



# AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

### Meeting Minutes: February 4, 2019

#### Attendees

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

#### Call to Order

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

#### Approval of Agenda, Board Report, and Prior Meeting Minutes

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

The meeting agenda was approved as modified. The WMATA budget discussion was added, to be presented by Dennis Anosike, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), WMATA.

#### WMATA Budget:

Mr. Anosike talked about some of the contents of the budget that were released to the Board in November 2018 by Paul Wiedefeld, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer (GM/CEO), WMATA. Since the time of the budget release, the WMATA Board has had several hearings on the budget. Fundamentally, the budget in the aggregate is \$3.4 billion, of which \$1.4 billion is the Capital budget, with the remaining amount being the Operating budget. The Capital budget is focused on safety, system reliability, and improving the customer experience. The Capital budget is also focused on maintaining the system. There are no new project investments in this budget. The focus of the Operating budget is to maintain the current level of service. It does not increase or decrease service, nor does it call for an increase in fares.

The six-year Capital budget program is \$9.3 billion. The first year of the Capital budget program is \$1.4 billion. Among the things that will be done with the \$1.4 billion are replacing MetroAccess vans, improving lights in stations, and rehabbing station platforms across the system, which will impact mainline services significantly as some stations will be closed to facilitate those rehabilitations.

With respect to MetroAccess vans, a quarter of the fleet is replaced every year. In the fiscal year 2020, 220 vans will be replaced. Regarding lighting in stations, there are 54 underground stations and every one of them will receive some lighting improvements. Completion for this long-term project is expected in 2021, and \$200 million is expected to be spent. Rehabilitation of 7000-series railcars is part of the program along with the purchase of the 8000-series railcars. These improvements will help all Metro customers as they will see improvements, and they will have newer and improved rail-cars. In addition to no fare increase and no service cuts, WMATA, per the direction of the

GM/CEO, has promised to enhance the Rush Hour promise to 10 minutes from 15, and to introduce the weekend flat fare of \$2 on Metrorail. There are some proposed passes as well: a new visitor's pass, reduction in cost for the 7-day passes, and unlimited local bus trips at no additional cost to the Metrorail passes.

At this time, Mr. Anosike invited questions from the AAC members.

Mr. Sheehan asked would the weekend flat fare of \$2 on fixed route result weekend flat fare of \$4 for MetroAccess? Mr. Anosike said we would hope so, but the Board must approve, and that may happen around March.

Mr. Kaffen asked how did the \$2 weekend fare originate, and has a revenue cost analysis been done? He added that Metro is fighting for every dollar, and wanted to know what is the net revenue going to be, why in this specific year, and is there any new activity in that net cost? Mr. Anosike stated the package that the GM/CEO proposed is not just about the flat weekend fare of \$2, it is a combination of cost reduction of 7-day pass, introduction of a new visitor's pass, addition of unlimited local bus trips on rail passes amongst other proposals. The analysis was conducted. If proposals are reviewed independently, millions of dollars may be lost. However, the combination may not be not negative or positive, but it may be zero. Mr. Kaffen stated that the passes seem very different than \$2 flat weekend fare, and they target different people.

Vice-Chair Rush stated that even though in the presentation it states there will be no fare increase, there will be a silent increase. She explained that with the extension of rush-hour-service, the rush-hour-fare-duration will increase. That will increase the fare of MetroAccess riders. Mr. Anosike stated that the GM/CEOs proposal is to ask the jurisdictions for additional contribution for extension of rush hour service, and to run 8-car-trains. The Board must act when they approve the budget in March and make the \$4 flat fare of MetroAccess weekend fare.

Ms. Bush asked regarding the process of rehabbing the platform and would trains have the safety mechanism that was asked for before? Mr. Anosike stated monitoring has been done to identify platforms that have to be rehabilitated. It will take more than a year, or two. As for trains, Metro must follow the safety findings as per the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Ms. Ray asked, with respect to the weekend flat fare, will there be any change in the transfer policy? Will there be a weekend flat fare for bus riders? Ms. Ray also asked about restoring or adding bus service during this period, so that bus to bus travel is viable for customers; so that it is frequent enough for a customer to bypass rail service disruptions, for example the upcoming Blue Line shut down during summer. In Northern Virginia a rider could have an option of using buses without having to use Metrorail, but service ends in the early evening hours and is infrequent. There needs to be more inter and intra jurisdictional bus service.

Mr. Anosike stated, with respect to the weekend flat fare, there will not be any reduction to bus fares or transfers. A pass will cost less. In the corridors with platform constructions, bus bridges will be established. There may not be additional bus service. More realigning of bus service may happen. The Office of Bus Planning will continue to evaluate bus service.

Mr. Semelfort asked about passes. Will the cost reduction on the 7-day passes result in cost reduction for the reduced fare passes? Also, what is the feasibility of having a MetroAccess pass? Mr. Anosike confirmed the cost reduction for the reduced fare passes. Currently there is no plan or a discussion for a MetroAccess pass.

Ms. Bellamy asked what happened to the lighting money that was allocated before? Mr. Anosike stated the money was allocated before, however, it was not utilized as the work was not performed thus the money was not received. This year, we plan on getting the work accomplished and expect to utilize 90 to 100% of the money allocated.

Chair Posner asked why MetroAccess riders do not receive rush hour promise on excessive trips, and why is there no discussion for a MetroAccess pass since there are student passes and various recommendations for other passes currently? Mr. Blake stated there cannot be a discount based on time on a van, because the time allowed is outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). He added that MetroAccess had been leading the way in discounts as customers have been receiving late trip credits way before the fixed route "promise". Mr. Anosike stated there has been discussion about the students riding free. The U Pass, for example, is paid by all students whether they use or not. If that is the model the AAC suggests, it can be discussed, however, he did not think that is the model the AAC suggests.

This concluded the presentation and discussion on WMATA budget. Ms. Rush thanked Mr. Anosike for coming.

### **January 7, 2019, Meeting Minutes**

The prior meeting minutes were approved as amended. A correction was for the ADA as it stands: Americans Disabilities Act, not American Disability Act.

### **The Board Report**

The Board Report was approved with adoption of recommendations by Ms. Ray, to the edits presented by Chair Posner. Ms. Ray will email her comments to Chair Posner.

### **Metrorail Announcements Update:**

Donald Goings, Superintendent, Rail Infrastructure and Support Services, and Zaria West, Assistant Superintendent, Rail Operations Information Center, received concerns and provided information about Metrorail Announcements.

Mr. Blake stated the AAC wants to know what can be done about having line and direction announced during the initial dwell time at a station. There is silence for about 5 seconds of dwell time. Can the 7000-series trains announce the line and the direction immediately

as the trains dwell? Also, there are concerns that train operators are not announcing stations with elevator outages. What can be done about these complaints?

Mr. Goings stated we are waiting for these announcements to start at the dwell time. The train operators are trained to wait till the end of the announcements before closing doors. Apparently, that is not happening, and the matter is being reviewed.

Mr. Kaffen stated during non-peak hours, often due to lack of platform activity, announcements get truncated, and there is no standard cut. Have you performed an analysis of what is important for those announcements, for peak vs. non-peak? The recommendation is to conduct full announcements during peak hours and to curtail announcements for non-peak hours. Perhaps the train operators can flip a switch for announcements. Mr. Goings stated that can be reviewed.

Mr. Oberg asked how can the train operators be educated on when is the right time to close doors? Mr. Goings re-iterated that train operators are supposed to wait for the announcements to finish before closing the doors. The quality assurance will audit to ensure the protocol is being followed.

Mr. Sheehan commented about the series and order of announcements. Critical information should come first in the announcements, and the secondary information should come afterwards. Mr. Goings asked whether the AAC would like for him to come back before implementation of any changes? The AAC confirmed that it would like for Mr. Goings to return before implementing changes.

Mr. Ariza-Silva asked how can the riders be made aware of elevator outages? Trains do not announce elevator outage information. Mr. Goings stated the elevator outage announcement should be made, and it will be reviewed by the quality assurance audits.

Mr. Calabria shared information about the focus of the General Manager at the New York Subway concerning the dwell time and the announcements. One of the analysts solved the problem by looking at the running time versus dwell time. Mr. Calabria asked if there is some data for running time between stations in the 80s versus current time? Mr. Goings stated we have adjusted our running time and asked for clarification on what Mr. Calabria stated, if the running time is faster it may help with dwell time. Mr. Calabria stated the New York subway found they were running slower than they did a 100 years ago due to accidents, etc., as we have had in the Metro system. For the New York subway, they are looking to increase the running time, so that it helps with the dwell time. Mr. Goings stated that in Spring and Summer, dwell time will increase as there will be many more visitors, and the ridership will increase.

Chair Posner stated at transfer stations it is critical that the train operators announce train line and destination. Chair Posner emphasized on utilizing the initial 5 seconds.

### **Elevator and Escalator Performance Update:**

Rolando Grimaldi, Assistant General Superintendent, Elevator and Escalator, who is in-charge of maintenance and repair of elevators and escalators, provided an update on the escalator directional configuration. Escalator configurations are pre-set, and work accordingly. If there is a bank of three escalators, the middle escalator direction is changed as per the morning and afternoon rush hours. Mr. Grimaldi also provided availability performance data for the fiscal year thus far. For elevators: the first quarter's availability was 95.4%. The second quarter was on target, at 96.6%, whereas the goal is 96.5%. For the month of January thus far, the availability is at 96.3%, which is a bit below the target, however, and he hopes to have the availability above target by the time this quarter ends on March 31<sup>st</sup>. Thus far, the escalator availability has been on target for the whole fiscal year.

Mr. Calabria recommended elevator outage announcements be made by train operators two stations prior the station with outage. He also recommended to have the information displayed on the Passenger Information Display Systems (PIDS), as well as to have the jumbotrons, which are bigger in size, comparatively to the PIDS, and more information can be displayed on them, to be placed inside and outside the stations.

Mr. Grimaldi stated he has personally heard the elevator outage announcements a few times and is not sure what type of information rail operators receive, and how quickly they are able to get the outage information. However, as soon as they know of an outage, it gets added to the database and almost immediately it gets published on the public page.

Mr. Oberg asked what is the target in getting an out-of-service elevator to be operational? What is the best way for a rider to know that there is an issue with the elevator? Mr. Grimaldi stated if the failure is known, then the outage duration can be known. However, sometimes, until a technician checks the unit and determines the issue, the outage duration may not be known until that time. He provided an example of an elevator that was placed out of service this morning, by a jurisdictional inspector for a missing item. Since they knew the reason of the outage, immediately they also knew the likely duration of that outage and were able to post it immediately.

Mr. Ariza-Silva asked how soon the technician gets information of an elevator outage? This morning at 10 am, he checked on the Dupont Circle elevator and it showed that it was in service. He reached the station sometime after 12 pm and found it was not operational. Mr. Ariza-Silva asked the station manager, and was told the elevator had just went out of service. When he checked the website, the elevator was still not listed as an outage. How quickly can the information be conveyed, so riders have this information available?

Mr. Grimaldi stated the elevator he just mentioned was the one at Dupont Circle. The elevator was reported being out of service, at 12:28pm. At other times, if an elevator is out and no one notified it, the department will not know. Until a station manager informs the elevator department, they do not know of the outage. As an outage is reported, it gets posted in the database, and then it is posted on the public page.

Ms. Ray asked about escalator configuration. In a bank of two, and one escalator is out of service however, and being used as a walker, should the other escalator operate in ascending direction? Mr. Grimaldi confirmed the protocol and stated the return to service dates are estimated and new signs have been ordered, so that more relevant information can be posted for riders. Not only signs, but different kinds of barricades with date and reason of outage will be used in the upcoming months. If a technician does not change the unit direction, station managers have the key and can change it on most escalators. There are a few escalators that cannot switch directions. If a unit has been working in one direction for a long time, it may not work if direction is changed.

Chair Posner stated on several occasions at Metro Center he has experienced that there were two descending escalators, but no ascending escalator. Station managers have told him they are not allowed to change the direction. About the configuration at the Clarendon and the Ballston stations, first escalators are in ascending order and the ones in descending order are the farthest units. Can the direction of those escalators be reversed? Chair Posner also mentioned that the street elevator at the Virginia Square station defaults to platform rather than the street level.

Mr. Grimaldi stated in most of the stations, the first escalator is in the descending direction. At Clarendon and Ballston, Chair Posner is asking for the down escalator to be closer to the turnstiles, and he will look at the configurations. Mr. Grimaldi stated that all the street elevators should default at the street level and that he will review as to why the street elevator at the Virginia Square station is not defaulting to the street level, as it should.

**Public Comment:**

A customer commented about the delayed service received by Regency Cab on Saturday, February 2, 2019. He had requested a cab at 10am. Instead, the ride arrived at 11:40am, and he was dropped off at 12:45pm. The customer stated that the cab company has only 2 accessible vehicles. Mr. Blake asked the customer to provide him with the written testimony that he had, so that his complaint can be provided to the Regency Cab management for review and resolution. For future reference, Mr. Crawford shared information about Anytime Cab, a company that has all accessible vehicles.

A customer who takes multiple MetroAccess trips in a day stated that most of the trips have been late recently. He called the dispatch office to be placed on a watch-list for his trips to be monitored, and he was told there was no such list. The customer also commented about seats on the new MetroAccess vans. It is hard for him to get on the chair and it is hard to adjust. The customer's comments included concern about boarding of one wheelchair on a van, which sometimes causes longer wait times for a ride.

Mr. Blake stated there is no watch-list that is managed by the dispatch office. Based on customer's trip data, Allison Anderson, Operations Manager, and her team will monitor certain customers to determine what is causing trips to be constantly late. He reiterated that there is no special list, and every customer is treated equally.

The new MetroAccess vans can hold 2 wheelchairs, however, it is a difficult proposition, therefore, thus MetroAccess tries to only schedule one wheelchair customer per trip on the van. Ms. Anderson will follow up with the customer.

Rico Dancy, National Black Deaf Advocates, asked why Metro does not have a monthly pass for people with disabilities? His second issue is about the station managers. Mr. Dancy and his brother went to the Union Station and the station manager laughed directly at his face. The station manager asked to see his ID, which Mr. Dancy showed, and it worked. Mr. Dancy wants to know where is the training? Mr. Blake stated the issue raised was very serious, we are already reviewing the issue and Ms. Dancy will be hearing from us on this matter.

On the issue of the pass for paratransit, Mr. Blake stated as a person who is an advocate for the people with disabilities, he does not support facilitating things that create separate but equal service. He said we are trying to facilitate the ability for people with disabilities to be in the mainstream. MetroAccess customers have free rides on the bus and rail. Many customers also have free rides on Abilities-Ride. The program is in the process of being expanded through the region. In terms of discounts however, MetroAccess customers already had late trip credits long before the people with on fixed route services had discounts. As discussed before, is a MetroAccess pass a possibility? Anything is possible, and he encourages for the committee to continue to advocate for it. What Metro will continue to facilitate is bringing people with disabilities to the mainstream services.

Ms. Bush commented about shared rides on MetroAccess and shared an experience of one of her rides from the past weekend. For this trip, Ms. Bush was taken way out of her way for another customer's pick up, before she was taken to her destination. As a result, she was delayed for her appointment, and had to make changes for her return trip as well.

Mr. Blake stated that Ms. Anderson will look at that trip and determine as to why the trip was booked, the way it was routed. The fixed route trip, direction, and route booked, will be considered as well. We do not want to make your trips inconvenient.

Dr. Banerjee brought up the motion that was passed in the last meeting and wants it to be added to the next AAC meeting agenda. The motion was to combine the Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) and MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meetings, and have 2 meetings in a month, instead of 3 meetings a month. There was a brief discussion about this motion, and was decided that it will be on the next AAC meeting agenda.

A customer informed the AAC that he had received a late trip credit, a matter that he had brought forth in past meetings.

Mr. Ariza-Silva asked is there a possibility for bus transformation study? Mr. Blake stated that could be placed on a future agenda.

Mr. Semelfort reminded the AAC to send their questions to him for the proposals by midnight on February 5<sup>th</sup>, so that he can submit them by February 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Bus/Rail Subcommittee Report and MetroAccess Subcommittee Report**

Due to time constraints, the two reports were not presented.

**Meeting adjourned at 7:35pm.**