



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes: December 2, 2019

Attendees

Present: Denise Rush (Acting Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (Acting Vice-Chair), Darnise Bush, Tino Calabia, Vanessa Coles, Charlie Crawford, Rico Dancy, Melanie Jackson, Steve Kaffen, Mary Kay McMahon, Phillipa Mezile, Doris Ray, Paul Semelfort, Patrick Sheehan, and Phil Posner (Remote Participation)

Call to Order

Acting-Chair Rush called the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Approval of Agenda, Board Report, and Prior Meeting Minutes

Acting-Chair Rush welcomed everyone and started with introductions of the Committee members.

The Meeting Agenda was approved.

The October 7, 2019 Meeting Minutes were not approved during the November meeting due to an objection to content by Ms. Ray. She was to provide edits to the AAC Coordinator, which she did not, therefore the October 7, 2019 Meeting Minutes were approved as written.

The November 4, 2019 Meeting Minutes were approved as written.

The Board Report was approved as amended. Ms. Ray proposed more information be added to the Open-Stroller Policy section of the report. Mr. Calabia recommended to change the time of DC Circulator policy. Ms. Bush recommended to include the priorities and the permitted stroller size.

Meet & Greet Session with Chief of Safety

Theresa Impastato, Chief of Safety, attended the AAC meet and greet session. She joined Metro in August 2019, from New Jersey where she was employed with Amtrak as the Deputy Chief of Safety. Prior to that, she worked with New Jersey's Light-Rail System. Chief Impastato is thrilled to be here and is looking forward to working in collaboration with Metro teams, as well as WMATA's advisory committees. Chief Impastato invited questions from the Committee. Acting Chair Rush asked if she is the Chief of Safety for the entire WMATA system. Chief Impastato confirmed that she oversees the entire WMATA jurisdiction.

Ms. Ray asked about the policy and procedures that the bus operators are to follow in a disruptive situation. She also asked about procedures for a threatful situation to the operator and/or passengers with and without a variety of disabilities. Ms. Ray described an incident that occurred while she and other riders were aboard a bus. Chief Impastato responded she oversees the safety of bus, rail, and MetroAccess. She also employs a

Deputy Chief who is designated to oversee Metrobus and MetroAccess' safety. There are teams of safety officers engaged in responding to reports of incidents and conducting investigations and they would be intimately familiar with the policies specifically to Ms. Ray's inquiry. Chief Impastato was not familiar with the specifics of the incident described by Ms. Ray, but ensured that she would research the incident and provide an update to the Committee.

Ms. Coles repeated an incident regarding a MetroAccess ride that occurred last month that was also shared during November's MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) Meeting. Ms. Cole stated that she was taken to her destination, however she had inaccurate information regarding the location. She exited the van and had no place to go until the time she could be picked up. The driver of the van was willing to let her re-board the vehicle, however the dispatcher informed her another vehicle would be sent instead. Ms. Cole viewed this as a safety concern. Chief Impastato stated she will review the policy and discuss it with the providers. Ms. Coles also shared an experience of a MetroAccess rider who was touched by another MetroAccess rider traveling from the ARC. Chief Impastato stated her team will investigate and review the policy.

Acting-Chair Rush asked for clarification of the policy. To her knowledge, if a customer exits the vehicle, the wait time is an hour before a vehicle can be sent for pickup. Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services, stated we are public transportation and there is a rule between the time a customer must wait from a drop off to the next trip, and that is at-least an hour. If a customer happens to be dropped off at a destination that is closed, but MetroAccess took the customer to the destination at the requested time, it is not a requirement that MetroAccess take the customer right back home. If that courtesy was extended, that trip would be reviewed to determine why a driver did that. Ms. Coles stated she was willing to ride with the driver to the next destination. Mr. Blake clarified there are many other factors. The driver may have a pick up of a customer traveling with a personal care attendant (PCA) and 2 companions, for example. Ms. Coles stated there are people with intellectual disabilities and there may be some legal ramifications. Mr. Blake stated in the case of a customer with intellectual disabilities, if the scenario described occurs, during the first instance we are going to show some of the courtesy that Ms. Coles referred to, probably by having a Road Supervisor come to the scene and wait with the customer. This will not be a regular occurrence. If the person needs that kind of assistance, then the person will be required to travel with a PCA.

As for the incident that Ms. Coles mentioned about a person with intellectual disability touching another person, creating a very uncomfortable situation, that falls under our abusive behavior policy. If during the investigation it is found that the accusation is accurate, we will contact the customer's guardian, stake holders and others who are involved in that individual's transportation planning, informing them of the outcome. Depending on the seriousness of the incident they will get a warning, immediate suspension, or they be required to travel with a PCA.

Mr. Sheehan stated the waiver for the emergency exercise should be eliminated as it prevents the AAC members from participating. Regarding the incidents of MetroAccess customers traveling to and from the ARC and other destinations, he asked about the procedure and what can be done to improve the follow-up communication with the person lodging the complaint, can they request an update as that is important. Mr. Blake stated the customer lodging the complaint can request an update. At the same time, we are careful with the amount of information we give. Every customer is treated equally, unless behavior shows us differently. MetroAccess will not engage in pre-behavior discrimination for anybody. We are not going to assume the person with an intellectual disability cannot behave properly on public transportation, however, appropriate actions will be taken for any customer who engages in certain behavior.

There are things that we are doing to make the service more efficient. As you know with the Abilities-Ride, we are starting with a couple of human service agencies as those trips are often described more of school trips in nature rather than transportation trips. It was recommended to discuss this matter at the MAS meeting.

Mr. Sheehan asked about the first part of his comments regarding the reporting process when there is an incident involving a customer; the incident will be reported in writing, an investigation will take place, and then they would be informed of the investigation findings. Mr. Blake stated that is correct. Depending upon the severity of the incident, the outcome could be a warning or a suspension of two to four weeks, and perhaps a requirement that the person with intellectual disability travels with a PCA.

Regarding the periodic emergency exercises, Mr. Blake stated there is a waiver that covers personal injury. He also stated it is important to get the Committee's feedback. He clarified the Committee is asking that the waiver policy be reviewed with a written response. However, it is not just the decision of the Chief of Safety as General Counsel also has a role in that decision. Chief Impastato stated she will review the waiver policy and noted that the emergency exercises identify many oversights in our planning. She echoed Mr. Blake's thoughts of the importance of the Committee's participation on various facets, and that it is critical to identify these issues.

Mr. Calabria asked about the relationship of the Office of Chief of Safety and other levels of governments, particularly the Federal government. Chief Impastato stated the regulatory changes happened in 2016 are now coming into effect. The Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC) was formed earlier in 2019 and received certification from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). They are the independent designated body that oversees Metro's state of safety. We work with them to identify issues, they report to jurisdictions, they have an authorizing compact and they report up to the FTA. She meets with them informally up-to twice monthly and formally exchanges information. They are active on social media and are extremely responsive, as is Metro.

Mr. Ariza-Silva stated his concerns of riding Metro at certain times of the day and inquired about increased presence of police officers. Chief Impastato shared her actions on this matter; she has had discussions with the Chief of Metro Police, to familiarize herself of

the protocol of inspection and the law enforcement and was very pleased with her discovery with patrols. We also partner with agencies, we receive Department of Homeland Security (DHS) funds to improve safety, we also have non-uniformed presence. We have very mature protocols and she personally felt very comfortable. If Police Officers in uniform are not visible that does not mean that we are not following safety protocols. There are non-uniform Police Officers through-out the system. Mr. Crawford asked would some safety issues go away as they get dealt with or is it that some issues would not change. Chief Impastato stated identifying risk before it is realized and eliminating it before it happens is important. Unfortunately, most of the incidents are realized incidents, meaning an incident has occurred, an investigation is provided, corrective actions for the realized incident are determined as well as preventive measures for future references. That is an accurate descriptor of where we are as an industry and where Metro is as an agency. That is a good starting point, but it is unacceptable and unsustainable on the long term. We need to pivot as an agency and as a larger industry towards proactive identification of risk and vulnerability, and appointment of engineering solutions to engineer out and eliminate those solutions. In the event we are incapable of doing so, we need robust and flexible procedures that will enable us to reduce the risk before it is realized. Her expectation is that over her tenure here we will work to invert the ratio of corrected realized risks to identified eliminated risks. Currently, most of our risk mitigation efforts are realized, and they have been corrected. The minority are proactively identified and eliminated. It is her goal over her tenure here, to flip that ratio.

Acting-Chair Rush thanked Chief Impastato for coming and invited her to future meetings. Chief Impastato thanked the Committee and she looks forward to a re-visit.

New Faregates Display and Introduction

Terri Anomnachi, Project Manager, Capital Funds, thanked the Committee members for participating in the faregates demonstration and for providing feedback which will be used to make the best faregates possible. Carol Peredo Lopez, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, thanked Ms. Anomnachi for going above and beyond for making it possible for the Committee members to participate in the demonstration and be able to provide their feedback. Ms. Anomnachi invited questions and feedback from the Committee.

Ms. Coles asked about the size of the faregates. Ms. Anomnachi stated the size demonstrated would be the size installed. Due to various constraints such as the existing infrastructure to fit enough faregates in the system and the fire codes for emergency egress, it is a great challenge to change the width of the faregates as we jeopardize other regulatory requirements for the implementation. Acting Vice-Chair Ariza-Silva stated the ADA faregate was wider. Ms. Mezile commented about the sounds of the alarms. Ms. Anomnachi stated the sounds can be shared with the Committee with a vote at a later meeting. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated part of the faregates are slightly wider due to some of the indentations by the gates. Ms. Bush recommended to have the Braille at both the touch points. Ms. Anomnachi will take this recommendation to her team.

Ms. Jackson stated the lights indicating direction of the faregates, are very useful. Mr. Crawford thanked Ms. Anomnachi for the demonstration and asked if the faregates close

on a person or an object, would they retract. Ms. Anomnachi stated the safety feature has significantly increased. If the gates start to close and if it detects something in a zone, it will automatically retract and not close and the alarm will sound. The second part is the advanced high and low sensors, with an increased number from currently four to 38 in the new faregates. Ms. Anomnachi thanked the Committee for having her at the meeting. She thanked the Committee members for their participation, and for inviting her back to the next meeting to share the sounds of faregates alarm.

Proclamation Honoring Emeritus Member: Carolyn Bellamy

Mr. Calabria had previously shared a draft of the Proclamation to the Committee. Acting-Chair Rush provided an obituary that had additional information. There was a discussion about the Proclamation regarding who would it be read by and presented to. Mr. Calabria stated the recommendation was to be Proclaimed by the Committee, signed by Acting Chair Rush, issued on December 3rd - the designated day for the Persons with Disabilities, and to be shared with WMATA Board. Acting Chair Rush stated it might be too early. Ms. Ray referred the Proclamation to be presented by the WMATA Board and recognized in January 2020. Ms. Mezile stated Mayors offer Proclamations and Councils issue resolution, thus the AAC needs to identify proper terminology. Anu Sharma, AAC Coordinator, ADAP, clarified that the Proclamation was to be drafted, discussed, and finalized by the AAC to be presented to the Board along with the Board Report.

Mr. Crawford proposed the AAC adopts the statement recommended by Chair Posner to which Mr. Calabria has a blue-print. Acting-Chair Rush and Ms. Ray assist in completing it, then we adopt that Proforma, and then we recommend it to the Board by Chair Posner that they entertain the notion of having a Proclamation from WMATA. The motion carried.

Mr. Sheehan spoke in front of the Board as a citizen and asked them to move some of the issues that were dear to Ms. Bellamy as she referred to MetroAccess customers as “my people!” Acting-Chair Rush stated Ms. Bellamy trained MetroAccess drivers, taught them sensitivity, and told them what to expect on the road. She worked with various companies and tried to fix things even on her own time as she stood by what she believed in. Ms. Bellamy did many things for the entire Transportation System. The dedication followed by a silent prayer for Ms. Bellamy and her family.

Public Comment:

A customer stated the issue of “Grandfathering” and the rising costs were big issues for Ms. Bellamy. She stated the negative impact of open-stroller policy on Metrobuses.

The second customer shared information about an upcoming meeting for the Bus Transportation Project (BTP) meeting.

Ms. Bush shared her views on the open stroller pilot. She recommended to include items such as stroller policy, e-scooters, and carts, in the Board Report.

The third customer stated his concerns: MetroAccess reservations window time of 90 minutes, information flow, follow up, accountability, and attitudes of WMATA staff. Acting-

Chair Rush stated differences in the AAC meetings versus the Board meetings. In the Board meeting customers can make statements without being acknowledged or being answered. In the AAC meetings, customers are acknowledged and receive answers even if they may not like the responses. She provided an example of unresolved issues, such as the waiver of the emergency exercises that was talked about a few years ago.

Kirti Suri, Office of Council Member Robert White shared some updates. A complaint was sent to District Department of Transportation (DDOT) expressing concerns about the dock-less scooters. A response is awaited. Her office held a round table on policing practices of Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) with communities of color. Chief Pavlik was present and had many public testimonies. This will be a continuing conversation. On December 3, 2019, the DC Council will be voting on proposed appointment of WMATA Board of Directors. The Council has proposed Stephanie Giggidby, there was a public nomination on her name last week. Council Member White is very pleased with Ms. Giggidby's qualifications and looks forward to her appointment to WMATA Board.

Mr. Kaffen recommended for DDOT to quickly issue guidance (even if preliminary) for e-scooters users on their website since currently there is no information. Mr. Sheehan stated the guidelines from DDOT should be consistent with the AAC recommendations.

Ms. Bush shared her continuous complaint about MetroAccess shared rides and expects a follow up. Acting-Chair Rush asked if she reported the incident. Ms. Bush stated she will follow the protocol of lodging the complaint.

Bus/Rail Subcommittee (BRS) Report:

Bus/Rail Subcommittee Chair Calabria provided his report from the November Bus/Rail Subcommittee Meeting. The drafts of the handbook have been worked on and would be shared with the Riders Advisory Council (RAC) on December 4, 2019. On December 12, a final version will be shared with the Board during the Board of Directors Meeting.

MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) Report:

MetroAccess Subcommittee Chair Semelfort provided his report including the topics discussed in the meeting. Mr. Blake stated Silver Cab will be at the December MAS meeting. Mr. Semelfort invited customers to attend that meeting to voice their concerns.

Policy Adjustment:

Mr. Blake shared a policy adjustment that Metro has made. Earlier this year, there was a member of this Committee who attended a public hearing and there was no interpreter. Since then, we have had a policy of having an interpreter present. Now, for the Board Meetings in particular, a person who is in need to have an interpreter, needs to inform us ahead of the time. For the public hearings, we will have the interpreters automatically.

A customer asked how would people know about the change of policy? Mr. Blake stated the policy that required customers needing the interpreter service to notify in advance if they attended the Board Meeting, had been in place for many years and it worked. The

information had been on the website all along as that policy remained. Since the policy changed, the information was removed from the website. Now that the policy is being adjusted, the information will be posted on the website again. Rico Dancy asked what happens if a deaf person shows up and there is no interpreter there. Mr. Blake stated if you know you are coming to the Board Meeting, please contact us and request the interpreter services. The matter will be discussed further at the next AAC meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:30 p.m.