



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes: November 5, 2018

Attendees

Present: Phil Posner (Chair), Darnise Bush, Tino Calabia, Charlie Crawford, Steve Kaffen, Steve McGann, Anthony Oberg, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, and Paul Semelfort.

Call to Order

Chair Phil Posner called the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting to order at 5:40 p.m.

Approval of Agenda, Board Report, and Prior Meeting Minutes

Chair Posner welcomed everyone and started off with introductions of the Committee members.

Due to a lack of a quorum, motions could not be made therefore the Agenda, the Board Report, and the Prior Meeting Minutes could not be approved.

Chair Posner provided information from the last Board Budget Meeting that he attended:

- The process of Capital and Operational budgets: Before the budget is adopted in March 2019, with there will be two workshops scheduled between December and January.
- Provided information about proposals from the General Manager/CEO Paul Wiedefeld.
- Building consolidation from current 10 to 7. One building will remain in the District of Columbia. This building has been identified (the former Reporters Building), located at 300 7th Street SW, across the street from L'Enfant Plaza Station. This building was built in 1965, and WMATA will pay less than the cost of it back then. Five of the six Metrorail lines service this station, along with VRE. The new Virginia office may be near the Rosslyn station as the Orange, Blue, and Silver lines service that location. The Maryland office location is unknown at this time.

Ms. Rush encouraged everyone to participate in the upcoming public hearings regardless of the weather conditions and/or time-constraints. Mr. Calabia asked whether the amount of time given to public comments is three (3) minutes. Chair Posner stated talking points will be provided.

Mr. Oberg stated the proposed L'Enfant Plaza Metro Headquarters office location is not close to the elevator side of the station. Chair Posner stated he made comments about accessibility.

Chair Posner suggested that the elevator outage announcements should be made by train operators so that riders who need the elevator are aware of the outage before they get off the train. This will not only be helpful, but will also save riders' time.

Mr. Kaffen suggested that Metro should start a new 3-days-pass since many visitors come to the DC area and they may not stay the entire week.

Christiaan Blake, Acting Assistant General Manager, Access Services, provided information about measures that are being taken to improve the MetroAccess service. For example: reservation and scheduling are being reviewed to improve customer rides and experience. He added that the MetroAccess budget has been challenged this year. The effort to improve scheduling, thereby customer experience, is also aimed at improving the efficiency of the service. This will result in more shared rides, and fewer straight line to destination trips. Customers who really like non-shared ride trips will have that option from many of their trips through the expanded Abilities-Ride program.

There was a discussion about free rides being provided to MetroAccess customers for excessively long trips since Metrorail and Metrobus riders get Rush-Hour-Promise.

Ms. Bush suggested that dialysis patients and/or cancer treatment patients should be provided with special trips. Mr. Blake clarified that MetroAccess cannot prioritize trips. However, Metro's goal is for all MetroAccess customers to reach their destinations in a timely manner.

Ms. Ray commented about add-on trips and how the on-time performance is affected as a result of such trips.

Chair Posner expressed concerns that during an emergency MetroAccess drivers, have to call the MetroAccess Operations Control Center (OCC) before they can make a call to 911, and sometimes there can be a substantial amount of hold time; time that is lost before help can be called. He suggested that MetroAccess establish a hotline to be dedicated for this purpose, and for the MetroAccess Subcommittee to work on this issue further.

Rail-Car Barriers Update (percentages)

Mr. Blake stated as of now, 48 of the 500 trains have been fitted with the traditional barriers. Timeline is May 2019. At this point, completion is 8%.

MetroAccess budget has been challenged this year. One of the issues being worked on is scheduling. MetroAccess is also working with the contractors on service issues. Over the time, trip demands is declining. Customers who really like non-shared rides are choosing the Abilities-Ride program, as intended.

LED Light Fixtures Update

David Shaffer, ADAP, provided a lighting update. He stated that six new mezzanines, and 48 station platform lighting projects started in July. Twenty-five percent (25%) of station passageway lightings have been completed. He added that progress is being made. Lighting work at some of the stations has to be performed one side of the platform at a time because of the need for track time, therefore it is done during single tracking.

Mr. Shaffer shared a development on the 7000-series rail-car-announcements. He stated that “side of the doors opening at the next/upcoming station” is now being announced. This has been a long-term goal of the AAC.

Mr. Oberg stated he has been using Metro for 3 to 4 years, however, he has never heard any announcements about the elevator outage aboard Metro trains, and asked when were such announcements made? Chair Posner stated it was two years ago and added that it was time to reignite the fire and have these announcements come back to the system.

Ms. Ray commented about lighting at the Court House station. Mr. Blake informed her that each of her recommendations will be shared with the lighting team. Chair Posner commented that the capital budget is solid for lighting issues.

Train Announcements Discussion

Mr. Oberg read the following email that he had received regarding the train announcements:

To whom it may concern,

My understanding is that the order of the train announcements topic has been on the agenda for a long while now. As someone who is blind, it is very difficult for me to use the subway system when I don't know which line and what direction the train is going. Most of the time the operators do not even let the automated announcements with the new trains get to the point in the announcement where it indicates what train and direction it is. They cut it off before then. Even when they do let the announcement go that long, it is within 2 or 3 seconds before the doors close and I don't have enough time to make an informed decision or locate the doors. Knowing what line and direction the train is going is crucial to me for successfully navigating the system. This is one of the reasons I generally avoid the subway, but that is not always practical. This seems like a very simple request, with no financial impact, so why can this topic not be resolved?

Thank you,

Cammie

Chair Posner stated that on the 7000-series railcars, the announcements are automated. Mr. Calabria asked if the Committee would invite a decision maker to the meetings since we have had discussions about this before and we have no resolution. He also stated that sometimes it is up to 27 seconds before doors open while train holds at the platform, and the operators are truncating the announcements. If we have a decision maker, they can decide whether an announcement needs to be pulled away from the system – as needed or not. Chair Posner stated that he often contacts the person in charge within the respective divisions and provides them with the Committee's feedback.

October Board Meeting, RAC Discussion

The Riders' Advisory Committee (RAC) is not being dissolved. Their meetings are on the first Wednesdays of the month, and the public is invited.

New AAC Members Orientation

Anu Sharma, Accessibility Advisory Committee Coordinator, will provide tentative dates for the new members' Orientation and for the ADA Appeals Process Training.

Public Comment:

Barbara Milleville, National Capital Citizens with Low Vision Group (NCCLVG), stated that the NCCLVG is in favor of the open stroller policy. This is primarily to accommodate customers with mild or moderate impairments who use the buses to run errands and a lot of times they use stroller like devices. For example, people may have one of the following disability: brain injury, missing limbs, heart-attack patient, back surgeries, cerebral-palsy, vision loss. As a result, they may suffer from memory loss, unable to carry things, unable to do heavy lifting, or even trouble with maintaining balance, thus, they may need to push a cart. To ask a person to quickly empty or re-load the cart and exit the bus may be difficult. Senior citizens may also suffer from one of the mentioned disabilities. Asking them to fold their cart is similar for a person in wheelchair to get up from their wheelchair or to separate them from their mobility device. That is not acceptable. Accommodation must be same for people with all disabilities. The stroller policy needs to have some provision in it for people with mild impairments. There could be a mother traveling with three kids, are you going to ask her to take everything out of that stroller including the baby while on the bus? People cannot afford the ride-sharing, or to afford living in a walkable community with a grocery store, they do not have a car. Ms. Milleville offered some solutions: bus driver could ask for the person with disability to show their reduced fare or MetroAccess ID, and put the devices where seats are facing each other.

Proposed Policy of Open Baby Strollers Aboard Buses Discussion

Mr. Oberg stated this is a sensitive issue and needs to be handled with care by the AAC. Mr. Calabria provided information on the DC Circulator guide regarding the open Stroller policy aboard their buses, and the order of priority. Chair Posner stated the Circulator buses are wider than Metro buses. Ms. Ray opposed the proposed policy. Mr. Crawford stated it is important to mitigate all possible issues. Mr. Kaffen stated we are dealing with different bus configurations and this is a sensitive issue for families. Mr. McGann questioned why is this topic being re-visited since the AAC was opposed to this policy in the last meeting? Chair Posner clarified that the AAC received a presentation, therefore, the committee is revisiting the issue to see how to diplomatically state a response. Ms. Ray stated bus operators should not have to make decisions as to which rider will be allowed to board, and which rider will not be allowed. Ms. Rush stated the AAC must be very careful about the language it uses.

MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) Report:

Mr. Semelfort asked when will the date for Abilities-Ride solicitation pre-proposal conference (expansion of the program) be provided to the AAC? He asked for the Mystery Ride Program update, and information about the further procurement process for the Scope of Work. During the last MAS meeting, the subcommittee had a discussion with

the two Abilities-Ride providers; and heard about their experiences, challenges, and lessons learned. The MAS also learned that the providers have independent drivers, and about their basic practices. The subcommittee also learned that 25% of new vehicles in the MetroAccess fleet will likely be sedans or small SUVs and should arrive by the end of calendar year 2019.

Mr. Blake stated there were over 9,000 Abilities-Ride trips in October, and finalization of the application process is in progress for the Mystery Rider program.

Bus/Rail Subcommittee (BRS) Report:

Mr. Calabria reported that the subcommittee discussed the 8000-series railcar with Jun Deng, Assistant Project Manager. She informed that the design to the vendors will be submitted later. The Ombudsman's report was on lighting and work plan updates, and there were some public comments.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:33 p.m.