
- Michael Andrade, METRO, Manager of METROLift Services
- Susan Clark, FTA Office of Civil Rights
- Theresa Sullivan, then FTA Office of Civil Rights
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- Russell Thatcher, TranSystems Corporation (Team Leader)
- Tom Procopio, TranSystems Corporation
- David Chia, Planners Collaborative

Ms. Clark reviewed the goals of the review—to assess compliance and also to provide technical assistance on ADA complementary paratransit services. She stated that a report would be drafted and provided to METRO for review and comment. Once the draft is transmitted to METRO, the report would be subject to release in response to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. METRO's comments on the draft would be incorporated into a final report, and the final report will be posted on FTA's website.

Ms. Clark advised that METRO would be required to respond to the findings. Recommendations, which will require a response, will be offered as suggestions for addressing the findings.

Ms. Clark encouraged METRO to begin addressing findings mentioned during the on-site review while it awaited the draft and final reports. She also invited METRO staff to contact FTA or the review team for technical assistance over the next several months if they decided to move ahead with corrective actions.

The review team also thanked METRO and contractor staff for the cooperation they had provided throughout the week. They then presented initial findings in each of the following areas:

- Service design (rider assistance policies, service area, response time, fares, trip purposes, days and hours, and coordination)
- Eligibility determinations
- Telephone access
- Handling of trip requests
- On-time performance
- Trip duration
- Resources (vehicles, personnel, and financial resources)

Following the presentation of findings, Ms. Clark encouraged METRO staff to begin addressing the findings, as appropriate. She reiterated that FTA and the review team were available for any assistance that might be needed.

3 Background

Houston area voters created the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) in 1978 and approved a one-cent sales tax to support the operation of METRO. The service area is comprised of almost 1,300 square miles and has a population of approximately 2.8 million people. The service area is comprised of the cities of Houston, Bellaire, Bunker Hill Village, El Lago, Hedwig Village, Hilshire Village, Humble, Hunters Creek, Pitney Point, Southside Place, Spring Valley, Taylor Lake Village and West University Place.

METRO provides a range of transportation options including fixed route bus service, rail service (METRORail), METROStar Vanpool and METROLift (paratransit) service.

3.1 Description of Fixed Route Service (METRO)

METRO provides three types of fixed route service, local bus service, Park & Ride bus service and METRORail service. At the time of the on-site review, METRO operated 1,216 buses and 18 METRORail vehicles. In August 2010, METRO provided 6,630,571 trips for local, Park & Ride, and METRORail service. The breakdown by service is shown in table 3.1

Table 3.1 – METRO Fixed Route Services (August 2010)

Service Type	Boardings
Local Bus Service	5,077,572
Park and Ride	694,855
Total Fixed Route Bus Services	5,772,427
METRORail	858,144
Total Fixed Route Services	6,630,571

Source: METRO Web Site, Board Reports, August 2010

Local bus service (94 routes) operates mostly on city streets with buses stopping at every other corner along the route. The local bus service also includes an Airport service with a direct ride from downtown Houston to George Bush International Airport Terminal C. At the time of the review, the fare for local bus service was \$1.25 per trip.

Park & Ride Service is designed for long-distance commuting. Operated using 31 routes and serving 28 Park & Ride lots, the service connects riders to key destinations throughout the service area. Fares are based on distance and range from \$2–4.50 per trip.

METRORail is a 7.5-mile rail line that features 16 stations offering access to Downtown, Midtown, the Museum District, Hermann Park/Houston Zoo, the Texas Medical Center and Reliant Park Complex. The fare for rail service is \$1.25 per trip.

METRO also provides a vanpool program serving Harris and seven surrounding counties. The program, known as Star Vanpool, operates over 760 vanpools serving more than 8,200 riders.

3.2 Description of ADA Complementary Paratransit Service (METROLift)

METRO's ADA complementary paratransit service is known as METROLift. The following description is based on information that METRO provided to the review team and information in *The METROLift Guide* revised June 2010 (*The Guide*).

METRO staff handles METROLift reservations, scheduling and dispatch at a central call center, which is located on the 4th floor at 1900 Main Street in Houston.

At the time of the review METRO had contracts with two main service providers, First Transit and Greater Houston Transportation (Yellow Cab), that operated the assigned runs.

METRO also had contracts with four cab companies to provide taxi backup service for METROLIFT service. METROLIFT uses this service to accommodate peaks in demand and to address issues that arise on the day of service. The companies available for taxi backup service were:

- Yellow Cab (same company that provided dedicated service)
- Houston Transportation
- Fiesta Cab
- United Cab
- Liberty Cab

The service providers are responsible for hiring, training, and supervising drivers, for vehicle maintenance, and for ensuring that the scheduled runs leave on time.

At the time of the review, Yellow Cab and the taxi backup service contractors also provides any vehicles needed to operate the service. METRO provided vehicles to First Transit for First Transit's portion of the operation. The contract with First Transit also allowed First Transit to provide any vehicles beyond those owned and provided by METRO.

In April 2011, METRO awarded a four-year contract to MV Transportation. MV began the transition in May 2011 and expected to transition the entire fleet by August 2011.

Type of Service

At the time of the review *The Guide* (Page 6) indicates that the service is strictly curb-to-curb. The contracts with the service providers, however, indicate that assistance beyond the vehicle is to be provided by drivers when needed, with certain safety restrictions. Conversations with METROLift managers also indicated that assistance beyond the curb is provided as needed. This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 of the report.

Service Area

The Guide (Page 10) states:

METROLift has expanded service hours for those persons living within 3/4 mile from a local bus route. The service is available from 3:45 a.m., with the last trip originating at 1:30 a.m., 7 days a week.

METROLift's service area is covered in more detail in Chapter 5.

Response Time

At the time of the review, *The Guide* (Page 11) stated that reservations may be made one day in advance except on Fridays when reservations are taken for Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Riders have an option to use the automated calling system, called MACS and the on-line reservation system called MACS-WEB 7 days per week to make reservations. In-person phone reservations are not taken on weekends or holidays. According to *The Guide*, “scheduling assistance is available through the dispatch office on weekends or holidays.” A dispatch number could be found on the back cover. That listing does not make it clear that is the number to call to call for assistance in reserving trips, however.

The failure to list the dispatch number alongside the information about the MACS and MACS web automated system options may discourage or prevent eligible riders who are unable to use these automated options from making or attempting to make next-day trip reservations to which they are entitled under §§37.131(b) and 37.131(b)(1) of the DOT ADA regulations. If it has either of these effects, it would constitute a prohibited capacity constraint.

Riders can use the automated systems 7 days a week from 5 a.m.–5 p.m. To get staff assistance with trip bookings, riders can call the reservations office on weekdays from 8 a.m.–5 p.m. On weekends and holidays, if riders need staff assistance with trip bookings, they call the dispatch number. The dispatch number is not listed on page 11, but it is listed elsewhere in *The Guide* including on the back cover.

Fares

The fare for a METROLift ride is \$1.15. This is below the fixed route base adult fare and meets the regulatory requirement that ADA paratransit fares not exceed twice the base fixed route fare for a comparable fixed route trip. *The Guide* (Page 12) states that attendants ride at no charge each companion must pay the same fare as the rider.

Days and Hours

The Guide (Page 10) states that the METROLift base service hours are: Monday – Friday, 5 a.m.–11 p.m., Saturday, 7 a.m.–Midnight, and Sundays and holidays, 7 a.m.–11 p.m. The *Guide* describes expanded service hours for those persons living within 3/4 mile of a local bus route as “available from 3:45 a.m., with the last trip originating at 1:30 a.m., 7 days a week.” The need to revise the days and hours of METROLift service is discussed in Chapter 5.

The Guide (Page 12) lists the holidays observed by METRO and advises riders that METROLift closes the Reservation and Customer Services Officers and has fewer vehicles scheduled for service. The holidays are: New Year’s, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the Friday after Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day.

Trip Purposes

At the time of the review, there was no published policy to serve all ADA paratransit eligible trips without regard to trip purpose. *The Guide* (Page 8) stated, “School Districts are responsible for providing transportation for students. METROLift transportation is not provided to students going to and from a district school or sponsored events.” METRO staff stated that they work closely with school districts on accessible transportation issues; school districts are required to provide accessible vehicles. The need to revise this policy is discussed in Chapter 6.

Attendants and Companions

In the Travel Time section of *The Guide* (Page 12), an attendant is described as someone who assists the rider while traveling. A companion is a person who accompanies the rider on the trip. Multiple companions are allowed on a space available basis. The need to revise this policy is discussed in Chapter 5.

Visitors

The METRO policy with regard to visitors is explained on page 16 of *The Guide*. METRO requires that the visitor provide “basic” information and a copy of their ADA certification from their local transit authority or “physical or documented proof of disability” at least “a week before scheduling the first trip.” Visitor certification is valid for 21 days of travel in a one-year period. Visitors must send a money order in advance for the number of trip tickets they will need, or purchase the tickets when arriving in Houston. The description in *The Guide* does not define “basic” information. *The Guide* (Page 16) also states that “ADA-certified visitors might be eligible for METROLift services.” The need to revise the visitor eligibility policy is discussed in Chapter 6.

3.3 METROLift Subsidy Program

METRO also provides a taxi transportation service which is available to individuals who qualify for METROLift service, with subsidies given directly to the riders, called the METROLift Subsidy Program (MSP) MSP is described in *The Guide* (Page 17) as “for certified METROLift patrons who have same-day trip requirements that can’t be provided by METROLIFT. MSP can be scheduled on the day of service.” *The Guide* (Page 11) states that MSP is available before and after METROLift base service hours “for those who require late-night or early morning service.”

At the time of the review, all of the vehicles in the MSP fleet were accessible and trip scheduling for the MSP program scheduling was separate from METROLIFT. MSP operations were not the subject of this review.

3.4 ADA Complementary Paratransit Performance Policies and Standards

METRO provided the review team with information detailing its ADA complementary paratransit performance policies and standards. Following is a summary of the paratransit performance standards established by METRO for trip denials, vehicle wait time, late cancellations and rider no-shows, missed trips, on-time performance, on-board travel times, and telephone service.

Trip Denial Policies

Section 37.131(b) of the DOT ADA regulations allows transit agencies to negotiate pickup times with the rider, provided the customer is not required to travel more than one hour before or after the time requested. At the time of the review, there was no written policy that all ADA trips

would be served. According to METRO's response to FTA's information request prior to the review and statements from METRO staff during the site visit, METRO's standard for trip denials is zero and all trips are scheduled "without negotiation."

Vehicle Wait Time, Late Cancellations, and No-Shows

The Guide does not state the number of minutes that a driver will wait for a rider upon arrival at the pickup point. *The Guide* (Page 14) instructs customers to call 60 minutes or more in advance of their pickup if they will not be riding. It further states that if a rider does not call and does not show up for the ride they will be considered a "No-Ride" (No-Show). This policy is stated on page 14 as "10-10-10." In other words, a rider with 10 No-Rides equaling 10 percent or more of their total trips will receive a 10-day suspension of service. "Continued abuse of the No-Ride policy will lead to progressively longer suspensions, up to a permanent suspension of service." This policy and the need to revise it are discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

Missed Trips

As discussed in Chapter 9, at the time of the review, METRO's definition of a "missed trip" was when a vehicle did not arrive within 60 minutes of the "User Time." (user time). Staff indicated that a performance goal related to missed trips had not been established. The operator contracts in place included liquidated damages for a driver who fell more than 1 hour behind schedule without contacting dispatch.

On-Time Performance

According to METRO's response to FTA's information request prior to the review and statements from staff during the site visit, METRO's on-time window for "pickups" was zero minutes early to 15 minutes late.. *The Guide* (Page 13) instructs passengers to be ready and waiting for their vehicle 15 minutes prior to the scheduled pickup time. This would suggest an actual on-time window of 15 minutes before to 15 minutes after the scheduled time. At the time of the review, eligible riders were able to book trips by requesting either a pickup time (typically for return trips) or stating an appointment time (typically for outgoing trips). Trips with appointment times were considered "on time" if the drop-off occurred prior to the appointment time, so if a rider was dropped off 60 minutes prior to their appointment time, that drop-off would be considered just as "on time" as if the rider had been dropped off at the appointment time. *The Guide* (Page 6) instructs riders "if you need to be at work at 8:00 a.m. your appointment time should be 7:00 a.m. or 7:15 a.m."

At the time of the review, METRO's on-time standard was that METROLift service should be comparable or better than METRO fixed route on-time performance. On-time performance standards and goals are discussed in more detail in Chapters 6 and 9.

3.5 Rider Comments

Formal ADA Complaints Received by FTA

As of the date of the on-site review, there were no formal complaints on file with FTA regarding METRO's ADA complementary paratransit services.

Rider Comments

Prior to and during the on-site review, the review team interviewed ten registered METROLift paratransit riders. Each interviewee was asked for comments on various aspects of the service, including:

- Eligibility determination process
- Telephone hold times, trip denials, and getting trips scheduled at desired times
- On-time performance
- On-board travel times
- Vehicle operator assistance and professionalism
- Vehicle condition

The review team also asked for any other comments on the service not covered by the specific questions. Please refer to Chapters 5–9 for summaries of the consumer comments related to the service issues covered in each chapter.

Rider Comments on File at METRO

METROLift provided a report of all customer comments for the period July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010. During that period, 4,049 comments were entered into its automated customer comment tracking system (COM). The breakdown of comments by the three categories was as follows:

- Commendations – 1,352 (33 percent)
- Comments – 1,030 (25 percent)
- Complaints – 1,667 (41 percent)

Based on review team observations at the time of the review, approximately one out of every three entries into COM is a commendation.

Of the 1,352 commendations, 962 (71 percent) pertained to drivers and 319 (24 percent) pertained to other employees. The balance of the commendations pertained to METROLift service in general.

Of the 1,030 comments, 979 (95 percent) were comments about the service or a service policy. The rest of the comments were categorized as Other (38) and Crowded Vehicle (16). Two calls were about lost items and one pertained to a pass or ticket problem.

Table 3.2 provides a breakdown of the complaints by major category.

Table 3.2 – METROLift Complaints, July 1, 2009–June 30, 2010

Complaint Category	Number	Percentage
Service	897	53.8%
Driver Behavior	370	22.1%
Driving Safety	111	6.7%
Routing (Dispatch)	96	5.8%
Employee Behavior (Other than driver)	89	5.3%
Scheduling (Reservations)	66	4.0%
Miscellaneous	36	2.2%
Customer Service	2	0.1%
Total	1,667	100%

Service complaints made up more than half of all complaints received during this period, and almost all (96.5 percent) of the service complaints were about late or missed trips. The next largest category of complaints concerned driver behavior, of which 220 out of 370 related to driver discourtesy or rudeness. The complete report, listing complaints by month, category and sub-category is contained in Attachment D.

4 Summary of Findings

This chapter summarizes the findings made as a result of the review. Findings denote deficiencies in ADA compliance or topics on which FTA requires additional reporting to ensure an ADA compliance issue does not exist. Findings shall always require corrective action and/or additional reporting. Recommendations are statements detailing suggested changes to policy or practice to ensure best practices under the ADA. The basis for findings and recommendations are detailed in Chapters 5 through 10.

4.1 ADA Complementary Paratransit Service Criteria

1. At the time of the review, *The Guide* (Page 6) stated “Patrons must be able to independently travel to and from the vehicle parked at the curb for all scheduled pickup and drop-off locations...” However, contracts with First Transit and Yellow Cab require drivers to provide, as needed, door-to-door service. To meet the requirements of §37.129(a) of the DOT ADA regulations, METRO must revise its public information to inform applicants and eligible riders that door-to-door assistance will be provided when needed due to disability, and how and when they are to request it. The revised policy must take into account that an eligible rider’s need for assistance may vary depending upon the location, particularly if it is one to which the rider has not traveled previously. METRO must ensure that personnel and contractors are trained to proficiency on this policy and provide copies of the revised policy and public information to FTA.
2. At the time of the review, METRO stated that it had a policy prohibiting standees on METROLift vehicle lifts, and all METROLift vehicles had a boarding chair for riders who wanted to use the lift but do not have their own wheelchair. This policy does not meet the requirements of the DOT ADA regulations. METRO and its contractors must cease enforcing this policy. Section 37.165(g) requires METRO to permit individuals with disabilities who do not use wheelchairs, including standees, to use a vehicle's lift or ramp to enter the vehicle. METRO must adopt a new policy that meets the requirements, ensure that the policy is applied to fixed route and METROLIFT service and provide a copy of the policy to FTA. METRO must revise public information to reflect the new policy.
3. *The Guide* (Page 7) stated that paratransit eligible riders are required to wear a METROLift furnished seatbelt while riding up and down on the wheelchair lift. The nondiscrimination requirements of §37.5 of the DOT ADA regulations do not permit the imposition of this policy. The presence of this belt is not required under the vehicle specifications contained in 49 CFR Part 38. METRO must direct employees and contractors to cease enforcing this policy, provide a copy of the directive to FTA, and remove the reference to the seatbelt policy in the next revision of *The Guide*.
4. At the time of the review, the Travel Time section of *The Guide* (Page 12) described an attendant as “someone who assists you while you are traveling.” Appendix D to the DOT ADA regulations explains the definition of a personal care attendant as “someone designated or employed specifically to help the eligible individual meet his or her personal needs.” People assisting the eligible rider at the trip origin and/or destination also meet the definition of a personal care attendant. METRO must revise its policy on attendants to clarify that an

attendant need not provide assistance while on the transit vehicle, provide a copy of the revised policy to FTA and include the new information in the next revision of *The Guide*.

5. At the time of the review, METROLift service was available from 3:45 a.m.–1:30 a.m., 7 days a week within the ADA paratransit service area. However, several bus routes and light rail operated before 3:45 a.m. and ended after 1:30 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights. Section 37.131(e) of the DOT ADA regulations requires that METROLift ADA paratransit service be available during the same hours as fixed route service. METRO must revise its public information and must ensure that METROLift trips are scheduled and provided during the same hours and days as fixed route bus and rail service is available
6. At the time of the review, METRO had practices in place for receiving, recording, tracking and responding to complaints. Based on the information the review team provided to FTA, however, it does not appear that METRO’s policies and procedures to meet its obligations under §§27.13(b) and 27.121(b) of the DOT ADA regulations for keeping copies of complaints on file for one year and maintaining a summary of complaints on file for five years were discussed with METRO staff. Please provide information on METRO’s policies and procedures describing how these obligations are met.

4.2 ADA Complementary Paratransit Eligibility Process

1. At the time of the review, METRO provided transportation to and from the eligibility interview and charged \$4.00 per round trip. The DOT ADA regulation at §37.5 prohibits the imposition of special charges on riders with disabilities. Appendix D at §37.125 explains that the paratransit eligibility “process may not impose unreasonable administrative burdens on applicants, and, since it is part of the entity’s nondiscrimination obligations, may not involve “user fees” or application fees to the applicant.” Since the trip to and from the interview is required to apply for the service, METRO may not charge a fare for either trip. METRO must direct employees and contractors to cease imposing these charges and provide a copy of the directive to FTA.
2. At the time of the review, *The Guide* (Page 8) stated “School districts are responsible for providing transportation for students. Therefore, METROLift transportation is not provided to students going to and from a district school or sponsored events.” Just as students may ride METRO’s fixed route buses to and from school, to meet its obligations under §§ 37.5, 37.121, 37.123 and 37.131(d) METRO must provide comparable paratransit service for students with disabilities who are unable to use the fixed route system. In addition, METRO must revise its policies to accept and process applications from students with disabilities, since the eligibility process must consider ability to travel to all origins and destinations throughout the service area without regard to trip purpose. As part of METRO’s response to this finding, please provide a copy of the revised policy and directive and remove the language on school trips from the next revision of *The Guide*.
3. At the time of the review, METRO granted applicants receiving dialysis treatment either conditional eligibility for trips to and from dialysis treatment or for trips home from treatment only. METRO did not permit these riders to make reservations for other trips. This policy does not meet the requirements of § 37.131(d) of the DOT ADA regulations, and METRO must cease restricting eligibility based on trip purpose. METRO must inform similarly-situated riders whose eligibility has been linked to trip purpose that they may

reapply for eligibility. As part of METRO's response to this finding, please submit an example of letters and/or other public information sent to these riders informing them of the right to reapply.

4. At the time of the review, METRO appeared to inappropriately link a rider's overall eligibility to his or her ability to make or not make a particular trip. The lack of required specificity in the denial letters prevented the review team from determining the specific reasons. To meet the requirements of §37.125 of the DOT ADA regulations, METRO must revise its eligibility process to first either grant conditional eligibility to applicants who are able to use fixed route under some conditions, or it must grant unconditional eligibility to these applicants. The conditional eligibility determination letter must identify the applicant's functional limitations and the environmental conditions that prevent the applicant from using fixed route. In the determination discussed in finding #3 above, the conditional eligibility letter should list the condition as severe fatigue due to treatment. Next, in trip-by-trip eligibility, METRO must apply the individual's conditions to his or her specific trips requests based on the trip origin and destination and must do so for every trip request to determine whether or not the trip is to be taken on METROLift or on fixed route service.
5. A detailed review of 16 randomly selected eligibility denials raised questions with 10 determinations. The lack of required specificity in the denial letters prevented the review team from ascertaining the specific reason(s) for the denials. However, these denials appeared to be based on limited observations made of applicants walking 200-300 feet in METRO's climate-controlled lobby, which was free of barriers and obstacles at the time of the review, and did not appear to consider the information that METRO solicited from professionals named in the respective applications. This practice also prevented METRO from determining applicants' functional abilities and establishing conditions based conditions typically encountered outdoors (such as distance, environmental factors, inaccessible paths of travel or bus stops, and terrain). The failure to consider these functional abilities and architectural and environmental barriers indicate that METRO's process denied eligibility to applicants who should have been determined eligible for at least some level of ADA paratransit service. The percentage of denials reversed on appeal is another such indication. METRO's response to this finding must include a corrective action plan for revising the eligibility determination process.
6. At the time of the on-site review, METRO's denial letters contained a standard statement that the applicant's condition "does not prevent you from riding METRO's fixed route service." As discussed at the time of the review, to meet the requirements of the DOT ADA regulations at §37.125(d), METRO must revise its eligibility determination letters that deny eligibility and those granting conditional or temporary eligibility to state the specific reason(s) for the finding. As explained in Appendix D, in the case of a denial "the reasons must specifically relate the evidence in the matter to the eligibility criteria of the rule and of the entity's process. A mere recital that the applicant can use fixed route transit is not sufficient." During the review, METRO staff revised the template to include space to list the specific reasons for the determination. As part of METRO's response to this finding, submit a representative sample of letters to FTA for review.
7. As part of METRO's revision of its eligibility determination letters, to meet the requirements of §37.125(e) METRO must also revise its letters granting unconditional eligibility and conditional eligibility to state that the rider has been found "ADA Paratransit Eligible."

8. At the time of the review, a large percentage of eligibility denials were reversed on appeal, and METRO did not appear to be tracking its disposition of eligibility appeals. Between August 1, 2009 and July 31, 2010, eighteen percent of applicants were denied eligibility. The review team analyzed 197 appeal files and found that a) approximately 27 percent of applicants who were denied ADA paratransit eligibility appealed the decision and b) denials were reversed and the determination was changed to a grant of unconditional eligibility approximately 45 percent of the time. Tracking information on the number and disposition of appeals is important for two reasons. First, METRO needs this information in case a complaint is filed with METRO or with FTA. Second, METRO's failure to track this information prevents METRO from identifying trends or procedural flaws in determinations that result in reversals upon appeal and from making improvements in the accuracy of its eligibility determination process. As part of METRO's response to this finding, FTA requests information on the number of appeals requested, decisions reversed, decisions upheld, and decisions remanded to METRO for reconsideration during the past six months.
9. At the time of the review, METRO required applicants to appeal an eligibility denial or a grant of conditional eligibility in writing. If applicants desired a hearing before the Appeals Committee, METRO arranged a conference call, rather than a hearing. To meet its obligations under §37.125(g)(2), METRO must cease requiring applicants to prepare a written statement to appeal and establish an appeal process that includes an opportunity for a hearing. As part of METRO's response to this finding, FTA requests information on the reporting relationship(s) between the individual(s) involved in making eligibility determinations and the interim manager identified in the appeal process, so that FTA can determine whether or not the appeal process guarantees the requisite separation of function. METRO must direct staff to cease requiring written appeals, revise its eligibility material, denial and conditional letters and public information to remove requirements for a written appeal and reflect the hearing process, and include these changes in the next revision of *The Guide*. If METRO elects to prepare the one-page appeal form described in the recommendations section below, please provide a copy to FTA.
10. *The Guide* (Page 16) states that "ADA-certified visitors might be eligible for METROLift services." To meet the requirements of §37.127(d) of the DOT ADA regulations, METRO must revise its visitor eligibility process and public information to reflect that visitors who present documentation of eligibility from their home jurisdictions are entitled to visitor eligibility. For those visitors who do not present evidence of eligibility, documentation can only be required of visitors whose disability is not apparent. METRO must accept a signed statement from a visitor stating that he or she is unable to use the fixed route system. Please revise the policy, provide a copy to FTA and include the new policy in the next revision of *The Guide*.

4.3 Telephone Access

1. At the time of the review, METRO's telephone performance standard that 90 percent of calls should be answered within three minutes was met on two of the five days in the sample week within the main reservations call group. Performance in the main dispatch call group and Spanish call group met the standard on zero of the five days in the sample week. In addition, telephone service reports did not appear to capture the actual hold times that customers experienced, if those hold times were over four minutes. To meet the requirements of

§37.131(f) to operate METROLift service without any operational pattern or practice that significantly limits the availability of service, a revised standard that specifies a maximum hold time is needed. Telephone hold times must be tracked and monitored against the standard and staffing adjusted to avoid a pattern or practice of significantly long hold times. METRO must track all hold times, including those longer than four minutes. As part of METRO's response to this finding, draft the revised standard and submit a copy to FTA.

4.4 Trip Reservations and Scheduling

1. At the time of the review, METRO did not provide an opportunity for passengers to negotiate pickup times. Pickup times were not available to METROLift riders until the evening before the scheduled trip, and riders were required to call METRO after 7:00 p.m. to obtain the final scheduled time. No opportunity for negotiation was possible, as schedules had already been transmitted to the contractors at that time. As discussed in Chapter 9, riders could request same-day changes on the day of service and METRO would try to accommodate them. This is not compliant with the requirement under §37.131(b)(2) of the DOT ADA regulations, which permits transit systems to negotiate pickup times with ADA paratransit passengers but prohibits requiring the individual to schedule a trip more than an hour before or an hour after his scheduled time. METRO must revise its process to ensure that passengers are able to negotiate pickup times prior to finalizing the schedule.
2. Compounding the trip purpose restriction discussed in Chapter 6 of this report, riders who were granted conditional eligibility by for trips from dialysis treatment were required to call each day after completion of their treatment to request a ride. Restricting paratransit eligible riders to booking only same-day trips does not meet the requirements of the DOT ADA regulations at §§ 37.131(b)(2) and 37.131(d), which requires the provision of next-day service, as described in finding #1. METRO must revise its reservation and scheduling procedures to permit all eligible riders to make next day reservations without regard to trip purpose.
3. At the time of the review, *The Guide* (Page 11) stated that reservations may be made one day in advance except on Fridays, when reservations were taken for Saturday, Sunday and Monday. *The Guide* (Page 12) listed the holidays observed by METRO and advised riders that the METROLift reservation and customer services offices are closed on those dates. To meet the response time requirements of §37.131(b)(1) of the DOT ADA regulations, METRO must ensure that reservation service is available during times comparable to normal business hours on a day when the offices are not open before a service day, and that riders have an opportunity to negotiate pickup times as part of the process. METRO must revise its public information and provide a copy to FTA.
4. At the time of the review, riders had an option to use METRO's automated calling system, MACS, and the on-line reservation system, MACS-WEB, seven days per week to make reservations. *The Guide* stated, "Scheduling assistance is available through the dispatch office on weekends or holidays." The number to call for scheduling assistance was not listed on that page; a number for dispatch could be found on the back cover. Failure to list the dispatch number alongside the information about the MACS and MACS-WEB automated system options may discourage or prevent eligible riders who are unable to use these automated options from making or attempting to make next-day trip reservations to which they are entitled under §§37.131(b) and 37.131(b)(1) of the DOT ADA regulations. If it has

either of these effects, it would constitute a prohibited capacity constraint. Long hold times on Fridays suggested that some riders may have been unaware of or unable to make use of the automated systems, and unaware that trips may be scheduled by calling the dispatch number. To meet the requirements of §37.131(b)(1), METRO must develop an explicit process or procedure to ensure that eligible riders unable to use MACS or MACS-WEB are able to book trips on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays including the opportunity to negotiate pickup times as part of the process. Please provide a copy of the revised procedures and revised public information to FTA.

4.5 Service Performance

1. While the contracts with First Transit and Yellow Cab indicated that the on-time performance goals were 85 and 90 percent respectively, METROLift managers stated during the on-site review that they strove to achieve a combined on-time performance for both pickups and drop-offs of 75 percent. This standard meant that METRO considered it acceptable for one of every four trips to be late. This goal and level of on-time performance for initial or return trips suggests that some METROLift riders may experience a capacity constraint in violation of §37.131(3)(i)(A). An additional concern is that the sampling methodology used at the time of the review may have masked even poorer performance, since the performance of the back-up sedan service was not included in calculations of on-time performance. METRO must develop a plan to review operational practices to identify ways to increase on-time performance for METROLift pickups, and adjusting the sampling methodology to accurately reflect actual performance and representative proportions of trips provided by contractors, including the back –up sedan service provided by Yellow Cab. See the recommendations in Chapter 9. As part of METRO’s response to this finding, FTA requests METRO’s performance standards for its current contractors.
2. To meet its obligations to negotiate pickup times under §37.131(b)(2), METRO must ensure that schedulers and dispatchers do not adjust the rider’s scheduled pickup time (user time) or the pickup window without the rider’s consent and must limit any changes to within 60 minutes of the requested pickup time. There are several issues with METRO’s scheduling practices at the time of the review: First, the pickup time given to the passenger may not be the same as the pickup time given to the METROLift driver, which could result in the passenger no-show. Second, while METRO’s policy had been to limit such changes to no more than 20 minutes, an analysis of a sample day indicated that user times for nine trips were changed by 30 to more than 60 minutes; the information available at the time of the review did not indicate in all cases whether these changes due to objections by riders to pickup times provided to them the previous evening, whether contractors made these changes without the rider’s knowledge, or whether the changes were in response to other same-day requests from riders. For the sample day, it appeared that for the 2.4% of trips sampled, most of the changes were in response to same-day requests from riders requesting an earlier pickup time. The review team checked the parameters in the Trapeze software system and found that the system was actually set to change the requested times by -15/+20 METRO must direct staff and contractors to honor the negotiation window and document all customer contact regarding changes to the user time and/or the pickup window, and provide a copy of the directive to FTA. As part of METRO’s response to this finding, FTA requests METRO’s current definition(s) of METROLift denials and the number of METROLift ADA paratransit trips, requested, scheduled, provided, and denied for the past six months.

3. METROLift did not adequately monitor performance of Yellow Cab sedan service to ensure that pickups were timely. For the sample day analyzed, out the 59 completed trips dispatched to Yellow Cab, (the backup taxi sedan service) a user time was recorded in the scheduling software for only 11 of these trips. It was impossible for the review team or METRO to determine whether the other 48 trips were on time or not. Since dispatchers assigned trips to backup taxis only after determining there was no other capacity, a second concern is that pickup and drop-off performance may not have been accurate for the sample day. METRO must require contractors to record user times for all trips, including those served by backup taxi. A plan for monitoring service performance, including on-time performance of METROLift trips served by backup taxi is needed to ensure that eligible riders do not experience substantial numbers of untimely pickups, missed trips and denials prohibited by the DOT ADA regulations at §§37.131(3)(i)(A) and (B). METRO must submit to FTA a copy of its revised instructions to its contractors for recording trips and its plans for monitoring service performance.
4. METROLift did not adequately monitor performance to ensure that travel time is not excessive. During the opening conference for the compliance review, the review team was informed that METROLift monitors ride time by comparing paratransit times to comparable fixed route itineraries for selected trips. To meet its obligations under §37.131(3)(i)(C), an explicit policy is needed describing how METRO defines and monitors comparability for all trips, including individual trip requests which METRO chooses to group. A second concern is that METRO's sampling method did not appear to include METROLift trips over 60 minutes in length. As part of METRO's response to this finding, please provide a copy of the policy to FTA.
5. At the time of the review, METRO had neither a written definition of a missed trip, nor a performance standard for missed trips that its contractors were not to exceed. To meet the requirements of 37.125(h)(1) – (h)(3) and §37.131(f)(3)(i)(B) of the DOT ADA regulations, METRO must develop a definition of a “missed trip,” which must include any attempted pickup after the end of the pickup window that does not result in a passenger being transported. If a vehicle does not arrive within the pickup window, the rider has no obligation to wait for the vehicle and is under no obligation to board the vehicle. For the sample day, the review team found that 11 of the 35 trips requests that METRO had coded as no-shows should have been coded as missed trips. As part of its response to this finding, METRO must create a written policy defining a trip missed by METRO or one of its contractors and provide a copy to FTA. FTA also requests a current copy of METRO's procedure for declaring rider no-shows.
6. To meet its obligations under §37.125(h)(1) –(h)(3) of the DOT ADA regulations, METRO must revise its No-Ride suspension policy as written in *The Guide* to reflect that only no-shows under the rider's control will be charged against riders, only if they fail to board after the 5 minute vehicle wait time or cancel their trip within one hour of their pickup time, and only when the vehicle arrives within the pickup window. METRO may not count those instances where the vehicle arrives outside of the pickup window and the rider elects not to board, as trips missed by system error must not be counted against the passenger. As part of METRO's response to this finding, FTA requests that METRO's define “continued abuse of the No-Ride policy” and “progressively longer suspensions” as stated in *The Guide* (Page 14) so that FTA may determine whether or not they are consistent with DOT ADA regulations.

FTA also requires METRO to specify the number of days of advance notice the rider will receive of the proposed suspension, so that FTA can determine whether adequate time to appeal the proposed suspension is afforded. The reference to permanent suspensions must be stricken from the policy, and procedures must be revised so that subsequent trips for the day are not automatically cancelled or put “on hold” if a rider misses one trip.

7. To meet its obligations under §37.125(h)(3), METRO must establish an appeals process and make it available to an individual on whom sanctions have been proposed and submit the appeals policy to FTA. The sanction must be stayed pending the outcome of the appeal. FTA will require the removal of METRO’s statement in *The Guide* (Page 15) that suspensions must be appealed immediately. The appeals process must meet the requirements of 37.125(g) and be free of the procedural flaws discussed in finding #8 in section 6.6 of this report.
8. At the time of the review, METRO did not have a standard or window for on-time drop-offs for METROLift. Trips with appointment times were considered “on time” if the drop-off occurred prior to the appointment time, so if a rider was dropped off 60 minutes prior to their appointment time, that drop-off would be considered just as “on time” as if the rider had been dropped off at the appointment time. *The Guide* (Page 6) instructs riders “if you need to be at work at 8:00 a.m. your appointment time should be 7:00 a.m. or 7:15 a.m.” METRO has an implicit obligation to get riders to appointments on time (not late) and an explicit obligation to monitor performance to insure that METROLift service is operated without any operational pattern or practice that significantly limits the availability of service to ADA paratransit eligible persons. If operational practices cause riders to arrive late to appointments and riders are discouraged from using the service as a result, this would constitute a capacity constraint prohibited by the DOT ADA regulations. METRO must develop an on-time standard or window for on time drop-offs to appointments; require contractor(s) to track, measure review and report drop-off performance for all trips with a requested appointment time; and require contractor(s) to print the appointment times on driver manifests for all trips with a requested appointment time. As part of METRO’s response to this finding, please provide copies of the standard and directive(s) to FTA.

4.6 Resources

There were no findings of non-compliance requiring corrective action in Chapter 10 of this report. See Section 10.8 of this report for recommendations.

5 ADA Complementary Paratransit Service Criteria

This chapter presents information about METRO's ADA complementary paratransit service policies and the regulatory criteria for each of the following areas:

- Type of service
- Service area
- Hours and days of service
- Fares
- No Trip purposes
- Efforts to coordinate with adjoining transit systems

This chapter also examines the process used by METRO to receive, investigate, and respond to comments and complaints from ADA complementary paratransit service riders.

Observations concerning the response time requirement of the DOT ADA regulations are discussed in Chapter 8. If applicable, observations concerning the requirement that ADA complementary paratransit be provided without capacity constraints appear throughout the report.

5.1 Consumer Comments

In the telephone interviews conducted by the review team in advance of the site visit, none of the riders or local agency staff raised any concerns about service criteria issues or METRO's process for receiving and responding to comments and complaints.

5.2 Type of Service

Section 37.129(a) of the DOT ADA regulations states that ADA complementary paratransit service must be provided on an "origin-to-destination" basis. Transit agencies may designate the "base" level of rider assistance that they provide as either curb-to-curb or door-to-door.

According to DOT's interpretation of this provision, if the base service is curb-to-curb, transit agencies must have procedures in place to provide additional assistance beyond the curb if this is needed for eligible riders to complete their trips. This might include assisting riders to and from the front door and policies and procedures for providing this assistance in a safe and reasonable way.

The *METROLift Guide* revised June 2010 (*The Guide*) (Page 6) states:

Patrons must be able to independently travel to and from the vehicle parked at the curb for all scheduled pickup and drop-off locations... it is the sole responsibility for the patron's guardian to ride with the patron or arrange to have a responsible party meet the vehicle and collect the patron at the destination.

However, the contracts with First Transit and Yellow Cab at the time of the review stated:

Due to physical and cognitive disabilities of our patrons, drivers are required to assist patrons to and from the door if requested. In the event that a patron fails to meet the vehicle, the driver is required to go to the door, or if not a home, inside the building on the first floor only near the main entrance door to announce their arrival before calling the dispatcher for a Code 5 (no-ride clearance). Drivers should not leave sight of the vehicle if there are patrons inside the vehicle. Under these circumstances the driver should park as close to the entrance as possible so they can check on patrons and keep the vehicle in sight. Our goal is to link the driver and patron as fast as possible in order to avoid delays.

At the time of the review, METRO used Trapeze as its scheduling software. METRO Managers said that METROLift identified (in Trapeze) certain riders needing driver assistance from the vehicle to the building entrance. Drivers interviewed at the time of the review stated that this information appears on their manifests and said that they provide assistance beyond curb-to curb when requested. To meet its obligations under Section §37.129 (a) METRO must revise *The Guide* to reflect these practices at the time of the review, so that riders needing driver assistance to or from the vehicle and the entrance due to disability will know how and when to request assistance and that the assistance will be provided. The revised policy must reflect that an eligible rider's need for assistance may vary depending upon the location, particularly if it is one to which the rider has not traveled previously. METRO must ensure that staff are trained to proficiency on this policy.

METRO Managers also said that METRO has a policy of prohibiting standees on METROLift vehicle lifts. The policy is stated in *The Guide* (Page 6) as "Boarding chairs are available to any patron who is unable to access the van using the stairs." This policy does not meet the requirements of §37.165(g) and must be revised. The DOT ADA regulations state:

The entity shall permit individuals with disabilities who do not use wheelchairs, including standees, to use a vehicle's lift or ramp to enter the vehicle. Provided, that an entity is not required to permit such individuals to use a lift Model 141 manufactured by EEC, Inc. If the entity chooses not to allow such individuals to use such a lift, it shall clearly notify consumers of this fact by signage on the exterior of the vehicle (adjacent to and of equivalent size with the accessibility symbol).

The Guide (Page 7) explains that paratransit eligible riders are required to wear a METROLift furnished seatbelt while riding up and down on the wheelchair lift. The nondiscrimination requirements of §37.5 of the DOT ADA regulations do not permit the imposition of this policy. The presence of this belt is not required under the vehicle specifications contained in 49 CFR Part 38. METRO must cease enforcing this policy.

5.3 Service Area

Section 37.131(a)(1) of DOT ADA regulations requires a transit provider operating fixed route bus service to provide complementary paratransit service that covers, at a minimum, all areas within 3/4 mile of all of its bus routes, along with any small areas within its core service area that may be more than 3/4 mile from a bus route, but which are otherwise surrounded by served corridors. Additionally, entities operating a rail system must provide complementary paratransit service from points within a 3/4-mile radius of any rail station to points within a 3/4-mile radius

of any other rail station. The service area for ADA complementary paratransit service must include areas outside of the defined fixed route jurisdiction—such as beyond political boundaries or taxing jurisdictions—that are within 3/4 mile of the transit operator’s fixed route, unless the public transit agency does not have the legal authority to operate in those areas.

METRO staff stated that the entire METROLift service area, including its service areas for METROLift ADA paratransit and METROLift non-ADA service, encompasses 751 square miles, of which 531 square miles are served by ADA complementary paratransit service. The METROLift ADA paratransit service area was the subject of this review. The METROLift ADA service area encompasses origins and destinations within 3/4-mile from all local bus routes and rail stations. The ADA paratransit service areas differed on weekdays, Saturday, and Sunday, based on corresponding variations to the fixed route service it complements. The METROLift ADA paratransit service area meets the requirements of the DOT ADA regulations at §37.131(a).

There is also non-ADA METROLift service in portions of Harris County that do not have fixed route service. Two communities (Clear Lake and Kingswood) have non-ADA METROLift service for intra-community service. METRO fixed route service does not operate in either community.

The ADA METROLift service area boundaries were entered into Trapeze. If a rider called to request a trip with an address that is not in the ADA METROLift service area, a popup window appears on the computer screen to alert the reservationist.

5.4 Days and Hours of Service

Section 37.131(e) of the DOT ADA regulations requires that the ADA complementary paratransit service be available during the same hours and days as the fixed route service. This requirement applies on a route-by-route basis. If a person can travel between two given points using a given fixed route at a given time of day, an ADA paratransit eligible person must be able to travel between those points on paratransit at that time of day. This criterion recognizes that the shape of the service area can change. For example, an area that has fixed route bus service on weekdays but not weekends must have ADA complementary paratransit service (provide trips) on weekdays but not necessarily on weekends; an area that has bus service from 5 a.m. until 9 p.m. must have ADA complementary paratransit service, at minimum, from 5 a.m. until 9 p.m.

According to *The Guide* (Page 10), METROLift base service hours (non-ADA) are Monday–Friday 5 a.m.–11 p.m., Saturday 7 a.m.–Midnight, and Sundays and holidays 7 a.m.–11 p.m.

The Guide (Page 10) states: “METROLift has expanded service hours for those persons living within 3/4-mile from a local bus route. The service is available from 3:45 a.m., with the last trip originating at 1:30 a.m., 7 days a week.”

As shown in Table 5.1, there are several bus routes, as well as the light rail on Friday and Saturday nights, whose service hours begin before 3:45 a.m. or end after 1:30 a.m. This means that there are certain times that ADA complementary paratransit service is not available when fixed route service is available, which does not meet the requirement of §37.131(e) of the DOT ADA regulations.

Table 5.1 – METRO Fixed Routes Operating Beyond METROLift Service Hours

Days	Fixed Route	Service Beyond METROLift
Weekday	Route 50 west	Begins at 3:41 a.m.
	Route 82 west	Ends at 1:47 a.m.
	Route 163 west	Ends at 1:52 a.m.
	METRORail north (Friday only)	Ends at 1:40 a.m.
	METRORail south (Friday only)	Ends at 2:20 a.m.
Saturday	Route 25 west	Ends at 1:41 a.m.
	Route 52 south	Ends at 1:45 a.m.
	Route 82 west	Ends at 1:38 a.m.
	METRORail north	Ends at 1:40 a.m.
	METRORail south	Ends at 2:20 a.m.
Sunday	Route 66 south	Ends at 1:54 a.m.
	Route 77 south	Ends at 1:46 a.m.

To meet its obligations under the DOT ADA regulations, METRO must provide METROLift service at during the hours and days of service, including these early or late hours of the respective fixed routes listed above.

5.5 Fares

Section 37.131(c) of the DOT ADA regulations requires that paratransit fares be no more than twice the fixed route fare for the same trip at the same time of day on the fixed route system, excluding discounts. In addition, fares for individuals accompanying ADA complementary paratransit riders must be the same fare as for the paratransit rider. Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) must be allowed to travel at no charge. Finally, a transit system may negotiate a higher fare with a social service organization or other organization for trips guaranteed to the agency or other organization.

At the time of the review, the cash fare for a one-way trip on METRO fixed route service was \$1.25. The fare for a METROLift trip was \$1.15. This complies with the DOT ADA regulations.

Riders paid with pre-paid tickets or passes. METRO also offered monthly and annual passes for unlimited METROLift trips.

5.6 Trip Purpose

Section 37.131(d) of the DOT ADA regulations requires that there be no restrictions or priorities based on trip purpose in the provision of ADA complementary paratransit service.

The Guide (Page 8) states: “School districts are responsible for providing transportation for students. Therefore, METROLift transportation is not provided to students going to and from a district school or sponsored events.”

At the time of the site visit, METRO managers told review team members that they work cooperatively with school officials in Houston to ensure that transportation is provided to

students with disabilities. No written agreement is in place between METRO and the school department to address this issue. Further, there did not seem to be a clear understanding of what constituted a school-sponsored event.

Just as students may ride METRO's fixed route buses to and from school, METRO must provide comparable paratransit service for students with disabilities who are unable to use the fixed route system, to meet its obligations under §§ 37.5, 37.121, 37.123 and 37.131(d). §§37.131(3)(i)(A) and (B). If the school district provides service which meets the service criteria for ADA complementary paratransit, METRO could contract out provision of this portion of the service. Whether or not the parties negotiate such an agreement, Metro must still accept and process applications from students with disabilities, since the eligibility process must consider ability to travel to all origins and destinations throughout the service area without regard to trip purpose.

5.7 Coordination with Adjacent Service Providers

When developing their paratransit plans, transit systems were required under Section 37.139(g) to include efforts to coordinate with transit systems with overlapping or contiguous service areas for paratransit riders who want to travel between service areas.

METRO does not have any transit systems that have overlapping or contiguous service areas.

5.8 Complaint Handling Process

The DOT ADA regulations require public transit providers to receive complaints from riders, resolve them promptly and equitably and to keep copies of complaints on file for one year and maintain a summary of complaints on file for five years (49 CFR 27.13(b) and 27.121(b)). While requirements to respond to complainants are not included in the DOT ADA regulations, it is a common and effective practice for a transit provider to respond to complainants and for transit providers to investigate allegations to ensure that all DOT ADA requirements are being met.

Complaint Policies and Procedures

METROLift receives customer comments primarily via telephone to either METROLift Customer Service or METRO Customer Service. A customer service representative (CSR) enters complaints sent to METROLift Customer Service into the "COM" feature of Trapeze PASS, the scheduling and dispatching application that METROLift used. This automated complaint-tracking system is an add-on feature of METROLift's PASS scheduling program. METRO Customer Service collects the details of any METROLift complaints they receive directly and emails the information to the appropriate METROLift supervisor. METROLift enters forwarded complaints into COM, usually on the same day.

At the time of the review, customer comments were tracked in three categories: commendations, comments, and complaints. A comment was registered when a customer called to express a general concern, ask about a lost item, or make general comment or suggestion regarding service. A complaint was registered when a customer called with a problem, usually related to a specific trip.

The METROLift CSR entered all commendations, comments and complaints into COM. This allows a direct link to trip data related to the event (e.g., date, time, and vehicle run). The date and time received and the date logged is recorded in COM. If the incident pertains to a trip, the trip information is obtained and entered into the record. Trip information in the record includes:

- Date of the trip(s)
- Vehicle and run number
- Provider (First Transit or Yellow Cab)
- Schedule early and schedule late times
- Origin and destination of the trips
- Customer name, home address and telephone number

A copy of the complaint is printed out in a Customer Service Report when all the data and the details have been entered into the system. If the commendation, comment or complaint involves a driver, the METROLift CSR prints out the complaint history for the driver for the past six months and attaches the history to the incoming commendation, comment or complaint.

A dispatch supervisor reviewed complaints to determine if the complaint was caused by the actions of a METROLift employee. An example would be if a customer complained about a trip being late, and the trip was late because one of the dispatch troubleshooters or routers added a trip on the day of service, which caused the driver to be late. If that is the case, the complaint is resolved in-house. If the complaint was not caused by the actions of a METROLift employee (i.e., a rude driver), the complaint is forwarded to the appropriate service provider. The time allotted for the in house review or for a response from the service provider is two days

Complaints sent to the service providers are generally handled by the Training and Safety Manager. They will review the complaint and the attached driver complaint history. The Training and Safety Manager pulls the driver log for that day and looks for any notes that may help explain what happened. The driver is then asked what they remember about the particular incident. A summary of the investigation and action taken is written on the Customer Service Report. The driver is allowed to add any comments to the form, and then the driver signs the form. The completed form is sent back to METROLift.

When METROLift receives the Customer Service Report back from the service provider, METROLift uses a form letter to respond to the complainant. The letter states that the comments provided have been reviewed and appropriate action has been taken. The letter advises that if the complainant has further questions or other concerns, METROLift Customer Service center may be contacted, and the telephone number is provided. A copy of a letter is included as Attachment E.

Complaint Response Times

The Guide (Page 15) states that on average, comments will be processed within 7–10 business days. METROLift takes a sample of 60 complaints each month and measures how quickly the complaint is resolved. The sample of 60 is made up of 20 complaints regarding First Transit, 20 complaints related to Yellow Cab, and 20 METROLift complaints not specifically related to a service contractor. Using the June 2010 sample of 60 trips, the review team found that 42 (70 percent) of the customer comments in the sample were closed within 7 business days. An

additional 14 (23 percent) were closed within 10 business days. The percentage of customer comments in the sample closed within 10 business days (93 percent) suggests that METROLift is generally meeting its performance goal of responding to customer comments within 7–10 business days.

5.9 Findings

1. At the time of the review, *The Guide* (Page 6) stated “Patrons must be able to independently travel to and from the vehicle parked at the curb for all scheduled pickup and drop-off locations...” However, contracts with First Transit and Yellow Cab require drivers to provide, as needed, door-to-door service. To meet the requirements of §37.129(a) of the DOT ADA regulations, METRO must revise its public information to inform applicants and eligible riders that door-to-door assistance will be provided when needed due to disability, and how and when they are to request it. The revised policy must take into account that an eligible rider’s need for assistance may vary depending upon the location, particularly if it is one to which the rider has not traveled previously. METRO must ensure that personnel and contractors are trained to proficiency on this policy and provide copies of the revised policy and public information to FTA.
2. At the time of the review, METRO stated that it had a policy prohibiting standees on METROLift vehicle lifts, and all METROLift vehicles had a boarding chair for riders who wanted to use the lift but do not have their own wheelchair. This policy does not meet the requirements of the DOT ADA regulations. METRO and its contractors must cease enforcing this policy. Section 37.165(g) requires METRO to permit individuals with disabilities who do not use wheelchairs, including standees, to use a vehicle’s lift or ramp to enter the vehicle. METRO must adopt a new policy that meets the requirements, ensure that the policy is applied to fixed route and METROLIFT service and provide a copy of the policy to FTA. METRO must revise public information to reflect the new policy.
3. *The Guide* (Page 7) stated that paratransit eligible riders are required to wear a METROLift furnished seatbelt while riding up and down on the wheelchair lift. The nondiscrimination requirements of §37.5 of the DOT ADA regulations do not permit the imposition of this policy. The presence of this belt is not required under the vehicle specifications contained in 49 CFR Part 38. METRO must direct employees and contractors to cease enforcing this policy, provide a copy of the directive to FTA, and remove the reference to the seatbelt policy in the next revision of *The Guide*.
4. At the time of the review, the Travel Time section of *The Guide* (Page 12) described an attendant as “someone who assists you while you are traveling.” Appendix D to the DOT ADA regulations explains the definition of a personal care attendant as “someone designated or employed specifically to help the eligible individual meet his or her personal needs.” People assisting the eligible rider at the trip origin and/or destination also meet the definition of a personal care attendant. METRO must revise its policy on attendants to clarify that an attendant need not provide assistance while on the transit vehicle, provide a copy of the revised policy to FTA and include the new information in the next revision of *The Guide*.
5. At the time of the review, METROLift service was available from 3:45 a.m.–1:30 a.m., 7 days a week within the ADA paratransit service area. However, several bus routes and

light rail operated before 3:45 a.m. and ended after 1:30 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights. Section 37.131(e) of the DOT ADA regulations requires that METROLift ADA paratransit service be available during the same hours as fixed route service. METRO must revise its public information and must ensure that METROLift trips are scheduled and provided during the same hours and days as fixed route bus and rail service is available

6. At the time of the review, METRO had practices in place for receiving, recording, tracking and responding to complaints. Based on the information the review team provided to FTA, however, it does not appear that METRO's policies and procedures to meet its obligations under §§27.13(b) and 27.121(b) of the DOT ADA regulations for keeping copies of complaints on file for one year and maintaining a summary of complaints on file for five years were discussed with METRO staff. Please provide information on METRO's policies and procedures describing how these obligations are met.

5.10 Recommendations

1. METRO's practices of randomly pulling 60 complaints each month and reviewing them to determine the timeliness of the response and the tracking of complaints related to individual drivers are effective practices. It is recommended that these practices continue.

6 ADA Complementary Paratransit Eligibility

Section 37.121 of the DOT ADA regulations requires transit systems to establish a process for determining ADA complementary paratransit eligibility, including who is eligible, timelines for processing applications, recertification requirements, how appeals are handled, and how the process is described in public information documents.

The review team examined the process used to determine applicants' eligibility for ADA complementary paratransit service to ensure that determinations are being made in accordance with the regulatory criteria and in a way that accurately reflects the applicants' functional ability. The review team also assessed timeliness of the processing of requests for eligibility and carried out the following tasks:

- Obtained information about the eligibility determination process through interviews with riders and advocates and a review of consumer comments on file at METRO
- Developed an understanding of the handling and review of applications through an assessment of eligibility materials and interviews of eligibility determination staff
- Reviewed eligibility determination outcomes for the period of August 1, 2009, through July 31, 2010
- Reviewed the application files of applicants denied ADA complementary paratransit eligibility
- Reviewed no-show policies and procedures

6.1 Consumer Comments

Five of the six riders and local agency staff contacted in advance of the review commented on the eligibility determination process. When asked if they felt the determinations were fair and accurate, three individuals indicated that they felt they were. Two individuals expressed some concerns about how determinations were made. One person indicated that limitations caused by psychiatric disabilities did not always seem to be taken into consideration. One person also said that limitations in walking distance did not appear to be fully considered. Both individuals who expressed some concerns indicated that they did not agree with limiting eligibility for riders with chronic renal failure to only trips to and from treatment. One of these individuals worked at a dialysis clinic and said that many riders whose eligibility is limited have difficulty making other trips at other times. He said that the clinic often works with individuals to arrange transportation for other purposes. He cited one example of a rider who needed a prescription filled, and could not use the fixed route bus because of their condition, but also could not schedule the trip on METROLift.

When asked if eligibility determinations were made within 21 days of a completed interview, all five indicated that in their experience, decisions were timely. Two individuals, however, expressed some concern with the complexity and overall time to complete the process. One person said they sometimes have to call for applicants to find out where they are in the process. Another said that it can be a long time getting the application completed, getting a professional to complete part of the application, and getting in for an interview.

6.2 Overview of the Eligibility Determination Process and Materials

Section 37.125(b) of the DOT ADA regulations requires that all information about the process, materials necessary to apply for eligibility, and notices and determinations concerning eligibility be available in accessible formats, upon request.

Section 137.125(c) of the DOT ADA regulations requires transit systems to make a determination of ADA complementary paratransit eligibility within 21 days of the receipt of a completed application, or treat the applicant as eligible and provide service until the eligibility determination has been made.

Section 37.125(d) of the DOT ADA regulations states that determinations of eligibility must be in writing and if applicants are found to be ineligible, the determination must state the specific reasons for the decision. Appendix D to the regulations indicates that these reasons cannot be a simple recital that the person has been found to be able to use fixed route service. The specific reasons must relate to the regulatory criteria and the transit system's eligibility process.

Decisions that deny or limit eligibility also must also include information about the process for appealing the decision.

Section 37.125(e) requires the transit system to provide documentation to each eligible individual stating that he or she is "ADA complementary paratransit eligible" and include the following information:

1. Name of the eligible individual
2. Name of the transit system
3. Telephone number of the transit system's paratransit coordinator
4. Expiration date for eligibility
5. Any conditions or limitations on the individual's eligibility, including the use of a PCA

Section 37.125(f) permits the transit system to require recertification of the eligibility of ADA complementary paratransit eligible individuals at reasonable intervals.

Section 137.125(g) outlines a process for administering appeals through which individuals who are denied eligibility can obtain review of the denial. The transit system is permitted to require that an appeal be filed within 60 days of the denial of an individual's application. The appeal process must include an opportunity for the denied applicant to be heard and to present information and arguments. The decision on the appeal must be made by a person not involved with the initial decision to deny eligibility, must be written, and must explain the reasons for the decision. During the appeal period, the transit system is not required to provide paratransit service to the appellant. However, if a decision is not made within 30 days of the completion of the appeal process, the appellant must be provided paratransit service from that time until and unless a decision to deny the appeal is issued.

As explained in Appendix D, an eligible rider does not need to live within the ADA service area in order to be eligible for service. Eligibility is based on an individual's functional ability to use fixed route service. If an eligible rider lives outside of the paratransit service area and can get to

a pickup point within the service area, he or she must be provided with service from the pickup point to destinations within the service area.

Eligibility

METRO manages an in-house eligibility-determination process. As of the time of the review, the process included an application filled out by the customer, a health care/ professional verification and an in-person interview. The customer completes the personal information section of the application and signs the form. The customer must then have their doctor or other healthcare professional complete and sign the physician section of the application. The doctor or other health care professional must describe, in lay terms, why the customer's disability prevents the customer from using fixed route service. The application in use at the time of the review states and review team examination of eligibility files confirms that METRO accepted professional verification from a broad range of medical and healthcare professionals.

In addition to a physician completing the physician section of the application, an additional signature on professional letterhead or prescription form must be submitted verifying completion of the application. The completed application and additional signature must all be submitted in order for the application to be considered complete.

After METRO has received a completed application form, a letter is sent to the customer with instructions explaining how to make an appointment for an in-person interview. After the in-person interview has been conducted, a decision regarding eligibility will be provided in writing within 21 days.

Initial Determination Process

Section 37.123 of the DOT ADA regulations contains the regulatory eligibility standards for ADA complementary paratransit service, with further explanatory text provided in Appendix D to this section. As specified in §37.123(e)(1) & (2), eligibility is based on whether an individual can travel independently on the fixed-route system without the assistance of another person, other than the vehicle operator deploying the lift or ramp.

Individuals interested in applying for ADA paratransit eligibility are instructed by METRO's public information to obtain, complete and submit an application form. Application forms can be obtained by calling the METROLift Customer Service Office at 713-225-0119 or obtained from the METRO RideStore at 1900 Main Street. A downloadable copy of the application form is also posted on METRO's website. At the time of the review METRO staff also indicated that they provide copies of application forms to disability and human services organizations in the service area upon request.

The application form is six pages and is available in large print (14 pt. font). The ADA Coordinator stated that the application is available in Braille and Spanish. The first four pages are to be completed by the applicant. The instructions on the first page of the application indicate that the last two pages are to be completed by "a physician/certified health professional who is familiar with your impairment or condition."

The portion of the application completed by the applicant requests the following information:

- General information (name, address, phone number, date of birth, last four digits of the applicant's social security number, and emergency contact)
- Types of mobility aids used by the applicant
- The nearest street intersection to the applicant's home
- Whether the applicant can walk or get to the nearest intersection using a mobility aid
- Whether the applicant can find his or her way to a bus stop without getting lost
 - The maximum time that the applicant can stand and wait for a bus (choices are 15 min., 10 min., 5 min., and less than 5 min.)
- Whether the applicant can do the following to recognize the bus they need to ride: read the destination sign, ask the driver where the bus is going, give or write a note to the driver, and understand the driver's answer
- Whether the applicant can pay the fare by putting money in the farebox or using a METRO Q Pass
- Whether the applicant can recognize where to get off the bus
- An explanation of the times when the applicant is able to use METRO fixed route buses
- Whether the applicant has ever received orientation and mobility training or travel training and, if so, what bus routes the applicant is able to travel on
- An explanation of the reasons why the applicant cannot use METRO fixed-route buses for some or all trips
- How the applicant currently travels (examples given are: self, family, friends, bus, rail, METROLift, etc.)
- Whether the applicant requires someone to travel with them
- Whether the applicant can wait independently/alone at certain locations when traveling

The application also includes a form for the applicant's signature to permit the professional verification information to be released to METRO staff.

The portion of the application completed by the medical professional requests the following information:

- Ratings (excellent, good, fair, poor, none, don't know) for: upper body strength, lower body strength, coordination, balance, self awareness, independent judgment, sense of direction, ability to understand and follow directions, verbal communication, written communication, stamina and endurance
 - Whether, in the opinion of the professional, the applicant can travel independently from his/her house to the sidewalk
- Whether the applicant can walk up and down two steps
- How far the applicant can travel independently without assistance (choices are <1/4 mile, 1/4 mile, 1/2 mile, 3/4 mile, >3/4 mile)
- Whether the applicant's disability requires a personal attendant
- A diagnosis, requested in layman's terms, of the applicant's primary impairment or disabling condition

- A description of what prevents the applicant from using the local bus and rail system
- Whether the condition is permanent or temporary and, if temporary, the expected duration
- A visual acuity statement if the applicant has a vision impairment
- The applicant's IQ if the applicant has a cognitive disability
- The types of mobility aids used by the applicant

In addition, professionals must also provide their signature on letterhead or a prescription form to verify that they completed this part of the application form.

As applications are received, staff in the Customer Service Office reviews them for completeness. If applications are missing key information, such as the information required from medical professionals, the application is returned with a letter describing the missing information.

If applications are complete, letters instructing applicants to call to schedule an in-person interview are mailed. The number to call, as well as the days and hours that calls are taken and interviews are scheduled are provided. The letter states that if applicants do not call to schedule an interview within 14 days, no further action will be taken on their application.

The letter also indicates that applicants can use the METROLift service to get to and from interviews for \$4 round-trip. The DOT ADA regulations at §37.5 prohibit the imposition of special charges on riders with disabilities. Appendix D at §37.125 explains that the paratransit eligibility process may not impose unreasonable administrative burdens on applicants, and, since it is part of the entity's nondiscrimination obligations, may not involve "user fees" or application fees to the applicant." Since the trip to and from the interview is part of the process to become eligible for and use the METROLift service, there must be no fare charged for either trip. A copy of the Complete Application/Interview Letter is provided as Attachment F.

In-person interviews are scheduled weekdays between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. All interviews are conducted on the first floor of METRO's downtown headquarters, which is at 1900 Main Street. The site is adjacent to the Downtown Transit Center and is well served by fixed route buses and rail.

At the time of the review, interviews and assessments were conducted by several different staff in the Customer Service Office. The experience and background of the staff varied. METRO managers stated that they do not require individuals assigned to interviews and assessments to have any particular expertise in disability services, rehabilitation or health care. METRO managers stated that all staff receive training on the regulatory requirements for ADA paratransit eligibility.

Staff who conduct interviews first review the information contained in the application form. They then conduct a brief interview and walk with the applicant around the first-floor lobby of the building. A brief two-page Interview Summary Form is completed, a copy of which is provided as Attachment G. Information about the applicant's stated disability and mobility aids used is recorded. Applicants are asked to restate the reasons why they need METROLift paratransit service, if they can use the fixed route bus or rail services for some of their trips. Applicants are also asked how many times a week they expect to need transportation services and to name three places that they regularly go.

Staff observe applicants as they arrive and depart from the interview, participate in the interview process, and as they walk through the lobby area which involves traveling perhaps 200–300 feet. Based on the observations made, staff provided an opinion on:

- Whether the applicant was able to participate independently in the interview process, and if not, why
- Whether the applicant was able to safely travel through the observation area
- Whether the applicant was able to walk independently
- How far the applicant can walk/roll
- How long they can stand and wait for a bus
- What physical barriers keep them from riding the local bus service
- Whether the applicant has the ability to ask for and understand information
- Whether there are memory issues
- Whether the applicant has the ability to handle unexpected situations
- The applicant’s visual abilities (determined by whether they were able to independently travel without another’s assistance)

Staff then makes an eligibility decision based on information provided in the application form, information collected during the interview, and observations made on the walk around the interview area. This decision is recorded on the Interview Summary Form. If a recommendation is made to deny eligibility, staff is asked to provide information to support the decision. METRO managers stated that typically there is no follow-up with professionals who provided information in the application form.

Types of Eligibility Granted

At the time of the review, METRO grants full-term unconditional and conditional eligibility for four years. Temporary eligibility was granted for the expected duration of the applicant’s disability or was granted for an appropriate period if it is determined that the applicant’s functional abilities might change in the short-term.

Applicants could be found to have unconditional paratransit eligibility, conditional paratransit eligibility, temporary paratransit eligibility, or found to be not eligible.

Unconditional eligibility was granted if applicants cannot use the fixed route service under any reasonable conditions.

Conditional eligibility was granted if applicants can use the fixed route service under certain conditions and need paratransit service for only some trips.

METRO had a relatively limited number of eligibility conditions that it used, which included:

- Service to or from dialysis treatments only
- Service home from dialysis treatments only
- Service before dawn or after dusk for applicants with night blindness only

When conditional eligibility is granted for trips to and from dialysis only, determination letters state “...you are restricted to the trips to and from dialysis on METROLift; no other trips can be

scheduled on METROLift or MSP.” These riders are instructed to call the METROLift office to “set up the time and address for your authorized trips.” When riders call, a subscription trip to and from dialysis is arranged and entered in the scheduling system. These riders are not permitted to place any other trip requests.

When conditional eligibility is granted only for trips home from dialysis treatments, riders are not allowed to place trip requests in advance. The letters granting this type of eligibility state that “No trips will be scheduled in advance. If you should require METROLift services after treatment, your dialysis clinic supervisor will need to call the dispatch supervisor at 713-225-0410 after dialysis and request a METROLift ride home.”

At the time of the review, METRO did not identify conditions based on maximum travel distances, inaccessible paths of travel, inaccessible bus stops, familiar versus unfamiliar trips, extreme environmental conditions, or other conditions typically found in other processes.

The review team discussed with METRO the issue of limiting eligibility to a particular trip purpose (dialysis). While the intent is to provide ADA paratransit service at times when the person’s health condition and/or the effects of the treatment make the person too fatigued to be able to use fixed route service, tying eligibility to dialysis trips only is not appropriate. For example, a person with end-stage renal failure may be too fatigued not only when they are traveling to and from dialysis treatment, but at other times as well. Limiting their eligibility to dialysis trips only would prevent them from using the METROLift service to make other trips at times when they are too fatigued to use fixed route service. Instead of tying eligibility to a particular trip purpose, METRO should be granting eligibility for trips when severe fatigue prevents a rider from using fixed route service.

Final Decisions and Letters of Determination

The review team requested and examined samples of all types of eligibility determination letters used by METRO. This included copies of letters granting full (unconditional) eligibility, conditional eligibility, as well as letters denying eligibility

The letters were reviewed to determine whether they contain information required by the DOT ADA regulations at § 37.125(d) and (e). The regulations require that eligibility determinations include the following five points of information:

1. Name of the eligible individual
2. Name of the transit provider
3. Telephone number of the entity’s paratransit coordinator
4. Expiration date for eligibility
5. Any conditions or limitations on the individual’s eligibility, including the use of a PCA

This section also requires that determinations of eligibility are in writing and if applicants are found to be ineligible, the determination must state the specific reasons for the decision. Appendix D to the regulations indicates that these reasons cannot be a simple recital that the person has been found to be able to use fixed route service. Decisions that deny or limit eligibility also must also include information about the process for appealing the decision.

The review team requested and examined samples of all types of eligibility determination letters used by METRO. This included copies of letters granting full (unconditional) eligibility, conditional eligibility, as well as letters denying eligibility.

METRO's letters that granted unconditional and conditional eligibility included the name of the rider and the name of the transit agency. Both types of letters also include the telephone number for METROLift Customer Service (713-225-0119), which is the office responsible for making eligibility determinations. Letters that grant conditional eligibility also included descriptions of the specific limitations on eligibility.

Letters granting unconditional eligibility included an expiration date in a text box at the bottom of the letter. Letters granting conditional eligibility did not appear to contain the same text box with an expiration date. However, the ID cards issued with the letters do include the applicable expiration dates.

Letters granting unconditional eligibility included the statement that applicants were "...eligible for our Paratransit Public Transportation Service in accordance with the provisions of Section 49 CFR part 37 of the American's with Disabilities Act." The letters granting conditional eligibility do not refer to the ADA and state only that applicants are METROLift Eligible. These letters do not meet the requirements of the DOT ADA regulations at §37.125(e) which requires that the letters state that riders have been found "ADA Paratransit Eligible."

Section 37.125(d) of the DOT ADA regulations also requires that denial letters state the reasons for the finding. Appendix D to the regulations explains that "in the case of a denial, reasons must be specified. The reasons must specifically relate the evidence in the matter to the eligibility criteria of this rule and of the entity's process. A mere recital that the applicant can use fixed route transit is not sufficient."

The review team found that the denial letters and those that placed conditions on eligibility did indicate that applicants had the right to appeal and indicated what needed to be done to request an appeal. However, the denial letters lacked the required specificity. The standard language stated that METRO had found that the person's condition "...does not prevent you from riding METRO's fixed route bus service." During the week of the review, METRO staff crafted a new template denial letter. METRO staff stated that going forward, denial letters would be customized for each applicant. Open text blocks were included in the template to provide space to communicate the specific information from the application form and/or the specific observations made in the interview and indoor walk that led to the decision.

Recertification

As described in *The Guide* (Page 8), the recertification process for METROLift appeared to be identical to the initial eligibility determination process;

At the time of the review, METRO staff stated that all METROLift riders receive notices 90 days before the expiration of their eligibility reminding them to reapply. During the trip booking process, the review team observed that reservationists also remind riders to reapply if they notice that the expiration date of the rider's eligibility is approaching. Customer Service staff also indicated that they extend the eligibility of existing riders whose eligibility is about to expire as

long as the person calls and indicates that they wish to continue to use the service and will be reapplying.

Visitor eligibility

Section 37.127 of the DOT ADA regulations requires that paratransit service be made available to visitors who do not reside in the jurisdiction(s) served by the transit system. Visitors who present documentation that they are ADA paratransit eligible in the jurisdiction in which they reside are to be treated as eligible. For visitors with disabilities who do not present such documentation, the transit system may require documentation of the individual's place of residence and, if the individual's disability is not apparent, of his or her disability, and must accept a certification by such individuals that they are unable to use the fixed route system.

Section 37.127(e) of the DOT ADA regulations requires that a public entity shall make the service to a visitor required by this section available for any combination of 21 days during any 365-day period beginning with the visitor's first use of the service during such 365-day period.

6.3 Reported Determination Outcomes

Statistics provided by METRO managers during the on-site review indicated that 16,491 individuals were registered as ADA paratransit eligible.

The review team analyzed applications and outcomes for the most recent year, from August 1, 2009 through July 31, 2010. Records showed that 8,574 completed applications were received during this period (715 per month on average). Approximately 22 percent of those who submitted completed applications (1,884 in total) did not appear for an in-person interview; either because they did not respond to the letter informing them that their application had been received and to call to schedule an interview, or they failed to show for scheduled interviews.

A total of 6,690 in-person interviews and assessments were conducted during the one-year period from August 1, 2009 through July 31, 2010. In 5,503 cases (82 percent), applicants were granted some form of eligibility—either unconditional or conditional. 1,187 applicants who completed the interview and assessment process (18 percent) were denied eligibility.

METRO's monthly determination records did not indicate the number of applicants granted conditional rather than unconditional eligibility. To get a sense of these outcomes, the review team requested a printout of all of the riders granted conditional eligibility. This total was then compared to the total number of eligible riders in the system. This analysis showed 383 riders with conditional eligibility, which is approximately 2.3 percent of all riders. The analysis suggests that the vast majority of riders who had been granted eligibility (14,491 of the 16,108, or 97.7 percent) were granted unconditional eligibility.

The special report listing all 383 riders with conditional eligibility also showed that 337 of these riders (80 percent) have eligibility only for trips back from dialysis and must call on the day of service to request a ride. The other 46 individuals (12 percent) have eligibility both to and from dialysis treatment and have these trips only set up as subscription trips. The list did not show any riders with conditional eligibility other than these two types.

Riders who were granted eligibility by METRO for trips to and from dialysis treatment receive subscription service for these trips. However, riders granted transportation home from treatment only must call each day when treatment is complete to request a ride. If the eligibility determination is that the health condition and the effects of treatment prevent these riders from using fixed route transportation to return home, the policy of requiring these calls each day is disadvantageous to riders as well as to METRO, since METRO must accept and accommodate these same day trip requests. Staff at dialysis centers contacted as part of the review indicated that riders often experienced long holds when trying to contact the dispatch office to place same day trip requests and long wait times for vehicles to arrive following calls for transportation at the completion of treatment. Allowing paratransit eligible riders to book only same-day trips does not meet the requirements of the DOT ADA regulations at §§37.121, 37.131(b)(2) and 37.131(d), which require that METROLift service be comparable to fixed route and that if pickup times are to be negotiated, eligible riders cannot be required to schedule a trip to begin more than an hour before or after the individual's desired departure time. METROLift service must be provided without trip purpose priorities or restrictions. Next-day service is required.

6.4 Process Observations and Reviews of Determinations

Review of Application Processing Times

Section 37.125(c) of the DOT ADA regulations requires public entities to make a determination of ADA paratransit eligibility within 21 days of the receipt of a completed application, or treat the applicant as eligible and provide service on the 22nd day and thereafter until the eligibility determination is made.

This review included an assessment of METRO policies and practices regarding the timely processing of applications.

At the time of the site visit, applications for ADA paratransit eligibility were not complete until applicants send in a completed application form and participate in an in-person interview and assessment. The following additional two time periods are important because applicants are not in control of these parts of the process and the time spent waiting for response letters and in-person interviews is controlled by METRO.

- The time elapsed between METRO's receipt of completed paper application forms and when applicants receive acknowledgement letters from METRO asking that they call to schedule an in-person interview, and
- The time between an applicant's call requesting an in-person interview appointment, the appointment times offered by METRO, and the actual times of the interviews.

The review team looked not only at the time METRO took to send out acknowledgement letters and to schedule in-person interviews but also the elapsed time between completion of the process, which was the in-person interview and the final determinations, but also the time taken by METRO to send out acknowledgement letters and to schedule in-person interviews.

First, the review team examined the records for 147 randomly selected applications received between February and August 2010. The application receipt dates noted in each file were compared to the dates of the letters sent to applicants instructing them to call to schedule interview appointments. Table 6.1 shows the results. Seven percent of letters were sent out the

same day that completed applications were received; 71 percent were sent out within 1 day; 79 were sent within two days; and 97 percent were sent within 5 days. In five cases, it took longer than 5 days to send the letters, and the maximum elapsed time was 10 days. In addition, in each case where it took more than 2 days to send the letter, a weekend or holiday was included in the date span. This analysis of this random sample suggests that METRO was diligent in acknowledging receipt of the majority of the completed application forms in the sample and instructing applicants to go on to the next step in the process, the scheduling of in-person interviews, within a reasonable period of time.

Table 6.1 – Elapsed Time Between Receipt of Completed Application Forms and Mailing of Acknowledgement Letters (February–August 2010)

Days	Applications	Cumulative Percent
Same day	10	7%
1 day	94	71%
2 days	12	79%
3 days	14	88%
4 days	8	94%
5 days	4	97%
> 5 days	5	100%
Total	147	100%

Second, the review team examined records for the same 147 applications related to the elapsed time between applicants’ calls requesting interview appointments, the first available open appointments, and when the in-person interviews were actually scheduled. METRO records the date that applicants call requesting appointments and the dates the interviews actually took place. METRO also notes in each file if applicants no-showed for scheduled appointments. In 138 cases, applicants called to schedule appointments; nine applicants never called to initiate the interview. Table 6.2 shows the elapsed times between calls for appointments and the actual scheduled appointment times for these 138 applications.

Table 6.2 – Elapsed Time Between Calls from Applicants Requesting Interview Appointments and the Scheduled Appointment Times (February–August 2010)

Days	Applications	Cumulative Percent
0 (walk-ins)	36	26%
1–7 days	19	40%
8–14 days	74	94%
15–21 days	3	96%
> 21 days	6*	100%
Total	147	100%

* 84 days, 42 days, 30 days, 25 days, 26 days, 26 days

The records showed that 36 applicants (26 percent) did not follow the directions in the letters to call to schedule appointments. Instead, they showed up at the interview site without an appointment. In all 36 cases, METRO conducted the interviews even though these applicants did not have appointments. Another 19 applicants (14 percent) were given appointments within 7 days of the date that they called. The majority of appointments (74 of the 138, or 54 percent)

were scheduled 8–14 days from the dates the applicants called. Three were scheduled from 15-21 days out, and six took more than 21 days to schedule. In all six cases that took more than 21 days to schedule, notes in the files indicated that the delay was due to the applicant’s choice of dates. In four cases, applicants chose dates other than the first available; the applicants in the other two cases had failed to appear for previous appointments.

METRO staff also stated that in some cases, while earlier appointment times may be available, applicants select later dates to better match their own schedules. To get a better sense of the availability of earliest appointment time, the review team examined the application log that is maintained by staff. The log showed that there were several open appointment times only three days out.

Finally, the review team considered the elapsed time between the interviews and assessments and final determinations. METRO notes in each file when the interview was conducted, as well as the date that the letter of determination was sent. Of the 147 applications in the selected sample received between February and August of 2010, there were 109 cases where applicants participated in interviews and the process was completed. Table 6.3 shows the result of the analysis for these 109 applications. As shown, two of the 109 determination letters were mailed the day of the interviews/assessments. Another 101 were mailed within 7 days of the date of the interviews/assessments. Six were mailed within 14 days of the date of the interviews/assessments. Only one determination took longer than 14 days, and that one was made within 15 days. This analysis suggests that METRO was making determinations of ADA paratransit eligibility within 21 days.

Table 6.3 – Elapsed Time Between Completed Interviews/Assessments and Mailing of Final Letters of Determination (February–August 2010)

Days	Applications	Cumulative Percent
0 (Same Day)	2	2%
1–7 days	101	95%
8–14 days	5	99%
15–21 days	1	100%
> 21 days	0	100%
Total	109	100%

In the event that determinations take more than 21 days from receipt of a complete application, METRO gives applicants information about their right to receive service. *The Guide* (Page 9) states: “After the in-person interview has been conducted, a decision regarding eligibility will be furnished in writing within 21 days. If a decision is not made within this time period, the patron has the right to use the service until a decision is made.”

Review of Sample Determinations

To review the appropriateness of determinations, the review team and METROLift staff responsible for making determinations analyzed 22 applications and decisions. The sample included six determinations where applicants were granted temporary eligibility and 16 files for applicants who were found to be not eligible.

The review found all six determinations of temporary eligibility to be appropriate. In all six cases, the applications and information provided by professionals indicated that the health condition was temporary, or the type of health condition was such that treatment could change functional ability within the year.

Four of the 16 determinations that found the applicant not eligible also appeared appropriate. In these four cases, the information provided did not indicate functional limitations that would prevent fixed route use, and in most of the four cases applicants indicated that they were regularly using the fixed route service without difficulty.

In two of the remaining 12 determinations, that while the review team members had some questions about the determinations, the review team judged that that the determinations were reasonable.

In the remaining 10 remaining cases examined, the review team had *significant* concerns about the denials of eligibility. Fact Summaries from each file and review team member concerns were as follows:

- In one case, the professional familiar with the applicant indicated chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema, and hypertension. The professional noted that the applicant used oxygen. The applicant used a walker, sometimes used a cane and reported being able to travel a maximum of a quarter of a mile. This information was repeated in the interview. The CSR person who conducted the indoor walk and interview noted that the applicant walked along the indoor route and that “no breathing problems were observed.” The CSR person’s observations appeared to be the main basis for the decision. There was no documented follow-up with the professional familiar with the applicant. The review team’s concerns with the denial were that breathing issues may not be readily observed by a lay person observing the applicant walking a short distance indoors in a climate-controlled environment. At a minimum, follow-up with the professional would have been appropriate before denying eligibility based on such limited observations.
- In another case, the professional indicated that the applicant had incurred a spinal cord injury and indicated poor lower body strength. The applicant appeared for the interview and in-person assessment using a leg brace and a cane. The CSR person noted that the applicant indicated he could walk to the intersection nearest his home, observed the applicant walking along the indoor course and recommended denying eligibility. In this case, the applicant appealed and participated in an in-person functional assessment at the Memorial Hermann Medical Center. Professionals at the center reported that the applicant could walk only a very short distance and was affected by tremors. Based on the functional assessment conducted in connection with the appeal, the applicant was granted unconditional eligibility.
- Another applicant reported congestive heart failure, asthma, and arthritis. The professional familiar with the applicant confirmed these health conditions and noted a prior stroke as well. The professional said the person could travel only very limited distances and could not travel in extreme temperatures; these functional limitations are all consistent with these health conditions. The CSR person had the applicant walk along the indoor course and only observed that the person’s balance was “not perfect.” The applicant was denied eligibility. This applicant also requested an

appeal and participated in a functional assessment at Memorial Hermann Medical Center. The Center's report noted that the applicant could walk for only 2 minutes and 30 seconds and that this distance could only be managed with "several breaks." Even with this information, the Appeal Committee voted to uphold the initial denial of eligibility. Following the denial on appeal, the applicant's physician submitted a letter indicating the applicant had Class 3 heart failure. The applicant was then approved for unconditional eligibility.

- In a similar case, another applicant reported congestive heart failure and shortness of breath, both of which were confirmed by the professional familiar with the applicant. The applicant walked with a cane at the in-person interview and the METRO CSR person conducting the interview and indoor walk observed that she "walks slowly and drags the cane as she walks." The applicant was denied and appealed. On appeal, the professional provided additional information that indicated that the applicant had advanced heart failure and was "Status #1" on a heart transplant list. The applicant was then approved for unconditional eligibility.
- In a fifth case, the applicant reported stomach surgery and showed up for the in-person interview with a walker and an attendant. The professional familiar with the applicant indicated Crohn's disease and recent surgery. The METRO CSR person noted that the applicant "walked with assistance" without the walker that they had brought, and that the applicant "walked slowly due to wound from surgery." In this case, there seemed to be adequate documentation and observations to justify at least temporary eligibility. Instead, the applicant was denied.
- In another case, the professional familiar with the applicant reported severe osteoarthritis, "poor" lower body strength, poor stamina and endurance, and poor coordination and balance. The professional indicated that the applicant used a walker and could not walk more than one-quarter of a mile. The applicant showed up for the interview and assessment with a cane. In the interview, the applicant indicated that she used the fixed route bus approximately three times a week. The CSR person noted she observed the applicant "walking ok" along the indoor course. There was no follow-up with the professional familiar with the applicant and the applicant was denied eligibility. The review team's concerns with the denial was that the while applicant may be able to use the bus when the walking distance to and from bus stops is less than a quarter of a mile, but would not be able to do so when the walking distance to and from stops is greater than a quarter of a mile. The in-person assessment did not document that the applicant could travel more than a quarter of a mile in the real environment. In the absence of documentation indicating the person could travel greater distances, follow-up with the professional would seem to be the appropriate action appropriate before denying eligibility.
- Another applicant reported back surgery in February of 2010 and traveled using a support cane (and sometimes with a walker). The professional familiar with the applicant indicated a lower back spinal disc herniation, as well as a "history of ankle fractures." The professional estimated the person's walking distance at less than a quarter of a mile. In the interview, the applicant indicated that he used the bus approximately three times a week. The METRO CSR person who conducted the interview and indoor walk wrote that the applicant appeared "steady even when

- limping.” The person was denied eligibility. Again, use of the fixed route system could have been for trips that required shorter walks to and from bus stops. The indoor walk did not document the ability to travel longer distances and there was no follow-up with the professional to discuss the professional’s estimate of maximum walking distance.
- Another applicant reported congestive heart failure and shortness of breath. She did not report using the fixed route buses and stated in the interview that “stops are too far.” The professional familiar with the applicant rated her stamina and endurance as poor and estimated a maximum walking distance of less than mile. The METRO customer service person that conducted the indoor walk wrote that the applicant was “Okay walking. No SOB (shortness of breath) observed.” As in the other cases of applicants reporting CHF, the review team’s concern with the denial is that observations by a lay person in a limited, climate-controlled environment is not adequate documentation to discount the information provided by the professional familiar with the applicant. Again, there was no follow-up with the professional to discuss the differences between his estimates of the person’s ability and the observations made at METRO.
 - In another case, the professional familiar with the applicant indicated cervical lumbar radiculopathy, weak lower extremities, chronic bronchitis, spasticity, and poor lower body strength, coordination and balance. The professional also indicated that the person used a power wheelchair. The applicant participated in the interview and in-person assessment using a powered scooter. The METRO CSR person observed him traveling along the accessible indoor route. He was denied eligibility. The determination did not appear to consider whether he needed accessible bus stops in order to use the fixed system and whether or not his disability prevented him from traveling on an inaccessible path-of-travel to or from bus stops. Eligibility should have been granted on at least a conditional basis for trips where accessible paths of travel to or from bus stops did not exist or where those bus stops that the applicant needed to use were not accessible.
 - Finally, one applicant indicated neuropathy and diabetes, and used crutches at the in-person interview and assessment. The professional familiar with the applicant noted “severe neuropathy,” a bipolar condition, and stated that the applicant could not walk short or long distances. The METRO CSR person conducting the interview and indoor walk noted “some disability,” but that the applicant “walked through the tour fine. No observed signs of pain or swelling. Balance stable.” Again, the reviewers’ concern was that the METRO person conducting the indoor walk and interview was making very limited, non-professional observations of gait and balance and that this information was used to apparently refute the documentation provided by the applicant’s professional. Again, there was no follow-up with the professional to discuss the apparent inconsistency between METRO observations and the professional’s statements.

Appeal Process

Section 137.125(g) of the DOT ADA regulations contains the requirements for administering the eligibility appeals process through which individuals who are denied eligibility can obtain review

of the denial. The transit system is permitted to require that an appeal be filed within 60 days of the denial of an individual's application. The appeals process must include an opportunity for the applicant to be heard and to present information and arguments. The decision on the appeal must be made by a person not involved with the initial decision to deny eligibility, must be communicated in writing and must explain the reasons for the decision. During the pendency of the appeal, the transit system is not required to provide paratransit service to the applicant. However, if a decision is not made within 30 days of the completion of the appeal process, the applicant must be provided paratransit service from that time until and unless a decision to deny the appeal is issued.

Individuals who do not agree with initial eligibility decisions can request an appeal within 60 days of receipt of the initial determination letter. *The Guide* (Pages 9-10) states, "Applicants who are denied METROLift service have the right to appeal METRO's decision. Appeals must be received within 60 days and mailed to the following address: METROLift Eligibility Appeals, P.O. Box 61429, Houston, TX 77208-1429." Appeals will be forwarded to the METROLift Appeals Committee for review and final ruling."

The emphasis in METRO's appeal process is on the appellant preparing a written statement indicating why they feel they should be eligible. METRO staff indicated that the typical process is that applicants will first call to indicate their desire to appeal. When they call, they are instructed to prepare a written statement and send it to METRO. The written statement is then forwarded to the members of the Appeals Committee for review. Staff indicated that if an applicant states that they want to make their case in-person with the Appeals Committee, a conference call is arranged. Actual face-to-face appeals before the Appeals Committee are not arranged.

At the time of the review, the Appeals Committee was composed of three people:

- A representative from the Houston Center for Independent Living
- An Orientation & Mobility Specialist from the Houston Independent School District
- A representative from the Council for Disability Services

METRO staff stated that one of the Appeals Committee members has a disability that prevents them from traveling, which is the reason that emphasis is placed on appellants submitting their case in writing or that conference calls are arranged rather than face-to-face appeal hearings. If, after reviewing appeal information forwarded by appellants, or having a conference call with appellants, the Appeals Committee feels that more information is needed, they can request that the appellant participate in a second functional assessment. METRO has contracts with three disability organizations/individuals to conduct these additional assessments. Appellants whose primary disability is physical can be asked to meet with someone from the Institute for Rehabilitation Research. Individuals whose primary disability is vision-related are asked to go to the Lighthouse for the Blind to be interviewed and assessed. Individuals with cognitive or psychiatric disabilities are asked to meet with a specialist in cognitive disabilities who is under contract to METRO.

The review team examined records for appeals. For the one-year period from August 1, 2009, through July 31, 2010, METRO staff reported 326 appeals. During this same period, 1,187 applicants were denied ADA paratransit eligibility. This suggests an appeal rate of 27 percent.

The review team analyzed 197 appeal files. In 99 cases (50 percent), the initial decisions that found applicants not eligible were upheld during the appeal. In 82 cases (42 percent), applicants initially denied eligibility were found to be unconditionally eligible in their appeal process. In the other 16 cases (8 percent), the Appeals Committee had requested additional information and had recommended that further assessments be conducted. For these 16 cases, a final decision had not yet been made. For the 181 appeals that had been decided, the records indicated that 45 percent of the initial determinations had been overturned and applicants initially denied were granted unconditional eligibility.

It appeared that the denials described above were based on limited observations by non-medical professionals of the respective applicants walking a short distance in a climate-controlled environment without barriers, and these observations appeared to be the basis for discounting information from professionals familiar with the applicants that who stated that applicants had significant functional limitations. There also was no follow-up when these limited observations appeared to contradict the information provided by professionals familiar with applicants.

To meet its obligations under §37.125(g)(2), METRO must correct two due process flaws in its appeal process. METRO must establish a process that includes an opportunity to be heard and to present information and arguments. Furthermore, as explained in Appendix D to the DOT ADA regulations “there must be an opportunity to be heard in person as well as the chance to present written evidence and arguments.” The Appeals Committee member who is unable to participate in person may participate via conference call.

6.5 No-Show Suspension Policy

Section 37.125(h) of the DOT ADA regulations states that transit agencies “may establish an administrative process to suspend, for a reasonable period of time, the provision of complementary paratransit service to ADA eligible individuals who establish a pattern or practice of missing scheduled trips.” FTA has permitted transit systems to regard late cancellations as no-shows if and only if they have the same operational effect on the system as a no-show, generally less than 1–2 hours of the scheduled trip time.

As specified in §37.125(h)(1), trips missed by riders for reasons beyond their control, including trips missed due to operator or transit system error, cannot be a basis for determining that such a pattern or practice exists. Appendix D to this section describes a “pattern or practice” as involving “intentional, repeated or regular actions, not isolated, accidental or singular incidents.”

Under the next-day service provisions of §37.131(b), the passenger has an independent right to each of these trips. To automatically cancel a "return trip" as a result of a "no-show" for the "outgoing trip" would undermine this provision and the rider's right to the second independent trip. Further, §37.125 provides that a transit operator can develop a policy for no-shows, requiring due process; to allow for cancellation of a second (i.e., "return") trip based upon a "no-show" for the first (i.e., "outgoing") trip would be contrary to these provisions.

The review team reviewed METRO's policies procedures and practices regarding no-show/suspensions.

According to *The Guide* (Page 14), METRO's policy regarding no-shows and late cancellations at the time of the review was:

“If you know you're not going to be ready or find out at the last minute that you cannot go at all, please call 713-225-0410 to cancel your trip. Call 60 minutes or more before your trip. If you don't call and don't show up for your trip, you will be considered a No-Ride. METRO limits the number of No-Rides you can have in one month to 10. In the event that we send a vehicle to your location and the driver cannot locate you, the driver will report the No-Ride to the dispatcher. The dispatcher will log the call, verify your trip information, and No-Ride your trip. All of your remaining trips for the day will automatically be put on hold by the dispatcher. If you call in after your No-Ride and you still need to travel, your trips will be reinstated. Please call the dispatch Office before the driver wastes a trip to your location.

A No-Ride by any patron hurts the service but excessive No-Rides are abusive to the METROLift system, affecting other riders, drivers and dispatchers. In a one month period, if you have 10 No-Rides equaling 10 percent or more of your total trips, METROLift staff will send you a certified and regular letter that suspends your riding privileges. The 10-day suspension will start on the 20th day of the month. Continued abuse of the No-Ride policy will lead to progressively longer suspensions, up to a permanent suspension of service.

The policy as written in *The Guide* does not define what constitutes “continued abuse,” or progressively longer suspensions, up to a permanent suspension of service.” The policy does not specify how and when METRO would determine whether or not the no-show was under the customer’s control. The policy neither specifies neither the number of days advance- notice the rider would receive of the proposed suspension, to allow the rider to exercise his or her right to appeal the proposed sanction nor the details of the appeals process required under Section 37,125 (h)(3) of the DOT ADA regulations. At the time of the review METROLift managers stated that that riders were not suspended for no-shows and that the policy had not been enforced for the three years prior to the review.

Findings regarding METRO’s no-show policy are listed in Chapter 9.

6.6 Findings

1. At the time of the review, METRO provided transportation to and from the eligibility interview and at \$4.00 per round trip. The DOT ADA regulation at §37.5 prohibits the imposition of special charges on riders with disabilities. Appendix D at §37.125 explains that the paratransit eligibility process may not impose unreasonable administrative burdens on applicants, and, since it is part of the entity’s nondiscrimination obligations, may not involve “user fees” or application fees to the applicant.” Since the trip to and from interview is required to apply for the service METRO may not charge a fare for either trip. METRO must direct employees and contractors to cease imposing these charges and provide a copy of the directive to FTA.
2. At the time of the review, *The Guide* (Page 8) stated “School districts are responsible for providing transportation for students. Therefore, METROLift transportation is not provided to students going to and from a district school or sponsored events.” Just as students may ride METRO’s fixed route buses to and from school, to meet its obligations under §§ 37.5, 37.121, 37.123 and 37.131(d) METRO must provide comparable paratransit service for

students with disabilities who are unable to use the fixed route system. In addition, METRO must revise its policies to accept and process applications from students with disabilities, since the eligibility process must consider ability to travel to all origins and destinations throughout the service area without regard to trip purpose. As part of METRO's response to this finding, please provide a copy of the revised policy and directive and remove the language on school trips from the next revision of *The Guide*.

3. At the time of the review, METRO granted applicants receiving dialysis treatment either conditional eligibility for trips to and from dialysis treatment or for trips home from treatment only. METRO did not permit these riders to make reservations for other trips. This policy does not meet the requirements of § 37.131(d) of the DOT ADA regulations, METRO must cease restricting eligibility based on trip purpose. METRO must inform similarly-situated riders whose eligibility has been linked to trip purpose that they may reapply for eligibility. As part of METRO's response to this finding, please submit an example of letters and/or other public information sent to these riders informing them of the right to reapply.
4. At the time of the review, METRO appeared to inappropriately link a rider's overall eligibility to his or her ability to make or not make a particular trip. The lack of required specificity in the denial letters prevented the review team from determining the specific reasons. To meet the requirements of §37.125 of the DOT ADA regulations, METRO must revise its eligibility process to first either grant conditional eligibility to applicants who are able to use fixed route under some conditions, or it must grant unconditional eligibility to these applicants. The conditional eligibility determination letter must identify the applicant's functional limitations and the environmental conditions that prevent the applicant from using fixed route. In the determination discussed in finding #3above, the conditional eligibility letter should list the condition as severe fatigue due to treatment. Next, in trip-by-trip eligibility, METRO must apply the individual's conditions to his or her specific trips requests based on the trip origin and destination and must do so for every trip request to determine whether or not the trip is to be taken on METROLIFT or on fixed route service.
5. A detailed review of 16 randomly selected eligibility denials raised questions with 10 determinations. The lack of required specificity in the denial letters prevented the review team from ascertaining the specific reason(s) for the denials. However, these denials appeared to be based on limited observations made of applicants walking 200-300 feet in METRO's climate-controlled lobby, which was free of barriers and obstacles at the time of the review, and did not appear to consider the information that METRO solicited from professionals named in the respective applications. This practice also prevented METRO from determining applicants' functional abilities and establishing conditions based on conditions typically encountered outdoors (such as distance, environmental factors, inaccessible paths of travel or bus stops, and terrain). The failure to consider these functional abilities and architectural and environmental barriers indicate that METRO's process denied eligibility to applicants who should have been determined eligible for at least some level of ADA paratransit service. The percentage of denials reversed on appeal is another such indication. METRO's response to this finding must include a corrective action plan for revising the eligibility determination process.

6. At the time of the on-site review, METRO's denial letters contained a standard statement that the applicant's condition "does not prevent you from riding METRO's fixed route service." As discussed at the time of the review, to meet the requirements of the DOT ADA regulations at §37.125(d), METRO must revise its eligibility determination letters that deny eligibility and those granting conditional or temporary eligibility to state the specific reason(s) for the finding. As explained in Appendix D, in the case of a denial "the reasons must specifically relate the evidence in the matter to the eligibility criteria of the rule and of the entity's process. A mere recital that the applicant can use fixed route transit is not sufficient." During the review, METRO staff revised the template to include space to list the specific reasons for the determination. As part of METRO's response to this finding, submit a representative sample of letters to FTA for review.
7. As part of METRO's revision of its eligibility determination letters, to meet the requirements of §37.125(e) METRO must also revise its letters granting unconditional eligibility and conditional eligibility to state that the rider has been found "ADA Paratransit Eligible."
8. At the time of the review, a large percentage of eligibility denials were reversed on appeal, and METRO did not appear to be tracking its disposition of eligibility appeals. Between August 1, 2009 and July 31, 2010, eighteen percent of applicants were denied eligibility. The review team analyzed 197 appeal files and found that a) approximately 27 percent of applicants who were denied ADA paratransit eligibility appealed the decision and b) denials were reversed and the determination was changed to a grant of unconditional eligibility approximately 45 percent of the time. Tracking information on the number and disposition of appeals is important for two reasons. First, METRO needs this information in case a complaint is filed with METRO or with FTA. Second, METRO's failure to track this information prevents METRO from identifying trends or procedural flaws in determinations that result in reversals upon appeal and from making improvements in the accuracy of its eligibility determination process. As part of METRO's response to this finding, FTA requests information on the number of appeals requested, decisions reversed, decisions upheld, and decisions remanded to METRO for reconsideration during the past six months.
9. At the time of the review, METRO required applicants to appeal an eligibility denial or a grant of conditional eligibility in writing. If applicants desired a hearing before the Appeals Committee, METRO arranged a conference call, rather than a hearing. To meet its obligations under §37.125(g)(2), METRO must cease requiring applicants to prepare a written statement to appeal and establish an appeal process that includes an opportunity for a hearing. As part of METRO's response to this finding, FTA requests information on the reporting relationship(s) between the individual(s) involved in making eligibility determinations and the interim manager identified in the appeal process, so that FTA can determine whether or not the appeal process guarantees the requisite separation of function. METRO must direct staff to cease requiring written appeals, revise its eligibility material, denial and conditional letters and public information to remove requirements for a written appeal and reflect the hearing process, and include these changes in the next revision of *The Guide*. If METRO elects to prepare the one-page appeal form described in the recommendations section below, please provide a copy to FTA.
10. *The Guide* (Page 16) states that "ADA-certified visitors might be eligible for METROLift services. To meet the requirements of §37.127(d) of the DOT ADA regulations, METRO

must revise its visitor eligibility process and public information to reflect that visitors who present documentation of eligibility from their home jurisdictions are entitled to visitor eligibility. For those visitors who do not present evidence of eligibility, documentation can only be required of visitors whose disability is not apparent. METRO must accept a signed statement from a visitor stating that he or she is unable to use the fixed route system. Please revise the policy, provide a copy to FTA and include the new policy in the next revision of *The Guide*.

6.7 Recommendations

1. Streamline the application process by explaining the need for an assessment at the time the application form is sent to the applicant, rather than waiting until the completed application is received to mail the letter with these instructions.
2. Revise procedures to include follow up by phone or fax with applicants and professionals, especially if there are inconsistencies among responses to questions on the professional verification form or on written application forms, particularly before making decisions to deny eligibility outright. Conducting follow up with professionals will facilitate METRO's making more thorough initial determinations, provide additional information about an applicant's functional ability if the applicant appeals the decision and will inform METRO if questions on the professional verification form are unclear to some professionals.
3. Consider utilizing professionals who are trained to conduct physical functional assessments, such as physical or occupational therapists, to conduct ADA paratransit eligibility assessments as part of the eligibility determination process. Consider expanding the indoor walk in the lobby to better determine functional abilities and barriers encountered outdoors. In the absence of a complete functional assessment, METRO staff should consider abilities and limitations indicated by professionals named by applicants. Follow-up with applicants and professionals before discounting the information provided by professionals and basing decisions on the limited observations from the indoor walk.
4. METRO should consider that many persons with chronic renal failure experience severe fatigue on non-treatment days and/or throughout the day on treatment days.
5. Compile a list of functional skills and abilities needed to independently use fixed route service for public comment. Provide copies to staff and contractors involved in making eligibility determinations. FTA staff is available to provide technical assistance.
6. Arrange conference calls for the Appeals Committee member unable to attend hearings.
7. Create a one-page notice of appeal form for applicants to sign and return to METRO to indicate their intention to appeal METRO's denial or determination of conditional eligibility. The form may contain check boxes for applicants to indicate if they are appealing a denial of eligibility or a decision granting conditional eligibility and they feel that they should have been granted unconditional eligibility.
8. Consider providing subscription service to eligible riders with recurring trips, including those riders with an overall eligibility determination of conditional eligibility.

7 Telephone Access

Telephone access for placing or changing trip reservations or checking on the status of a ride is an important part of ADA complementary paratransit operations. Experiencing significant telephone delays to place or confirm trip requests or to check on rides could discourage people from using the service and could therefore be considered a form of capacity constraint.

Section 37.131(b) of the DOT ADA regulations requires that service must be scheduled and provided at any requested time in response to a request for service made the previous day. For example, a rider should be able to make a reservation at 4:45 p.m. for a pickup at 8 a.m. the following morning. Requests must be accepted during normal business hours, even on days that the agency may not otherwise be providing service (e.g., trip requests taken on Sunday for a trip on the following Monday). In addition, Section 37.131(f) prohibits a transit system from limiting the availability of service to ADA paratransit eligible persons (capacity constraint). This chapter summarizes the review of the telephone system used for placing, changing, or confirming trip reservations or checking on the status of a ride

Team members collected the following information about telephone access to METRO ADA complementary paratransit service:

- Consumer comments obtained through telephone interviews with riders, advocates, and agencies
- Standards for telephone answering performance
- Design of the phone system and the staffing of phones
- Practices for handling of calls in both reservations and dispatch through direct observation

7.1 Consumer Comments

All six riders and agency staff contacted in advance of the review provided feedback on telephone hold times. One individual who worked mainly with riders who have subscription service indicated that she does not usually have to call the reservations line, but when she has, the hold times are reasonable. A second person also indicated that hold times are reasonable, typically 1–4 minutes and rarely more than 4 minutes. Two others indicated that hold times in recent months were much improved and were now reasonable. They indicated a year ago hold times could be long (“more than 5 minutes”), but more recently hold times were mostly 1–2 minutes. The final two people had issues with hold times. One said that she often experiences holds of 5 minutes or more. The second person, who worked at a dialysis center, said that he has a very difficult time getting through to the dispatch office on the day of service to place trip requests for individuals. He said that he is on hold for a long time and then when someone does answer, he is very often immediately asked to hold again. As discussed in Chapter 6, individuals with eligibility only for trips home from dialysis must call each day to request a return trip.

7.2 Phone Service Standards

METROLift riders scheduled or cancelled rides and checked on the status of rides on-line or by using the voice telephone system. The voice telephone system is also equipped with an

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system that allows riders to schedule, confirm, and cancel trips without having to wait for a reservation agent or CSRs for assistance. The IVR system is known locally as MACS (METRO Automated Calling Systems). The on-line service is known locally as MACS-WEB.

METRO has two telephone numbers: reservations (713-225-6716) and dispatch (713-225-0410). The process to schedule trips is somewhat different from the process for calling dispatch to check on the status of trips. The *METROLift Guide* revised June 2010 (*The Guide*) (Page 11) provides instructions to riders for scheduling trips:

Using our Automated Calling System (MACS), trips are scheduled 1 day in advance by calling 713-225-6716 and pressing 1, then simply following the prompts, or use MACS-WEB (www.ridemetro.org). To use MACS or MACS-WEB you will need your client ID and Password. MACS/MACS-WEB is available 7 days a week from 5 a.m.–5 p.m. Scheduling assistance is available through the dispatch office on weekdays and holidays. Or call the METROLift reservation office at 713-225-6716, Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. for next day trips, or Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. for trips on Saturday, Sunday and Monday.”

The above instructions are somewhat confusing. As these instructions indicate, METRO is strongly encouraging the use of the MACS and MACS-WEB systems by presenting these options prior to the instructions for speaking with a reservationist. Riders can use the automated systems seven days a week from 5 a.m.–5 p.m. To get staff assistance with trip bookings, riders can call the reservations office on weekdays from 8 a.m.–5 p.m. On weekends and holidays, if riders need staff assistance with trip bookings, they call the dispatch number. The dispatch number is not listed on page 11, but it is listed elsewhere in *The Guide*, including on the back cover. The listing on the back cover does not expressly indicate that assistance with trip bookings on weekends and holidays is available through dispatch.

For same-day issues like checking on rides or requesting same-day changes, riders can call the dispatch number. This number is staffed seven days a week during all hours that service is provided.

If riders use the MACS service, there is no hold time in the telephone queue. As soon as riders select “1,” they access the IVR system to place trip requests or get updates on trips. Similarly, if riders use the MACS-WEB option, they do not experience hold times. The MACS and MACS-WEB services are also available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for riders to confirm scheduled trips, check on scheduled ride times, or cancel trips.

For riders who cannot use the MACS or MACS-WEB systems, or prefer to speak to reservations or dispatch staff, they may be placed in a hold queue. According to information provided by METRO, telephone performance standards had been adopted for the reservations and dispatch telephone lines. The standard is for 90 percent of all calls to be answered within three minutes.

The CISCO phone system has the capability to provide detailed service level reports and METRO staff stated that it uses these reports to monitor telephone performance on an ongoing basis. The reports show the total number of calls handled and calls abandoned for each call group. The reports also show the number and percentage of calls handled or abandoned within 1, 2, 3 and 4 minutes in one-minute increments. METRO had developed a special report that shows the number and percentage of calls answered and abandoned within three minutes.

Managers and supervisors also have the capability to log into the reporting system and monitor performance in any call group at any time. METRO also has LED displays in the reservations and dispatch areas that display real-time information about telephone queues and hold times.

7.3 Phone System Design

At the time of the review, METRO used a state-of-the-art automatic call distribution (ACD) system—the CISCO IP system. Separate numbers are maintained for the reservations office and the dispatch office. All calls to both lines are recorded.

When riders call the reservations number (713-225-6716) they are greeted and informed that they have reached the METROLift reservations office. Callers are then given a list of options:

- Press 1 to be connected to the automated scheduling system (MACS)
- Press 2 for assistance in Spanish (these instructions provided in Spanish), or
- Remain on the line to be assisted by a reservationist

If the call was not answered immediately by a reservationist, callers were informed that all reservationists were busy and callers were given an estimated hold time. While customers were on hold, the system played background music and made important service announcements.

When riders called the dispatch number (713-225-0410) they were greeted by an automated message and informed that they had reached the dispatch office. The message then stated in Spanish that they could press 2 for information in Spanish. The recording then mentioned that collect calls are not accepted and gave the METROLift toll-free number (877-214-7433). Callers were reminded that they must present a ticket or pass to ride the METROLift service. Callers are then offered the following options:

- Press 1 to be connected to the automated calling system (MACS) to check on a ride or to cancel a ride, or
- Remain on the line to be assisted by a dispatcher

As was done on the reservations line, if the call was not answered immediately, callers were informed that all dispatchers were busy and callers were given an estimated hold time. While customers were on hold, the system played background music and made important service announcements.

7.4 Reservations and Dispatch Staffing

Reservations

At the time of the on-site review, METRO had five full-time reservationists. Four were METRO employees and one was a temporary employee. All five worked weekdays from 9:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. METRO also employed nine full-time CSRs. The CSRs answer general information calls and assist in making ADA paratransit eligibility determinations, but are also used to provide backup in reservations and dispatch if needed. Three of the CSRs worked weekdays from 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Five worked Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. One worked Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. and then Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Table 7.1 shows the number of reservations and backup CSRs that were available given this staffing plan. As shown, eight CSRs were available Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 8:00–8:30 a.m. This increased to nine at 8:30 a.m. From 9:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., nine CSRs and five reservationists were available on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Fewer staff were available on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On these days, there were eight CSRs from 8:00–8:30 a.m., nine from 8:30–9:30 a.m., nine CSRs plus five reservationists from 9:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m., but then only four CSRs and five reservationists from 1:00–5:00 p.m.

Table 7.1 – METROLift Reservations and Customer Service Staffing Levels

Time	Mondays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays	Fridays
8–8:30 a.m.	8 CS, 0 RES	8 CS, 0 RES	8 CS, 0 RES	8 CS, 0 RES	8 CS, 0 RES
8:30–9:30 a.m.	9 CS, 0 RES	9 CS, 0 RES	9 CS, 0 RES	9 CS, 0 RES	9 CS, 0 RES
9:30 a.m.–1 p.m.	9 CS, 5 RES	9 CS, 5 RES	9 CS, 5 RES	9 CS, 5 RES	9 CS, 5 RES
1–5 p.m.	9 CS, 5 RES	4 CS, 5 RES	9 CS, 5 RES	4 CS, 5 RES	9 CS, 5 RES

RES – Reservations, CS – Customer Service

METRO managers stated that there were also five clerical staff and two technical staff working in the METROLift area that were available to provide backup in reservations as needed. These employees worked various shifts on weekdays.

METRO managers also stated that the METROLift CSRs had been merged with the fixed route CSRs in October 2009. Some staff in each area had been cross-trained to be able to handle calls for both types of services. Additional cross training was planned to expand staffing flexibility in each area.

Dispatch

At the time of on-site review, METRO had 22 radio dispatchers and 31 CSRs who worked primarily in the dispatch office. Radio dispatchers focused on managing trips and runs. Customer service staff took calls from riders, provided updated trip information, recorded cancellations and handled same day trip change requests. The CSRs in dispatch were also referred to as the “Where’s My Ride (WMR) staff. All radio dispatchers were METRO employees. Thirty of the 33 WMR agents were METRO staff and three were temporary staff.

Radio dispatchers worked varying shifts that covered all hours of operations, starting at 3:15 a.m. and continuing until 2:00 a.m. On weekdays, two to three radio dispatchers were scheduled early in the morning (3:15 or 3:30 a.m. starts). Another five to seven dispatchers reported between 5:00 and 6:00 a.m., which then provided eight to nine radio dispatchers during the morning peak hours. Eight radio dispatchers were scheduled to work the afternoon/evening shift on weekdays. Two to three radio dispatchers were typically scheduled to work the very late evening and early morning shift.

Five radio dispatchers were scheduled to work Saturdays, with two covering the morning/early afternoon hours, and three covering the late afternoon and evening hours. Six radio dispatchers were scheduled for Sundays, with three working morning/early afternoon hours and three working late afternoon and evening hours.

The WMR agents worked varying shifts that provided coverage from 5:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m. on weekdays, 4:00 a.m.–10:30 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. On weekdays, 12–15 WMR agents worked morning/early afternoon shifts, and 10–13 agents worked late morning/afternoon and evening shifts.

On weekends, five WMR agents were scheduled to work morning and early afternoon shifts, and six were scheduled for late morning, afternoon, and evening shifts.

7.5 Telephone Service Performance

While on site, the review team obtained copies of telephone performance reports. This included reports for the main reservations call group, the Spanish reservations call group, the main dispatch call group, and the Spanish dispatch call group. Information about the total number of calls received, the number of calls abandoned, the percentage of calls answered within three minutes, the percentage of calls answered within four minutes, and the average hold time for answered calls was extracted from the reports for a randomly-selected sample week. The information was extracted from two reports provided by METRO—the Contact Service Queue Call Distribution Summary Report, and the Contact Service Queue Activity Report. Sample pages from these two reports are provided in Attachment H. Information was extracted for the week of Sunday, July 11 through Saturday, July 17.

Table 7.2 shows the information gathered. Performance in the main reservations call group for Monday and Wednesday of this sample week was good. Between 92.3–94.1 percent of calls were answered within three minutes on these days, which exceeds METRO’s standard of 90 percent of all calls within three minutes). Between 94.5–97.9 percent of calls were answered in 4 minutes for these days.

Performance in the main reservations call group Tuesday of this sample week was somewhat lower, with 80.7 percent of calls answered within three minutes, which was below the standard, and 96.3 percent answered within 4 minutes. Performance on Thursday was also below the adopted standard, with 82.7 percent of calls answered within three minutes and 88.1 percent of calls answered in four minutes. Performance on Friday, July 16 was low—only 59.6 percent of calls answered within three minutes and only 73.6 percent answered within four minutes. Call volume on Friday was also significantly higher. There were between 1,460–1,681 calls to the main reservations line on the other days in this week, but 2,064 calls on Friday. This is likely due to the fact that the reservations office is not open on weekends.

Performance in the Spanish reservations call group varied by day and was slightly lower than in the main reservations call group. Between 85.1–91.1 percent of calls were answered within three minutes on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday of that week, and between 88.5–94.1 percent were answered within four minutes on those days. Performance was lower on Tuesday and Friday, with only 64.3–64.9 percent of calls answered within three minutes and 83–89.2 percent answered within four minutes.

Performance in the main dispatch call group for this sample week was below METRO standards. Between 71.8–79.5 percent of calls were answered within three minutes, and 88.2–92.5 percent of calls were answered within four minutes.

Performance in the Spanish dispatch call group was also below the METRO standard, with between 62.7–82.9 percent of calls answered within three minutes. A much higher rate of abandoned calls was also recorded on the Spanish dispatch call group. Between 23–24 percent of calls were abandoned on Tuesday and Wednesday and 16–19 percent were abandoned on Thursday, Friday and Saturday of that week.

Table 7.2 – METROLift Telephone Performance, July 11–17, 2010

	Sun 7/11	Mon 7/12	Tue 7/13	Wed 7/14	Thu 7/15	Fri 7/16	Sat 7/17
Main Reservations Call Group							
Calls Handled	NA	1681	1660	1584	1460	2064	NA
Calls Abandoned	NA	89	103	100	89	312	NA
Percent Abandoned	NA	5.0	5.8	5.9	5.7	13.1	NA
Percent Calls Handled <3 Min	NA	92.3	80.7	94.1	82.7	59.6	NA
Percent Calls Handled <4 Min	NA	94.5	96.3	97.9	88.1	73.6	NA
Avg Hold Time (Calls Answered)	NA	0:55	1:28	0:59	1:21	2:51	NA
Spanish Reservations Call Group							
Calls Handled	NA	87	111	101	103	112	NA
Calls Abandoned	NA	1	6	3	9	5	NA
Percent Abandoned	NA	1.1	5.1	2.9	8.0	4.3	NA
Percent Calls Handled <3 Min	NA	85.1	64.9	91.1	86.4	64.3	NA
Percent Calls Handled <4 Min	NA	88.5	89.2	94.1	90.3	83.0	NA
Avg Hold Time (Calls Answered)	NA	1:22	2:09	1:25	1:19	2:31	NA
Main Dispatch Call Group							
Calls Handled	2928	4000	4406	4443	4113	3796	2410
Calls Abandoned	345	426	545	596	490	460	255
Percent Abandoned	10.5	9.6	11.0	11.8	10.6	10.8	9.6
Percent Calls Handled <3 Min	NA	78.0	71.8	79.5	74.0	76.8	77.5
Percent Calls Handled <4 Min	NA	91.4	87.2	92.5	88.2	88.8	86.3
Avg Hold Time (Calls Answered)	1:05	1:43	2:03	1:48	1:56	1:50	1:33
Spanish Dispatch Call Group							
Calls Handled	97	174	198	222	217	151	110
Calls Abandoned	6	10	24	23	16	16	19
Percent Abandoned	5.8	5.4	10.8	9.4	6.7	9.6	14.7
Percent Calls Handled <3 Min	NA	81.6	68.2	68.0	82.9	72.8	62.7
Percent Calls Handled <4 Min	NA	92.5	84.8	84.7	90.3	84.8	73.6
Avg Hold Time (Calls Answered)	1:35	1:42	2:06	2:16	1:45	1:58	2:51

The review team also examined more detailed hold time data for this week. Hold times by hour of the day were extracted from the systems Contact Service Queue Activity Report (by Interval) for this week. A sample page of this report is provided in Attachment H. Data extracted included the total number of calls received each hour and the percentage of calls answered within three minutes by hour. This information for the four call groups is provided in Tables 7.3–7.6.

As shown in Table 7.3, performance in the main reservations call group met the METRO standard for 26 of the 45 hourly periods in the week. The standard was not met during 19 of the 45 hourly periods. Performance was good for several hours of the day on Monday through Thursday. Performance was lower at the start of the day (from 8:00–9:00 a.m.), during the middle of the day (1:00–2:00 p.m.), and at the end of the day (4:00–5:00 p.m.). On Monday

from 8:00–9:00 a.m., only 69.1 percent of calls were answered within three minutes. On Thursday from 8:00–9:00 a.m., only 64.1 percent of calls were answered in three minutes. Performance was consistently lower from 1:00–2:00 p.m. It ranged from 59.6 percent on Tuesday, to 68.6 percent on Thursday, to 74.1 percent on Monday. Performance was also very low from 4:00–5:00 p.m. on Tuesday (54.5 percent) and Thursday (46.3 percent). The longer hold times at the beginning and end of the day appear to be related to higher call volume. The mid-day issues appear to be related to coverage during lunch times. Performance on Friday was quite low for many of the hourly calling periods. Fewer than 60 percent of calls were answered in three minutes during six of the nine hours.

A similar pattern was seen for calls to the Spanish reservations call group. The METRO standard was met on this call group for 22 of the 45 hourly periods in the week. The standard was not met for 23 hourly periods. The percentage of calls answered in three minutes or less was much lower from 8:00–10:00 a.m., 12:00–2:00 p.m., and 3:00–5:00 p.m. Performance was 62.5 percent or lower for four of the hourly periods from 8:00–10:00 a.m. Monday through Thursday, and 53.8 percent or lower for three of the hourly period from 3:00–4:00 p.m. on Monday through Thursday. Interestingly, the Spanish reservations line did not appear to experience the same degree of mid-day performance degradation, with only one hourly period falling below 60 percent. On Friday, performance was good through noon, but then declined significantly in the afternoon.

Table 7.3 – Telephone Performance Data, Main Reservation Call Group (July 11-17, 2010)

Time	Mon 7/12		Tue 7/13		Wed 7/14		Thu 7/15		Fri 7/16	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
8–9a	239	69.1	218	100	183	96.1	188	64.1	272	64.8
9–10a	174	92.1	160	100	160	79	132	88.3	186	93.8
10–11a	178	100	176	100	172	98.8	136	100	209	97.5
11–12n	185	95.5	167	95.7	158	92.9	129	100	213	45.9
12–1p	150	100	174	91.7	141	89	147	99.3	239	40.5
1–2p	187	74.1	168	59.6	175	93.9	157	68.6	261	38.6
2–3p	183	100	197	84.1	198	100	177	100	295	56.4
3–4p	214	100	236	54.7	194	100	208	100	351	40.1
4–5p	266	100	283	54.5	308	92.5	281	46.3	371	64

= Number of calls received % = Percent of calls answered within 3 minutes

**Table 7.4 – Telephone Performance Data
Spanish Reservation Call Group (July 11-17, 2010)**

Time	Mon 7/12		Tue 7/13		Wed 7/14		Thu 7/15		Fri 7/16	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
8–9a	7	71.4	5	25	8	100	13	54.5	6	100
9–10a	10	55.6	8	87.5	12	54.5	11	62.5	10	90
10–11a	8	75	14	100	9	100	9	100	7	100
11–12n	10	80	11	90	11	100	12	100	12	83.3
12–1p	6	83.3	5	100	12	100	10	100	10	50
1–2p	11	81.8	18	52.9	7	100	9	100	16	53.3
2–3p	12	100	17	68.8	14	100	21	100	14	69.2
3–4p	9	100	19	50	14	92.9	12	100	20	33.3
4–5p	15	100	21	36.8	17	81.3	15	53.8	24	57.1

= Number of calls received % = Percent of calls answered within 3 minutes

Table 7.5 shows hold times by hour for the main dispatch call group. Performance met the METRO standard (at least 90 percent of calls answered within 3 minutes) for 92 of the 168 hourly periods in the week 55 percent of the time. This percentage includes those periods when no calls were received and the percentage answered was zero. Hourly periods with very low performance, less than 60 percent of calls answered in 3 minutes, are shaded in Table 7.5. There are some hourly periods with very low performance during the very early morning (3:00–5:00 a.m.), some in the evening (after 7:00 p.m.), and some on Saturday during the middle of the day (from 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.). Most of the hourly periods with low performance were in the afternoon from 1:00–6:00 p.m. A total of 18 of the 35 hourly periods during the afternoon were below 60 percent.

Table 7.6 shows hold times by hour for the Spanish dispatch call group. Performance met the METRO standard (at least 90 percent of calls answered within 3 minutes) for 91 of the 168 hourly periods in the week 54 percent of the time. Hourly periods where less than 60 percent of calls were answered in three minutes are shaded. These periods tended to vary more than for the main dispatch call group; again there was some concentration of low performance during the afternoon (12:00–6:00 p.m.). Sixteen 16 of the 43 hourly periods for the week between 12:00 and 6:00 p.m. had less than 60 percent of calls answered within three minutes.

Table 7.5 – Telephone Performance Data, Main Dispatch Call Group, July 11–17, 2010

Time	Sun 7/11		Mon 7/12		Tue 7/13		Wed 7/14		Thu 7/15		Fri 7/16		Sat 7/17	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
12–1a	10	100	8	100	11	100	8	100	10	100	5	100	3	100
1–2a	0	0	3	100	1	100	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
2–3a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3–4a	2	50	20	73.7	14	92.9	15	100	17	94.1	17	62.5	7	57.1
4–5a	15	100	98	53.6	66	62.7	67	78.4	65	63	69	58.2	28	100
5–6a	47	100	155	77.2	130	88.3	125	99.1	114	61.1	143	43.8	53	96.2
6–7a	106	100	205	100	217	100	210	100	193	93.3	202	100	85	100
7–8a	160	100	238	100	292	100	262	96	251	87.6	213	98.6	115	100
8–9a	208	100	307	97.1	397	75.4	327	94.6	302	75	296	99.6	146	89.4
9–10a	179	98.2	303	85.6	391	78	358	67.3	317	72.9	328	97.7	196	28.6
10–11a	160	100	319	95.1	345	98.5	409	53	336	85.7	363	100	242	39
11–12n	161	100	321	100	396	81.5	431	91.3	303	100	358	92.6	210	55.3
12–1p	195	89.6	313	96.8	386	50.2	376	93.9	356	95	326	71.3	219	83.3
1–2p	246	58.1	314	48.2	375	45.1	364	88.8	323	79.4	322	31.5	192	100
2–3p	161	61.3	293	76.6	309	49.4	325	92	338	65.8	371	48.5	155	97.3
3–4p	100	97.9	323	24.2	325	26.4	329	79.9	336	31.6	310	36.9	153	100
4–5p	153	92.9	295	42.6	291	54	351	52.9	303	23.2	267	50.5	126	100
5–6p	202	90.2	199	58.7	236	37.8	253	56.6	201	75.6	191	63.3	111	80.7
6–7p	147	96.7	142	65.3	126	70.4	151	95	163	79.6	125	98.4	106	96.1
7–8p	279	43.3	196	55.2	231	78.7	190	79.5	232	70.6	98	95.7	167	72.1
8–9p	184	86.7	194	91.9	204	98.4	233	32.3	197	93.4	110	100	140	61.1
9–10p	108	100	136	96.3	138	98.5	189	57.6	179	78.1	97	79.3	132	42.3
10–11p	74	95.7	53	98.1	92	96.3	88	97.7	92	44.7	61	91.1	78	84.5
11–12a	31	100	30	96.6	22	100	21	100	28	100	29	93.1	31	100

= Number of calls received % = Percentage of calls answered within 3 minutes

Table 7.6 – Telephone Performance Data, Spanish Dispatch Call Group, July 11-17, 2010

Time	Sun 7/11		Mon 7/12		Tue 7/13		Wed 7/14		Thu 7/15		Fri 7/16		Sat 7/17	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
12-1a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1-2a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2-3a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3-4a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	100	1	0
4-5a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
5-6a	4	100	9	62.5	4	75	6	100	7	33.3	8	20	1	100
6-7a	0	0	9	100	9	75	13	76.9	7	85.7	11	88.9	1	100
7-8a	7	85.7	10	100	17	100	14	92.9	14	50	11	100	5	75
8-9a	3	100	15	78.6	22	80	24	62.5	9	87.5	16	93.8	15	86.7
9-10a	8	100	16	68.8	16	71.4	29	30.4	21	46.5	12	83.3	12	27.3
10-11a	4	75	17	100	20	100	24	50	26	75	14	92.9	18	20
11-12n	7	89.7	8	85.7	13	100	11	70	20	100	8	100	13	54.5
12-1p	6	83.3	8	85.7	17	43.8	19	88.9	17	100	12	40	10	50
1-2p	6	25	6	60	22	41.2	12	80	21	100	6	50	4	100
2-3p	4	0	13	100	21	50	16	63.6	20	89.5	16	18.2	5	100
3-4p	2	100	7	100	12	9.1	18	88.2	17	100	13	23.1	11	100
4-5p	6	83.3	12	54.5	12	37.5	8	50	13	92.3	3	100	4	100
5-6p	4	100	9	44.4	6	33.3	10	75	7	85.7	3	66.7	5	33.3
6-7p	5	75	5	60	0	0	2	100	2	50	6	100	1	0
7-8p	6	33.3	10	90	5	80	13	72.7	6	60	6	100	9	100
8-9p	14	100	11	72.7	10	100	9	50	13	91.7	8	100	6	50
9-10p	8	100	8	100	9	66.7	10	44.4	7	100	7	66.7	6	0
10-11p	3	100	11	88.9	5	33.3	6	100	6	50	4	75	2	100
11-12a	0	0	1	100	2	100	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0

= Number of calls received % = Percentage of calls answered within 3 minutes

The review team checked performance for a second week to see if the low performance on the dispatch call groups for the week of July 11–17 was an aberration. Data on call volumes and hold times was extracted from the METRO telephone reports for the hours of 12:00–6:00 p.m. for the week of July 18–24, 2010. This information is provided in Tables 7.7 and 7.8. Hourly periods with less than 60 percent of calls answered in three minutes are shaded.

As shown in Table 7.7, performance on the main dispatch call group was somewhat better during this second sample week. Only five of the 43 hourly call periods had fewer than 60 percent of calls answered in three minutes. However, another six hourly periods had only slightly improved performance, with less than 70 percent of calls answered in three minutes. Still, the METRO standard was met during 24 of the 43 hourly periods.

As shown in Table 7.8, performance on the Spanish dispatch call group for this second sample week did not significantly improve. Fourteen of the hourly periods had fewer than 60 percent of calls answered in three minutes—similar to the first week examined. Only 18 of the 43 hourly periods met the METRO standard of having 90 percent of calls answered within three minutes.

**Table 7.7 – Telephone Performance Data, Main Dispatch Call Group
(12:00–6:00 P.M., July 18–24, 2010)**

Time	Sun 7/18		Mon 7/19		Tue 7/20		Wed 7/21		Thu 7/22		Fri 7/23		Sat 7/24	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
12–1p	145	100	262	100	378	97.4	291	99.6	274	100	277	85.1	195	100
1–2p	209	98	132	96.9	393	75.7	300	91.9	300	100	273	77.4	170	79.6
2–3p	154	95	312	68.3	354	48.6	327	81.1	273	100	297	63.2	139	100
3–4p	96	100	283	68.8	367	37	354	38.4	286	100	307	63.6	171	100
4–5p	60	100	234	53.3	257	65.6	279	47.8	212	100	281	70.6	144	98.5
5–6p	72	100	159	94.9	213	64.8	172	82.8	146	100	229	88	110	94

= Number of calls received % = Percent of calls answered within 3 minutes

**Table 7.8 – Telephone Performance Data, Spanish Dispatch Call Group
(12:00–6:00 P.M., July 18–24, 2010)**

Time	Sun 7/18		Mon 7/19		Tue 7/20		Wed 7/21		Thu 7/22		Fri 7/23		Sat 7/24	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
12–1p	5	100	9	100	16	90.9	11	100	15	100	4	100	8	100
1–2p	7	100	12	100	9	50	20	89.5	15	100	24	63.6	9	66.7
2–3p	12	77.8	8	42.9	19	18.8	21	80	19	100	18	64.3	3	100
3–4p	7	83.3	15	30.8	20	27.8	16	23.1	10	100	19	58.8	10	100
4–5p	1	100	14	25	19	62.5	19	56.3	9	100	15	46.7	4	33.3
5–6p	4	100	4	75	15	53.3	6	50	2	100	12	75	5	33.3

= Number of calls received % = Percentage of calls answered within 3 minutes

7.6 Findings

1. At the time of the review, METRO’s telephone performance standard that 90 percent of calls should be answered within three minutes was met on two of the five days in the sample week within the main reservations call group. Performance in the main dispatch call group and Spanish call group met the standard on zero of the five days in the sample week. In addition, telephone service reports did not appear to capture the actual hold times that customers experienced, if those hold times were over four minutes. To meet the requirements of §37.131(f) to operate METROLift service without any operational pattern or practice that significantly limits the availability of service, a revised standard that specifies a maximum hold time is needed. Telephone hold times must be tracked and monitored against the standard and staffing adjusted to avoid a pattern or practice of significantly long hold times. METRO must track all hold times, including those longer than four minutes. As part of METRO’s response to this finding, draft the revised standard and submit a copy to FTA.

Additional findings requiring corrective action are similar to those discussed in Chapter 8, Trip Reservations. See Chapter 8 for findings regarding access to reservations. See below for recommendations concerning telephone performance.

7.7 Recommendations

1. One example of a revised telephone performance standard that specifies maximum hold time is that 90 percent of calls should be answered within three minutes and 100 percent of all calls answered within five minutes.
2. Consider staffing the reservations office on weekends and allow riders to call reservations seven days a week to place trip requests.
3. To allow telephone performance to meet METRO's established standard of answering at least 90 percent of calls within three minutes, increase staff in the reservations and dispatch offices in particular, during the early morning hours and lunch hours in reservations and afternoon hours in dispatch.

8 Trip Reservations Process

While the previous chapter addressed access to reservations, this chapter focuses on how METRO handles trip requests. Section 37.131(b) of the DOT ADA regulations require the transit system to schedule and provide paratransit service to any ADA complementary paratransit eligible person at any requested time on a particular day in response to a request for service made the previous day. Reservations may be taken by reservation agents or by “mechanical means” and can be made via “real-time scheduling.” A transit agency may negotiate pickup times with the rider but cannot require the rider to schedule a trip to begin more than one hour before or after the individual's desired departure time. At the transit system’s discretion, reservations may be made up to 14 days in advance.

Section 37.133 of the DOT ADA regulations allows subscription trips, i.e., pre-arranged trips at a particular time not requiring individual trip reservations for each trip. Such trips may not comprise more than 50 percent of the available trips at any given time if there is a capacity constraint at that time of day. If the paratransit service operates without capacity constraints, there is no limit to subscription service.

The review team examined how METRO handled trip requests from riders. Particular attention was given to policies regarding trip reservations and negotiation of requested trip times, whether METRO uses any form of trip caps or waiting lists and whether there was a pattern or practice of denying a significant number of ADA-eligible trip requests. The review team gathered and analyzed the following information:

- Comments from riders and advocates through telephone interviews, and through a review of comments and complaints on file at FTA and METRO
- Reservations policies and performance standards
- Service reports prepared by METRO showing the number of trips served and the number of trips denied for the past three years
- Direct observations of the handling of trips by the review team and interviews with METRO staff about the ability to accommodate trip requests

8.1 Consumer Comments

All six riders and agency staff contacted in advance of the review commented on the trip reservations process. Each was asked if they were able to get trips scheduled at the times they needed, and if they were ever denied a trip.

Four of the individuals contacted said they had never been denied a trip and indicated no issues with getting trips scheduled at the times needed. One person mentioned that she works primarily with persons who are on subscription service, so placing trip requests is not an issue. One raised a related concern, saying that once in a while riders are denied trips because they do not have an attendant to travel with them. This person worked at a program that served individuals with cognitive disabilities.

One of the remaining two riders indicated some issues. He said that he sometimes gets pickup times that are too close to his appointment times, which can cause him to be late if he doesn’t call to request a change.

One person, who worked at a dialysis center, did not indicate issues with trip denials or inappropriate times, but stated that some people who have eligibility that requires them to call in each day for a return trip home sometimes forget to call for their rides. This then causes them to have to wait for a very long time once they do call for their rides home.

8.2 Standards, Policies, and Procedures

The response time provisions of DOT ADA regulations differentiate between next day reservations and advance reservations. Section 37.131(b)(4) states that a transit agency may permit reservations to be made up to 14 days in advance of an ADA paratransit eligible individual's desired trips. Providing advance reservations is optional; providing next day service is required under Section 37.131(b)(1).

In material provided to the review team prior to the on-site review, METRO stated, "The standard for trip denials is zero. All trip requests are scheduled without negotiation."

As discussed earlier in this report, METRO has two telephone numbers: reservations (713-225-6716) and dispatch (713-225-0410). The process to schedule trips is somewhat different from the process for calling dispatch to check on the status of trips. Page 11 of *The Guide* provides instructions to riders for scheduling trips. It states:

Using our Automated Calling System (MACS), trips are scheduled 1 day in advance by calling 713-225-6716 and pressing 1, then simply following the prompts, or use MACS-WEB (www.ridemetro.org). To use MACS or MACS-WEB you will need your client ID and Password. MACS/MACS-WEB is available 7 days a week from 5 a.m.–5 p.m. Scheduling assistance is available through the dispatch office on weekdays and holidays. Or call the METROLift reservation office at 713-225-6716, Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. for next day trips, or Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. for trips on Saturday, Sunday and Monday."

The above instructions are somewhat confusing. As these instructions indicate, METRO is strongly encouraging the use of the MACS and MACS-WEB systems, by presenting these options prior to the instructions for speaking with a reservationist. Riders can use the automated systems seven days a week from 5:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. To get staff assistance with trip bookings, riders can call the reservations office on weekdays from 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. On weekends and holidays, if riders need staff assistance with trip bookings, they call the dispatch number. The dispatch number is not listed on page 11, but it is listed elsewhere in *The Guide*, including on the back cover. The listing on the back cover does not expressly indicate that assistance with trip bookings on weekends and holidays is available through dispatch.

FTA recommends that METRO revise *The Guide* to explicitly indicate that assistance with trip bookings is available through dispatch on weekends and holidays to meet its obligations under §37.131(b)(1). Not all eligible riders will be able to use MACS or MACS-WEB and all eligible riders are entitled to next-day reservations under §37.131(b)(1).

Subscription Service

Section 37.133 of the DOT ADA regulations allows subscription trips, i.e., pre-arranged trips at a particular time not requiring individual trip reservations for each trip. Such trips may not comprise more than 50 percent of the available trips at any given time if there is a capacity

constraint at that time of day. If the paratransit service operates without capacity constraints, there is no limit to subscription service.

Subscription service is available for METROLift for riders making the same trip (origin, destination, and time) at least three times per week. METRO staff estimates that approximately half of all METROLift trips are subscription trips. The *METROLift Guide* revised June 2010 (*The Guide*) (Page 12) states that 50 percent “is the maximum allowed under the transportation provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act.” This is an incorrect understanding of the DOT ADA regulations. If there are no capacity constraints at a given time of day, then there is no cap on the proportion of subscription service at that time of day.

8.3 Review of Recorded Trip Denials

According to data provided by METRO, there had been no denials for METROLift service in the three most recent fiscal years, through June 2010.

8.4 Observations of the Handling of Trip Requests

The review team listened to 197 trip requests during the afternoon of Monday, August 16 and the morning of Tuesday, August 17, encompassing eight hours and 43 minutes of observations. The review team sat with five different METROLift reservationists; through the use of telephone splitters, the review team was able to listen to both sides of the telephone conversation.

During these observations, the review team observed no denials. The reservationists entered the caller’s information along with the origin, destination, and requested trip time, into the Trapeze scheduling software. The reservationists reminded the callers that the scheduled trip time would be available after 7:00 p.m. that evening.

Of the 197 calls observed, 21 were not for trip requests. Riders called to confirm trip times, cancel or change trip requests, obtain updates on their eligibility application, and ask about their ride (WMR).

If the caller requested a same-day trip, the reservationist transferred the call to a METROLift dispatcher. For WMR queries, some of the reservationists had received additional training to check the Trapeze dispatch modules to provide an answer without having to transfer the call to a dispatcher. Certain reservationists had also received training to make changes to rider information (e.g., address, mobility aids, telephone number).

METRO scheduled its reservationists to have at least one Spanish-speaking reservationist available. If one was not available, the reservationist transfers the call to another METRO employee who speaks Spanish.

Other observations included:

- METRO reservationists were courteous and professional in dealing with callers
- Reservationists assumed that the first trip of a request started at the rider’s home address; they would have to edit the trip information in Trapeze if they were incorrect

- Reservationists would usually, but not always, add 15 minutes to the requested pickup time for return trips, e.g., if a caller requested a 5 p.m. pickup to return home, the reservationists would usually enter 5:15 p.m. into Trapeze.
- Reservationists did not add the additional 15 minutes to pickups for return trips if the caller insisted on it not being added.
- When confirming requested pickup times, reservationists were inconsistent in the pickup time repeated back to the customer. Some repeated the pickup time and included the additional 15 minutes and others did not.
- Reservationists were inconsistent in confirming key information such as home address and telephone numbers.
- Reservationists were inconsistent in confirming whether the caller was traveling with a PCA and/or using a mobility aid.

Negotiations and Denials

According to Section 37.131(b) of the DOT ADA regulations, if the negotiation results in offering pickup times that differ by one hour or more than the requested time, this constitutes a denial and must be counted as such, irrespective of whether the rider accepts the offer or not.

Review team members considered these questions as part of observations of the batch scheduling and call back processes:

- Does the transit system record and honor the originally requested time to meet part of its response time obligations under the DOT ADA regulations and ensure that riders are not required to travel more than one hour before or after the time the customer wishes to travel?
- Do call backs take place too early or too late in the day?
- Does the rider have an opportunity to negotiate when he receives the scheduled pickup time, which is provided during the call-back, whether the call back happens because the rider calls the transit system, or the transit calls the rider?
- If a new scheduled time is negotiated, is the original requested time preserved?
- After the call-back and realistic negotiation, is there a possibility that the transit system would adjust the scheduled time again?

METROLift reservationists did not schedule trips to actual runs and did not negotiate trip times with riders at the time they called to book trips. Instead, the caller's appointment time or requested pickup time was recorded in the system and trips are batch scheduled on the afternoon the day before service, once all trip requests had been received. When riders called to place trip requests, reservationists provided an estimated pickup time and informed riders that they should call back after 7:00 p.m. on the day before service to request the final scheduled pickup times for their trips.

In the final batch scheduling process, times requested by riders can change by up to 20 minutes, from 20 minutes before the time requested to 20 minutes after the time requested. Riders are informed of this each time they call and place trip requests. *The Guide* also informed riders that estimated times can change by up to 20 minutes (page 12).

As part of the review, a special report was generated for a randomly selected sample day showing the times requested by riders and the final scheduled times. The times were compared to see if they were changed by more than 20 minutes. One report was run following the completion of the batch scheduling process—to determine if times were changed by more than 20 minutes during the scheduling process. A second report was run following the day of service to determine if times were changed on the day of service by dispatchers, routers, or other staff managing runs. These special reports are discussed in Chapter 9.

8.5 Findings

1. At the time of the review, METRO did not provide an opportunity for passengers to negotiate pickup times. Pickup times were not available to METROLift riders until the evening before the scheduled trip, and riders were required to call METRO after 7:00 p.m. to obtain the final scheduled time. No opportunity for negotiation was possible, as schedules had already been transmitted to the contractors at that time. As discussed in Chapter 9, riders could request same-day changes on the day of service and METRO would try to accommodate them. This is not compliant with the requirement under §37.131(b)(2) of the DOT ADA regulations, which permits transit systems to negotiate pickup times with ADA paratransit passengers but prohibits requiring the individual to schedule a trip more than an hour before or an hour after his scheduled time. METRO must revise its process to ensure that passengers are able to negotiate pickup times prior to finalizing the schedule.
2. Compounding the trip purpose restriction discussed in Chapter 6 of this report, riders who were granted conditional eligibility by for trips from dialysis treatment were required to call each day after completion of their treatment to request a ride. Restricting paratransit eligible riders to booking only same-day trips does not meet the requirements of the DOT ADA regulations at §§ 37.131(b)(2) and 37.131(d), which requires the provision of next-day service, as described in finding #1, METRO must revise its reservation and scheduling procedures to permit all eligible riders to make next day reservations without regard to trip purpose.
3. At the time of the review, The Guide (Page 11) stated that reservations may be made one day in advance except on Fridays, when reservations were taken for Saturday, Sunday and Monday. The Guide (Page 12) listed the holidays observed by METRO and advised riders that the METROLift reservation and customer services offices are closed on those dates. To meet the response time requirements of §37.131(b)(1) of the DOT ADA regulations and ensure that reservation service is available during times comparable to normal business hours on a day when the offices are not open before a service day, METRO must ensure that reservation service available during at least all normal business hours of METRO's administrative offices and that riders have an opportunity to negotiate pickup times as part of the process. METRO must revise its public information and provide a copy to FTA.
4. At the time of the review, riders had an option to use METRO's automated calling system, MACS, and the on-line reservation system, MACS-WEB, seven days per week to make reservations. The Guide stated, "Scheduling assistance is available through the dispatch office on weekends or holidays." The number to call for scheduling assistance was not listed on that page; a number for dispatch could be found on the back cover. Failure to list the

dispatch number alongside the information about the MACS and MACS web automated system options may discourage or prevent eligible riders who are unable to use these automated options from making or attempting to make next-day trip reservations to which they are entitled under §§37.131(b) and 37.131(b)(1) of the DOT ADA regulations. If it has either of these effects, it would constitute a prohibited capacity constraint. Long hold times on Fridays suggested that some riders may have been unaware of or unable to make use of the automated systems, and unaware that trips may be scheduled by calling the dispatch number. To meet the requirements of §37.131(b)(1), METRO must develop an explicit process or procedure to ensure that eligible riders unable to use MACS or MACS-Web are able to book trips on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays including the opportunity to negotiate pickup times as part of the process. Please provide a copy of the revised procedures and revised public information to FTA.

8.6 Recommendations

1. METRO should be aware that subscription service may absorb more than 50 percent of the number of trips available at a given time of day, provided there is non-subscription capacity at that time of day.
2. Revise the text in *The Guide* “How Do I Schedule a METROLift Trip?” to indicate that assistance with placing trip requests is available seven days a week. Explain that assistance is available from the reservation office on weekdays and by calling the dispatch office on weekends and holidays. For clarity, separate the text describing the automated trip booking options from the staff assisted options. Include the dispatch number in this section of *The Guide*. This may help lower the number of calls received in the reservations office on Fridays and improve telephone hold times on Fridays. More staff may be needed in the dispatch office to handle trip requests received over the weekend.
3. Re-train reservationists with respect to entering the pickup times for return trips consistently and to confirm key trip information with customers at the end of each call, including the pickup time entered into the Trapeze system. Consider developing a script to include all this key information.

9 Service Performance

Section 37.131(f) of the DOT ADA regulations for ADA complementary paratransit service capacity constraints, including missed trips, a substantial number of untimely trips, and excessively long rides and other operational practices that limit the availability of service to paratransit eligible riders. The review team examined on-time performance, missed trips and no-shows, and on-board travel times for METRO's ADA complementary paratransit service.

The review team conducted the following activities:

- Obtained comments from consumers regarding on-time performance and travel times through telephone interviews and a review of complaints filed with METRO
- Reviewed METRO's relevant service policies, procedures, and standards
- Observed METRO's scheduling and dispatch functions and interviewed the appropriate staff
- Interviewed drivers about schedules provided and dispatch support received
- Reviewed METRO's on-time performance and travel time records
- Tabulated actual pickup and drop-off times recorded on completed manifests for a selected day
- Reviewed a sample of run manifests to assess average trip length
- Compared travel times of ADA complementary paratransit trips with those of comparable fixed route trips

9.1 Consumer Comments

Six riders and disability service agency staff were contacted prior to the review and asked to comment on the timeliness of METROLift service and on-board ride times. Each was asked if pickups were on time (within 15 minutes of the scheduled time) and if drop-offs were on time. If they indicated issues with on-time performance, they were asked to estimate the number of times in every 10 trips that service was late. They were also asked if on-board ride times were reasonable, recognizing that METROLift is a shared-ride service.

On-time performance was a major issue for the individuals contacted. While two said the timeliness was good or okay, one said it had been getting better, three expressed significant concerns.

One of the two people who indicated the service was okay or good estimated that only approximately one in 10 pickups was late. The second person estimated that approximately two in 10 trips were late.

The person who indicated recent improvements said that on-time performance had been worse about a year ago. He said that in recent months approximately three out of every 10 trips was late.

One of the three individuals who indicated that service was not timely said that subscription service tended to be okay, but that non-subscription trips were late "about 30–40 percent of the time." A second person said that pickups that were 30–45 minutes after the scheduled time were normal, and that occasionally pickups were 45–60 minutes late. The third person, who worked at

a dialysis center, said that “three in every four days are bad.” He stated that he often has to arrange alternate transportation for people who have been waiting a very long time. He said the service was poor both for pickups and for drop-offs. He also mentioned that vehicles would sometimes show-up early, before riders had completed treatment or had time to recover. If the early trip was not taken, he said that these riders often had to wait long times for another vehicle to return to pick up the rider.

Three of the six people contacted also expressed issues with the quality of information provided when dispatch was contacted for an update on late trips. All said something similar—that dispatch would tell them the vehicle would be there in five minutes, they would wait 15 minutes, call again, and be told the same thing. A second person also commented on early arrivals. This person, staff at a center for persons with cognitive disabilities, said that taxis sometimes showed up before the program was over, and the drivers would get upset.

Three individuals also said that the scheduled pickup times seemed to be constantly changing. They said they would get their scheduled times the day before, then call on the day of service and find out the trip had been moved by 10 or 20 minutes. In addition, if they were calling the dispatch number about a late ride, they would be told that the trip time had changed.

Individuals contacted were split on their experiences with travel times. Three said the times were reasonable and that they had no problems. Three said ride times can be “very long or circuitous.” The latter group of three worked at programs serving riders with disabilities where group subscription service was provided.

One person said that riders picked up at 3:30 p.m. can be on the van 90 minutes to get home. Riders picked up earlier, between 1:30–1:45 p.m., could be on the van for up to 2.5 hours. A second person said this was a “big issue.” He said that trips can take 90 minutes and that people coming to his program from the “north side” could ride for up to two hours. The third person, who worked at a dialysis center did not mention total ride times, but commented on routes being circuitous. He said that vans sometimes would go right by the center to pick up or drop off others, then double back with the person coming to dialysis.

9.2 Service Standards and Policies

On-Time Performance Policies and Standards

At the time of the review, METROLift trips were considered on-time if:

- Pickups are made from the scheduled time to 15 minutes after the scheduled time (0/+15 window)
- Drop-offs are made any time earlier and up to the stated appointment time or requested drop-off time.

The review team found that METRO may have had as many as four different definitions of on-time performance. According to *The Guide*, “The on-time performance service reliability standard for METROLift is comparable to METRO’s local fixed route bus service” (Page 13). METROLift managers stated during the on-site review that they strive to achieve a combined on-time performance for both pickups and drop-offs of 75 percent.

The contract with First Transit (Page 11) indicated that the goal for on-time pickups is 85 percent. Page 15 of the contract with Yellow Cab stated that the goal for on-time performance is 90 percent.

No-Show and Missed Trip Definitions and Performance Standards

METRO's definition of a "missed trip" is when a vehicle does not arrive within 60 minutes of the user time (explained in further detail below). Staff indicated that a performance goal related to missed trips had not been established.

Travel Time Policies and Standards

Among the examples of prohibited capacity constraints included in §37.131(f) are "substantial numbers of trips with excessive trip lengths" (§37.131(f)(3)(i)(C)). Since paratransit is a shared-ride service, trips between Point A and Point B will usually take longer than a taxi ride between the same points, and involve more intermediate stops. However, when the number of intermediate stops and the total trip time grows so large as to make use of the system prohibitively inconvenient, a capacity constraint could exist. Generally, total transit time aboard paratransit should be comparable to the same trip taken on the fixed-route system, after accounting for any transfers for multi-route trips, waiting time at each end of the trip, and travel to and from the bus stop.

METRO's policy was that travel times on the METROLift service should be comparable to travel times on the fixed route system. *The Guide* (Page 11) states:

Paratransit travel time should be comparable to trips with the same origin and destination on the fixed route bus system including transfers and wait times. This comparison exists except when circumstances are beyond our control, such as in times of inclement weather, traffic congestion, construction, etc.

The goal indicated by METROLift managers was to achieve this standard 90 percent of the time.

9.3 Scheduling and Dispatching Procedures and Observations

Scheduling Procedures

At the time of the on-site review, METRO employed one lead scheduler and two support schedulers. The support schedulers alternate days when they assist with scheduling, so that on any given day two staff are involved in preparing and reviewing run schedules.

As indicated in Chapter 8, METRO performs "batch scheduling" to create final schedules for METROLift service. Riders state desired travel times when they call to book trips, but exact pickup times are not quoted during these calls. Riders must call back the evening before each day of service to request exact pickup times. Riders can also use the MACS and MACS-WEB automated and on-line systems to learn exact pickup times after all trips are scheduled.

METROLift Scheduling procedures include the following steps:

- The run template is loaded each day at midnight to open capacity for trip reservations for the following day.

- The “template” subscription trips, group subscription trips that are anchored to a specific run are then loaded. Other subscription trips are allowed to “float” in the system and are scheduled as part of the batch scheduling process once all trip requests have been received. Dialysis subscription trips are not templated.
- Schedulers identify and pull all “Clear Lake” trips (trips in a community in the far southeastern part of the service area) and manually place them on a run specifically built to handle service in this area.
- Next, trips by riders who use extra wide wheelchairs are identified and manually scheduled on vehicles that can accommodate them.
- Next, all trips by riders who use wheelchairs and are traveling during peak hours are identified and scheduled. This is necessary to be sure that all of these trips are scheduled on accessible vehicles and none “drop out” of the scheduling process, since the backup taxi program used to assist with peak needs cannot serve these riders.
- After these specific needs are considered, the batch scheduling process is run to place as many of the rest of the trips in the system on runs.
- A re-batch of all the trips scheduled in these various ways is then run. The re-batch reschedules all of the scheduled trips and finds additional efficiencies. The re-batch allows some of the unscheduled trips from the first batch to be placed on runs where slack time is created.

The lead scheduler indicated that, after all scheduling procedures are completed, approximately 50–80 trips remain unscheduled—that is, the automated scheduling system is not able to place these trips on runs within the service parameters that have been set.

The lead scheduler noted that remaining unscheduled trips are not manually “forced” onto runs. Dispatchers handled unscheduled trips on the day of service, which were either added to runs if space became available or were served with backup taxis. The scheduling procedures used ensured that virtually all unscheduled trips were for riders who are ambulatory so that the taxi backup service is an option for them, if nothing else is found by dispatchers.

The lead scheduler also mentioned that there was no final, manual run-through of all schedules for a final check. METRO also does not run any special “exception” reports (such as vehicle capacity reports, travel time reports, or other “violation” reports) to make sure trips are scheduled appropriately. The lead scheduler indicated that it had been METRO’s experience that the system reliably honors the parameters set and that trips were not scheduled inappropriately.

A special routine developed by Trapeze for METRO was then run to populate a user time field in the system. The user time is basically the Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA) after all of the scheduling is completed the afternoon prior to the day of service. The user time becomes the scheduled pickup time that was given to riders from that point on. For any trips that remained unscheduled, the special routine sets the user time to the times requested by the riders.

Once the user times were generated, a full set of the schedules was created and printed. Copies were then e-mailed to the two service providers.

Analysis of User Times

The review team analyzed a sample day of METROLift trips (August 16, 2010) that were requested and scheduled. The analysis compared the User Times generated after scheduling with

user times that appeared in Trapeze after the trip had taken place. This sample day had 4,536 trips with both user times. METROLIFT managers stated that in general, the user time should not change and the review team's analysis found that in general it did not change. METROLift Managers stated that if they needed to adjust the user time, the maximum adjustment was 20 minutes; their rationale for 20 minutes was that this was a reasonable change that should not greatly affect the rider. The review team's analysis of the sample day showed that the majority of the changes to the user time were riders calling with a new requested time.

Table 9.1 presents the analysis of the user times of the August 16, 2010 trips. As seen, 97.1 percent of the trips (4,403) had the same user times after scheduling and after the trip had taken place. Another 2.4 percent (111 trips) had differing user times, but there was also a new time requested by the rider. METROLift schedulers and/or dispatchers had adjusted the user time without a change in the requested time for the other 0.5 percent of the trips (24). For 11 of these 24, the adjustment was 1 to 20 minutes (earlier or later). Three trips had their user times adjusted by more than 20 minutes later: 23, 31, and 36 minutes. Eight trips had their user times adjusted by more than 20 minutes earlier: 25, 27, 28, 35, 35, 56, 60, and 76 minutes.

Table 9.1 – Analysis of User Times for METROLift Trips: August 16, 2010

No change	4,403	97.1%
Changed and New Requested Time	111	2.4%
Changed 1-20 minutes	11	0.2%
Changed > 20 minutes later	3	0.1%
Changed > 20 minutes earlier	8	0.2%
TOTAL TRIPS	4,536	100%

The changes in user times for nine of these 11 trips (seven trips were changed by between 30 and 59 minutes, and two were changed by at least 60 minutes) raise concerns about whether METROLIFT honored the one-hour trip negotiation window. Furthermore, METRO's policy that any change in the user time up to 20 minutes is acceptable may lead to unwarranted rider no-shows for those riders who expected an on-time pickup based on the original user time, rather than an adjusted user time that METROLift did not communicate to them.

System Parameters

The review team examined the key scheduling parameters set in the Trapeze system used for the METROLift service. Copies of screen prints of these parameters are provided as Attachment I.

The lead scheduler stated that the system is set to allow requested initial estimated pickup times given to riders to be changed by up to 15 minutes either way in the batch scheduling process. These tolerances are shown in the parameters called "Tolerance – Pickup Early" and "Tolerance – Pickup Late" in Attachment I. As shown in the screen prints, both are set to 15 minutes.

The system is also set to allow appointment/desired drop-off times to float by only 15 minutes. This tolerance is shown in the parameter settings called "Tolerance – Drop-off Early" and "Tolerance – Drop-off Late" in Attachment I. As shown the early drop-off allowance is set at zero, and the late drop-off allowance is set at 15 minutes. The 15-minute late drop-off

essentially offsets the 15 minutes that is deducted from appointment times in the trip reservations process (see Chapter 8).

With these parameter settings, even though requested travel times are not negotiated with riders at the time that trips are booked, there is minimal changing of the estimated times given.

METRO has also developed detailed travel time parameters. These are shown in the screen prints labeled “Max OBT Factors” in Attachment I. As shown, maximum travel time settings range from 30 minutes for the shortest trips in the system, to two hours and 12 minutes for the longest trips in the system. For the longest trips, METRO has set the system to allow just over twice the direct travel time with no grouping. Varied travel time settings are consistent with industry best practices and these settings appeared to be reasonable and appropriate.

Dispatch Procedures

At the time of the on-site review, the METROLift dispatch center was organized with three layers of staff oversight, radio dispatchers, carrier dispatchers and WMR agents. The dispatch center had the following staff:

- One floor supervisor
- Two routers (same-day schedulers)
- Two service supervisors (troubleshooters)
- Two carrier supervisors (not METRO employees)
- Eight radio dispatchers
- Eight WMR agents

During the morning and afternoon peak periods there are eight radio dispatchers on duty. Each of the radio dispatchers is assigned a radio channel, and each channel has runs assigned to it. Channels 1–3 have 35 runs each and Channels 4–8 have 40 runs assigned to them. Channels 1–4 are First Transit runs and channels 5–8 are Yellow Cab runs. The number of runs assigned to each channel represents the maximum number of runs for the day assigned to each; it does not represent the peak pull out requirement for METROLift. During peak operating hours, there are approximately 236 vehicles in service. With eight radio dispatchers on duty during these times, this means that each dispatcher is managing about 30 runs. This is a reasonable workload based on recommended industry practice.

Radio Dispatchers

Radio dispatchers are responsible for signing a driver into service at the start of the run. The driver calls in and informs the radio dispatcher that they are going into service and provides the vehicle number and odometer of the vehicle, which is entered into Trapeze by the dispatcher. The drivers are also required to call into their dispatcher when they (the drivers) make the first pickup on the run, which the dispatcher enters into Trapeze. The observed communication between drivers and radio dispatchers was conducted in a professional manner.

Throughout the day, the radio dispatchers conduct “roll calls” of all of their runs in service. During the roll call, the dispatcher obtains an update from the driver of where the driver is on the run. The radio dispatcher may also remind a driver to perform their trips, if recent trips do not appear as performed in Trapeze or, if the driver is running on-time, will praise the driver for doing a good job of staying on time. Once per hour, one radio dispatcher will broadcast a traffic

update and safety message. The radio dispatchers are responsible for following no-show procedures and authorizing no-shows. Effective no show procedures in use throughout the paratransit industry include verifying location, attempting to make customer contact, and authorizing the driver to proceed after waiting for a short period of time. The review team observed a few no-show interactions between drivers and radio dispatchers. Radio dispatchers did not consistently verify driver location.

Radio dispatchers are also responsible for reviewing the runs to ensure on-time performance. If they see a run that is behind schedule, they should notify a floor supervisor, service supervisor, or router for assistance. Radio dispatchers are not allowed to move trips between runs. The review team did not observe any instance where a radio dispatcher made any notification to the Supervisors or routers regarding assistance with late trips or in anticipation of any problems on runs.

Carrier Supervisors

Each carrier, First Transit and Yellow Cab, provides a dispatcher who works in the METROLift dispatch center. These carrier dispatchers provide backup assistance to the radio dispatchers by assisting with handling ‘call outs’ when requested by a driver. A ‘call out’ is when a driver arrives at a pick up location and cannot find the rider. The driver requests that the dispatcher attempt to contact the customer. The carrier dispatchers also monitor all of the runs assigned to their company making sure that drivers are performing trips, are running on time, and look for any potential problems with runs. The carrier dispatchers also act as the ‘go-between’ between their drivers regarding incidents, or in the event of a vehicle breakdown, with their garage. Like the radio dispatchers, the carrier dispatchers may not move trips between runs. If the carrier dispatchers see that a run is behind schedule, or sees the need for trips to be moved between schedules for any reason, a service supervisor or floor supervisor must be notified. The review team did not observe any instance where a carrier dispatcher made any such notification regarding late trips or in anticipation of any problems on a run.

The review team noticed differences in the interaction of the drivers with the carrier dispatchers. It appeared that the First Transit drivers, for the most part, treated their radio dispatcher as their primary point of contact during the day. For example, a driver would contact their radio dispatcher for a call out. If the radio dispatcher is busy assisting another driver, the driver requesting the call out would then contact their carrier dispatcher. The carrier dispatcher would then make the call out, and advise the driver to contact their radio dispatcher for the authorization for a no-show, if needed.

The interaction between Yellow Cab drivers and their dispatchers seemed to be the opposite of the observed interaction of the First Transit drivers and their dispatchers. The Yellow Cab drivers seemed to use the Yellow Cab carrier dispatcher as their primary point of contact. A higher number of calls between Yellow Cab drivers and their carrier dispatcher were observed than between First Transit drivers and their carrier dispatcher. Like the First Transit carrier dispatcher, the Yellow Cab carrier dispatcher, when assisting with call outs, would instruct the driver to contact their assigned radio dispatcher for no-show authorizations.

Routers (Same-Day Schedulers)

The routers act as same day schedulers for trips that were not assigned to runs during the scheduling process, for trips that have been moved off a run during the day (for example, a

customer calls to say they are not ready for their return trip), or for customers who are ready early for their return trip. The routers use a feature in Trapeze called Find Closest Vehicle. This feature uses the time and address of a trip and finds vehicles that are within a specified radius of the address within a specified time window around the trip time. The radius and window are set by the router. The router then scans each individual run that is listed by Find Closest and selects the most appropriate vehicle on which to place the trip.

Routers use this same tool when scheduling a trip for a later pick up because the customer was not ready for the return, or when scheduling a trip when the customer is ready early. Customers who are not going to be ready for their scheduled return ride are allowed to place the return trip on Hold. This involves moving the trip off the assigned run onto the unscheduled list. When the customer calls to indicate that they are ready for their return, the router, using the Find Closest feature, finds a run to place the trip on. The “ready early” calls come through the WMR agents. If the scheduled pick up is less than 90 minutes early *and* the run is on time, the customer is informed that the pickup will happen at the scheduled time. The WMR agent will also provide the arrival time, as estimated by Trapeze, of the pickup. WMR agents notify the driver via text message that the passenger is ready.

If a request for an early return is more than 90 minutes early *or* if there is a problem with the run, the WMR agent notifies the router. The router will work with the trip and make appropriate arrangements to get the customer picked up. This may involve moving the trip to another run, removing the trip from the schedule and working on it later, or assigning it to a backup taxi.

Troubleshooters

The troubleshooters were responsible for scanning the runs in service and identifying any runs that were experiencing a problem or those that may experience a problem later in the day. Radio dispatchers do not move trips between runs. Moving trips between runs is the responsibility of the troubleshooters. The troubleshooter may move trips from a run because they observed a problem or potential problem, or because they had been notified by a radio dispatcher, carrier dispatcher or floor supervisor. The review team did not observe any instances of a radio dispatcher or carrier dispatcher communicating with a troubleshooter concerning runs that were operating behind schedule.

Use of “Where’s-My-Ride” (WMR) Agents

The WMR agents handle a wide range of calls from customers who called about trips on the day of service. The bulk of the calls observed by the review team were from customers calling to find out when they would be picked up. The information provided to the customer was the user time (scheduled time) and the current estimated time that the vehicle will arrive. The estimated time is calculated by Trapeze based upon earlier performed trips. It was also observed that, if the trip had been placed on taxi backup, the customer was informed that a cab would be coming to provide the trip, and the cab number was provided to the customer.

The WMR agents also get the calls for customers who will not be ready for their scheduled pickup and from customers who are ready early for their pickup. When a customer calls to indicate they will not be ready for their scheduled pick up their trip is placed on hold (unscheduled). As indicated earlier in this chapter, the routers will subsequently schedule the trip for a return when the customer calls to say they are ready. When a customer calls for an early return, the WMR Agent checks to see if the scheduled time is within 90 minutes of the time

of the call and whether the run is running on-time. If so, the customer is advised that the pickup will be at the scheduled time, and is given the estimated time the vehicle will arrive. If the scheduled time is more than 90 minutes from the time of the call or the run is running late, the routers and/or floor supervisor is notified. The scheduling of these trips is handled as described above.

The review team observed the WMR agents make good use of Tracker Notes (notes attached to a trip explaining actions taken) and routinely asking for contact information from customers and adding that information into Tracker Notes. Interaction between the WMR agents and the customers was courteous, professional and appropriate in all observed instance. The WMR agents routinely provided the customers with the user time (scheduled time) and estimated time the vehicle was due to arrive. Providing both times may be confusing to the customers and lead them to believe that their scheduled times are changing.

9.4 Driver Interviews

The review team interviewed a sample of drivers at both First Transit and Yellow Cab. The review team conducted the interviews in private and drivers were informed that they would remain anonymous. There were a total of 14 interviews: eight with First Transit drivers and six with Yellow Cab drivers. The interviews included both new and experienced drivers; the shortest tenure was less than three months and the longest tenure was 19 years. Questions covered schedules, dispatch support, and understanding of service policies.

Four of eight First Transit drivers felt they often ran late and scheduling was too tight, while the other four found them to be reasonable. Yellow drivers feel the schedules are about right and they rarely run late. Most Yellow Cab drivers felt their schedules were about right. One driver indicated there is flexibility to re-order their route if it doesn't negatively impact the rider.

Five of the eight First Transit drivers believed that the pickup window was the scheduled time up to five minutes after. Most of the Yellow Cab drivers said that they try to arrive five minutes early, but most understood the 15-minute pickup window.

First Transit drivers were split on customers' understanding of pickup window. Some felt customers understood the policy, particularly the five-minute window. These drivers felt that customers took advantage of the window and waited until the five minutes is over. Other drivers felt that customers were usually ready on time, while others felt they were rarely ready. Most Yellow Cab drivers also felt that most of the riders understood the pickup window, particularly long-time riders. They also felt most riders are ready within the five-minute window.

Five of the eight First Transit drivers felt they were late between two times per week and "all the time." They all said that they request dispatch assistance when running late. Most mentioned that the dispatcher is good at checking in with drivers. They said the dispatcher sometimes removes trips to get the driver back on schedule, but many times just keep the trips and allow drivers to run late. The Yellow Cab drivers indicated they are rarely late, and lateness was generally the result of an added trip. They contact the dispatcher when running late, and the dispatchers may move trips if possible.

Seven of the eight First Transit drivers indicated they would assist riders by providing assistance between the vehicle and the door of a passenger's point of origin or destination; most mentioned assisting riders with bags. Some drivers indicated they would help the rider to the door but not go inside, while only one said he would only provide service from curb to curb. All six Yellow Cab drivers indicated they provide service to the door and help riders with packages.

First Transit drivers generally felt that special instructions on manifests were correct, although some mentioned incorrect information about mobility devices and wrong apartment numbers or gate codes. Most Yellow Cab drivers indicated that the special instructions in their manifest were generally correct; however, four of the six indicated that information concerning mobility aids was often incorrect.

Drivers also felt they had good communication with the dispatcher and that the dispatch office tends to work with them when they are running late.

9.5 On-Time Performance

Reported On-Time Performance

METRO monitored on-time performance on a daily basis using a sample of 40 completed trips: it uses a sample of 20 trips for pickups (10 from First Transit and 10 from Yellow Cab) and 20 trips for drop-offs (10 from First Transit and 10 from Yellow Cab). If any of the sample trips are no-shows or cancellations, METRO does not select other completed trips as replacements for the calculation, so the actual sample size is reduced.

Table 9.2 presents METRO's calculations for on-time performance for the current fiscal year, July 2010; and for July 14, 2010 (the review team's sample day). On-time pickups include also include all pickups that take place prior to the beginning of the 0/+15 minute pickup window.

Table 9.2 – Reported On-time Performance for METROLift

	Overall	First Transit	Yellow Cab
FY 2010 through 8/18	74.8%	74.7%	75.2%
July 2010	75.2%	73.4%	77.0%
Pickups only	65.9%		
Drop-offs only	83.7%		
July 14, 2010	71.0%	50.0%	84.2%
Pickups only	60.0%		
Drop-offs only	81.3%		

For FY 2010, METROLift on-time performance had been at the level targeted by METRO. The on-time performances of the two contractors for FY 2010 were similar. For July 2010, the reported on-time performance was 75.2 percent. The reported pickup performance was 65.9 percent (sample of 416 completed trips) and the reported drop-off performance was 83.7 percent (sample of 455 trips). Yellow Cab's performance was better than that of First

Transit: 77.0 percent versus 73.4 percent. However, there are two concerns with METRO's performance goal of 75 percent. First, while METRO's pickup window of 15 minutes is smaller than typical for a paratransit operation, the goal of 75 percent on-time performance is very low. This standard means that METRO considers it acceptable for one of every four trips to be late. Second, blending the pickup and drop-off performances into a single value can mask poorer performance in pickups or drop-offs—each likely requiring different procedural or operational remedies.

In addition, the sampling methodology that METRO uses is not representative of the actual operations. First Transit and Yellow Cab do not provide the same number of METROLift trips; the proportion of First Transit trips is roughly 60 percent, so First Transit trips in the calculation of overall METROLift performance should be similarly weighted. The on-time performance also does not account for the portion of trips served by taxi backup (Yellow Cab sedans).

Based on review team member interviews with METROLift riders, there is some confusion with the definition of an on-time pickup. As discussed earlier in this chapter, after METRO completes its batch scheduling, it does not call riders to inform them of their actual scheduled pickup times (user times); a rider must call METRO on the evening before service to get his or her actual pickup times. On the day of service, however, when a rider calls to get a pickup time, the METRO reservationist or dispatcher provides the estimated time of arrival (ETA) rather than the user time. METRO staff said that they believed the ETA was more useful to riders and what most riders were interested in knowing. The confusion that may arise, however, is that the pickup window is based on the user time and does not change. The ETA may change for a variety of reasons, and Trapeze adjusts the ETA based on every pickup and drop-off time transmitted by the driver. For example, if a cancelled trip creates time in a route, a METRO dispatcher may shift a trip from one route to another. If a rider assumes that the ETA represents the start of the pickup window, that rider may not be prepared when the vehicle arrives.

Calculated On-Time Performance for Sample Week

The review team performed an independent analysis of on-time performance. The sample data came from driver manifests for the sample day of Wednesday, July 14, 2010. The sample set consisted of roughly every 30th trip on the manifests for that day. The data included pickup arrival times, drop-off times (all recorded by the drivers), and appointment time (if available), along with route and carrier information. The total sample comprised 134 METROLift trips.

Table 9.3 shows the analysis of on-time pickup performance for the sampled trips. Counting all pickups that were in the window or early, on-time performance was 57.5 percent. This is in line with METRO's reported pickup performance for July 14 (60.0 percent, sample of 15 trips). If one counts only pickups within the window of 0/+15, then on-time performance for the sampled trips was 38.1 percent; 19.4 percent of the pickups took place before the beginning of the window.

Table 9.3 – On-Time Pickup Performance: July 14, 2010

Sample		Number	Percent
			134
Pickups in window (0/+15 minutes after user time)		51	38.1
Pickups in window or early		77	57.5
All early pickups			
	1–15 minutes	20	14.9
	16–30 minutes	4	3.0
	> 30 minutes	2	1.5
All late pickups		57	42.5
	1–15 minutes	33	24.6
	16–30 minutes	12	9.0
	> 30 minutes	12	9.0
	> 60 minutes	5	3.7

A pickup window of 0/+30 minutes is more typical of paratransit operations. If one were to recalculate the on-time pickup performance of METROLift using this window, then the adjusted performance would be:

- In window (0/+30) or early 82.1 percent
- Late 17.9 percent

The review team cannot say that this would have been the actual performance with a 0/+30 window; driver behavior, dispatcher behavior, and the schedules created by Trapeze would be different with a different pickup window. Nevertheless, even with a pickup window of 30 minutes, on time performance of 82.1 percent would be low. The review team also computed on-time pickup performance by excluding trips that were on “protection” routes (routes not created until the day of service) and trips that METROLift dispatchers moved to another route during the day of service. There are 108 trips in this subset of the review team’s sample. As shown in Table 9.4, pickup performance is better but still not good. Counting all pickups that were in the window or early, on-time performance was 64.8 percent. If one counts only pickups within the window of 0/+15, then on-time performance for this subset of trips was 43.5 percent; 21.3 percent of the pickups took place before the beginning of the window.

**Table 9.4 – On-Time Pickup Performance
Excluding Trip Moved or on Protection Runs**

Sample		Number	Percent
		108	100.0
Pickups in window (0/+15 minutes after user time)		47	43.5
Pickups in window or early		70	64.8
All early pickups			
	1–15 minutes	19	17.6
	16–30 minutes	3	2.8
	> 30 minutes	1	0.9
All late pickups		38	35.2
	1–15 minutes	24	22.2
	16–30 minutes	7	6.5
	> 30 minutes	7	6.5
	> 60 minutes	2	1.9

Of the set of sample trips from July 14, 2010, 69 had a designated appointment time. The on-time drop-off performance for the sampled trips is presented in Table 9.5. The analysis shows that 76.8 percent of the sampled trips with appointment times had on-time drop-offs, while 23.2 percent arrived after the appointment time. In other words, roughly one of every four trips with an appointment time arrived late. The review team's calculation of drop-off performance is in line with METRO's calculation for this day (81.3 percent, sample of 16 trips). The review team's calculated on-time drop-off performance is slightly lower than METRO's standard. Allowing 23.2 percent of trips where appointment times are known to arrive outside of the window that METRO uses for on-time performance for drop-offs constitutes an operational pattern or practice that may discourage METROLift riders from using the service.

Table 9.5 – On-Time Drop-off Performance (July 14, 2010)

Sample		Number	Percent
		69	100.0
All on-time trips (before appointment time)		53	76.8
	1–15 minutes early	17	24.6
	16–30–minutes early	13	18.8
	31–60 minutes early	22	31.9
	> 60 minutes early	1	1.4
All late drop-offs		16	23.2
	1–15 minutes	7	10.1
	16–30–minutes	5	7.2
	> 30–minutes	4	5.8

In addition, a significant proportion of trips with an appointment time had a very early drop-off. A third of all trips in the sample (23 of 69) had arrival times more than 30 minutes ahead of the

requested drop-off time. Since reservationists would sometimes enter drop-off times that were 15 minutes earlier than the appointment times requested by the caller, e.g., for a requested 9 a.m. appointment, a reservationist may have entered 8:45 a.m. into Trapeze. In these cases, a rider dropped off 30 minutes early (based on the Trapeze times) would actually be dropped off 45 minutes early. This may be a concern for riders who are being dropped off at a facility or medical office that may not be open so far in advance of the rider's appointment time.

This inconsistent practice may also lead to misstating on-time performance, since some trips recorded as being 1–15 minutes late may or may not be on time. METRO reservationists were inconsistent in entering drop-off times that were 15 minutes earlier than the appointment time requested by riders so it was not possible for the review team to determine the effect on on-time drop-off performance, at the time of the review.

Taxi Backup Trips

METRO uses Yellow Cab as a taxi backup contractor. Yellow Cab receives calls from the METROLift dispatch office to provide individual trips. It uses its fleet of sedans to serve these trips. METRO pays Yellow Cab the standard meter rate for these trips. Yellow Cab submits a taxi voucher for each METROLift trip delivered. The vouchers include the fare, as well as the pickup and drop-off times.

METRO staff estimated that Yellow Cab backup provides 1–2 percent of METROLift trips. On the sample day analyzed by the review team, there were 62 trips dispatched to Yellow Cab sedans. The Trapeze data for these trips show 59 completed trips and three no-shows. However, the data included a user time for only 11 of the 59 completed trips. As a result, it was not possible to determine whether the pickup was timely for the other 48 trips. Of the 11 trips with user times:

- Three were within the window or early
- Six were late
- Two were “late but send backs;” i.e., notes in Trapeze indicated that these trips were the second attempt to pick up the rider after s/he was either not ready or could not be found during the first attempted pickup.

A further review of the Trapeze data shows that for all six late pickups, the time that METRO requested Yellow Cab to perform the trip was already beyond the end of the 15-minute pickup window.

Four of the 59 completed taxi backup trips had appointment times. Two of the four drop-offs were on time, and the other two drop-offs were late by 21 minutes and 49 minutes.

As stated above, the portion of METROLift trips provided by backup taxi is small. However, this sample from one day suggested that METRO may not have been monitoring these trips. Since 51 of 62 trips assigned to Yellow Cab did not have a user time in Trapeze, it was not possible for the review team to measure on-time pickups. Furthermore, the small subset of trips with a user time and/or an appointment time suggests that pickup and drop-off performance is worse than the performance for First Transit and Yellow Cab accessible service. This is not surprising, as METRO dispatchers would be assigning trips to backup taxis only after determining that there was no other capacity.

9.6 No-Show and Missed-Trip Coding

As discussed earlier in this report, METRO's definition of a rider No-Ride/No Show includes any of the following conditions:

- Rider calls to cancel a trip fewer than 60 minutes before the requested pickup time
- Vehicle arrives within the pickup window, but the rider is not ready to leave
- Vehicle arrives within the pickup window, but the driver cannot locate the rider

METRO's definition of a missed trip is when a vehicle does not arrive within 60 minutes of the user time. FTA's definition of a missed trip includes any instance in which the vehicle arrives later than the end of the defined pickup window and the trip is not taken, as the rider is under no obligation to board the vehicle if the vehicle arrives outside of the pickup window. In METRO's case this should be any trip later than 15 minutes after the user time.

The review team analyzed a set of 35 trip requests that METRO had coded as rider no-shows during the sample day of Wednesday, July 14, 2010. The review team was determining whether METRO had appropriately coded them. Within the Trapeze database, one could view comments entered by METRO dispatchers who declared trips as no-shows. One could also view the time of the no-show in relation to the pickup window for the trip.

The analysis found the following results for the 35 trip requests (20 by First Transit, 15 by Yellow Cab):

- 12 appeared to be coded correctly
- Three appeared to be coded correctly, but sufficient documentation was not entered in Trapeze
- Nine were unclear; it was not possible to determine if the coding was correct due to unclear or inconsistent documentation
- 11 appeared to be incorrectly coded as no-shows

Table 9.6 presents the 11 trips that appear to incorrectly coded.

Table 9.6 – Sample of Trips Incorrectly Coded as Rider No-Shows: July 14, 2010

Run	User Time	Carrier	Explanation
3	1:08 p.m.	First Transit	Vehicle arrived 81 minutes after user time
3	5:07 p.m.	First Transit	Vehicle arrived 71 minutes after user time
109	3:00 p.m.	Yellow Cab	Driver arrived in window, but waited only 3 minutes
116	3:35 p.m.	Yellow Cab	Vehicle arrived >15 minutes after user time
148	10:19	Yellow Cab	Vehicle arrived 45 minutes after user time
157	7:47	Yellow Cab	Driver left before user time
311	3:26 p.m.	First Transit	Vehicle arrived 29 minutes after user time
319	6:10	First Transit	Vehicle arrived 20 minutes after user time
319	3:14 p.m.	First Transit	Vehicle arrived 29 minutes after user time
354	5:04 p.m.	First Transit	Vehicle arrived 26 minutes after user time
393	4:51 p.m.	First Transit	Vehicle arrived 29 minutes after user time

As presented in Table 9.5, of the 11 trips that appear to be incorrectly coded as no-shows, in nine instances the vehicle arrived after the end of the pickup window; for three trips, it arrived at least 45 minutes after the user time (25 minutes after the end of the pickup window). For one trip in this sample, the driver arrived within in the window but waited only three minutes, whereas the METRO policy is to wait at least five minutes. For another trip in this sample, the driver arrived and left prior to the user time.

It is important for METRO staff to correctly code trips. Incorrect coding leads to inaccurate calculations of performance of the METROLift carriers. More importantly, no-show codings are the basis of potential service suspensions of METROLift riders. Incorrect coding of trips could lead to proposing suspensions that are not warranted.

9.7 Analysis of On-Board Travel Times

Comparison to METRO Travel Time Standards

The review team analyzed a sample of trips to assess average trip length; and performed a comparison of travel times between ADA Complementary Paratransit trips and comparable fixed route trips.

Review of Trip Length

During the opening meeting, the review team was informed that METROLift monitors ride time by comparing paratransit times to comparable fixed route itineraries for selected trips. Using a random trip generator report, a user enters a date or range of dates and the number of completed trips to select for the sample. The report ignores trips that have not been completed (*e.g.*, no-shows and cancels). METROLift routinely selects 10 completed trips per day for comparison to fixed route service. The report creates an Excel spreadsheet that contains the pickup and drop-off addresses of the trip as well as the pickup time, drop-off time and a calculation of the paratransit travel time. The Excel spreadsheet is e-mailed to a METRO CSR (the same CSR each day) who determines the fixed route itinerary to match each trip. The fixed route trip itinerary is created using the Trapeze Trip Planner. For each fixed route itinerary found, walking distance and on-board time is entered into the Excel spreadsheet and variances between paratransit ride time and fixed route ride time are calculated. The completed spreadsheet is returned to METROLift Managers for review.

METROLift does not take waiting time or walking time into account when comparing the paratransit travel time to the fixed route travel time. Only the on-board and transfer waiting time are considered. By excluding five minute the waiting time and walking time from the comparison, METROLift is applying a stricter standard that applied by the review team.

The review team was provided with copies of the Excel spreadsheet for the period of June 10, 2010 through June 30, 2010. It was decided to use trips from that time period to conduct the analysis of ride time for METROLift trips.

The review team used two approaches to evaluate trip length and to compare METROLift travel times with equivalent fixed route travel times. The first analysis was to calculate the ride time for all paratransit trips from June 10 through June 30, 2010. Using a standard Trapeze PASS report called the Ride Length Report, the review team determined the number of trips provided

in the sample period in 15-minute increments. Three out of every four trips (76.2 percent) provided by METROLift during the sample period were completed in 60 minutes or less. Another 22.3 percent of the trips provided were completed between 91 and 120 minutes. The remaining 1.5 percent of the trips in the sample had travel times in excess of 120 minutes. The percentage of trips with travel times over 120 minutes on METROLift is higher than has been observed in other paratransit reviews. Table 9.7 displays the results of the analysis.

Table 9.7 – Trip Lengths for June 10–June 30, 2010

No. of Trips	70,887
≤ 15 minutes	18.9%
16–30 minutes	24.7%
31–45 minutes	18.5%
46–60 minutes	14.0%
61–75 minutes	10.0%
76–90 minutes	6.5%
91–105 minutes	3.9%
106–120	1.9%
121 + minutes	1.5%

Next, the review team compared the actual travel times for a sample of 31 ADA complementary paratransit trips that were 45 minutes or longer to fixed route travel times to assess whether these paratransit trips would be significantly longer than comparable fixed route trips from the same origin to the same destination at the same time of day. The sample was drawn from the trips selected daily for comparison to fixed route by METROLift for the period of June 10 through June 20, 2010. The review team selected all trips with travel times of 60 minutes or more from the METROLift sample: 22 trips in all. The team then selected another nine trips with travel times between 45 minutes and 60 minutes from the METROLift sample, resulting in a total sample of 31 trips. Using the Trapeze Fixed Route Itinerary Planner the review team then developed comparable fixed route trip itineraries including estimated walking times to/from the bus or rail stops. Based on the actual paratransit origin and destination addresses and time of day, the review team determined the route(s) that one would use to make the same trip using METRO’s fixed route service. Each fixed route travel time is the sum of the following components:

- Travel time on each bus link including transfer (waiting) time
- A five minute wait time at the start of the fixed route trip
- Walking time allowance at each end of the trip; the estimated walking distance was included with each fixed route itinerary as 6 minutes for 0.3 miles, 10 minutes for 0.5 miles, 16 minutes for 0.8 miles, and 20 minutes for 1.0 miles

Table 9.8 on the following pages displays the results of the comparison of paratransit travel time to the comparable travel time of a fixed route itinerary. The second column in Table 9.8 shows

the origin and destination for each METROLift trip included in the sample.¹ The third and fourth columns show the paratransit pickup time and drop-off time. The fifth column shows the paratransit travel time. The sixth column lists the fixed route run or runs needed to complete the trip on fixed route. The next five columns show the components of the fixed route itinerary. Those components include a five-minute wait time at the start of the trips, the boarding time, the alighting time, the calculation of the on-board travel time and the walking time for the itinerary. The walking time was calculated by taking the estimated walking distance assuming a three-mile per hour walking speed (20 minutes to walk one mile). The next to last column is a calculation of the total travel time on fixed route. The total travel time is the sum of the wait time, the on-board time and the walking time.

The final two columns compare the ADA complementary paratransit service ride time to the comparable fixed route ride time. The Travel Time Difference column compares the ADA complementary paratransit ride time to the fixed route service ride time. A difference with a minus (-) sign means that the ADA Complementary paratransit ride time was less than the corresponding fixed route ride time. In the Travel Time Ratio column, a number less than 1.0 means that the ADA complementary paratransit ride time was less than the corresponding fixed route ride time.

The review team was able to develop fixed route itineraries for 29 out of the 31 trips selected. As shown in Table 9.8, the average travel time for the sample METROLift trips was nine minutes shorter than comparable trips on fixed route (73 minutes for paratransit trips and 82 minutes for fixed route trips with the same origin and drop-off). One fixed route trip would have required three transfers, two trips would have required two transfers, 22 trips would have required one transfer and only three trips would have required no transfers. On average the number of transfers that would have been required was 1.0.

The table also shows that 19 out of 29 trips (66 percent) would have had shorter ride times on METROLift when compared to fixed route service. The trips that were longer on METROLift, 10 in all, ranged from 8 to 53 minutes. Five of the trips (numbers 9, 12, 17, 26 and 28) with longer METROLift ride times were longer by more than 20 minutes, which could be excessive in terms of fixed route comparability. Addresses in the chart were rounded down to the nearest 100 block.

¹

Table 9.8 – Comparison of Travel Times on METROLift vs. Fixed Route for Selected trips: June 10–June 30, 2010

Trip Number	Paratransit Trip				Fixed Route Trip							Paratransit–Fixed Route Travel Time	Travel Time Ratio
	Pickup Address Drop-off Address	Pickup Time	Drop-off Time	Travel Time (Mins)	Route Numbers	Board Time	Alight Time	Wait Time	On-Board Time	Walking Time	Travel Time (Mins)		
1	6700 Fannin St 10600 Hazen St	2:51 p.m.	4:05 p.m.	74	4	2:51 p.m.	3:35 p.m.	5	44	16	65	9	1.1
2	10400 North Fwy 0 Burress St	8:37 p.m.	9:24 p.m.	47	56	8:39 p.m.	8:59 p.m.	5	20	14	39	8	1.2
3	5400 Clarewood Dr 7800 Belbay St	2:58 p.m.	3:58 p.m.	60	2 & 73	2:59 p.m.	3:56 p.m.	5	57	12	74	-14	0.8
4	9400 Pembroke St 3600 W Dallas St	7:20 a.m.	8:23 a.m.	63	3	7:18 a.m.	8:22 a.m.	5	64	12	81	-18	0.8
5	3900 Brownstone Ln 800 Texas Ave	5:21 a.m.	6:27 a.m.	66	11 & 244	5:40 a.m.	6:34 a.m.	5	54	16	75	-9	0.9
6	12200 Fleming Dr 5500 Pine St	7:07 a.m.	8:45 a.m.	98	137 & 700 & 65	7:05 a.m.	8:29 a.m.	5	84	22	111	-13	0.9
7	1500 W Gray St 14400 Buffalo Speedway	1:12 p.m.	2:10 p.m.	58	35 & 11	1:02 p.m.	1:52 p.m.	5	50	12	67	-9	0.9
8	11100 Ashcott Dr 15300 Bammel North Houston Rd	6:18 p.m.	8:03 p.m.	105	132 & 163	6:08 p.m.	8:11 p.m.	5	123	28	156	-51	0.7
9	1200 Binz St 5700 Langley Rd	8:10 p.m.	10:14 p.m.	124	7 & 3	8:10 p.m.	9:10 p.m.	5	60	6	71	53	1.8
10	10600 Homestead Rd 300 Kirkstall Dr	12:11 p.m.	13:26 p.m.	75	3 & 56 & 86	11:51 a.m.	1:55 p.m.	5	124	18	147	-72	0.5
11	6400 Beverly Hill St 3100 Bloomfield	2:39 p.m.	3:24 p.m.	45	163 & 52	2:50 p.m.	4:42 p.m.	5	112	24	141	-96	0.3

Trip Number	Paratransit Trip				Fixed Route Trip							Paratransit-Fixed Route Travel Time	Travel Time Ratio
	Pickup Address Drop-off Address	Pickup Time	Drop-off Time	Travel Time (Mins)	Route Numbers	Board Time	Alight Time	Wait Time	On-Board Time	Walking Time	Travel Time (Mins)		
12	3000 Shadowbriar Dr 3500 W Dallas St	6:35 a.m.	8:22 a.m.	107	25 & 27	6:39 a.m.	7:39 a.m.	5	60	14	79	28	1.4
13	2500 S Braeswood Blvd 16200 Westpark Dr	12:07 p.m.	1:22 p.m.	75	No Fixed Route Itinerary								
14	11000 Hammerly Blvd 8000 Antoine Dr	6:12 p.m.	7:00 p.m.	48	58 & 85	6:20 p.m.	7:16 p.m.	5	56	18	79	-31	0.6
15	6800 Maxroy St 2100 W Holcombe Blvd	8:44 am	9:34 am	50	40 & 26	8:46 a.m.	9:44 a.m.	5	58	14	77	-27	0.7
16	7500 FM 1960 Rd W 9300 Dandy St	5:17 p.m.	6:32 p.m.	75	44&45	5:22 p.m.	6:47 p.m.	5	85	8	98	-23	0.8
17	1900 Caroline St 12800 Sandrock Dr	3:57 p.m.	5:15 p.m.	78	30	4:05 p.m.	4:48 p.m.	5	43	8	56	22	1.4
18	2100 Tannehill Dr 1600 Polk St	6:03 a.m.	6:57 a.m.	54	40& 85	6:30 a.m.	7:07 a.m.	5	37	14	56	-2	1.0
19	9800 Linares Dr 3700 Southwest Pkwy	3:36 p.m.	4:34 p.m.	58	45 & 1 & 65	3:39 p.m.	5:08 p.m.	5	89	16	110	-52	0.5
20	6400 Fannin St 9000 Woodlyn Rd	11:09 a.m.	12:31 p.m.	82	1 & 52	11:03	12:09	5	66	12	83	-1	1.0
21	8300 Bissinnet St 1000 Bunker Hill Rd	2:15 p.m.	3:32 p.m.	67	46 & 70	2:14 p.m.	2:52 p.m.	5	38	12	55	12	1.2

Trip Number	Paratransit Trip				Fixed Route Trip							Paratransit-Fixed Route Travel Time	Travel Time Ratio
	Pickup Address Drop-off Address	Pickup Time	Drop-off Time	Travel Time (Mins)	Route Numbers	Board Time	Alight Time	Wait Time	On-Board Time	Walking Time	Travel Time (Mins)		
22	11600 Wood Shadows Dr 1300 St Joseph Pkwy	8:34 a.m.	9:46 p.m.	72	137 & 77	8:42 a.m.	9:20 a.m.	5	38	14	57	15	1.3
23	15700 Clayton Bend Dr 0 Briar Dale Ct	6:25 a.m.	7:38 a.m.	73	No Fixed Route Itinerary								
24	2900 Smith St 6200 Ridgeway Dr	10:54 a.m.	12:18 p.m.	84	9 & 5	11:12 a.m.	12:24 p.m.	5	72	14	91	-7	0.9
25	6400 Fannin St 7200 Corporate Dr	11:38 a.m.	12:58 p.m.	80	73 & 2	12:04 p.m.	1:00 p.m.	5	56	20	81	-1	1.0
26	1200 East Fwy 700 Morris St	4:31 p.m.	5:37 p.m.	66	60 & 88	4:28 p.m.	4:53 p.m.	5	25	12	44	22	156
27	11200 Gessner Rd 2500 Panagard Dr	4:34 p.m.	5:21 p.m.	47	46 & 82	4:38 p.m.	6:03p.m.	5	85	4	94	-47	0.5
28	200 N Travis St 8000 Airport Blvd	11:44 a.m.	1:12 p.m.	88	60 & 88	11:15 a.m.	12:03 p.m.	5	48	12	65	23	1.4
29	4800 Allendale Rd 8800 Bissonnet St	4:08 a.m.	5:36 a.m.	88	40 & 68	4:37 a.m.	7:10 a.m.	5	153	12	170	-82	0.5
30	1000 Sam Houston Pkwy 400 West Rd	12:45 p.m.	2:26 p.m.	101	20 & 66	12:38 p.m.	3:05 p.m.	5	147	16	168	-67	0.6
31	3500 W Dallas St 5000 Marietta Ln	4:02 p.m.	4:50 p.m.	48	3 & 77	4:03 p.m.	4:39 p.m.	5	36	6	47	1	1.0
Average				73				5	64	13	82	-9	0.9

The five trips that exceeded fixed route time by more than 20 minutes had paratransit ride times in excess of 60 minutes. This represents 22.7 percent (5 divided by 22) of all the trips with paratransit ride times in excess of 60 minutes in the sample. This suggests that about 5.3 percent of all trips with paratransit ride times over 60 minutes do not have ride times comparable to fixed route service. This number suggests that METROLift is not consistently meeting its ride time standard, which could be considered a capacity constraint.

The review team found that two of the five trips were part of a large group trip. The rider in each instance was one of nine passengers either picked up to go to or to return home from one location. Reviewing large group trips and rescheduling some of the trips assigned to those groups may help shorten on-board time.

9.8 Findings

1. While the contracts with First Transit and Yellow Cab indicated that the on-time performance goals were 85 and 90 percent respectively, METROLift managers stated during the on-site review that they strove to achieve a combined on-time performance for both pickups and drop-offs of 75 percent. This standard meant that METRO considered it acceptable for one of every four trips to be late. This goal and level of on-time performance for initial or return trips suggests that some METROLift riders may experience a capacity constraint in violation of §37.131(3)(i)(A). An additional concern is that the sampling methodology used at the time of the review may have masked even poorer performance, since the performance of the back-up sedan service was not included in calculations of on-time performance. METRO must develop a plan to review operational practices to identify ways to increase on-time performance for METROLift pickups, and adjusting the sampling methodology to accurately reflect actual performance and representative proportions of trips provided by contractors, including the back-up sedan service provided by Yellow Cab. See the recommendations below. As part of METRO's response to this finding, FTA requests METRO's performance standards for its current contractors.
2. To meet its obligations to negotiate pickup times under §37.131(b)(2), METRO must ensure that schedulers and dispatchers do not adjust the rider's scheduled pickup time (user time) or the pickup window without the rider's consent and must limit any changes to within 60 minutes of the requested pickup time. There are several issues with METRO's scheduling practices at the time of the review: First, the pickup time given to the passenger may not be the same as the pickup time given to the METROLift driver, which could result in the passenger no-show. Second, while METRO's policy had been to limit such changes to no more than 20 minutes, an analysis of a sample day indicated that user times for nine trips were changed by 30 to more than 60 minutes; the information available at the time of the review did not indicate in all cases whether these changes due to objections by riders to pickup times provided to them the previous evening, whether contractors made these changes without the rider's knowledge, or whether the changes were in response to other same-day requests from riders. For the sample day, it appeared that for the 2.4% of trips sampled, most of the changes were in response to same-day requests from riders requesting an earlier pickup time. The review team checked the parameters in the Trapeze software system and found that the system was actually set to change the requested times by -15/+20 METRO

must direct staff and contractors to honor the negotiation window and document all customer contact regarding changes to the user time and/or the pickup window, and provide a copy of the directive to FTA. As part of METRO's response to this finding, FTA requests METRO's current definition(s) of METROLift denials and the number of METROLift ADA paratransit trips, requested, scheduled, provided, and denied for the past six months.

3. METROLift did not adequately monitor performance of Yellow Cab sedan service to ensure that pickups were timely. For the sample day analyzed, out the 59 completed trips dispatched to Yellow Cab, (the backup taxi sedan service) a user time was recorded in the scheduling software for only 11 of these trips. It was impossible for the review team or METRO determine whether the other 48 trips were on time or not. Since dispatchers assigned trips to backup taxis only after determining there was no other capacity, a second concern is that pickup and drop-off performance may not have been accurate for the sample day. METRO must require contractors to record user times for all trips, including those served by backup taxi. A plan for monitoring service performance, including on-time performance of METROLift trips served by backup taxi is needed to ensure that eligible riders do not experience substantial numbers of untimely pickups, missed trips and denials prohibited by the DOT ADA regulations at §§37.131(3)(i)(A) and (B). METRO must submit to FTA a copy of its revised instructions to its contractors for recording trips and its plans for monitoring service performance.
4. METROLift did not adequately monitor performance to ensure that travel time is not excessive. During the opening conference for the compliance review, the review team was informed that METROLift monitors ride time by comparing paratransit times to comparable fixed route itineraries for selected trips. To meet its obligations under §37.131(3)(i)(C), an explicit policy is needed describing how METRO defines and monitors comparability for all trips, including individual trip requests which METRO chooses to group. A second concern is that METRO's sampling method did not appear to include METROLift trips over 60 minutes in length. As part of METRO's response to this finding, please provide a copy of the policy to FTA.
5. At the time of the review, METRO had neither a written definition of a missed trip, nor a performance standard for missed trips that its contractors were not to exceed. To meet the requirements of 37.125(h)(1) – (h)(3) and §37.131(f)(3)(i)(B) of the DOT ADA regulations, METRO must develop a definition of a “missed trip,” which must include any attempted pickup after the end of the pickup window that does not result in a passenger being transported. If a vehicle does not arrive within the pickup window, the rider has no obligation to wait for the vehicle and is under no obligation to board the vehicle. For the sample day, the review team found that 11 of the 35 trips requests that METRO had coded as no-shows should have been coded as missed trips. As part of its response to this finding, METRO must create a written policy defining a trip missed by METRO or one of its contractors and provide a copy to FTA. FTA also requests a current copy of METRO's procedure for declaring rider no-shows.
6. To meet its obligations under §37.125(h)(1) – (h)(3) of the DOT ADA regulations, METRO must revise its No-Ride suspension policy as written in *The Guide* to reflect that only no-shows under the rider's control will be charged against riders, only if they fail to board after the 5 minute vehicle wait time or cancel their trip within one hour of their pickup time, and only when the vehicle arrives within the pickup window. METRO may not count those

instances where the vehicle arrives outside of the pickup window and the rider elects not to board, as trips missed by system error must not be counted against the passenger. As part of METRO's response to this finding, FTA requests that METRO's define "continued abuse of the No-Ride policy" and "progressively longer suspensions" as stated in *The Guide* (Page 14) so that FTA may determine whether or not they are consistent with DOT ADA regulations. FTA also requires METRO to specify the number of days of advance notice the rider will receive of the proposed suspension, so that FTA can determine whether adequate time to appeal the proposed suspension is afforded. The reference to permanent suspensions must be stricken from the policy, and procedures must be revised so that subsequent trips for the day are not automatically cancelled or put "on hold" if a rider misses one trip.

7. To meet its obligations under §37.125(h)(3), METRO must establish an appeals process and make it available to an individual on whom sanctions have been proposed and submit the appeals policy to FTA. The sanction must be stayed pending the outcome of the appeal. FTA will require the removal of METRO's statement in *The Guide* (Page 15) that suspensions must be appealed immediately. The appeals process must meet the requirements of 37.125(g) and be free of the procedural flaws discussed in finding #8 in section 6.6 of this report.
8. At the time of the review, METRO did not have a standard or window for on-time drop-offs for METROLift. Trips with appointment times were considered "on time" if the drop-off occurred prior to the appointment time, so if a rider was dropped off 60 minutes prior to their appointment time, that drop-off would be considered just as "on time" as if the rider had been dropped off at the appointment time. *The Guide* (Page 6) instructs riders "if you need to be at work at 8:00 a.m. your appointment time should be 7:00 a.m. or 7:15 a.m." METRO has an implicit obligation to get riders to appointments on time (not late) and an explicit obligation to monitor performance to insure that METROLift service is operated without any operational pattern or practice that significantly limits the availability of service to ADA paratransit eligible persons. If operational practices cause riders to arrive late to appointments and riders are discouraged from using the service as a result, this would constitute a capacity constraint prohibited by the DOT ADA regulations. METRO must develop an on-time standard or window for on time drop-offs to appointments; require contractor(s) to track, measure review and report drop-off performance for all trips with a requested appointment time; and require contractor(s) to print the appointment times on driver manifests for all trips with a requested appointment time. As part of METRO's response to this finding, please provide copies of the standard and directive(s) to FTA.

9.9 Recommendations

1. Strongly consider raising performance goals for METROLift's on-time performance and indicate what percentage of METROLift trips are to be performed within the standard or goal. In FTA's experience, a performance goal within the 90th percentile is common among systems with a 30-minute pickup window. A performance goal of 75 percent for on-time trips is low, even for a pickup window of 15 minutes. If one were to recalculate the on-time pickup performance of METROLift using a window of 0/+30, then the adjusted performance would be 82.1 percent. The review team could not say that this would have been the actual performance with a 0/+30 window; driver behavior, dispatcher behavior, as well as the

schedules created by Trapeze would be different with a different pickup window. Nevertheless, 82.1 percent of pickups that are early or on time would still represent poor performance, given a pickup window of 30 minutes.

2. Separately report METROLift's on-time performance for pickups and drop-offs. Combining pickup and drop-off performances can mask poorer performance in pickups or drop-offs. Improving performance for pickups and drop may likely require different procedural or operational changes. In July 2010, while the overall performance met one of the standards of 75 percent, there was a large disparity between pickup and drop-off performance (65.9 percent and 83.7 percent respectively).
3. Revise the methodology used to evaluate performance to reflect the differences in the proportion of service provided by each contractor. First Transit and Yellow Cab did not provide the same number of METROLift trips; as the proportion of First Transit trips is roughly 60 percent, First Transit trips should be similarly weighted in the calculation of overall METROLift performance.
4. The model drop-off policy would also prevent riders from arriving substantially early (for example, more than 30 minutes prior to the rider's desired arrival time).
5. Consider reviewing operational practices to reduce the number of METROLift drop-offs that are more than 30 minutes ahead of the requested appointment time. A significant proportion of trips with an appointment time had a very early drop-off. A third of all trips in the sample (23 of 69) had arrival times more than 30 minutes ahead of the requested drop-off time. This may be a concern for riders dropped off at a location that may not be open that far in advance of an appointment.
6. Providing both the user time (scheduled time) and estimated arrival time (ETA) during a "Where's my ride?" (WMR) call could lead riders to believe that the pickup window and pickup times have changed. As a result, they might not be ready to leave when the vehicle arrived. Direct WMR agents and dispatchers to provide the user time and pickup window—in place the estimated time of arrival—to riders calling on the day of service.
7. Direct METROLift dispatchers to provide the user time and pickup window in place of the estimated time of arrival (ETA) when a rider calls to check on the status of a ride, prior to the end of the pickup window. Provide the ETA after the expiration of the pickup window, when the vehicle is actually late.
8. Direct dispatchers to verify a driver's location prior to declaring a rider no-show and approving the driver's departure from the pick-up point.
9. Allow eligible riders to contest individual No-Ride determinations prior to reaching the 10 percent threshold.
10. Establish a goal of zero trips to be missed by METROLift.
11. Review trips grouped by METRO and reschedule trips assigned to those groups to help shorten on board time. The five trips that exceeded fixed route time by more than 20 minutes had paratransit ride times in excess of 60 minutes. This represents 22.7 percent (5 divided by 22) of all the trips with paratransit ride times in excess of 60 minutes in the sample. This suggests that about 5.3 percent of all ADA trips with paratransit ride times over 60 minutes are not comparable to fixed route service and that METROLift was not consistently meeting

its ride time standards for trips with paratransit ride times in excess of 60 minutes. The review team found that two of the five trips were trips METRO assigned to be part of a large group trip. The rider in each instance was one of nine passengers either picked up to go to or to return home from one location.

12. Consider adding 20 minutes to fixed route time to account for walking and waiting time at fixed route stops and stations. At the time of the review, METROLift did not consider waiting time at the start of the fixed route run or walking time when comparing paratransit ride times to fixed route ride time.
13. METROLift routinely reviewed 10 trips per day and compared the paratransit ride time to the comparable fixed route ride time. It is recommended that this practice be continued.
14. *The Guide* (Pages 18-20) listed METROLift Designated Stops at Major Locations and advised eligible riders to wait at the designated METROLift signs. This is an effective practice to assist some eligible riders and it is recommended that this information be included in *The Guide* in the future.

10 Resources

The review team examined the resources made available by METRO to provide ADA complementary paratransit service. This information included:

- Rider comments on driver performance and vehicle condition
- Comments from vehicle operators on training and vehicle condition
- Information on the vehicle fleet
- Number of vehicle operators and tenure/turnover
- Availability of vehicles and drivers to cover scheduled runs
- Operating budget for the service and the process used to estimate funding needs

The review team also compared the paratransit ridership in the METRO service area with ridership in other systems using a national paratransit demand model.

10.1 Consumer Comments

Riders and disability service agency staff contacted in advance of the review were asked about drivers and vehicles. Each was asked if drivers were helpful and professional. Each was also asked if the vehicles were clean and in good repair.

Three of the six persons contacted said that the drivers were either good or very good. Comments included “very helpful,” “helpful and professional,” and “good.” One person said that there seemed to be many new drivers and some drivers didn’t know the area. He suggested more training orienting drivers to the area.

Three of those contacted said that most of the drivers were good or very good. Comments from these individuals included “some could use more customer service training,” “drivers for the van service are good, but some taxi drivers get upset and are unprofessional,” and “most are good.”

All six individuals contacted said that the vehicles were clean and in good repair. One person indicated that vehicle condition was an issue in the past, but that newer vehicles had been purchased and they were very good.

10.2 Vehicle Fleet and Availability

Vehicle Age and Condition

At the time of the on-site review, Yellow Cab operated a fleet of 160 vehicles for the METROLift service. All vehicles were ramp-equipped minivans. Each vehicle accommodated four ambulatory riders or two riders using wheelchairs plus one ambulatory rider.

First Transit provided a fleet list that included 165 body-on-chassis minibuses. As discussed later in this chapter, the list included a number of older vehicles that were in the process of being replaced. First Transit managers indicated that 20 vehicles were considered “hard down” (retired). All vehicles in the First Transit fleet had similar seating configurations that included 10 seats for ambulatory riders plus four securement areas for riders using wheelchairs.

Table 10.1 shows the ages of vehicles in both fleets. Yellow Cab was operating a newer fleet at the time of the on-site review. Most (92) were 2008 model year (MY) vehicles and the average age of vehicles in the fleet was 2.2 years. First Transit was operating a somewhat old fleet. The large majority of active vehicles (97) were 2005 MY vehicles and the average age was 3.3 years for the active fleet. All 97 of the older First Transit vehicles had over 250,000 miles of service, and 90 of these vehicles had more than 300,000 miles of service at the time of the on-site review.

Table 10.1 – Ages of Vehicles in the METROLift Fleet

Model Year	Yellow Cab Fleet	First Transit Fleet
2005 (retired)	0	20
2005	1	97
2006	27	0
2007	11	0
2008	92	0
2009	29	1
2010	0	47
Total	160	165 total, 145 active
Average Age	2.2 years	3.3 years¹

1 – Active fleet of 145 vehicles

Yellow Cab provides its own vehicles. The contract between METRO and Yellow Cab calls for no vehicles to exceed 5 years in age or 250,000 miles.

METRO owned and leased to First Transit all of the vehicles for its operation. In 2010, METRO began to replace the older 2005 vehicles in the First Transit fleet; at the time of the on-site review, 47 of 59 new vehicles had arrived. METRO’s capital replacement plan (see Attachment J) called for another 59 vehicles to be replaced in 2011, another 39 to be replaced 2012, and 40 to be replaced in 2013. METRO managers indicated that the 59 vehicles being delivered in 2011 should all arrive by March. This will give First Transit 118 new vehicles. After March 2010, remaining older vehicles will be used as spares. With the delivery of another 39 vehicles in 2012, all vehicles in the First Transit fleet should be 2010 and 2011 MY vehicles.

In the review team’s interviews of METROLift drivers, each was asked about the condition of vehicles and whether vehicles were repaired promptly if problems were noted on daily inspection forms. Overall, First Transit drivers felt that their vehicles were in good condition and that repairs were made promptly. They mentioned that the delivery of the 47 new 2010 vehicles had improved the overall condition of the fleet. However, some First Transit drivers mentioned that vehicles are sometimes not clean when they receive them. Yellow Cab drivers also felt that their vehicles were in good condition and maintenance was performed promptly. They stated that if a problem is identified with a vehicle during the inspection at the beginning of a shift, a different vehicle is assigned. Two Yellow Cab drivers also indicated that in-service issues are handled promptly. One driver said that if there is a breakdown in transit, a road supervisor retrieves any riders. The second driver who mentioned the handling of in-service problems said that Yellow Cab sends a replacement vehicle.

Vehicle Availability and Spare Ratios

The review team examined vehicle availability records for the sample week of July 11–17, 2010. For each service contractor, the review team determined how many vehicles were needed to cover runs assigned at the peak-hour, how many vehicles were out of service, and how many were available for service. The number of spare vehicles was then calculated. This was done for each day in the sample week.

Table 10.2 shows vehicle availability at Yellow Cab for the week of July 11–17. Note that Yellow Cab only operates very limited METROLift service on weekends (only 33–38 runs), so data for July 11 and July 17 was not collected since there were enough vehicles to cover these runs. Yellow Cab maintains vehicle availability records for both the morning pullout and the afternoon pullout.

Table 10.2 – Yellow Cab Vehicle Availability, July 11–17, 2010

Date	Peak Runs	Total Fleet	Vehicles Out Longer Term	Vehicles Available	Spares	Date
AM Pullout						
Sun 7/11	33	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Mon 7/12	136	160	11	5	149–154	13–18
Tue 7/13	136	160	13	5	147–155	11–19
Wed 7/14	136	160	9	4	151–156	15–20
Thu 7/15	136	160	12	4	148–156	12–20
Fri 7/16	132	160	10	4	150–156	18–24
Sat 7/17	38	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
P.M. Pullout						
Sun 7/11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Mon 7/12	136	160	12	5	148-155	12-19
Tue 7/13	136	160	9	4	151-155	15-19
Wed 7/14	136	160	12	5	148-155	12-19
Thu 7/15	136	160	12	4	148-156	12-20
Fri 7/16	132	160	25	6	135-150	3-18
Sat 7/17	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

The peak pullout requirement at Yellow Cab for this week ranged from 132–136 vehicles. Four to six vehicles were out longer term for repairs during this period. On most days, another nine to 13 vehicles were held out for preventive maintenance. The Yellow Cab manager said that vehicles held out for maintenance became available during the day for service and could be quickly placed in service if needed. With a total fleet of 160 vehicles, there were between 147–156 vehicles available for service on most days, which provided for between 11–20 spares per day. On Fridays, the Yellow Cab manager said that a larger number of vehicles were held out in the afternoon for maintenance on Friday night. All of these vehicles were available for service if needed. Managers at Yellow Cab indicated that enough vehicles are always available to meet daily pullout requirements

Table 10.3 shows vehicle availability at First Transit for the same week. The peak pullout requirement at First Transit for this week was 92 vehicles on Sunday, 75 on Saturday, and between 96–108 vehicles on weekdays. During this week, the First Transit Maintenance Manager indicated that the fleet ranged from 140–145 vehicles. As mentioned above, approximately 20 of the older vehicles are considered “hard down,” or retired. During the week examined, 29–36 vehicles were listed as being out long term for repairs. This provided from two to 33 spares on the days examined. The number of spares was particularly low (only two to four vehicles) on Tuesday, July 13. Even though the spare ratio was tight on some days, the Maintenance Manager and General Manager at First Transit indicated that they are typically able to make pullout.

Table 10.3 – First Transit Vehicle Availability, July 11–17, 2010

Date	Peak Runs	Total Fleet	Vehicles Out Longer Term	Vehicles Available	Spares
AM Pullout					
Sun 7/11	92	140	31	109	17
Mon 7/12	96	140	34	106	10
Tue 7/13	106	141	31	110	4
Wed 7/14	106	145	31	114	8
Thu 7/15	100	145	30	115	15
Fri 7/16	100	145	34	111	11
Sat 7/17	75	144	36	108	33
P.M. Pullout					
Sun 7/11	92	140	31	109	17
Mon 7/12	90	140	35	105	30
Tue 7/13	106	144	36	108	2
Wed 7/14	108	145	30	115	7
Thu 7/15	93	145	29	116	23
Fri 7/16	97	145	34	111	14
Sat 7/17	75	144	36	108	33

10.3 Staffing and Operator Training

Driver Availability

The review team collected driver workforce information from each METROLift service provider. This included the total number of full-time and part-time drivers, wage and benefit information, and annual driver turnover information.

Table 10.4 shows the number of drivers employed by each service contractor at the time of the on-site review. It also shows the total number of weekday runs typically assigned. The ratio of available drivers to assigned weekday runs is then calculated and presented. Table 10.4 also shows the number of drivers terminated (post training) for the 12-month period prior to the on-site review, and the calculated annual post-training turnover rate.

Table 10.4 – Driver Availability and Turnover (July 2010)

Contractor	Drivers	Weekday Runs Assigned	Ratio of Drivers to Runs	Drivers Terminated in 2009	Annual Turnover Rate
Yellow Cab	153	139–141	1.1	66 ¹	39%
First Transit	235	151 (average)	1.6	138	59%

1. Yellow Cab identified 44 post-training terminations in an 8-month period. This was annualized to 66.

At the time of the on-site review, Yellow Cab had a workforce of 153 drivers, all full-time. Yellow Cab was assigned up to 141 runs per weekday. During the on-site review, Yellow Cab received 139 runs per weekday. With 139–141 runs assigned each weekday, Yellow Cab had a ratio of approximately 1.1 drivers per scheduled weekday run. Typically, a ratio of at least 1.2 drivers per assigned weekday run is needed to provide adequate run coverage. Yellow Cab indicated that it also had 10 starters and five field service representatives and that these employees could be used as backup drivers if needed. Including these additional 15 employees would give Yellow Cab a ratio of 1.2 drivers and backup drivers per run.

First Transit had a workforce of 235 drivers, 234 full-time and one part-time. For the week of July 11–17, 2010, First Transit was assigned between 141 and 162 runs per weekday. The average number of weekday runs assigned was 151. This gave First Transit a driver to run ratio of 1.6. This exceeds the desired ratio of 1.2.

The review team analyzed driver termination records at Yellow Cab. For an 8-month period just prior to the on-site review, records indicated 44 post-training terminations. With a workforce of 153 drivers, this suggests a 39 percent post-training annual turnover rate. This is slightly higher than the 30 percent rate reported for private contractors in *TCRP Report 142, Vehicle Operator Recruitment, Retention, and Performance in ADA Complementary Paratransit Operations*.

Personnel records at First Transit indicated 138 post-training driver terminations for the 12-month period just prior to the on-site review. With 235 drivers, this suggests an annual post-training termination rate of 59 percent, which is significantly higher than the industry average reported in TCRP Report 142.

Yellow Cab drivers are paid \$285 per day for a 12-hour route. The company then deducts \$89 from this amount for the vehicle lease, \$60 for fuel, and \$1 for a uniform. This leaves drivers with \$135 per day, which equates to approximately \$11.25 per hour for a 12-hour shift. Beyond this daily reimbursement, drivers are not provided any benefits. Driver trainees are paid \$388 every 2 weeks when in training. This equates to an hourly wage of approximately \$4.85.

First Transit drivers receive a training wage of \$7.25 per hour. The starting wage is \$9 per hour for the first year. The union agreement in place at the time of the review calls for a \$0.40 increase after one year and an increase of \$0.80 after the second year of employment. First Transit managers indicated that, to help reduce turnover, they were considering increasing the starting wage to between \$9.75 and \$10 per hour. Drivers at First Transit can elect health care coverage, with the company paying 80 percent of an individual plan, and 50 percent of a family or individual plus spouse plan. In October 2011, the company planned to increase its share of family and individual/spouse coverage from 50 percent to 65 percent, again in an effort to lower turnover. First Transit drivers also receive one week of paid vacation after one year of

employment, two weeks after two years, five paid holidays per year, and a 50 percent company match (up to six percent of annual wages) for any contributions they make to a 401(k) retirement plan.

Driver Training

Service providers are responsible for training their employees who serve as METROLift drivers. The minimum number of training hours was contractually required. Copies of each service provider's training curriculum were provided to the review team in advance of the site visit. While on site, the review team met with each of the Training Managers to review the respective training program.

First Transit Training

By contract, First Transit is required to provide 120 hours of training to new drivers. Of these, 64 hours are spent in the classroom. A behind the wheel (BTW) component makes up the balance of the 120 hours of training.

Topics covered in class range from an introduction to First Transit policies and procedures to a review of METRO fare structure and service procedures. According to the training manager, the ADA is initially discussed on the first day of training. ADA requirements are also covered throughout days two and three (16 hours total) of the training, which deal with passenger assistance.

The entire training package contains 13 chapters. At the end of each chapter, the trainees take a quiz, designed to measure understanding of the topic. If a trainee experiences a problem on a quiz, the trainer will conduct a one to one counseling to improve understanding. The trainee then retakes the quiz.

At the end of the classroom training, each trainee takes a written test. The test contains over 80 questions of which no more than seven may be answered incorrectly. Any trainee not passing the written exam the first time is retested, with the same requirements for passing. If the trainee fails to pass the written test the second time, they are disqualified from driving in METROLift service. Trainees also take a wheelchair securement test before moving on to the BTW part of the training. The purpose of the wheelchair securement test is to ensure that correct securement strap and belt usage is employed by the trainee.

With successful completion of the classroom training, a trainee moves to the BTW part of the training. BTW consists of evaluating driving competency on a closed course, and an evaluation of the driver while in revenue service. The BTW training is divided into 24 hours of closed course training and 32 hours in service training. The BTW training is conducted by a driver trainer who has been certified by the Transportation Safety Institute. In-service training starts with a driver operating a practice run, in which the driver is given a manifest and drives from stop to stop on the manifest, but does not pick up any passengers. On subsequent days, the trainee is given a manifest with actual pickups, but at a reduced speed. The speed is gradually increased over the remaining three days until the schedule provided is assumed to have a speed of 100 percent of the average system speed. The driver trainer evaluates the performance of the trainee and determines whether the trainee passed, and should be released to revenue service.

Refresher training does not appear to be as extensive. Retraining is conducted for cause, when new equipment is received and every two years for defensive driving. Monthly safety meetings

are held, and attendance is mandatory. The First Transit corporate office sets the topics to be covered each month, with local topics of interested added to the agenda

Yellow Cab Training

The number of training hours for Yellow Cab, like First Transit, is set by contract. Yellow Cab is required to provide 102 hours of training for drivers before releasing them into METROLift service. Before receiving training for METROLift, Yellow Cab requires applicants to have a taxi license, which Yellow Cab will help the applicant obtain if necessary.

Classroom training covers 42 hours. It begins with a two-day (14-hour) orientation to Yellow Cab. Items covered include working with the map book (key map), radio protocol and Yellow Cab policies.

The orientation to Yellow Cab is followed by two days (16 hours) of passenger-assistance training (PAT). The trainers at Yellow Cab have gone through the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) PASS course and were certified as trainers. They use material from the CTAA course as part of their PAT training. Disability awareness is included in this part of the training. At the conclusion of this part of the training, each trainee is given a 20-question test. The test is used to gauge understanding of the topic. A driver who does not display understanding of the topic is provided with additional training before moving on to wheelchair securement.

The wheelchair securement training is hands on training and covers at least six hours. In this part of the course, trainees are shown the proper way to secure a mobility device, and given the opportunity to secure a device in one of the vehicles. Anyone not mastering proper securement techniques will be given additional training. If the trainee cannot successfully master wheelchair securement, they are disqualified from driving in METROLift service.

The last part of the classroom training covers defensive driving techniques, including safe operation of the vehicle, identifying risks, and reacting appropriately. Once this part of the training is complete, the trainee moves onto the BTW component of the training.

The BTW part of the training encompasses 60 hours with a BTW trainer. The time is split between the trainer operating the vehicle (approximately two days) and the trainee operating the vehicle while being observed by the BTW trainer. Trainees that successfully complete the BTW part of the training are eligible to drive in METROLift service.

Refresher training is conducted when new equipment is received or for cause. Driver safety meetings are held quarterly.

In its interviews, the review team asked drivers about the initial training they had received as well as ongoing refresher training. Most First Transit drivers felt training was adequate and stated there was refresher training when something new was going on, such as the new vehicles. Five of six Yellow Cab drivers specifically mentioned securement training and customer service as part of their initial training. They stated that there was no official retraining, but regular safety meetings cover a variety of topics, including securement, customer service and disability awareness.

10.4 Run Coverage

The review team examined pullout records at Yellow Cab and First Transit to determine if runs were being closed or were pulling out late due to a lack of scheduled drivers, extraboard/standby drivers, or a lack of vehicles. The review team examined records for the week of July 11–17, 2010.

Table 10.5 shows the total number of runs assigned to each service contractor each day (including base runs, “protect” runs, and add-ons), the number of extraboard (EB) or standby drivers available each day, the number of runs closed because of a lack of drivers, runs closed due to lack of vehicles, late pullouts caused by a lack of extraboard/standby drivers, and late pullouts due to a lack of vehicles.

Table 10.5 – METROLift Run Coverage, July 11–17, 2010

Date	Total Runs Assigned¹	Scheduled Extraboard/Standby Drivers	Runs Closed (Drivers)	Runs Closed (Vehicles)	Late Pullouts (Drivers)	Late Pullouts (Vehicles)
Yellow Cab						
Sun 7/11	33	1	0	0	1	0
Mon 7/12	130	6	0	0	0	0
Tue 7/13	139	4	0	0	2	0
Wed 7/14	139	6	0	0	0	0
Thu 7/15	139	6	0	0	3	0
Fri 7/16	139	6	0	0	0	0
Sat 7/17	38	1	0	0	0	0
First Transit						
Sun 7/11	98	17	0	0	0	0
Mon 7/12	141	8	0	0	0	0
Tue 7/13	155	4	0	0	0	0
Wed 7/14	162	6	0	0	0	0
Thu 7/15	152	6	0	0	0	0
Fri 7/16	146	9	0	0	0	0
Sat 7/17	89	14	0	0	0	0

1. Includes base runs, “protect” runs, and add-on runs

Neither service contractor recorded any run closures for the week examined. First Transit also had no late pullouts for the week. Yellow Cab pulled out late for six runs for the week—one on Sunday, two on Tuesday, and three on Thursday.

The review team discussed late pullouts with Yellow Cab managers. They stated that Yellow Cab has a limited number of scheduled standby drivers and then calls in others as needed. If additional, non-scheduled standby drivers are needed, there is some delay in notifying these drivers and having them report. The company will call in a standby driver if the scheduled driver gives them one or two hours notice that they will not be able to work that day or that they will be late. If less notice is given, Yellow Cab does not call in standby drivers if the scheduled driver is just going to be late (they assume that there will be a similar delay in pullout either way). They only call in standbys if scheduled drivers indicate they will not be in for the entire day. A more detailed examination of the six late pullouts at Yellow Cab indicated that they occurred primarily

in the morning and that one or two additional scheduled standby drivers in the morning would improve performance.

While First Transit did not have any closed runs or late pullouts for the week examined, the review team noticed that First Transit relied heavily on unscheduled extraboard drivers who are called in as needed. They schedule many extraboard drivers on weekends (14–17) because they have many same-day call-outs on the weekends (for example, 17 drivers called out on Saturday, July 17). However, they schedule relative few extraboard drivers on weekdays (only four to nine on the week examined) and rely instead on calling in drivers to work extra time. The number of scheduled extraboard on weekdays does not compensate for the number of same-day call-outs experienced. For example, there were 14 same-day call-outs on Tuesday, July 13 and only eight scheduled extraboard drivers; 18 same-day call-outs of Wednesday, July 14 with only four scheduled extraboard; 10 same-day call-outs on Thursday, July 15 with only six scheduled extraboard; and 11 same-day call-outs on Friday, July 16 with only nine scheduled extraboard. While the practice of calling in additional drivers seems to be working, it would seem beneficial to consider scheduling additional extraboard drivers on weekdays.

10.5 Other Resources

As noted in Chapter 7, long telephone hold times that exceed the METRO performance standard were experienced in the reservations call groups, particularly on Fridays and first thing in the morning on other days. Long telephone hold times are also experienced in the dispatch call groups, particularly during the afternoon from 12:00–6:00 p.m. It appears that additional staff is needed to allow for more reasonable hold times. Staffing the reservations office on weekends might also reduce the call volume on Fridays and allow for better phone performance.

The review team also asked METROLift dispatchers as well as managers and drivers at the two service contractor sites about the reliability of two-way radio communications and MDT and AVL technologies. It was reported that both the voice and digital communications systems were reliable and that there were no major issues with these technologies.

10.6 Planning, Budgeting, and Funding

Operating Budgets

Reviewers met with METROLift Managers on Monday, August 16, 2010, and gathered information about the process used to develop budgets each year for METROLift service. METRO uses zero-based budgeting principles to create budgets, including the METROLift budget, each year. The process begins with planners and managers first estimating the expected ridership for the coming year. This is done by analyzing recent trends, including yearly trends in ridership and more recent monthly trends. METROLift planners and managers also work closely with METRO's service planning department to determine if any changes are planned in fixed route service for the coming year. This is important since changes in the fixed route system could impact ADA complementary paratransit requirements and ridership. METROLift managers stated that they try to be ahead of the curve regarding planned expansions of fixed route service. They consider establishing paratransit service beyond the ADA required service

area in communities with significant growth where fixed route service likely will be added in the near future. They stated that this allows them to have some level of paratransit available in these areas when fixed route is added, and makes the transition to a fully compliant ADA complementary paratransit service in these areas more seamless. Managers also stated that they will consider economic forecasts and factors that might impact transit and paratransit usage such as increased fuel costs which can lead to increased transit use.

Once ridership estimates have been established, the next step is to estimate the number of vehicle-revenue-hours of service that will be needed. This is done by applying a productivity factor to ridership estimates. Past experiences with service productivity and trends in productivity are considered during this part of the planning process. Managers stated that they tend to be conservative when applying likely productivities. While the service operated at 1.74 trips per revenue-hour in FY 2009 and for the first 10 months of FY 2010, a productivity of 1.71 was used when developing the FY 2011 budget.

Once the number of revenue-hours is developed, estimated costs are calculated using applicable service-delivery contract rates. Hourly cost rates are multiplied by the number of revenue-hours of service needed to get estimated contractor costs.

In addition to contracted service-provider costs, estimates of internal staffing needs and internal operating costs are developed. Ridership estimates are used to determine if increased staff is needed in the call center or other parts of the internal operation. Line items in the internal budget are adjusted to provide for any additional staff needed.

Finally, the budget includes estimates of taxi backup service. As mentioned in Chapter 9, METRO has a contract with Yellow cab for taxi backup service. Trips that cannot be performed on vans and minivans, or which need to be reassigned because of same-day service issues, can be referred to Yellow Cab. The number of likely taxi backup trips is estimated based on prior experience and added to the total budget.

Planning and budgeting information was provided by METRO for FY 2008–2011. This information is shown in Table 10.6. Included is annual ridership, vehicle-hours of service by year, annual budgets and actual expenses by year. Data provided for FY 2010 was for the first 10 months of the year (October 1, 2009, through July 31, 2010). This actual information as well as projections for the full year are provided in Table 10.6. All data is for ADA paratransit service including backup taxi service. Non-ADA METROLift Subsidy Program (MSP) taxi service is not included.

**Table 10.6 – METROLift Ridership, Revenue-Hours of Service
Actual Operating Expenses, and Operating Budgets, FY 2005–2010**

FY	Annual Ridership	Percent Change	Annual Revenue Hours	Percent Change	Actual Operating Expenses	Percent Change	Operating Budget	Percent Change
2008	1,334,010	NA	784,125	NA	\$26,688,743	NA	\$26,922,784	NA
2009	1,379,770	3.4%	793,923	1.2%	\$26,952,698	1.0%	\$28,948,821	7.5%
2010 ¹	1,161,454	NA	667,367	NA	\$23,321,269	NA	\$23,885,014	NA
2010 ²	1,393,745	1.0%	800,840	0.9%	\$27,985,522	3.8%	\$28,662,016	(1.0%)
2011	1,400,290	0.5%	816,883	2.0%	NA	NA	\$29,273,526	2.1%

1 – 10 months

2 – Annual

Ridership has been relatively flat since FY 2008. It increased by 3.4 percent from FY 2008–2009. Based on the first 10 months of FY 2010, the annualized FY 2010 estimate of ridership is that it will only increase by approximately 1 percent over FY 2009. Ridership estimates for FY 2011 used to develop the FY 2011 budget project and increase of less than 1 percent over the expected FY 2010 ridership.

Annual vehicle-revenue-hours have mostly tracked ridership. The increase in revenue-hours between FY 2008–2009 (1.2 percent) was lower than the rate of ridership increase (3.4 percent), but the expected increase in revenue-hours from FY 2009–2010 (0.9 percent) matches the estimated increase in ridership for this period (1 percent). The operating budget was increased significantly between FY 2008–2009 (by 7.5 percent). This far exceeded the actual increase in ridership (3.4 percent) or actual operating cost (1 percent). Budget projections for FY 2010 were lowered (essentially level funded). Even with a lowered budget increase, actual operating expenses for FY 2010 are expected to be within budget. For FY 2011, while only a one-half of one percent increase ridership is projected, METRO has allowed for a two percent increase in vehicle-revenue-hours, and a 2.1 percent budget increase.

While the forecasts have varied slightly from actual, the operating budget has been sufficient each year to meet service demand and costs.

Capital Budgets

The review team also discussed plans for capital replacement and expansion for METROLift service with METRO managers, who provided the review team with a copy of the capital replacement plan for the METROLift service, through FY 2016 (see Attachment J).

As shown in the capital replacement plan, METRO owned 118 vehicles that it makes available to contracted service providers for METROLift operations. The plan was to maintain this fleet of 118 METRO-owned vehicles. Other vehicles needed for the service will be provided by the contracted service providers. The contract with Yellow Cab calls for this contractor to provide all of the vehicles needed for their portion of the operation. The contract with First Transit includes provisions for First Transit to provide vehicles if needed beyond the 118 that are provided by METRO. METRO managers also indicated that the taxi backup service also provides capacity to expand service without the addition of METRO-owned vehicles.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the 118 METRO-owned vehicles provided to First Transit covered the contractors' peak pullout requirements and provided a reasonable spare ratio on some weekdays. On weekdays with the heaviest demand (Tuesdays and Wednesdays), the peak pullout was 106–108 vehicles and a fleet of 118 allowed for a minimal 8.5–10 percent spare ratio. To maintain a more adequate spare ratio, First Transit was continuing to operate 22–27 of the older 2005 vehicles. As replacements for the remainder of the 2005 vehicles are obtained in 2011 and 2012, First Transit will be able to operate newer spares. It is likely that some of the vehicles that METRO will consider replaced with newer vehicles will still need to be kept in service as spares in the future.

Analysis of Ridership

METROLift's ADA ridership in FY 2009, including the taxi backup service, was 1,379,770 one-way passenger-trips with an additional 102,948 trips provided to ADA-eligible riders through the

METROLift Subsidy Program (MSP). To determine how this level of ridership compares with other transit agencies, the review team used a national ADA complementary paratransit ridership model to estimate the predicted ADA complementary paratransit ridership in METRO's ADA complementary paratransit service area.

The national model, developed by the Transportation Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) and detailed in *TCRP Report 119, Improving ADA Complementary Paratransit Demand Estimation*, used data from 28 transit systems across the country to model ADA complementary paratransit demand. The model estimates ADA complementary paratransit demand based on the population of the service area, the base fare charged, the percentage of the population with household incomes below the poverty level, the effective window used to determine on-time performance, the percentage of applicants found conditionally eligible, and whether conditional eligibility is used to do trip-by-trip eligibility in operations.

To estimate demand for METRO's complementary paratransit area using this national model, the review team used the following data:

- Service area population: 3,004,334 (2000 U.S. Census data)
- Base ADA complementary paratransit fare: \$1.15
- Service area poverty rate: 11.1 percent (U.S. census data)
- Conditional eligibility rate: 2.3 percent
- On-time window: 15 minutes
- Trip-by-trip eligibility: not used

Using these factors, the TCRP model estimated the annual demand for ADA complementary paratransit service for METROLift to be 5,650,983 one-way trips. This far exceeds the 1,379,770 trips provided on METROLift vans and taxis, as well as the 1,482,718 trips provided if the MSP program is included. A copy of the summary page from the model showing the estimation for METRO's ADA complementary paratransit area is provided in Attachment K.

10.7 Findings

There were no findings of non-compliance requiring corrective action in Chapter 10 of this report. See below for recommendations.

10.8 Recommendations

- 1 For the week of July 11–17, 2010, all First Transit runs pulled out on time. Six runs at Yellow Cab pulled out late. Yellow Cab did not have enough scheduled standby drivers on these days to cover runs for drivers who called out. It appears that Yellow Cab could benefit from one or two additional scheduled standby drivers in the mornings on weekdays. Work with Yellow Cab to schedule 1–2 additional standby drivers on weekdays.
- 2 While First Transit did not have any closed runs or late pullouts for the week examined, the review team noticed that First Transit relied heavily on unscheduled extraboard drivers who were called in as needed. However, First Transit scheduled relatively few extraboard drivers

on weekdays relied instead on calling in drivers to work extra time. The number of scheduled extraboard on weekdays did not compensate for the number of same-day call-outs. While the practice of calling in additional drivers seemed to work, it would seem beneficial to consider scheduling additional extraboard drivers on weekdays.

- 3 Appendix D to the DOT ADA regulations explains that while there is no specific requirement for recurrent or refresher training, there is an obligation to ensure that, at any given time, employees are trained to proficiency. Refresher training programs are an effective practice in use throughout the transit industry. Consider requiring contractors to establish such programs, to augment retraining only for cause.
- 4 METROLift ridership appeared to be far below the level of ridership that would be predicted for the METRO area. Expected ridership, given the service area population, key demographic factors, and key service policies is 5,650,983 one-way passenger-trips per year. Actual METROLift ridership in FY 2009 was 1,379,770; including the MSP program ridership was 1,482,718. Undertake a study to examine why METROLift ridership was so far below levels predicted by national models. Include comments from the community. Compare the number of persons certified as ADA paratransit eligible by METRO to other large cities of similar size. Also examine the annual trip-making rate of METROLift eligible riders, as compared to that of ADA paratransit –eligible in other large cities of similar size. METROLift ridership appeared to be far below the level of ridership that would be predicted for the METRO area. Expected ridership, given the service area population, key demographic factors, and key service policies is 5,650,983 one-way passenger-trips per year. Actual METROLift ridership in FY 2009 was 1,379,770; including the MSP program ridership was 1,482,718. Undertake a study to examine why METROLift ridership was so far below levels predicted by national models. Include comments from the community. Compare the number of persons certified as ADA paratransit eligible by METRO to other large cities of similar size. Also examine the annual trip-making rate of METROLift eligible riders, as compared to that of ADA paratransit –eligible in other large cities of similar size.
- 5 Driver turnover appeared to be an issue. Annual post-training turnover at First Transit for the 12 months prior to the review was 59 percent. Turnover at Yellow Cab was somewhat better (39 percent), but still above the industry average of 30 percent. Work with contractors to institute programs to lower driver turnover. Approaches for attracting and retaining drivers are detailed in a recent report titled, *TCRP Report 142, Vehicle Operator Recruitment, Retention, and Performance in ADA Complementary Paratransit Operations*.

Attachment A
METRO Response to Draft Report



**Board of
Directors**

Gilbert Andrew
Garcia, CFA
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Allen D. Watson
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Lisa Castañeda
Secretary

Burt Ballantant
Honorable
Dwight Jefferson

Carrin F. Patman

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Gary Stobb

**President &
Chief Executive
Officer**

George Greenias

June 14, 2012

Ms. Susan Clark
Equal Opportunity Specialist
Federal Transit Administration Office of Civil Rights
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Ms. Clark:

On behalf of Houston METRO, I would like to thank the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for working with us to thoroughly review our ADA paratransit service, METROLift, to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). We have received and examined Mr. John Day's correspondence and enclosures regarding the preliminary draft report of the August 2010 ADA Complementary Paratransit Service Compliance Review. This letter concerns METRO's comments on the draft report for your consideration as you proceed to issue the final report.

Since the August 2010 review, METROLift ridership has continued to grow. In our most recent fiscal year 2011, ridership on the dedicated ADA service grew by 7.7%. Even with this growth, METRO remains committed to meeting the paratransit needs of the greater Houston area. We continue to operate a 751 square mile service area, 29% of which is non-ADA required on weekdays and 50% of which is non-ADA required on the weekends.

As part of METRO's comments, we would like to provide an overview of substantive changes to the METROLift program since the FTA review in August 2010. Our staff has engaged in several training initiatives to develop and refine skill sets, and we have changed one of our paratransit contractors.

Since late 2010, cross-training between the fixed route and paratransit customer service representatives has continued as anticipated at the time of the review. Additionally, METRO overhauled call center schedules and added a second Call Center Systems Coordinator to oversee staff scheduling and quality monitoring.

In October 2011, two (2) METROLift staff attended the Easter Seals Project ACTION Travel Training course in North Carolina as part of METRO's launch of a Travel Training program. We are now working with paratransit customers and senior citizens interested in learning more about riding the fixed route bus and rail system.

In January 2012, METRO formed a new Service Improvement Working Group comprised of METRO and both paratransit contractors. This group has focused on reducing driver behavior complaints and increasing on-time performance. During the spring of 2012, drivers from both contractors attended a new class to refresh their customer service skills.

In February 2012, METRO hosted the National Transit Institute's course on *Paratransit Management & Operations*. Then, in March 2012, METRO hosted the *Comprehensive ADA Paratransit Eligibility* course. METROLift staff actively participated in both events, and METRO truly appreciates the opportunity to be the host city for these nationally recognized courses.

On the operations side of service, METRO has increased dispatch supervision and worked with contractors to ramp up street supervision. In April 2011, MV Transportation Inc. took over our paratransit van contract. As part of the contract, METRO has access to increased information technology resources including additional route monitoring programs and more robust historical reports. At the time of this letter, we are launching trip monitoring web access at heavy use locations so that some facilities and centers can monitor customer trip times without calling dispatch (ex. a rehabilitative clinic has access to an online list of their customer trips with up to date arrival estimations).

As Mr. Day conveyed in his letter, many of the policy changes discussed at the time of the review have already been implemented. Below is a list of changes METRO made immediately following the August 2010 review that relate to findings in the preliminary draft issued on May, 31, 2012:

- 4.1.1 revised public information on door-to-door assistance
- 4.1.2 updated policy on standees to meet ADA regulations
- 4.1.3 removed reference to seatbelt policy in *The Guide*
- 4.1.4 clarified definition of attendant to reflect ADA regulations
- 4.2.2 edited policy on school trip transportation as suggested by reviewers
- 4.2.3 reviewed dialysis-only conditional eligibility list for transition processing
- 4.2.4 increased specificity of denial letters
- 4.2.6 edited language and template of denial letters
- 4.2.7 included "ADA Paratransit Eligible" on eligibility letters
- 4.2.9 expanded information on appeals process in user guide
- 4.2.10 updated policy on ADA-certified visitors
- 4.4.2 eliminated same day return trip booking requirement for dialysis customers
- 4.4.3 altered public information on making reservations on weekends and holidays
- 4.4.4 rewrote MACS and MACS WEB instructions in *The Guide*
- 4.5.1 added taxicab back-up to the on-time performance sampling method
- 4.5.6 revised no-show policy

Additionally, immediately following our March 22, 2012 phone call with FTA staff, METRO ceased its practice of collecting \$4.00 for transportation to and from eligibility interviews as outlined in 4.2.1 of the preliminary draft.

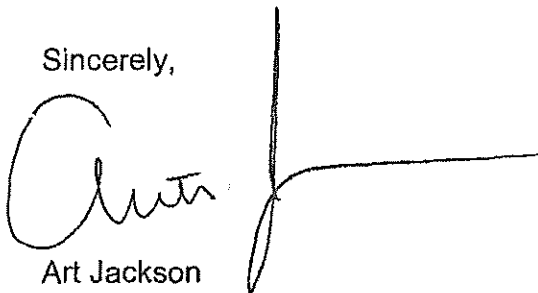
Finally, I'd like to clarify a few items regarding the METROLift program.

- 4.1.5 METROLift service hours were misunderstood at the time of the review. METROLift service is available from 3:45 am to 1:30 am with the last trip originating at 1:30 am, 7 days per week.
- 4.1.6 We meet our obligations for the DOT ADA regulations for keeping complaints on file for one year and maintaining a summary of complaints on file for five years. We use the Trapeze COM module to track all of our complaints and summaries of prior year complaint levels are also available.
- 4.3.1 METRO tracks all hold times including those longer than four minutes. The Contact Service Queue Call Distribution Summary Report can be adjusted to reflect different interval lengths including hold times beyond four minutes. Additionally, the Contact Service Queue Report can be pulled for time increments smaller than the full hour of operations in a single day to identify average and maximum hold times during specific times of the day (ex. between 11am and 12pm).
- 4.4.1 Opportunity for negotiation is available at the time of the reservation. Customers are given an estimated pick up time and informed that the time could shift plus or minus 20 minutes at the time of scheduling after 5 pm. If the estimated pick up time or scheduling window is unfavorable to the customer, the customer can change his/her request time and the reservationist will provide a new estimated time and scheduling window. This negotiation process happens before the schedule is finalized. Once the schedule is finalized, customers can call Dispatch for a user time assigned by the scheduling system. This assigned user time is within the scheduling window already agreed to by the customer at the time of the reservation. The Houston paratransit community is accustomed to the provision of this user time in order to better plan when to be on the curb for METROLift vehicles. The user time is the estimated time of arrival of the vehicle at the start of the run; actual time of arrival is subject to traffic, weather and other service issues on the day of service.
- 4.5.2 The customer's user time is locked at time of scheduling and does not change; however, the estimated time of arrival is dynamic, not static, depending on the vehicle's location in the Global Positioning System (GPS). Customers may perceive that their times have been changed since the estimated time of arrival for the vehicle evolves on the day of service due to traffic, weather and other service issues. In reality, the customer's scheduled time (user time) and on-time window

remains constant. METRO and its contractors understand and acknowledge that customer user times must not be changed.

To conclude, thank you again for your time in reviewing our METROLift program so that we may ensure compliance with the ADA and provide safe, courteous, reliable service to our paratransit customers. METRO looks forward to working with the FTA to resolve any outstanding issues from the August 2010 review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Art Jackson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Art Jackson
Senior Director, Customer Care & Customized Services
Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO)

cc: Aida Douglas, Acting Regional Civil Rights Officer, FTA Region 6
George Greanias, METRO President and Chief Executive Officer
Andrew Skabowski, METRO Senior Vice President, Service Delivery
Michael Andrade, METRO Director of Paratransit Services
Ninfa Muench, METRO Director of Contracted Services
Hilda Montemayor, METRO Manager of ADA Compliance and Paratransit

Attachment B
FTA Notification Letter



U.S. Department
Of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

Headquarters

East Building, 5th Floor, TCR
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

June 30, 2010

Mr. George Greanias
President and Chief Executive Officer
METRO
1600 Main Street
Houston, TX 77208-1429

Dear Mr. Greanias:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the Department of Transportation's (DOT) implementing regulations at 49 CFR Parts 27, 37, and 38, as they relate to public transportation. As part of our ongoing oversight efforts, FTA's Office of Civil Rights conducts a number of on-site compliance reviews of ADA complementary paratransit services. METROLift has been selected for such a review. The focus of the review will be METROLift's compliance with the six paratransit service criteria outlined in the DOT ADA regulations at 49 CFR § 37.131.

The overall review process will consist of the collection of data prior to the visit, an opening conference, an on-site review of METROLift paratransit service, and an exit conference. The entire on-site portion of the review will be completed within five days. FTA has engaged the services of Planners Collaborative, Inc. (PCI), of Boston, MA, assisted by TranSystems of Boston, MA to conduct the compliance review. Representatives of PCI and TranSystems and FTA will participate in the opening and exit conferences. Ms. Susan Clark, the Program Manager for this compliance review, has already contacted your organization to notify you of the on-site visit and has confirmed **Monday, August 16, 2010**, for commencement of the on-site visit.

We request **9 a.m.** for the opening conference. This will provide an opportunity for an introduction of the FTA representatives and PCI and TranSystems reviewers to members of your organization, including you or your designee, the METROLift paratransit service manager, the ADA coordinator, and other key staff. During the opening conference, team members from PCI and TranSystems will present an overview of the on-site review.

Because the members of the review team will be spending considerable time reviewing METROLift paratransit service, it would be helpful if you could provide them with temporary identification to permit easy system access. METRO staff contacts have already been identified to coordinate the on-site review and address questions that may arise during the review. In addition, we request that a work area be made available to the team in the building where the opening and exit conferences take place.

In order that we may properly prepare for the on-site visit, we request that you provide the information outlined in Enclosures 1 and 2. Enclosure 1 consists of items that must be received within 15 calendar days of the date of this letter. These materials should be forwarded to:

Russell Thatcher
TranSystems Corp.
38 Chauncy Street Suite 200
Boston , MA 02111
(857) 453-5509
rhthatcher@transystems.com

Enclosure 2 consists of items that will be needed at the initiation of the review.

We request that the exit conference be scheduled for **2 p.m. on Friday, August 20, 2010**. This conference will afford an opportunity for the reviewers to discuss their observations with you and your organization. We request that you or your designee, METROLift paratransit service manager, the ADA coordinator, and other key staff attend the exit conference. Findings will be made by the FTA Office of Civil Rights and provided to you in a written draft at a future date. You will then have an opportunity to provide comments before the report becomes final. When the report is transmitted to METRO in draft form, it will be a public document and subject to the Freedom of Information Act upon request.

METRO and METROLIFT staff are welcome to accompany the review team during the review, if you so choose. We welcome your suggestions and encourage your participation in the review by asking questions or commenting on any issues you may feel are relevant. If you have any questions or concerns prior to the opening conference, please contact Susan Clark at 202-493-0511 or at her e-mail address: *sue.clark@dot.gov*. You may also contact Russell Thatcher, whose contact information is above.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation as we undertake this process together. We look forward to a meaningful and successful review.

Sincerely,



Cheryl L. Hershey
Director
FTA Office of Civil Rights

Enclosures

cc: Robert C. Patrick, FTA Region VI Administrator
William Jones, FTA Region VI Civil Rights Officer
Gail Lyssy, FTA Region VI Director of Oversight & Program Management
Auturo Jackson, Director of Transportation Programs METRO
Maryann Dendor, METRO

The following information must be submitted to TranSystems by July 16, 2010

1. A description of how the ADA complementary paratransit service is structured and provided, including:
 - How trip requests/reservations are handled (by a central reservation office? by each carrier?), and the address(es) where reservations are taken.
 - How trips are scheduled (by a central scheduling office? by each carrier?) and the address(es) where scheduling is done.
 - How dispatching is handled (centrally? by each carrier?) and the address of the central dispatch office or the carrier dispatch sites).
2. A copy of the current broker and carrier contract(s), if service is contracted out in part or in total.
3. A copy of your ADA complementary paratransit "Operator Manual" (or copies if each carrier uses their own), and copies of your "Rider Handbook," service brochure, or other document that explains how trips are requested and service is provided.
4. A description of ADA complementary paratransit service standards, including:
 - The on-time performance standards (how is "on-time" defined and what is the goal for their percentage of trips provided within the standard?).
 - What standards have been set regarding acceptable numbers or percentages of trip denials?
 - The travel time standard (what travel time is considered comparable or too long and what is the goal for the percentage of trips provided within this standard?).
5. Telephone call-handling standards (what is the standard for hold time and/or call pickup and what is the goal for the percentage of calls within this standard?).
6. Samples of driver manifests as identified in Item 1 of Enclosure 2 in this correspondence and samples of records or reports or tabulations of the information requested in Item 2 of Enclosure 2.
7. Capital and operating budget and expenditures for ADA complementary paratransit services for the three most recent fiscal years, including the current year.
8. The number of ADA complementary paratransit trips served and trips denied for the three most recent fiscal years, including the current year.
9. Three copies of the system map for fixed route services.

We request that the following information and/or assistance be available at the beginning of the on-site visit.

1. Copies of completed driver manifests for the most recent six-month period (for each carrier).
2. The following ADA complementary paratransit data, by month, for the last six months (paper copies as well as in electronic format, if available):
 - Trips requested
 - Trips scheduled
 - Trips denied
 - Canceled trips
 - No-shows
 - Missed trips
 - Trips provided
 - A breakdown of trips requested, scheduled, and provided by carrier / provider.
 - A listing of trips denied each month showing customer's name, origin, requested destination, day and time, and if the person was ambulatory or uses a wheelchair.
 - On-time performance information (by carrier if there are multiple carriers in the system).
 - List of trips that exceeded 60 minutes showing the customer name, origin, destination, day and time, if the person was ambulatory or uses a wheelchair; and the total time on-board.
 - List of passenger no-shows and carrier missed trips with negotiated pickup times and actual vehicle arrival and departure times
 - Telephone call management records (if available) showing hold times by hourly or half-hourly periods and day, total call volume, calls answered and abandoned.
3. A list of complaints related to ADA complementary paratransit capacity constraints in the past year. The list should include all complaints related to trip denials, trip limits, on-time performance, lengthy trips, phone capacity issues, etc. showing customer's name, trip origin, date and type of complaint, carrier, and resolution (any corrective actions requested and taken).
4. The following eligibility information:
 - Copy of application form
 - Eligibility guidelines and any assessment or interview forms
 - Samples of all letters of determination
 - Other letters related to incomplete applications, appeals, and other eligibility issues
 - Total number of individuals registered for ADA complementary paratransit service
 - Most recent 12 months of data:
 - Applications received
 - Completed applications
 - Unconditional eligibility
 - Conditional eligibility
 - Temporary eligibility
 - Not eligible

- Any documentation and correspondence related to no-show suspensions
 - Access to eligibility files and appeals records
5. Work shift assignments for reservationists (call-takers), schedulers, and dispatchers
 6. Access to personnel records showing date of hire and termination for reservationists (call-takers), schedulers, dispatchers, drivers, and road supervisors
 7. Current paratransit fleet roster with vehicle type, accessible spaces, model year, and odometer reading.
 8. Access to most recent six months of daily vehicle pull-out records showing late pull-outs and closed runs.
 9. Vehicle availability reports for most recent six months.
 10. Copies of vehicle pre-trip inspection form and preventative maintenance form.
 11. Assistance with viewing and capturing parameters used in scheduling software.
 12. Assistance with viewing and collecting data on vehicle run structures and peak pull-out requirements.

Attachment C
On-Site Review Schedule

ADA Complementary Paratransit Compliance Assessment
Houston Metro, August 16-20, 2010

PROPOSED SCHEDULE (8-6-10), PAGE 1

Time	Activity	Who	Where
Monday, August 16, 2010			
9:00 AM	Opening conference	METRO and METROLift staff, All assessment team members	1900 Main St.
9:30 AM	Review METROLift service design, policies, standards, and other information sent in advance; Review recent service statistics and data.	METRO and METROLift staff, All assessment team members	1900 Main St.
10:30 AM	METROLift planning and budgeting process; Review operating budgets and capital purchases and plans; Review call center staffing levels	METROLift Director, METRO budget staff; Russell Thatcher, Sue Clark	1900 Main St.
10:30 AM	Review METROLift customer comment process; Review complaints by type for the past year; Review timing and content of selected responses.	METROLift Customer Service Manager; Tom Procopio, Theresa Sullivan	1900 Main St.
10:30 AM	Collect fixed route schedules and information; Review and compare fixed route and METROLift service area, fares, days and hours.	David Chia; METRO staff as needed	1900 Main St.
1:00 PM	Tour METROLift call center	METROLift Director	1900 Main St.
1:30 PM	Review telephone, MACS and MACS-WEB technology; Review a sample week of phone volume and hold time reports; Review call center staffing.	METROLift Call Center Manager and IT staff; Russell Thatcher, Tom Procopio, Sue Clark	1900 Main St.
1:30-5 PM	Observe trip reservation and initial scheduling process (using phone splitters if possible)	METROLift reservationists, David Chia, Theresa Sullivan	1900 Main St.
2:30-5 PM	Observe trip reservation and initial scheduling process (using phone splitters if possible)	METROLift reservationists; All assessment team members	1900 Main St.
5:00 PM	Arrange for special report of scheduled trips following batch with requested and estimated times versus actual scheduled times	METROLift schedulers and data specialist; Russell Thatcher	1900 Main St.
Tuesday, August 17, 2010			
8:00 AM	Observe trip reservation and initial scheduling process (using phone splitters if possible)	METROLift reservationists; All assessment team members	1900 Main St.
9:00 AM	Listen to phone recordings of riders calling in the evening and early morning to check final scheduled trip times	METROLift Call Center Manager; Russell Thatcher, Sue Clark, Theresa Sullivan	1900 Main St.
10:00 AM	Review scheduling process; System parameter settings (windows, speeds, travel time settings); Review run structure and runs by time of day at each service provider; Review report of requested/estimated, and final scheduled times	METROLift Lead Scheduler, METROLift data specialist as needed; Russell Thatcher, Tom Procopio, Sue Clark	1900 Main St.
10:00 AM	Generate and review report of no-shows and missed trips for a sample period (showing scheduled and actual arrival and departure times); Begin review of on-time performance, no-shows and missed trips	METROLift data specialist as needed; David Chia, Theresa Sullivan	1900 Main St.
1:00 PM	Generate report of long trips for a sample period; Identify sample of long trips; Begin analysis of METROLift versus fixed route travel times	METROLift data specialist as needed; Tom Procopio, Theresa Sullivan	1900 Main St.
1:00 PM	Begin review of eligibility determination process and materials; Review 30 recent determinations; Review no-show and service suspension records.	METROLift Eligibility Coordinator; Russell Thatcher, Sue Clark	1900 Main St.

ADA Complementary Paratransit Compliance Assessment
Houston Metro, August 16-20, 2010

PROPOSED SCHEDULE (8-6-10), PAGE 2

Time	Activity	Who	Where
3-5:00 PM	Observe "Where's My Ride? (WMR)" calls and dispatch process (using phone splitters if possible); interview dispatchers	METROLift dispatchers; All assessment team members.	1900 Main St.
Wednesday, August 18, 2010			
9:00 AM	Continue on-time performance, no-show and missed trip analysis, and service criteria analysis	METROLift staff as needed; David Chia, Theresa Sullivan	1900 Main St.
9:00 AM	Continue travel time analysis	METRO fixed route customer service (trip planning) staff; Tom Procopio	1900 Main St.
9:00 AM	Continue eligibility determination review	METROLift Eligibility Coordinator; Russell Thatcher, Sue Clark	1900 Main St.
1:00 PM	First Transit driver workforce (total FT and PT drivers); driver hires and terminations in the last 12 months	First Transit Manager; Russell Thatcher, Sue Clark	3250 Telephone Road
1:00 PM	Driver training at First Transit	First Transit Training Manager; Tom Procopio, Theresa Sullivan	3250 Telephone Road
1:00 PM	Interview drivers. Inspect vehicles at shift change.	First Transit drivers, David Chia, (other team members when available)	3250 Telephone Road
2:00 PM	Pullout records and run coverage at First Transit	First Transit Window Dispatch (Pullout Manager); Russell Thatcher, Sue Clark	3250 Telephone Road
4-5:00 PM	Additional "Where's My Ride?" and dispatch observations	METROLift dispatchers; All review team members	1900 Main St.
Thursday, August 19, 2010			
9:00 AM	Continue on-time performance, no-show and missed trip analysis, and service criteria analysis	METROLift staff as needed; David Chia, Theresa Sullivan	1900 Main St.
9:00 AM	Continue travel time analysis	METRO fixed route customer service (trip planning) staff; Tom Procopio	1900 Main St.
9:00 AM	Continue eligibility determination review	METROLift Eligibility Coordinator; Russell Thatcher, Sue Clark	1900 Main St.
1:00 PM	Yellow Cab driver workforce (total FT and PT drivers); driver hires and terminations in the last 12 months	Yellow Cab Manager; Russell Thatcher, Sue Clark	1406 Hays St.
1:00 PM	Driver training at Yellow Cab	Yellow Cab Training Manager; Tom Procopio, Theresa Sullivan	1406 Hays St.
1:00 PM	Interview Yellow Cab drivers. Inspect vehicles at shift change.	Yellow Cab drivers, David Chia, (other team members when available)	1406 Hays St.
2:00 PM	Pullout records and run coverage at Yellow Cab	Yellow Cab Window Dispatch (Pullout Manager); Russell Thatcher, Sue Clark	1406 Hays St.
4-5:00 PM	Additional "Where's My Ride?" and dispatch observations	METROLift dispatchers; All review team members	1900 Main St.
Friday, August 20, 2010			
8:00 AM	Additional analysis as needed; Tabulate and analyze data	All assessment team members; METRO and METROLift staff as needed.	1900 Main St.
2:00 PM	Exit Conference	METRO and METROLift staff; All assessment team members	1900 Main St.

Attachment D
METROLift Complaints (July 1, 2009–June 30, 2010)

MetroLift Fiscal Year Service Report

All Divisions

2010

JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN YTD TOTALS

I. COMMENDATION

1. COMMENDATIONS	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	YTD TOTALS
1. COMMENDATIONS	115	90	109	93	119	66	91	95	143	163	124	144	1352
a. COMMENDATION	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
b. Operators	79	59	81	69	82	47	65	59	102	115	95	109	962
c. Other Employees	27	24	24	20	33	13	22	32	37	43	20	24	319
d. Service	9	7	4	4	4	6	4	4	4	5	9	11	71
TOTAL COMMENDATIONS	115	90	109	93	119	66	91	95	143	163	124	144	1352

II. COMMENT

1. COMMENTS	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	YTD TOTALS
1. COMMENTS	70	75	66	86	105	86	46	68	81	103	101	143	1030
a. Crowded vehicle	2	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	2	3	13
b. Lost item	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
c. Other	2	3	5	7	7	0	1	0	1	5	2	2	35
d. Pass/ticket problem	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
e. Scheduling Comment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
f. Service Comment	66	70	60	77	97	85	44	68	79	98	97	138	979
TOTAL COMMENTS	70	75	66	86	105	86	46	68	81	103	101	143	1030

III. COMPLAINT

1. CUSTOMER SERVICE	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	YTD TOTALS
1. CUSTOMER SERVICE	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
a. Busy Phone Lines	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
b. Excessive Hold	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
c. Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
d. Wrong phone info	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. DRIVER BEHAVIOR	27	26	36	32	33	40	32	24	36	20	31	31	376
a. Discourtesy/rudeness	15	13	15	17	17	24	24	15	22	16	24	18	220
b. Horn Blowing	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
c. Improper Lift	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
d. Lost	2	3	6	6	7	7	1	5	7	1	1	1	47
e. Not Wearing ID Badge	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
f. Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
g. Pass Up	6	8	10	3	5	3	2	1	6	2	2	7	55
h. Passenger Seatbelt	2	1	2	3	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	14
i. Physical Abuse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
j. Playing radio	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
k. Smoking, eating, drink	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	6
l. Unscheduled Stop	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
m. Unsecured tiedown	1	1	1	2	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	1	12
n. Verbal Abuse	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	1	6
3. DRIVING SAFELY	9	10	7	9	11	12	4	8	11	11	10	9	111
a. Cut other driver off	2	1	0	3	2	4	2	3	1	1	0	1	20
b. Improper turn	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
c. Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
d. Ran light/stop sign	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
e. Reckless	1	5	2	3	2	4	0	1	7	4	4	4	37
f. Speeding	4	0	3	1	7	1	1	1	1	5	3	2	29
g. Sudden stops/starts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
h. Tailgating	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

MetroLift Fiscal Year Service Report

All Divisions

2010

	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	YTD TOTALS
i. Talking on Cell	2	2	1	2	0	3	1	3	1	1	3	1	20
4. EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR	7	8	10	7	7	9	9	5	6	9	10	2	89
a. Employee Behavior	7	8	10	7	7	9	9	5	6	9	10	2	89
5. MISCELLANEOUS	3	9	3	2	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	3	36
a. A/C not working	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
b. Equipment	0	3	0	1	0	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	14
c. M1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
d. Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
e. Other Passengers	1	3	2	1	3	0	1	0	0	2	2	1	16
6. ROUTING	4	4	10	8	5	13	10	9	5	8	13	7	96
a. Busy Phone Lines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
b. Excessive Hold	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
c. Excessive trvl time	4	4	9	7	5	8	9	8	5	7	12	7	85
d. Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
e. Wrong phone info	0	0	1	1	0	3	1	1	0	0	1	0	8
7. SCHEDULING	9	4	9	9	7	6	4	5	5	0	7	1	66
a. Busy Phone Lines	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
b. Excessive Hold	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
c. Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
d. Scheduling Conflict	8	4	8	8	6	6	3	4	5	0	7	1	60
e. Wrong phone info	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	4
8. SERVICE	43	60	74	84	81	74	63	76	101	73	77	91	697
a. Early	3	1	0	1	1	0	3	4	0	2	0	1	16
b. Late	30	51	62	66	60	62	54	66	86	59	57	73	726
c. Missed Trip	10	6	11	14	19	11	6	6	10	12	18	17	140
d. MSP	0	2	1	3	1	0	0	0	5	0	2	0	14
e. Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
f. Scheduling/Routing	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL COMPLAINTS	103	121	149	151	147	157	124	128	167	124	151	145	1667
TOTAL PASSENGERS (000's)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
COMPLAINTS / 100,000 PASSENGERS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
COMBINED TOTALS	288	286	324	330	371	309	261	291	391	390	376	432	4049

Attachment E
Sample METROLift Complaint Response Letter



1900 Main
P.O. Box 61429
Houston, TX 77208-1429
713-225-0119
713-652-8969 TDD
www.ridemetro.org

RECEIVED

JUN 1 5 2010

METROLIFT

Reference #: 37351
Date Received: 04-30-10

[REDACTED]
HOUSTON, TX 77057

RE: METROLift Services

Dear [REDACTED]

This letter is a follow-up to comments our office received recently regarding METROLift services. We thank you for taking the time to bring this matter to our attention.

Your comments have been reviewed and appropriate action has been taken. Your input provides an opportunity for us to learn how customers perceive our service and improve in areas identified.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact METROLift's Customer Service Center at 713-225-0119.

Sincerely,

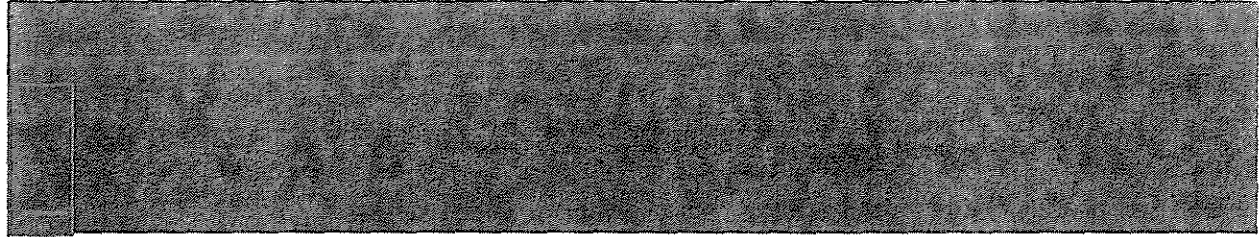
METROLift Management

Attachment F
Complete Application/Interview Letter



1900 Main
P.O. Box 61429
Houston, TX 77208-1429
713-225-0119
713-652-8969 TDD
www.ridemetro.org

"Complete Application/Interview Letter"



We have received your application for METROLift eligibility and are ready for you to schedule an appointment to come to our office for an in-person interview. During the interview process METROLift staff will take your photo ID and complete an assessment to help determine which METRO service will best serve your travel needs. As a bus company dedicated to providing quality transportation services to its passengers, we have several services for persons with disabilities.

Please call our interview representatives at 713-225-0119 Monday through Friday, between 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM for an appointment. You must make an appointment, as walk-ins cannot be accepted. If an appointment is not scheduled within 14 days, no further processing on your application will be made by METRO.

All appointments will be scheduled Monday through Friday on a first call-in basis. Our address is 1900 Main St at St. Joseph Parkway by the Downtown Transit Center.

Finally, METROLift service is available upon request for \$4.00 round trip when you make your interview appointment.

Thank You,
METROLift Customer Service

Attachment G
Interview Survey Form

INTERVIEW SUMMARY FORM

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ City _____ Zip _____

Client ID: _____ D.O.B. _____ Reviewed by: _____

Applicant Status New / Renewing photo taken / ID scanned Q card # _____

If renewing, was Q card turned in at interview? Yes No

Is the applicant able to participate independently in the interview process? Yes No

If no, please explain why: _____

Mobility aid used at interview: _____ Other mobility aids used _____

Is patron's disability (circle) *cognitive* *physical* *visual* *psychological*

Disability stated on Application: _____

Please explain why you need paratransit METROLift service: _____

How many times per week do you require transportation when traveling? _____

Can you use the bus for some trips? If so, please explain _____

Name 3 places that you go to regularly:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

OBSERVATIONS: * Please describe observations in detail, indicate limitations*****

Functional Abilities – Independently without another's assistance.

1. Safely travels through observation area.

2. Walk or wheel independently

3. Balance while walking in observation area.

How far can they walk/roll? _____

How long could they stand and wait for a bus. _____

What physical barriers keep them from riding the local bus service? _____

Cognitive/Physiological Abilities – circle if needed AR TD

1. Ability to ask for and understand information. _____

2. Memory Issues. _____

3. Ability to handle unexpected issues. _____

Visual Abilities – is patron able to independently travel without another's assistance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

APPROVED/UNCONDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY - Expiration Date: _____

Comments: _____

TEMPORARY ELIGIBILITY - Eligibility period _____ months _____

CONDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY - State condition _____

ELIGIBILITY DENIED

- _____ Able to get to and from the local fixed route bus stops
- _____ Able to board, ride and disembark from a local fixed route bus
- _____ Able to understand and navigate the local fixed route bus system

Provide information to support denial.

Attachment H
Sample Telephone Performance Reports

Contact Service Queue Call Distribution Summary Report

7/16/2010 12:00:00 AM - 7/16/2010 11:59:00 PM

Time Interval Length T = 60 sec

CSQ Name (Call Skills)	Calls Handled	Total / Percentage Calls Handled With Queue Time				Calls Abandoned	Total / Percentage Calls Abandoned With Queue Time			
		0 - 60 sec	0 - 120 sec	0 - 180 sec	0 - 240 sec		0 - 60 sec	0 - 120 sec	0 - 180 sec	0 - 240 sec
cic_complaint_csq (cic_complaint_sk)	356	131	194	253	300	111	38	67	93	104
		36.80%	54.50%	71.10%	84.30%		34.20%	60.40%	83.80%	93.70%
cic_cust_info_csq (cic_cust_info_sk)	5,544	2,246	3,080	4,158	4,767	1,272	613	907	1,083	1,202
		40.50%	55.60%	75.00%	86.00%		48.20%	71.30%	85.10%	94.50%
cic_cust_info_span _csq (cic_cust_info_span _sk)	156	52	73	105	124	20	10	15	18	19
		33.30%	46.80%	67.30%	79.50%		50.00%	75.00%	90.00%	95.00%
cic_lost_found_csq (cic_lost_found_sk)	87	24	31	48	61	20	7	13	15	19
		27.60%	35.60%	55.20%	70.10%		35.00%	65.00%	75.00%	95.00%
cic_operator_csq (cic_admin_sk)	193	179	186	190	190	19	16	18	18	19
		92.70%	96.40%	98.40%	98.40%		84.20%	94.70%	94.70%	100.00%
cic_q_card_csq (cic_q_card_sk)	227	100	130	176	198	44	21	35	40	40
		44.10%	57.30%	77.50%	87.20%		47.70%	79.50%	90.90%	90.90%
ml_cust_svc_csq (ml_cust_svc_sk)	327	210	247	269	283	29	18	22	25	26
		64.20%	75.50%	82.30%	86.50%		62.10%	75.90%	86.20%	89.70%
ml_dispatch_csq (ml_dispatch_sk)	3,796	1,569	2,228	2,917	3,370	460	269	359	396	428
		41.30%	58.70%	76.80%	88.80%		58.50%	78.00%	86.10%	93.00%
ml_dispatch_span _csq (ml_dispatch_span_ _sk)	151	60	86	110	128	16	7	10	14	14
		39.70%	57.00%	72.80%	84.80%		43.80%	62.50%	87.50%	87.50%
ml_reservation_cs q (ml_reservation_sk)	2,064	369	794	1,231	1,520	312	201	247	278	291
		17.90%	38.50%	59.60%	73.60%		64.40%	79.20%	89.10%	93.30%
ml_reservation_sp an_csq (ml_reservation_sp an_sk)	112	19	44	72	93	5	2	4	4	5
		17.00%	39.30%	64.30%	83.00%		40.00%	80.00%	80.00%	100.00%
vp_cust_svc_csq (vp_cust_svc_sk)	36	34	35	35	35	1	1	1	1	1
		94.40%	97.20%	97.20%	97.20%		100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

All times are server time.

Report generated: 8/17/2010 2:32:42PM (LJ13)

Contact Service Queue Activity Report

7/16/2010 12:00:00 AM - 7/16/2010 11:59:00 PM

* Calls handled by workflow script or another CSQ

<u>CSQ Name</u> <u>(Call Skills)</u>	<u>Calls</u> <u>Presented</u>	<u>Avg / Max</u> <u>Queue Time</u>	<u>Calls</u> <u>Handled</u>	<u>Avg Speed</u> <u>of Answer</u>	<u>Avg / Max</u> <u>Handle Time</u>	<u>Calls</u> <u>Abandoned</u>	<u>Avg / Max</u> <u>Time to</u> <u>Abandon</u>	<u>Avg / Max</u> <u>Abandon</u> <u>Per Day</u>	<u>Calls</u> <u>Dequeued</u>	<u>Avg / Max</u> <u>Time to</u> <u>Dequeue</u>	<u>Calls Handled</u> <u>by Other *</u>
ml_cust_svc_csq (ml_cust_svc_sk)	356	0:01:28 0:09:30	327	0:01:28	0:02:20 0:18:04	29	0:01:27 0:07:07	29.00 29	0	0:00:00 0:00:00	0
ml_dispatch_csq (ml_dispatch_sk)	4,301	0:01:47 0:14:38	3,796	0:01:50	0:01:28 0:20:40	460	0:01:19 0:12:37	460.00 460	0	0:00:00 0:00:00	45
ml_dispatch_span_c sq (ml_dispatch_span_s k)	167	0:01:57 0:10:17	151	0:01:58	0:01:29 0:12:53	16	0:01:45 0:05:36	16.00 16	0	0:00:00 0:00:00	0
ml_reservation_csq (ml_reservation_sk)	2,398	0:02:37 0:08:21	2,064	0:02:51	0:02:08 0:23:28	312	0:01:07 0:06:45	312.00 312	0	0:00:00 0:00:00	22
ml_reservation_spa n_csq (ml_reservation_span _sk)	119	0:02:27 0:06:48	112	0:02:31	0:02:25 0:09:54	5	0:01:29 0:03:05	5.00 5	0	0:00:00 0:00:00	2

All times are server time.

Report generated: 8/16/2010 2:46:24PM (LJ13)

Contact Service Queue Activity Report (by Interval)

7/16/2010 12:00:00 AM - 7/16/2010 11:59:00 PM

Interval = 60 min

* Calls Hand < SL: calls handled within service level

** Calls Aband < SL: calls abandoned within service level

1. Service Level for Handled Calls Only : (Calls Handled Within Service Level/ Calls Handled) * 100%

2. Service Level without Abandoned Calls Counted: (Calls Handled Within Service Level / (Calls Presented - Calls Abandoned Within Service Level))*100%

3. Service Level with Abandoned Calls Counted Positively: ((Calls Handled Within Service Level + Calls Abandoned Within Service Level) / Calls Presented) * 100%

4. Service Level with Abandoned Calls Counted Negatively: (Calls Handled Within Service Level / Calls Presented) * 100%

Interval Start Time	Interval End Time	CSO Name (Call Skills)	Service Level (sec)	Calls Hand < SL*	Calls Aband < SL**	Percentage of Service Level Met				Calls Presented	Calls Handled	Calls Abandoned	Calls Dequeued	
						Only ¹ Handled	Without ² Abandon	Positive ³ Abandon	Negative ⁴ Abandon					
7/16/2010 10:00:00AM	7/16/2010 11:00:00AM	ml_reservation_ csq (ml_reservation_s k)	180	195	8	97.5%	97.0%	97.1%	93.3%	209	200	95.7%	8 3.8%	1 0.5%
7/16/2010 10:00:00AM	7/16/2010 11:00:00AM	ml_reservation_ span_csq (ml_reservation_s pan_sk)	180	7	0	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	7	7	100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Summary:				621	22	95.5%	95.0%	95.1%	91.9%	676	650	96.2%	23 3.4%	3 0.4%
7/16/2010 11:00:00AM	7/16/2010 12:00:00PM	ml_cust_svc_csq (ml_cust_svc_sk)	180	38	2	88.4%	88.4%	88.9%	84.4%	45	43	95.6%	2 4.4%	0 0.0%
7/16/2010 11:00:00AM	7/16/2010 12:00:00PM	ml_dispatch_csq (ml_dispatch_sk)	180	300	32	92.6%	92.0%	92.7%	83.8%	358	324	90.5%	32 8.9%	2 0.6%
7/16/2010 11:00:00AM	7/16/2010 12:00:00PM	ml_dispatch_spa n_csq (ml_dispatch_spa n_sk)	180	7	1	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	87.5%	8	7	87.5%	1 12.5%	0 0.0%
7/16/2010 11:00:00AM	7/16/2010 12:00:00PM	ml_reservation_ csq (ml_reservation_s k)	180	83	26	45.9%	44.4%	51.2%	39.0%	213	181	85.0%	29 13.6%	3 1.4%
7/16/2010 11:00:00AM	7/16/2010 12:00:00PM	ml_reservation_ span_csq (ml_reservation_s pan_sk)	180	10	0	83.3%	83.3%	83.3%	83.3%	12	12	100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Summary:				438	61	77.2%	76.2%	78.5%	68.9%	636	567	89.2%	64 10.1%	5 0.8%

All times are server time.

Report generated: 8/15/2010 4:31:05PM (LJ13)

Attachment I
Screen Prints of Key Scheduling
System Parameter Settings

Properties



Profile | System

- ... Stamp Provider on Save
- ... Stop Activation
- ... Sync Neg with Sch times
- ... Sync Neg/Sch with Req times
- ... Sync Sch with Neg times
- ... Tolerance - Apply to Dropoff
- ... Tolerance - Dropoff Early
- ... Tolerance - Dropoff Late
- ... **Tolerance - Pickup Early**
- ... Tolerance - Pickup Late
- User Breaks
- Personal Trip Planner

Tolerance - Pickup Early

15

Minimal value is 0.
Maximal value is 24h00.

OK

Apply

Default

Cancel

Max OBT Factors



ParaService

From OBT

ReqDOAdj:

Factor

MaxOBT

MaxReqDOAdj:

ReqDoAdj Feeder:

ReqDOEtAdj:

Close

Add

Cancel

Edit

Save

Delete

ParaService	From OBT	Factor	MaxOBT	ReqDoAdj	ReqDOAd..
HOU	20	3.25	1h05	1.65	0.00
HOU	22	3.11	1h10	1.55	0.00
HOU	25	3.00	1h15	1.45	0.00
HOU	28	2.89	1h20	1.35	0.00
HOU	30	2.83	1h25	1.25	0.00
HOU	34	2.63	1h30	1.15	0.00
HOU	36	2.63	1h30	1.10	0.00
HOU	39	2.46	1h35	1.10	0.00
HOU	40	2.46	1h35	1.10	0.00
HOU	43	2.33	1h40	1.10	0.00
HOU	46	2.28	1h45	1.10	0.00
HOU	48	2.28	1h50	1.10	0.00
HOU	50	2.32	1h56	1.10	0.00
HOU	54	2.30	2h04	1.10	0.00
HOU	1h00	2.20	2h12	1.10	0.00



**Attachment J METROLift Capital
Replacement Plan (FY 2010–2016)**

METROLift Van Fleet Ages

	FY 2010 Age			FY 2011 Age			FY 2012 Age			FY 2013 Age			FY 2014 Age			FY2015 Age			FY2016 Age		
METROLIFT 2005	118	649	5.5	59	383.5	6.5															
METROLIFT 2005	-59	(324.5)	5.5	-59	-383.5	6.5															
METROLIFT 2010				59	88.5	1.5	59	147.5	2.5	59	206.5	3.5	20	90	4.5						
METROLIFT 2010							59	88.5	1.5	59	147.5	2.5	59	206.5	3.5	40	180	4.5			
METROLIFT 2010										-39	-136.5	3.5	-20	-90	4.5	-40	-180	4.5			
METROLIFT 2010													-19	-66.5	3.5						
METROLIFT 2013													39	58.5	1.5	39	97.5	2.5	39	136.5	3.5
METROLIFT 2013																			-39	-136.5	3.5
METROLIFT 2014																39	58.5	1.5	39	97.5	2.5
METROLIFT 2015																			40	60	1.5
2010 Transit Purchase (59)	59	29.5	0.5	59	29.5	0.5															
2011 No Transit Purchase																					
2012 No Transit Purchase																					
2013 Transit Purchase (39)									39	19.5	0.5										
2014 Transit Purchase (39)												39	19.5	0.5							
2015 Transit Purchase (40)															40	20	0.5				
2016 Transit Purchase (39)																			39	19.5	0.5
Total	118	354	3.0	118	118	1.0	118	236	2.0	118	237	2.0	118	218	1.8	118	176	1.5	118	177	1.5

Attachment K
Ridership Estimates Based on National TCRP
Demand Estimation Model

TCRP Project B-28
Estimation Tool for ADA Complementary Paratransit Demand

Input Values for Houston Metro

ADA service area population (2000 Census)	3,004,334
Base fare for ADA paratransit (Dollars)	\$1.15
Percent of applicants for ADA paratransit eligibility found conditionally eligible	2.3
Conditional trip determination	0
Percent of the population in the ADA service area in households with 1999-2000 income below the poverty line	11.1
Effective on-time window for ADA paratransit (minutes)	15

Results

Predicted Annual Ridership per Capita	1.88
Predicted Annual Ridership	5,650,983

Confidence Intervals for Mean Value for Systems with the Characteristics Entered

	Trips per Capita	Annual Ridership
Upper 95% confidence limit	3.46	10,383,427
Upper 90% confidence limit	3.11	9,351,743
Lower 90% confidence limit	1.14	3,414,722
Lower 95% confidence limit	1.02	3,075,440