



# AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

### **Meeting Minutes: September 3, 2019**

#### **Attendees**

Present: Phil Posner (Chair), Denise Rush (Vice–Chair), Darnise Bush, Tino Calabia, Charlie Crawford, Rico Dancy, Melanie Jackson, Steven Kaffen, Mary Kay McMahon, Philippa Mezile, Anthony Oberg, Doris Ray, Paul Semelfort, and Patrick Sheehan.

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Phil Posner called the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

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

Chair Posner welcomed everyone back from Summer Recess and started with introductions of the Committee members.

The meeting agenda was approved.

The July 1, 2019, meeting minutes were approved as written.

The Board Report was approved as written.

#### **Metrorail Faregates Update:**

Terri Anomnachi, Project Manager, Capital Funds, Office of Strategic Projects, stated WMATA has awarded the contract to supply the new faregates throughout the Metro system. The contractor was chosen based on having the best possible gate for the WMATA environment. The program had the following objectives: modernize WMATA faregates, improve the customer experience, improve operations interfaces, increase reliability, reduce opportunities for fare evasion, reduce power consumption, provide a pleasing design that is complimentary to WMATA's historic design aesthetics, and provide a seamless customer transition.

The modern design and seamless access of the new faregates will be ADA compliant. Because of the feedback received from the AAC, there will be six payment targets on the ADA accessible faregate. The improved customer displays will be larger, angled for better visibility, and will have adjustable background lighting. There will be opportunities for new messaging on the light-emitting diode (LED) status displays. The optional display colors will distinguish the fare payment with indicator lights. The new audible feature will have distinguishable tones and the volume will be adjustable. The number of sensors will increase from currently 4 to 18 pairs on the new faregates. The program design review started after July 2019 and is expected to be completed by early 2020. The testing and delivery is expected to begin in early 2020 and completed by early 2021. The deployment is expected to begin in early 2021 and completed by the end of 2021.

At this time, Ms. Anomnachi invited questions from the committee members.

Ms. Mezile asked about the gap in faregates. Ms. Anomnachi stated the current gap is 4 inches and in the new faregates it will be reduced to 2 inches to prevent fare evasion.

Mr. Oberg inquired about a solution with the new faregates to a situation when the current accessible faregates are inoperable, customers are stuck and must wait for the station managers. Ms. Anomnachi stated a new feature will be added where the Rail Operations Control Center (ROCC) will have a control of the gates. If station managers are unavailable, the ROCC will be able to override the accessible faregates when contacted via the intercom.

Chair Posner suggested having a verbal and visual message displayed for customers to inform them on how to contact the ROCC via intercoms and to provide locations of the intercoms. He also asked how the customers with vision impairment would be notified about various light indicators and how would the gate-jumpers be monitored. Ms. Anomnachi stated the intercoms will not be on the faregates, but at other locations. The LED lights will be the indicators along with the messaging. The audio indicators and alarms will be activated. If a person does not clear the gate completely, an alarm will sound, to account for the gate-jumpers.

Ms. McMahon inquired about directions of the faregates. Ms. Anomnachi stated the new faregates are bi-directional.

A customer asked about the notification for the faregate directions and braille being added to the faregates and the fare vending machines. Ms. Anomnachi stated the audible tones used to indicate the directional status of the faregate will be reviewed. Braille and raised lettering will be added on to the faregates.

Chair Posner asked whether the new Beacon system will be helpful for customers in finding the faregates. David Shaffer, Ombudsman, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, stated the Beacon system is designed to guide customers to the accessible faregates, which will be bi-directional.

Mr. Dancy asked if a deaf person is stuck at an accessible faregate and cannot use intercom, how would they get help? Ms. Anomnachi stated we have light indicators and tactile messaging and asked the Committee for any other recommendations. Chair Posner recommended having a tactile soft rubber button (or similar pattern) that goes up when gate is available in the direction of the customer's destination, and down when it is not available. Customers with vision impairment can feel it and know if that is the gate they need or if they need move to another one. Ms. Anomnachi stated she will share the recommendation with the team for consideration.

Ms. Ray asked about synthesizing messaging and recommended color contrasting (white on black) and stated the LED lights are very bright for people with vision impairment. Ms. Anomnachi stated the brown color accents will be on the new faregates. The gates are high quality stainless steel therefore, painting them is not an option. The display lights will be brighter and easy to see. Although the lighting is adjustable she will inquire about

solutions for improvement. Additionally, there will be platform payment validators near the fare kiosk that will read the fare information and provide locally stored information on the card. Ms. Anomnachi will share the feedback received from the AAC with the prototype discussion group and provide a prototype of the new faregate to the AAC when available.

A customer commented about the inadequate procurement processes and the need for transparency. Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services, stated the AAC is an advisory committee and we take your recommendations to our colleagues for consideration. Chair Posner agreed with Mr. Blake's comments and stated we have advised in past, we asked for updates and feedback, and we have received it.

Ms. Bush asked whether the number of accessible gates will change and specified Judiciary Square and Gallery Place stations where a customer must take an elevator to get to an accessible faregate. Ms. Anomnachi stated there will be a few stations where the number of accessible faregates will change to two, however, not at all the stations.

Chair Posner thanked Ms. Anomnachi for coming and providing the information. Ms. Anomnachi was happy to share the information and receive the AAC's feedback.

#### **UDPATES:**

Mr. Blake announced that Carol Lopez has been promoted to the position of the ADA Policy and Planning Director. Mr. Blake new role is the Managing Director, Access Services.

#### **On-Time Performance:**

Mr. Blake provided an update about MetroAccess on-time performance. During the first four months of the last fiscal year, the on-time performance remained at 92%. For the next five months of the same fiscal year, the on-time performance remained between 91% and 90%. The last three months of that fiscal year, the on-time performance was between 88.37% and 86.31%. With the beginning of the current fiscal year, the on-time performance has been 88.79% and 89.50% for the months of July and August, respectively. The direct MetroAccess trips translated in high on-time performance, however, it created budget challenges at WMATA, therefore some adjustments were necessary. Mr. Blake stated the effort is to improve upon the shared-ride service for 90% or better on-time performance.

There was a discussion about changing the on-time performance number. Mr. Semelfort and Ms. Rush asked about the 92% goal. Mr. Blake stated in public transit systems, 90% on-time performance is high, but our goal is a 100%. Chair Posner stated to his knowledge, there is no national or regional required number for the on-time performance level. There is an aspiration that we would like to have a 100%, and there is a contract level. Mr. Sheehan asked about the contract and if the contractor is penalized when below 92% and receive incentive when above 96%. Mr. Blake stated the contract says 92% service level, however the penalties at management's discretion and are not mandatory. Our public facing metric is to be above 90%. Our efforts will continue to achieve the 90% on-time performance level while providing the shared ride service.

There was a discussion about the Rangers and Mr. Sheehan recommended upgrading the system, which will positively impact the on-time performance. Mr. Blake explained the steps within the trip process: trips begin with reservations, then goes to schedulers, and on the day of the trip it goes to the dispatchers. The staff needs to do a better and more efficient job in reservations, scheduling, and dispatching the trips. The Rangers cause problems on the day of the service. The Rangers are directly connected to the scheduling and dispatch system called Trapeze and that causes challenges as the devices cannot be just taken out and replaced. The devices have been in the system for years. Pertaining to procurement, MetroAccess has submitted Request for Information (RFI) seeking input from companies that provide paratransit scheduling. The goal is to have as few trips moved by human beings as possible and have most of the trips moved by computers, allowing the dispatchers to answer customer questions. Mr. Blake stated we also need our drivers to show up on time to improve the on-time performance.

**Abilities-Ride:**

Mr. Blake provided an update about the delays in the expansion of the Abilities-Ride program. A process had to be cleared with the Procurement and the Risk Management Offices. A change in personnel in the Procurement office has added to the time previously anticipated. Mr. Blake informed the AAC that 10 additional service providers, with at-least two available in each jurisdiction, have been approved. Mr. Semelfort stated the current Abilities-Ride providers are at their capacity. As a result, customers end up waiting for long times before a ride shows up. As an advocate, he has been advising customers to use MetroAccess if the Abilities-Ride is not currently working for them. Mr. Blake agreed and stated additional service is needed and that MetroAccess is the safety net for customers.

**Sedans:**

Mr. Blake provided an update about the procurement process of the sedans. Due to the change of personnel in the Procurement Office the time frame for purchasing the vehicle has been extended. The feedback received from the AAC was highly effective in the decision of the chosen sedan. The purchase of the sedans is expected soon.

**GPS Improvements:**

Mr. Blake provided an update on the GPS improvements and stated Terrian Williams-Hall, Director, MetroAccess is working with our scheduling contractor, as well as the software and hardware providers. We have an RFI and look forward to building it into a Request for Purchase (RFP). We are trying to improve the product. Chair Posner stated the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) will have a discussion on various topics including the Rangers, and the fare calculator. Mr. Blake stated if MetroAccess goes to flat fare, the fare calculator would not be needed.

**Blue/Yellow Platform Project Progress:**

Ms. Lopez provided an update and stated the Yellow and Blue line platforms are ready to open on-time, September 9, 2019. All the stations will run Metrorail service effective

September 9, although they are at different stages of construction. The stations will have new and higher resolution Passenger Information Display Systems (PIDS).

Braddock Road: The bus bay construction will continue until the end of October, whereas the work on the Kiss & Ride will be until January 2020.

King Street-Old Town: The work will continue at the bus bays and Kiss & Ride as part of a different project that started at the time station closed for platform summer shutdown.

Eisenhower Avenue: Partial Kiss & Ride (accessible side) will be open, whereas the other side will be worked on until October and then it will return to full service.

Huntington: Some tile construction in parts of the station will continue, but the station will be operational. The accessible van will continue to be available for people to be transported from the temporary Kiss & Ride to the station.

Van Dorn Street: The bus route will be ready at the end of October and the Kiss & Ride will be available after that since currently it is used as bus bays.

Franconia-Springfield: Tile construction will continue at the pedestrian bridge.

Chair Posner asked about the shelters' bench heights and arm-rests. Ms. Lopez stated the bench height will be ADA compliant towards the higher end and the bus shelters will have arm-rests.

Chair Posner asked about the Wayfinding Beacons at the King Street Station. Ms. Lopez stated the King Street station will open as it was before the closure, with the center path.

Ms. Ray asked a few questions: Is MetroAccess on-time performance calculated on the aggregate on the trips or is it over a time? How do you define jurisdictions for the Abilities-Ride program? About the construction on the Blue and Yellow stations, she would like to address concerns with bus bays construction for people with mobility and vision impairment. Would presumptive eligibility continue till the end of all construction at the stations? Mr. Blake stated the on-time performance is cumulative from the first day of the month to the last day of the month. The presumptive eligibility is still open through opening of the station. If we find there are challenges for customers, we will review it further. The Abilities-Ride jurisdictions will be Washington DC, Maryland, and Northern Virginia. There will be more than one service provider in each of the five jurisdictions within Northern Virginia. Ms. Lopez stated to assist customers with mobility and vision impairment due to bus bays construction, the accessible vans will remain until October for the Huntington Station.

Mr. Crawford commended the appointment of Ms. Lopez.

Mr. Dancy referred to an incident that happened in Cleveland, Ohio, where a customer waited about 2 hours for a ride, and asked if that happens here, what would be done

about it? Chair Posner stated here customers receive a late trip credit and an apology. Mr. Blake stated if a contractor is not going to get a customer within a timely manner, the Operating Control Center (OCC) has the right to move that trip to any provider who can perform that trip. This is a new policy as before they could only move that trip to same company's driver, now the OCC has more flexibility to move the trips within the system.

A customer shared her concern about customers getting picked up from the same location by separate vehicles, whereas it would be more effective to pick them up in the same vehicle. Also, since MetroAccess uses cabs, how can a customer know that the vehicle is there for their pick up, if it is not a MetroAccess van? Mr. Blake stated it is important for customers to know what type of vehicle is picking them up, it also reduces the dwell time. Ms. Williams-Hall will review the matter further. Concerning the issue of pool-rides, we are working with our OCC to pool trips together and provide better rides to customers traveling together.

**Dock-Less Scooter/Disability Safety:**

The topic will be discussed by the members at the Bus and Rail Subcommittee meeting.

**Public Comment:**

A customer provided her experience of a pool ride taxi service. Customer recommended for one customer to book the trip and add others as companions. She also stated that the bus stop on the 14<sup>th</sup> street is unsafe for wheelchair customers and is not ADA compliant.

A second customer stated on July 1 the MetroAccess service area was modified. On July 1, the scheduling window increased to 90 minutes and if it was up to WMATA, the scheduling window will increase to 2 hours. MetroAccess customers pay the highest fares in the country. When there are evaluations to be done on WMATA, we need more representation. If the AAC members will not take the time to represent the disabled community, they should give up the seats and allow others who will take the time to represent the community.

A third customer shared a ride experience where another customer was bruised by an ARC rider. Chair Posner stated he has had that experience, as well.

Ms. Mezile asked about the purpose of the panoramic screens at the Gallery Place station. Ms. Lopez stated we are working on it to see what information can be displayed on those screens, however they are advertising screens.

Mr. Oberg briefed the AAC on a draft of a potential newsletter that could be shared with the public. Chair Posner stated it is a great idea and it increases transparency.

**Bus/Rail Subcommittee Report:**

Mr. Calabria asked Mr. Shaffer to provide comments on the dock-less scooters. Mr. Shaffer stated he shared observations of his travels and the travels of the AAC members.

**MetroAccess Subcommittee Report:**

Mr. Semelfort stated Mr. Blake addressed several topics discussed in the MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting. The on-time performance needs improvement and the Abilities-Ride will be addressed again. Chair Posner stated with the routes being cut, the customers should be grandfathered and that he will add it to the Board report.

Ms. Bush recommended to include a shared-ride topic to be discussed at the MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting to incorporate guidelines for people who spend excessive time on the shared ride. Chair Posner stated the pick-up time is as important as is the drop-off time.

Ms. Ray stated in preparation for the Bus/Rail Subcommittee Meeting, when we discussed a policy on Segways, she recalls the device policy spelled out the maximum speed at which the vehicle/device could go, that will be good for scooters. Also, the station (Metro) property and non-Metro property could be identified.

**Meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.**