



Metro Transit Aira Pilot Project Update

TAAC Meeting – Jan. 5, 2022

Bre Grand
Project Manager, Transit Information

Background

- Lack of wayfinding is a known customer pain point and particularly impacts blind and low vision customers
 - Safety challenges
 - Challenges identifying boarding locations, especially at places with many stops
- TIC Reps provide live assistance, but cannot video chat or see current street conditions (tools such as Google Street View are helpful, but can be outdated)
- There is a need to provide accessible, reliable, real-time wayfinding information for blind/low vision customers

Aira Overview

- On-demand wayfinding and navigation assistance for blind and low vision customers
- Through an app, uses device's audio/video and connects customers to a trained agent who provides real-time guidance
- Service has been used by other local agencies and transit agencies (MSP, City of Minneapolis, MBTA)

Aira Pilot: June 2021 – March 2022

- Pilot period is underway and will allow us to test and evaluate the service
- Metro Transit customers can use Aira for entire transit trip for free
- Current Aira users receive push notifications at large stations/facilities (such as Mall of America)

Stakeholder Engagement & Feedback

- User feedback will be critical for evaluating the service
- Two primary approaches for gathering input: virtual focus groups and online survey
 - Focus groups before and after pilot period with small groups
 - Electronic survey to be more widely distributed

Evaluation & Recommendation

- Project team will develop evaluation report
 - Review responses from focus groups and surveys
 - Analyze monthly metrics reports
- Team will recommend whether to extend service for another year and pursue future funding

Spreading the Word – Marketing & Media

- The pilot has been promoted through various methods:
 - Content developed for organizations (such as Vision Loss Resources, State Services for the Blind) to distribute through their communication channels
 - Riders' Almanac post, Connect article
 - Star Tribune story
 - Social media
 - Annunciator messages
 - KFAI Disability and Progress radio show
 - Aira communication channels (Explorer's call, social media)

Current Status

- Highest use of our Aira offer occurred during summer and early fall
- Average number of Aira sessions – 30 per month
- Approximately 20 unique users so far

Questions?