



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes: March 5, 2018

Attendees

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

Call to Order

Chair Posner 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.

The February 5, 2018, meeting minutes were approved as amended.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated February 5, 2018, was approved as amended to include a compliment thanking Metro's Board and staff for implementing the improvements to all of the new MetroAccess vehicles.

Ms. Bellamy asked Don Scruggs, Assistant Director, MetroAccess, when will Metro begin to implement the approved changes to the MetroAccess vehicles. Mr. Scruggs stated that there are six recommendations that will be retrofitted on all 200 of the new MetroAccess vans.

Ms. Ray would like to submit additional language to be added to the Board Report. She stated the Board Report should include information about the placing of signage on subway station walls versus the platform pylons.

Abilities-Ride Program Update

Christiaan Blake, Acting AGM, ACCS, provided the committee with an update on the Abilities-Ride progress. Mr. Blake reiterated the parameters of the program, and discussed the two service providers, Regency Taxi and Silver Cab. Mr. Blake stated there has only been one customer who attempted to take more than four trips on a single day, and that customer was notified and informed about the daily trip limit policy.

Mr. Blake stated that drivers are required by Maryland State law to have background checks for drivers, and the solicitation required the taxi companies to provide their drivers with customer sensitivity training on how to serve customers with disabilities.

Mr. Blake discussed the array of transportation options available to customers eligible for MetroAccess, adding that Metro would like these customers to have as many options as possible before the customers need to consider using MetroAccess.

Mr. Blake stated that the first six months of the Abilities-Ride Program was a soft launch period that ended on February 28, 2018. The soft launch period allowed Metro to understand the capabilities of the taxi providers and make any necessary adjustments.

Mr. Blake stated that more than 8,000 trips were taken on the Abilities-Ride program in the first six months. Metro is now planning for an increase in trip numbers. March 1, 2018, marked the beginning of the long term launch of the Abilities-Ride Program. Metro has established a goal of having 150,000 trips taken through the Abilities-Ride program March 1, 2018, through February 28, 2019. Mr. Blake stated that Metro is planning to increase ridership numbers with the help of Metro's Marketing team. There are 22,000 Maryland residents eligible for MetroAccess who will be targeted with enhanced marketing including outreach at senior centers and human services agencies. There will be promotional items, such as refrigerator magnets, distributed and sent directly to some homes.

Ms. Rush stated Metro failed to mention that they have partnered with human services agencies, such as The Arc and CHI to allow the Abilities-Ride providers to provide transportation service starting in January 2018. Mr. Blake stated that Metro did not partner the Abilities-Ride providers with the human services agencies. Mr. Blake stated that, from the beginning of the program, Metro has encouraged the taxi companies to market themselves to all MetroAccess customers including human services agencies in an effort to encourage those customers and their stakeholders to choose the Abilities-Ride alternative over MetroAccess. Mr. Blake added that customers traveling to/from human services agencies via the Abilities-Ride program as an alternative to MetroAccess is not a special initiative that would generate a presentation for the AAC.

Ms. Bellamy asked why the Abilities-Ride taxi services are allowed to market themselves to human services agencies. Ms. Bellamy added that MetroAccess customers with severe disabilities should not be recommended to the Abilities-Ride program. She stated she fears the taxi drivers will strand these customers. Mr. Blake acknowledge Ms. Bellamy's comment for the record, but strongly disagreed with an approach to this program that would discriminate against customers with some disabilities.

Ms. Bellamy asked how many wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV) each provider operates. Mr. Blake stated Regency has 77 and Silver Cab 13. Ms. Bellamy stated please explain why, she is unable to get a WAV when she calls Regency. Mr. Blake asked Ms. Bellamy to inform him of the date and time she requested service from either provider and was denied service. He stated he will follow up with Regency once he receives her information.

Mr. Semelfort asked with the increase in demand what is Metro's plan to add more providers. Mr. Blake stated that the Silver Cab fleet consists of 600 vehicles, and Regency has 300 vehicles allotted to the program. Mr. Blake stated the taxi companies are

committed to meeting the customer capacity. The more customer usage, the greater the taxi usage. The cab companies have stated they need to see the demand for rides before they can increase capacity.

Mr. Sheehan asked with the increase in capacity what are the dollar savings for MetroAccess. Mr. Sheehan also asked that Metro staff invite the human services agencies to an AAC meeting to answer questions about why they are putting their clients on the Abilities-Ride program. Mr. Blake stated that he will not require the human services agencies appear before the AAC, but that he will follow-up with some to gather feedback on their decision making as to how subsidized taxi services benefit their clients. Chair Posner requested that Mr. Blake also ask the agencies what safeguards they are taking for clients who use Abilities-Ride instead of MetroAccess. Mr. Blake agreed.

Ms. Ray asked if the 77 WAVs Regency has is a result of them acquiring Barwood. Also, Ms. Ray asked if the human services agencies are making a deal with the taxi companies, i.e. who is paying for the customers who use the taxi services. Ms. Ray also asked when is Metro planning to expand the Abilities-Ride program to Virginia. Mr. Blake stated the buying of Barwood Taxi added about 20 WAVs to the Regency fleet. He also added that either the customers, their parents, guardians, and/or human services agencies are paying the cost of the customer fare portion. Mr. Blake stated that Metro will look at expansion once a significant share of Maryland ridership is established.

Mr. Crawford stated since the human services agencies are using a public subsidy to provide transportation on Abilities-Ride for their clients, he believes the human service agencies should be required to come and address the AAC. Mr. Blake reminded Mr. Crawford that everyone who uses public transit, paratransit, and public funded alternative services, are benefiting from a public subsidy.

Ms. Bellamy stated that MetroAccess drivers will not leave a severely disabled customer unattended. However, she believes that the taxi drivers will. She also asked how we can assure this will not happen. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated there are many examples of taxi programs in Virginia leaving the customers unattended. He also added that the training taxi drivers receive isn't the same ADA sensitivity training MetroAccess drivers receive. Mr. Ariza-Silva asked how Metro will ensure the providers are training their drivers. Mr. Blake reiterated that the Abilities-Ride program is for every customer. Mr. Blake added that during the solicitation process all potential partners were required to demonstrate their training of drivers, and Metro continues to follow-up on their compliance with this provision of the agreements with both companies.

A member of the public stated that it is not the right of the AAC to make transportation decisions for people with certain disabilities. Individuals with cognitive disabilities have every right to use Abilities-Ride as any other customers. She stated these customers fight daily for a sense of independence. She added that Metro and the Abilities-Ride providers, drivers, customers should conduct monthly meetings to discuss how to improve service.

New Business Motion Approval

Following discussions by the AAC, Chair Posner requested motions on the following items:

- (1) to ask Metro to conduct a study on the slippage co-efficient of the 7000-series rail cars. Motion passed;
- (2) to table the study on accordion style car barrier. Motion passed;
- (3) for Metro to design larger screens for the 8000 series railcars. Mr. Kaffen stated the AAC should consider investigating the cost and a study of larger screens in 8000 series railcars. Ms. Ray added that the motion should include language requiring ADA accessible screens. The motion, as amended, passed;
- (4) for Metro's marketing office create Back2Good videos about priority seating. Motion passed;
- (5) to recommend the 8000 series railcars have removable armrest and increase the height of the priority seating to 22 inches from the floor. Motion passed;
- (6) that Metro study the configuration of the hand bar on top of the ceiling for safety. Motion passed;
- (7) that Metro study the feasibility of placing handrails from the ceiling that are the full length of the car. Mr. Kaffen stated that the AAC should ask Metro to review this request. The motion, as amended, passed;
- (8) to have Metro reverse the current seating and the wheelchair parking space, so that the benches are placed under the intercom and the wheelchair parking is located on the other side. Motion passed;
- (9) that ADAP invite the office of Vehicle Program Services to an upcoming AAC meeting to discuss the announcements on all train series. Chair Posner stated that there is a 5 second dead time that can be used for announcements. Motion passed;

Ms. Ray made a motion requesting that Metro staff work with the visually impaired community to investigate the brightness of the footlights located at the bottom of Metro's railcars. Motion passed.

Chair Posner added a compliment thanking Metro for completing the detectable warnings installation throughout the system will be added to next month's letter to the Board.

Public Comments

A member of the public stated that the service location she use to travel to and from on MetroAccess is no longer being serviced by MetroAccess. The customer also stated that her travel time is 2 hours long on other trips. Mr. Blake stated that Allison Anderson, Operations Manager, MetroAccess, will follow-up directly with the customer at the end of the meeting. Mr. Blake added that he will request MetroAccess staff monitor the customer's upcoming trips.

MetroAccess Subcommittee

Mr. Semelfort stated that the MetroAccess subcommittee had a discussion on the improvements to the new MetroAccess vans. He stated members are very pleased with the improvements Metro made to the new MetroAccess vans. Mr. Semelfort added Mr. Scruggs will be available to answer any questions about the new vehicles during the March 2018 MetroAccess subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Semelfort made a motion for Customer Service to consider MetroAccess customers and AAC members to participate in all Metro surveys. Mr. Blake stated that Metro agrees, and his office will ensure the participation of AAC members and MetroAccess customers in all future surveys.

Mr. Semelfort made a motion requesting WMATA to provide the AAC with the questions and results of future surveys. Motion passed.

Mr. Semelfort would like Metro to get the AAC leadership approval for each meeting agenda prior to sending the meeting agenda out. Mr. Blake stated if AAC committee chairs would like to complete the agendas of their respective meetings and send them to the AAC Coordinator, and then he will accept that process. Chair Posner reminded members that meeting agendas can always be modified at the beginning of each meeting. Chair Posner made a motion that the Chairs' of each committee work with the AAC Coordinator to develop the monthly agenda. Motion passed.

Dr. Banerjee stated he would like the members of the AAC to suggest agenda items and send the information to ADAP staff.

Ms. Ray would like to have a discussion about the MetroAccess Service area and the grandfather clause. Mr. Blake stated that he would like to study the feasibility of establishing a single MetroAccess service area. Chair Posner would like to add this topic to the MetroAccess work plan for discussion in May.

BUS/RAIL Subcommittee Report

Mr. McEntee stated there were eight items added to the AAC work plan.

Mr. McEntee stated the committee is awaiting to hear a response from Bus Planning about the removal of the Georgian Woods Place stop.

Mr. McEntee made a motion; any signage that is implement by Metro be presented to the AAC committee before it is implemented. The motion was approved

Ms. Rush called for a motion that AAC members will not participate in any emergency exercise until Metro changes the waiver requirement. Mr. Crawford stated that there are checks and balances in everything, and he understands the need for the waiver. Ms. Bellamy stated a member shouldn't have to sign the waiver, however, the committee members are needed to participate.

Mr. McEntee stated Metro need to invest in better evacuation equipment.

Mr. Crawford stated that L'Enfant Plaza and Gallery Place stations lighting is too dark. Mr. Blake stated he will have David Shaffer, ADA Ombudsman, to follow up.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.