

Two agencies feel the Spirit of Mobility

MAX and CitiBus are sold on the ARBOC low-floor concept



Citibus, Lubbock, TX, choose ARBOC for its versatility to transport at least four wheelchair passengers.

Already sold on the low-floor concept, transit agencies in Lubbock, TX, and Holland, MI, have adopted the ARBOC Spirit of Mobility as their preferred paratransit vehicle. These agencies say their passengers appreciate the low-floor design because it allows them greater control of their transit experience.

CitiAccess, the paratransit arm of Citibus, Lubbock, TX, has been using low-floor vehicles of one brand or another since 1992. CitiBUs general manager John Wilson says low-trans buses employed during that time proved bigger and bulkier than what he really wanted.

“We were always on the lookout for a low-floor vehicle to accommodate our wheelchair passengers in the smallest vehicle we could possibly find for the lowest possible price,” he says.

“We wanted to make it easier on the driver and the passengers to get in and out of the tight driveways and entrances we encounter with this type of service.”

He says CitiAccess went to low-floor in the first place to ease the loading of passengers without having to manipulate a standard lift.

“An operator loses a lot of time doing that, and time is money,” says Wilson. “A driver’s time is expensive when he isn’t moving passengers to where they need to be on time,” he says. “It reduces our costs to operate when the driver moves more people per hour.”

Wilson says Citibus was thrilled to come across ARBOC Spirit of Mobility at the 2008 APTA Expo in San Diego, CA. After his first look he arranged for a demo model.

“We put it in service in Lubbock for two months,” says Wilson. “Some of our biggest critics, both regular and wheelchair passengers, see the ARBOC as a tremendous improvement in service.”

He says CitiBus was going to buy the demo model no matter what. But he did write up all the items and issues he would like changed before agreeing to buy another 15 vehicles.

ARBOC worked to accommodate CitiAccess with the best configuration. The Spirit of Mobility has four tie-downs and room for eight passengers and can gain more seats with the additional flip-up seat option.

“Our wheelchair passengers really appreciate the low windows,” says Wilson. “They get a great view without wishing they were in a regular seat.”

The Macatawa Area Express Transportation Authority (MAX), Holland, MI, has been running low-floor Blue Bird transit buses on fixed routes since 2005. ARBOC introduced MAX to the Spirit of Mobility in 2008.

“We and a state transportation official looked it over,” says MAX director Linda LeFebre. “We quickly realized how the low-floor throughout would remove barriers for wheelchair passengers who always have issues maneuvering on and off the buses.”

She says if left to the customers who first rode the Spirit of Mobility, the agency would run nothing but this low-floor vehicle.

MAX has since jumped on board with five ARBOC buses and has ordered six more for delivery by December to replace the aging Blue Birds.

“We are on our way,” says LeFebre. “It takes awhile to get older buses cycled through, to secure the funding and take care of all the procurement details.”

LeFebre says ARBOC buses are in service for demand-response, but MAX has dedicated one of the five to a deviated fixed-route that permits pick-ups up to three-quarter of a mile off the main route for passengers who call in advance.

“This is working out very well,” she says. “We may try more in the future if we see a need.”

LeFebre says MAX passengers are very happy to see the agency phasing out transit buses with steps. **BR**



The lift lowers for a MAX customer. MAX says the Spirit of Mobility allows passengers greater control over their transit experience.