



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes: April 1, 2019

Attendees

Present: Denise Rush (Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (Second Vice-Chair), Carolyn Bellamy, Tino Calabria, Charlie Crawford, Melanie Jackson, Steven Kaffen, Phillippa Mezile, Mary Kay McMahon, Doris Ray, Paul Semelfort, and Patrick Sheehan. Remote Participation – Phil Posner

Call to Order

Second Vice-Chair Ariza-Silva called the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Approval of Agenda, Board Report, and Prior Meeting Minutes

The meeting agenda was approved as modified to add an update on the decision for MetroAccess sedans.

The February 4, 2019, meeting minutes were approved.

The March 4, 2019, meeting minutes were approved.

The Board Report was approved.

MetroAccess Sedans Update:

Christiaan Blake, Acting Assistant General Manager, Access Service, provided an update about the sedan chosen for the MetroAccess fleet. The decision was to add 175 Chevy Malibu hybrid sedans over the next 12 to 18 months, with the first vehicles possibly expected in October. He added that the feedback received by the committee and customers was a large part of the decision-making process.

Mr. Blake stated there is also a possibility of changing the seat configuration on some current MetroAccess vans to provide more interior spacing. The long seats could be removed and replaced with the side-facing seats. On Metrobus and Metrorail, the priority seats are side-facing seats. A similar configuration on MetroAccess vans will provide more interior space and comfortable seats at the appropriate heights. There are 111 vans in the fleet that can be candidates for this type of reconfiguration. Mr. Blake asked the committee to think about this matter, discuss, and provide feedback in a future MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting. Mr. Semelfort stated the van modification can be discussed in the MAS Meeting in the month of May.

Dr. Posner stated a hand-rail over the door is lacking on the Chevy Malibu, therefore, recommends WMATA to investigate installing it, and to look at removing of the front seat. Mr. Blake noted about the hand-rail, that type of modification can be reviewed after the procurement process is complete since these are off the lot vehicles. In reference to the idea of removing the front passenger seat, Mr. Blake stated that is far more unlikely. He added that he has talked with former colleagues; observed the use of sedans in Baltimore;

had testimony from taller customers, and have concluded, for now, that there is value to keeping the front seat as opposed to removing it. Mr. Blake advised the committee to continue to advocate for the removal of the front seat if they feel strongly about it.

Second Vice-Chair Ariza-Silva recommended to review the seat height and fabric for MetroAccess sedans. Fabric seats do not allow customers to move/adjust easily, whereas leather seats provide some ease. Mr. Blake stated the material of the seats was being reviewed.

Vice-Chair Rush stated she cannot ride a sedan unless she is seated in the front seat. Ms. Ray strongly supported Ms. Rush, and stated people with back injuries and various mobility problems may need the front seat. She supports leather seats as they will be easier to clean as well. She also stated that is very important for the seats to have lumbar support.

Platform Improvement Project:

James Hamre, Director, Bus Service Planning and Scheduling, presented information about Metro's Platform Improvement Project - Summer 2019. The closure of some of the Blue and Yellow line stations is to repair the current state of platforms that have deteriorated over the years. The concrete repair is a necessary safety project. For effective and efficient repair, stations south of National Airport will be closed from May 25 to September 2, 2019. After the major work, residual repairs will continue until December 2019, while stations remain open from September 2, onwards. Mr. Hamre also informed about the regional network coordination. The local partner agencies have coordinated to provide subsequent service for riders who will be impacted by the station closures this summer. Free shuttles have been planned on various routes for weekdays and weekends with times that place customers at the operating stations for the first and the last trains. Additional bus service has been added to the existing routes throughout the shutdown. Regional Transit Agencies have added bus services to the impacted areas as well. WMATA is also working with the state and regional representatives on various promotions. Personalized alternatives and concise information are part of communication for this project. The WMATA website has a wealth of information for riders in this region. Various modes are adopted to provide notifications to our riding public. WMATA staff will be on hand to provide information to customers before and during the summer shutdown at all impacted stations. At this time, Mr. Hamre invited questions from the AAC members.

Second Vice-Chair Ariza-Silva asked about accessibility of the new platforms. Mr. Hamre stated the intent is to fix or replace as many things possible in the time given. The wind shelters will be replaced and will have stainless steel bus stops. There will be additional facilities with wi-fi. The tiles will be replaced with non-slippery tiles. Bus Shelters will have new lights and electronic signage.

Mr. Calabria asked what does "replacement" mean, does that amount to renovation, to what extent will replacement/renovation result in ADA compliance? Mr. Hamre stated Carol Lopez, Access Review Design Manager, ADAP, ensures everything is ADA

compliant. All the stations are ADA compliant and all the replacements/renovations will be ADA compliant as well.

Mr. Calabria talked about the elevator buttons at stations. Mr. Hamre informed that he cannot speak of the elevator button panel as that would be outside of his realm. Since the beginning date of the summer shutdown is 56 days away from the project, if the specifications were not added by this time, they may not be added.

Vice-Chair Rush asked if a sufficient number of staff will be available to direct people with low vision or vision impairment. Mr. Hamre stated the intent is to have 86 staff a day at stations with a minimum of 4 people working with rail supervisors to provide personal direction at the stations. Travel training is also available. Staff will be available for direct guidance.

Vice-Chair Rush asked if the shuttle buses will be accessible or will there be separate shuttles/buses for customers who use wheelchairs? Mr. Hamre responded both, there will be accessible shuttles and others. There will be 116 transit vehicles in service during the peak-service hours, 220 operators will be engaged in the process. There is going to be a confederation of 7 different operators. We will have low floor transit buses by contractors, some road coaches, and they are all "accessible" which is a technical definition. We plan on having a contractor with MetroAccess like vehicles also to accommodate riders.

Vice-Chair Rush asked if the trip planner will provide detailed updates including information about specific shuttles? Mr. Hamre stated yes, there will be multiple sources of information. If the trip planner or the website work for a customer, it is available. The Office of Customer Information is also available for customers.

Ms. Ray asked about the frequency of the shuttles and the times of service. Mr. Hamre stated during the peak hours, the Blue and Yellow Line shuttles will operator at a frequency of 5 minutes or less. During the off-peak hours, the shuttles will operate at a frequency of 10 minutes or better. The shuttles will operate on the same time span as Metrorail for weekdays and weekends.

Ms. Ray stated it is important to have sufficient bus services in the region (Fairfax County) for various services. Mr. Hamre stated access to all public opportunities will be no worse than today. Midday bus operations will be placed. The King Street station is a major transfer location. By the Landmark shuttle, customers will have an opportunity to get to Metrorail. We have almost doubled the number of shuttles than what we had last year. The contractors would have to set up before the work begins on May 25th. There is a whole public outreach to make the public aware as to what is happening. For example, at the Braddock Road station, bus stops adjacent to the station will have to be relocated, so that the cranes can be situated there. Bus terminal is essential. Mr. Hamre provided brief information about other stations and their setups for the upcoming shutdown.

Second Vice-Chair Ariza-Silva asked about the status of the armrests on the bus shelters and in the wind shelters. Mr. Hamre stated the new bus stop shelters at the Franconia-Springfield Station are staying as stainless-steel since they provide great weather protection. They have integral support. The benches have separators to avoid people from sleeping. Mr. Hamre stated that feedback from the committee is welcome. If we do not catch it all now, we will have ample opportunities to do so later.

Mr. Calabria proposed a motion to add the written draft by Mr. Oberg, in the record, and that the summary be shared with Mr. Hamre and Ms. Lopez to see what could be done to accommodate the recommendations. The AAC had a brief discussion whether the draft needed to be shared at this point of time or later. The motion was passed that the draft will be shared with Mr. Hamre and Ms. Lopez (for informational purposes) and it will be further discussed by the committee in the Bus/Rail Subcommittee (BRS). When the committee comes to an agreement and has a final draft, that could also be shared.

Dr. Posner requested Ms. Lopez to attend the BRS meeting. Mr. Blake agreed to it.

Temporary Signage (Braille): Summer 2019 Platform Improvement Project:

Mr. Hamre asked would Braille on the temporary signage be useful and where? He stated if we do not prepare for it now, then it will not be included. Mr. Blake clarified that this was an idea by one of their colleagues.

Mark Bowman, Communications and Outreach Group, relayed one of the partners stated it might be useful to have Braille signage for the temporary signage. WMATA has not done this in past and they were here to take feedback from the committee as they are in the process of creating signage and would like to get feedback, if any.

Dr. Posner stated for everyone who will communicate with the public, it will be very useful for them to have the white-boards. The pre-prepared cards possibly in raised letters may be helpful for people with low vision. For communication purposes, it is easier to have writing materials. Mr. Hamre stated the white-boards are part of the inventory. He asked if the recommendation was for a handout or signs? If there is a central point to have information that will be helpful, he will be happy to see what can be done to accommodate.

Ms. Ray supported Dr. Posner's comment and stated there needs to be accommodations for people with hearing and vision impairment. If there is signage for sighted people, it needs to have raised signage, Braille will be better. Information on cards, may not be helpful. Mr. Hamre stated these are all good suggestions, however, he was not sure how we raise letters and/or Braille at all signs. We will have staff on hand to provide verbal guidance and physical assistance. We are ensuring that all signs are high contrast, in large letters, and visible. It will be incorporated with all materials. Though all of these signs will be also visible under low lighting, there will be sufficient lighting.

Ms. Ray asked if there will be sandwiched boards? Mr. Hamre stated yes, there are going to be sandwiched boards, mounted posters, bus stop posters, and wavy flags as they tend to catch more attention. There will be a host of different modes of giving information.

Ms. Ray stated the sandwich boards may not be helpful for people with vision impairment. She also asked if bus bays will be similar to the ones on the south side at the Vienna station? In bright sunlight, the way these bus bays are constructed, the whole white on white environment (silver metal), one is unable to see the contrast. Mr. Hamre stated none of these bus stops will have the canopy as do the bus stops at Vienna Station. Ms. Ray stated the old bus bays had contrast. Mr. Hamre stated he will challenge the design team to see what can be done about the contrast that existed on the old bus bays.

Public Comment:

A customer thanked the staff for speaking with his sister about her concerns that were brought forth in the last meeting. The customer asked about the color of the sedans, and public restrooms being accessible at Metrorail stations, and stated the temporary restroom at the Southern Avenue station was not accessible.

Mr. Blake stated the sedans will be white in color and will have MetroAccess markings. Concerning the restrooms, not all restrooms are technically public restrooms within the Metrorail stations. The older Metro stations were not designed with public restrooms. The newer stations are designed with accessible public restrooms. Some of the restrooms in the older stations have been modified and have been made accessible. Mr. Blake's office received a complaint about a temporary restroom at a station, where a contractor used a non-accessible portable restroom. Mr. Blake stated he is working with his colleagues to ensure that we use temporary restrooms that are wheelchair accessible going forward.

Bus/Rail Subcommittee (BRS) Report:

Mr. Calabria asked the committee to provide their comments on the BRS Meeting Minutes approval. Since the minutes will be approved in the next BRS meeting, there was no further discussion.

Other Items:

Dr. Posner recommended for Mr. Calabria to discuss the open gangways. Mr. Calabria talked about it, gave background as to how the discussion came about; it was after 2 incidents involving customers with visual disabilities. Mr. Calabria also shared information about the other transit agencies that are considering the open gangways.

Mr. Kaffen offered to provide an update on the Bus Transportation Project. Dr. Posner mentioned about his email with updates about the Bus Transportation Project and that the information is also available on the website for anyone to access.

Mr. Sheehan asked with respect to the open gangway trains, have we had a discussion from WMATA? Are we at a spot where we can respond to WMATA? The committee has not endorsed the open gangways. Mr. Crawford stated given the fact with new information available from the Washington Post article, the reasons why it cannot be accommodated does not hold true any longer. If it is something that can be done and is useful, then we should consider. Dr. Posner stated we can motion for someone from WMATA to come and give a full presentation on the status versus receiving information

from the Washington Post. Mr. Sheehan asked what accessibility are we trying to gain by open gangway trains that is important for the committee for consider this point? Mr. Calabia stated we can discuss it at the BRS meeting.

Ms. Ray hopes to take up the issue of signage on Metrorail trains immediately. Ms. Ray shared her experience of boarding a wrong train line due to inadequate exterior electronic train signs. She recommends having this on the work plan.

Mr. Calabia stated about open gangway matter, we reported it to the WMATA Board. Dr. Posner stated it is mentioned in the minutes that the "recommendation be given". When the General Manager/Chief Executive Officer (GM/CEO) came, we talked about it and he had stated the consideration was given, but it was not a viable alternative. We would request for the GM/CEO to come back and tell us if now it is a viable alternative since there is new information available. Mr. Sheehan stated we had a discussion with WMATA, and he wondered if the AAC is at a point where we can discuss the open gangway trains. Mr. Sheehan stated there is a difference about what we personally prefer, versus what the committee recommends. Mr. Crawford supported Mr. Sheehan and stated new information available to the AAC is by the Washington Post article. It is advisable for the AAC to ask WMATA to reconsider the open gangways. Mr. Crawford proposed the motion, seconded by Ms. Ray, the motion carried.

MetroAccess Subcommittee Report:

Mr. Semelfort proposed a motion for approval of the revised MAS agenda. The revised agenda was approved for the meeting on April 15, 2019. Mr. Semelfort stated the prior meeting minutes state there were 3 members who did not vote, the members did vote, but not in favor of the sedans, therefore, the prior minutes will be amended.

Mr. Semelfort provided the 2 proposed dates for workshops, and he thanked Mr. Blake for providing answers to the Request for Purchase (RFP) questions from the Abilities-Ride Program. He asked about the representative who is to provide his comments for the agenda topic of MetroAccess refunds. Mr. Blake stated he will be providing information about the MetroAccess refunds, and that it has been brought to the attention of the Board.

Mr. Calabia asked if the AAC advises the WMATA Board or the staff? Dr. Posner stated the AAC advises the Board. The Board depends on the professionals they hire. The Board has listened to us and took our advisement into consideration in past, but they will always go and listen to the staff (experts) and then make a final decision.

ADA Appeals Training:

Anu Sharma, Accessibility Advisory Committee Coordinator, proposed a few dates for the ADA Appeals training. The training must be attended by all new members and is open to any member who has not had the training in the past 5 years. Further communication about proposed dates will take place via email correspondence.

Bus Transportation Project Update:

Mr. Kaffen talked about a draft which will be distributed to the public on May 6th. There will be a questionnaire/survey. Initially the survey did not have open ended questions. By the end of July, the modified questions will be presented.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.