



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes: July 2, 2018

Attendees

Present: Phil Posner (Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Tapan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Darnise Bush, Tino Calabia, Charlie Crawford, Steven Kaffen, Edward McEntee, Phillipa Mezile, Anthony Oberg, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Paul Semelfort, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Chair Phil Posner called the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting to order at 5:35 pm.

Approval of Agenda, Board Report, and Prior Meeting Minutes

The meeting agenda was approved.

The June 4, 2018, meeting minutes were approved.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated July 2, 2018, was approved.

Chair Posner stated Virginia has accepted the report recommendation from former U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray H. LaHood to make WMATA's Board of Directors efficient and small. Chair Posner stated Virginia informed WMATA they will withhold their funding if WMATA does not commit to implementing LaHood's recommendations. Chair Posner stated the Board is made up of voting members and alternates. He added alternates did not vote in the past unless the voting member did not show up to vote, however, also in the past the alternate members were active members of all the working committees and attended all of the Board meetings. Chair Posner added the Board alternates are very impressive people and great advocates for people with disabilities. He added the Board has responded to Virginia's demand by announcing at the June 28th meeting that alternate members could no longer sit at the table nor attend executive and subcommittee meetings. Chair Posner added WMATA is losing expertise by honoring Virginia's demands. Chair Posner stated he spoke with members and suggested a system that includes an Alternate Advisory Committee. Chair Posner stated he would add new language in the letter to the Board to include new member guidelines, which discuss the importance of keeping WMATA's alternate Board members active. Mr. Calabia stated he would like to make a motion requesting the language be added to the letter to the Board. Mr. Calabia stated the committee should mention how a female member isn't represented. Chair Posner stated Prince George's County will not have any representation on the new makeup of the board.

Dr. Banerjee asked if this is an issue that the AAC has jurisdiction. Christiaan Blake, Acting AGM, Access Services, stated on the surface the make-up of the Board does not fall under the AAC jurisdiction. He added however, that Chair Posner and the committee can express concerns about how the Board makeup can affect accessibility.

Ms. Bellamy asked what will happen with Board member Catherine Hudgins. Chair Posner stated she will be replaced because she is an alternate. Barbara Millville, National Capital Citizens with Low Vision (NCCLV), asked if the committee is willing to add in the Chair's Report how Metro's Board does not have representation of a person with a disability. Chair Posner stated there may be members who have hidden disabilities. He suggested letting the letter stand with the prior language recommendations.

7000-Series Follow Up

Mr. Blake stated one day in July 2016 there was a report received that a customer with a visual disability fell off the platform into the trackbed between two cars on a train at the Grovesnor-Strathmore station. He added there was an investigation completed to determine what happened. The main conclusion that could be determined was that the train in the incident was 7000-series, and that per the customer's statement, he fell between two cars that had the new barriers. Mr. Blake stated the customer also provided the AAC with public comment about incident and his opinion about the role the barriers played at a previous AAC meeting. Mr. Blake stated the current dual barriers are ADA compliant, and that Metro maintains that they are safe, however after the Greenbelt inter-car barriers test, Metro made a decision to retrofit all the 7000-series cars with the traditional chain style barriers. Mr. Blake stated information he received from his colleagues indicated the project should be completed within 8-15 months. He added over time design challenges delayed the project according to information presented by representatives from Rail Engineering. Mr. Blake stated since the 2016 incident, two other customers have fallen off station platforms. Mr. Blake stated after the 2016 incident, there was communication sent out through the region reminding customers to find the solid floor before stepping into the door.

Mr. Blake stated the FTA wants the barrier retrofit project completed by December 2018. Mr. Blake stated Metro is holding to their position that all barriers will be replaced by November 2019. Mr. Blake stated Metro will attempt to make the rubber barriers more visible until the completion of all replacements. Mr. Blake stated Metro will invite the community to participate in a demo that will highlight better contrast for the barriers, and allow the disability community to have input on the final contrast design Metro goes with.

Mr. Calabria stated that there is an opportunity to make sure the 8000-series rail car barriers are safe and efficient for customers.

Doris Ray asked is there a requirement for between-car barriers in the ADA accessibility standards for transit vehicles. She also asked when did the AAC make the recommendations to the Board about inter-car barriers. Mr. Blake stated the DOT ADA regulations at 49 CFR §38.63, regarding between-car barriers for rapid rail vehicles and systems state: Suitable devices or systems shall be provided to prevent, deter or warn individuals from inadvertently stepping off the platform between cars. Acceptable

solutions include, but are not limited to, pantograph gates, chains, motion detectors or similar devices.

Ms. Ray stated there are no specific requirements hearing Mr. Blake read the CFR. Mr. Blake stated correct, however, there are measurement requirements for platform gaps and other items, such as curb ramps. Mr. Blake added the testimony Ms. Rush gave to the board on Thursday was excellent. Ms. Ray asked if she heard Mr. Blake correctly when he stated upon research, the first design was given to the Board in 2008. Ms. Ray stated she did not recall the AAC having a discussion about not accepting the rubber style barriers. Mr. Blake stated meeting minutes he reviewed dated in 2011 indicated the AAC announced they did not like the clam shell barriers. Chair Posner stated he believes the AAC announced in 2008 their dislike for the current rubber style barriers.

Mr. McEntee asked will the replacement of the inter-car barriers cause a disruption throughout the system. Mr. Blake Stated that the FTA warned any 7000-series car that does not have the chain style barrier between all train cars would have to be taken out of service come December 2018 until the barriers are installed. Mr. Blake added this would cause a service disruption. Mr. Blake stated, however Metro is responding to FTA asking them to reconsider their deadline, while making them aware of the additional steps Metro is taking, and some of the challenges Metro faces while attempting to retrofit all rail cars.

Mr. Calabria stated to say that the current barriers are compliant with the ADA is saying that the two customers with visual impairment who fall onto the tracks are compliant with the ADA. He added that is asinine.

Mr. Oberg asked where are the announcements being made in reference to finding the floor. Mr. Blake stated the message will play at every station. Mr. Oberg stated he hasn't heard the announcement yet, so it could have been played simultaneously.

Chair Posner stated at the last Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting the committee suggested the announcement be played in all 7000-series rail cars. Mr. Blake stated he informed his colleagues about the request of the AAC and was informed that it may be difficult. He added the AAC should make a motion requesting the announcement be played on the 7000-series.

Ms. Rush stated prior to losing her sight she was a rail user, and added customers are in a rush and do not allow customers with vision impairments to take time and search for the floor. She stated the chain barriers are for all customers. Ms. Rush added the chain barriers will make traveling safe for all customers.

Ms. Bush stated she travels in the stations several times a day and has not heard the announcement. She asked if Metro is willing to partner with stakeholders to advertise the information in their newsletters. She further added that people's lives are in Metro's hands

and Metro should make sure the word is out everywhere. Mr. Blake stated Metro is reaching out to their partners now to get the information out to all customers. Mr. Blake added that he suggested customers look out for customers who are blind/low vision, and that a customer stated the blind/low vision community does not need people to be their PCAs. Ms. Ray stated she has experienced incidents when customers wanted to assist her, however, they would grab and push her without asking if she needed help. Ms. Ray stated WMATA should consider at what height a cane can detect the inter-car barriers. She added the light at the foot at the door can make it hard for a visually impaired customer to detect the floor. Mr. Blake stated he will provide the exact height of the lower barriers. Ms. Millville stated anyone who would like to see how people with low vision or blind travel they should shadow a customer. She added Metro should focus on fixing the travel environment, such as lighting. She added Access is currently doing a good job, so she must give credit when credit is due.

A motion was made stating every 7000-series train has an announcement that states this is a 7000-series car. Another motion was made to ask Metro to have the touch the floor message played in the 7000-series cars. Chair Posner would like to include playing the announcement on the 7000-series recommendation in the letter to the board.

MetroAccess Assault

Mr. Blake stated a MetroAccess driver is alleged to have committed a sexual assault against a customer with an intellectual disability. Mr. Blake stated there is enough evidence against the driver that he was arrested and held without bond. Mr. Blake stated Metro does not tolerate that type of behavior from anyone. He added the incident occurred on the MetroAccess vehicle.

Abilities-Ride

Chair Posner asked if the drivers who are driving with Abilities-Ride received the same type of background screening as MetroAccess drivers. Mr. Blake stated according to the contractual agreement Abilities-Ride service providers must complete an extensive background check on all drivers, but the background check may not be equivalent to that of MetroAccess.

Mr. Blake stated for the month of May there were 7,200 trips completed through the Abilities-Ride program. He added the numbers are slowly climbing upwards, which has shown to cause a decrease in MetroAccess usage. Mr. Blake stated there are two mail outs that will announce travel to D.C. Mr. Blake added that he has asked a colleague, Michael Eichler, to complete an independent analysis on Abilities-Ride usage impact. He added MetroAccess ridership is currently down in Montgomery County, but is not down in PG County.

Mr. Blake stated the Abilities-Ride Mystery Rider program is underway and if there are any members who would like to participate in the program please contact his office.

Mr. Blake stated the DC Department for Hire Vehicle will meet with Metro Staff to discuss a similar promotion for Transport DC.

Ms. Rush asked for a better understanding of how Challenger is responsible for providing TransportDC. Mr. Blake stated TransportDC is currently operated by Yellow Cab, Transco, and TaxiTaxi. He also added Abilities-Ride is currently operated by Regency and Silver Cab/TaxiTaxi. Ms. Rush asked who will run the taxi service for MetroAccess. Mr. Blake stated both Transdev and Challenger were awarded rights to operate MetroAccess subcontracted taxi service. Ms. Bellamy asked how will the taxi service be efficient if two different contractors are running service. She added the group stated they didn't want more than one company running MetroAccess taxi service. Ms. Bellamy also asked what will happen to the MetroAccess customers when there is no more alternatives such as Abilities-Ride and TransportDC. She added this will cause fares to increase. Mr. Blake stated creating transportation alternatives to MetroAccess will not cause the fares to increase. He added alternatives are designed to give customers cost efficient travel options. Ms. Bellamy asked how could Metro ensure customers using alternative transportation have the same quality of ride. Mr. Blake stated MetroAccess follows the law. He added alternative services have standards, however, the customer has the right to choose which service they would like to use. Mr. Blake further added for customers who likes the strict structure of MetroAccess, then Abilities-Ride may not be the best option for them.

Ms. Millville stated MetroAccess customers in Virginia would like to have alternative services like those in DC and Maryland. Mr. Blake stated Virginia has great programs that operate parallel to MetroAccess service. He added that Metro is working to increase the Abilities-Ride travel parameters to include Virginia.

AAC Recruitment

Mr. Blake stated Metro would like to thank the members of the AAC for participating in the recruitment process. He added that ADAP is currently completing the administrative process of submitting the information to Metro's Board for selection. Mr. Blake stated his goal is to have the members on board and trained by August so they would be ready to serve starting September 2018.

Public Comment

Heidi Case, Project Action, stated as of July 5TH DCFHV has removed Yellow Cab out of the queue for providing TransportDC trips. Ms. Case recommends that Metro contract with the taxi cab companies directly. Mr. Blake stated Yellow Cab exhausted all their funding for the current fiscal year. He added since they used up their funding they cannot provide services until the money is made available.

Ms. Ray stated expanding Abilities-Ride to Virginia should be contingent on each county. She added that Metro would have to partner with the counties looking to provide a service

like Abilities-Ride. Ms. Ray stated FastTran is not a good example to use because they are trip based. She also added the customers in Virginia are currently experiencing problems with Star Transportation. Dr. Banerjee stated he has used the alternative taxi service offered in Virginia and it was very useful. Dr. Banerjee stated taxi vouchers work well.

Mr. Calabria stated as an advisory committee member he always looks at Metro as being family. He added if Metro and the AAC are family members, Metro's Board should keep the AAC first with all information. He added the AAC should never find out through a third party.

MetroAccess Subcommittee Report

Mr. Semelfort stated there was a discussion on the current MetroAccess subcommittee work plan. He added there would be a lot of information to help the new members get started. Mr. Semelfort stated Leroy Hayford provided a MetroAccess service update. He added performance indicators shows that MetroAccess trips are leveling off.

Mr. Semelfort stated there was a MetroAccess Customer Guide review, where they discussed the process of updating the Guide. Mr. Semelfort asked the committee to provide feedback on the Guide and work plan. A motion was made to approve the September MetroAccess subcommittee meeting agenda.

BUS/RAIL Subcommittee Report

Mr. McEntee stated there was a discussion on the changes to route 42. He added the changes Metro is considering making to the #42 bus route are due to a study Metro conducts each year on selected routes to determine reliability, bus stop issues, capacity, and other aspects of the service. Chair Posner stated Metro calls this action "State of Good Operations".

Mr. McEntee reported the BRS received an update on the station lighting program, stating that all of the lighting contracts are on scheduled. He added the committee is still awaiting the requested report on the baseline ideal light system including brightness, lumens, and Kelvin measure to reduce glare. Mr. McEntee also stated Metro staff will schedule a special lighting meeting to allow members and stakeholders to delve deeper into the very specific lighting issues at particular stations.

Mr. McEntee also reported there was a customer who made a comment about having the blue MetroAccess card. He stated Metro staff informed the customer that as a result of a recent policy change, customers who have been certified as Fully Eligible, but would like to use fixed route service with the incentive of the Free Ride Program (FRP), can now call ADAP and request their condition be changed to Conditional Eligibility, which comes with the FRP.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.