



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

300 7<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024

### **BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES: April 8, 2024**

In attendance: Tino Calabia (Chair), Steve Kaffen (Vice Chair), Sandra Neuzil (Second Vice-Chair), Vanessa Coles, Rico Dancy, Tajuan Farmer, Debby Fisher, Marcie Goldstein, Thomas Mangrum, Phillippa Mezile, Phil Posner, Denise Rush, Patrick Sheehan, and Kelley Simoneaux.

#### **Call to Order**

Anu Sharma, AAC Coordinator, took roll call, read the Meeting Agenda, and provided helpful information, thereafter, Chair Calabia moved the meeting forward.

#### **Review and Approval of BRS Agenda and Minutes:**

The BRS approved the Meeting Agenda for April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

The BRS Meeting Minutes from March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, were approved as amended.

#### **Metro's Fleet of the Future, Post Site-Visit:**

Lynn Bowersox, Senior Vice President, Rail Transformation, stated it was so nice to visit the Expo of Metro's fleet of the future, with so many of the AAC members, on the National Mall, from March 20<sup>th</sup> through April 3<sup>rd</sup>, from 9:00am to 5:00pm. It was a great experience and about 46,500 participants came up to the mockup of the 8K rail car and the electric bus. We had visitors from all walks of life, including students, tourists from the country and abroad. We had a lot of input from our regular customers who look forward to the upgrades, the feedback was received via the use of tablets and the data will be presented to the General Manager in the most authentic manner. We were looking to see to have either the shorter or the taller back seats. Next phase in design will be developing digital screens and signs and that the AAC is interested in speaking with Saray Meyer about those and provide their feedback, along with the audio components for the displays. Ms. Bowersox stated the inter-car-barriers is a pending matter.

Ms. Bowersox informed the AAC that she is retiring from WMATA on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Her experience and portion of the tenure has been very rewarding as she got to work with the AAC and learn so much. She is impressed by the Committee's work and dedication and looks forward to doing something that is of interest to her and volunteer her time after retirement. Chair Calabia thanked Ms. Bowersox for her great work on the open gangway rail cars and taking the input from the Committee. He wished her well and again thanked her for all she has done while working with the Committee. Ms. Coles thanked Ms. Bowersox for her services and that she is looking forward to the new rail cars when placed in service. Ms. Mezile stated the rail car was astounding, she thought she was in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Star Trek and is looking forward to further feedback opportunities. She commended Ms. Bowersox for her work with the rail cars and appreciated her services.

Mr. Sheehan stated he is devastated as Ms. Bowersox has done such a great job even in her previous role. It will be difficult to fill her shoes. A lot of the decisions that she made was based on the feedback received and he appreciated that the recommendations were considered and adopted. Particularly in the area of signage, on which Ms. Meyer is working on. He commented about the audio part and provided his positive feedback about the communication about it, and that the seating was done well with more padding. He commended her team and that they will continue on however, the works of Ms. Bowersox will be missed at WMATA. Ms. Bowersox stated in her retirement, she hopes to volunteer and bring something to the table as Mr. Sheehan has over the years.

Mr. Mangrum stated he visited the mockup of 8K rail cars and the electric bus. He asked about the charging facility and commented about possible behavior of riders that could damage the seats. Mr. Mangrum stated he asked questions during the site visit to New York and his questions were answered. Ms. Bowersox thanked him for his services and stated we spend a lot of time on rail as well as bus and asked him to continue his services.

Vice-Chair Kaffen stated Ms. Bowersox has been amazing during the entire process. There were iterations and changes, and Ms. Bowersox kept the Committee informed as the members were familiar of the rail car before going to New York. She is a great listener and that shows in the reality of how well the recommendations have been received. He commented about the maps and the importance of those for visitors and tourists. Ms. Bowersox asked him to continue to advocate as it is important. Vice-Chair Kaffen stated the maps at station platforms rotate and it is difficult to see the maps. Ms. Bowersox stated she will share the information forward. Chair Calabria stated one thing that he missed is the filtration system and the ultraviolet C is the safety system. He shared information about his testimony to WMATA Board, and the sources of his information. Ms. Bowersox stated the Project Team will provide information about it when they come back the next time.

Ms. Bowersox stated she would like to introduce her colleagues, Sarah Meyer, Executive Vice President and Chief Officer of Customer Experience and Engagement. Ms. Meyer came from the MTA and was also with the team at the trip to New York. Ms. Bowersox introduced Nahom Debessay and his work on the 8k rail cars. Ms. Meyer stated it is difficult to fill the shoes of Ms. Bowersox, it has been a great experience working with her and she looks forward to sharing information about the feedback concerning the maps, signage pilot at L'Enfant Plaza, print maps, etc. Vice Chair Kaffen asked about the point of contact for bus signage. Ms. Meyer stated that would be her and stated she would be presenting to the BRS next month. Vice Chair Kaffen asked if she would prefer to receive

some update now or after her May presentation. Ms. Meyer welcomed any and all feedback as soon as possible so that she can review it quickly.

Mr. Sheehan offered her experience on color contrast. Ms. Meyer was appreciative of the offer and stated she looks forward learning from him. Chair Calabia thanked Ms. Meyer and Ms. Bowersox for their work and stated the Committee looks forward to moving ahead with wayfinding with Ms. Meyer.

**Better Bus Network Redesign-Engagement Plan, Types of Materials being developed:**

Melissa Kim, Program Manager Planning, Capital and System Planning, presented an update about the Better Bus Network Redesign's engagement plan and types of materials being developed. Ms. Kim provided information about Project Background & Update, Phase 3 Engagement Approach, and Next Steps. Providing background of the Better Bus Network Redesign, Ms. Kim stated the Network Redesign is a project to rethink, redesign, and revitalize bus service. A part of the Better Bus Initiative includes many ongoing and future efforts to improve bus service and it is contingent on FY2025 budget adoption. Buses are a major part of the region's transportation network and were the core of public transportation during the pandemic. Our region is growing, people's travel patterns have changed, and there is a need to prioritize the customer experience.

Ms. Kim provided the project update and stated in spring 2023, they shared the draft visionary network. The revised visionary network outreach in spring 2024, primarily focuses on proposed 2025 better bus network. Implementation is expected in summer 2025 with final 2025 better bus network. Ms. Kim informed as to what is included in the Proposed 2025 Better Bus Network: changes from the draft Visionary Network including same level of resources as operated in FY24; update service design includes new routes and changes to routes and service times based on public comments from phase 2, bus stop consolidation, new route names, and operator assignments.

Ms. Kim stated the Proposed 2025 Better Bus Network better connects the region; improves access to better bus service, especially in evenings and on weekends; advances access to opportunity for equity focus communities; prepares us for the future; makes bus service more convenient to use. All these improvements represent ways that Metro is being more efficient with resources and improving customer experience. The next presentation to the AAC will be later this Spring and will include the latest proposed 2025 Better Bus Network information like: approach to building the network; ways the network better connects people to jobs and other key destinations; ways it provides access to an

all-day, all-week frequent service network to more people across the region; how much time customers will save; how residents in equity-focused communities will benefit; how the service will take advantage of dedicated lanes to be more reliable, and more!

Discussing the spring (phase 3) engagement goals, Ms. Kim stated it is to increase awareness and understanding of the proposed 2025 network; get the input needed with a focus on the proposed 2025 network and impacted audiences; generate support, build advocacy, and create champions. She further stated that phase 3 is an opportunity for the AAC to provide feedback on the proposed 2025 Better Bus Network before it is implemented. Discussing the engagement strategy incorporated from phase 2 successes & lessons learned, Ms. Kim stated they learned to reach more communities while being more efficient with resources. Ms. Kim stated the objective if that the Board adopts it in fall, enabling 2025 implementation.

Furthering the discussion, Ms. Kim stated the better bus discovery tour will target high-change areas, high ridership, pop-ups equity focus communities. Metro-led events such as discovery days in each state-level jurisdiction will be held mid-late June. There will be interactive "expo" to learn about proposed network & provide feedback, separate public hearing room, additional virtual public hearings including ride-alongs. Ms. Kim stated the focus is on high-change routes & areas not reached by other events. She further discussed multiple ways Metro is seeking feedback by robust stakeholder engagement, for example contacting the Committees & advisory boards such as RAC, AAC, Community Connections Committee (CCC). To reach out to the youth, they will have focus groups & Youth Advisory Council involvement. Ms. Kim stated union leadership will be included in the outreach with mock schedule committee with manifest. Not only that, but the elected officials will also be heavily involved, the community-based organizations will help identify & advocates partner-led events and toolkit. The target is to engage more bus operations staff.

Explaining the information that will be share, Ms. Kim stated an example static network map (Spring 2023) will be shared, along with an overview of the draft Visionary Network from Spring 2023 outreach. Ms. Kim stated it is not screen-readable at this time. Ms. Kim provided an example Route Profile (Spring 2023) that depicts the draft Visionary route, points of interest, similar existing routes, and information about frequency and span of service (when the bus will run). Ms. Kim stated the route map will have alt text explaining termini and their team will ensure reading order makes sense and conveys the clearest information for screen-readers. Ms. Kim provided an example Interactive Map (Spring 2023), and stated users will be able to compare existing routes to proposed 2025 Better

Bus Network routes and provide route-specific comments for Metro review. She explained that this map is screen-reader compatible and is capable of reading points of interest and other map labels. She provided example of Trip Planner (Mobile Version) which will allow users to compare their common trips between the existing network and the Visionary Network, including the wait between transfers. Ms. Kim stated the example Trip Planner (Web Version 2023) side-bar interface is screen-readable.

Ms. Kim recommended the AAC to sign up for the e-newsletter, and the Better Bus Dispatch located at [wmata.com/betterbus](http://wmata.com/betterbus). Ms. Kim requested the AAC to share information about the new bus network when the outreach kicks off. Ms. Kim recommended the AAC to inform people why they should provide their input, it helps spread the word through social media, digital or print newsletters, posters. Ms. Kim also encouraged the AAC to attend an event and invite others to come as well! Ms. Kim stated she would provide the next update in June with detailed information about the proposed 2025 Better Bus Network and the technical process used to develop it. At this time, Ms. Kim invited questions from the Committee.

Chair Calabia asked about any changes to bus service that were recommended as a result of the Better Bus Network Redesign. Ms. Kim stated there may have been a couple of changes and she can follow up. Chair Calabia mentioned a news article about the Prince George's County service. Ms. Kim stated Prince George's is our partner and when the materials come out, you will see the vision plan. They are reviewing the transportation holistically as a whole not just the bus service. Ms. Kim stated there is a lot of coordination between WMATA and Prince George's County. Chair Calabia asked about Montgomery County and Ms. Kim stated they have been collaborating with them as well.

Mr. Sheehan asked if Prince George's is using the phrase free network, particularly to assist the population that needs the assistance. He further asked about surveys that had asked a lot of information and if that data was incorporated. Moving forward with the network, Mr. Sheehan asked about metrics as presented by Jordan Holt. Ms. Kim stated Metro reviews equity and Prince George's County has diverse population and they hope the efforts could be more coordinated. The metrics that will come out, look best in the county. There are some folks in Ms. Holt's team that tracks data, will continue to report all of the metrics and that will require time. Mr. Mangrum asked about MetroAccess service being impacted by the service impacts on Bus and/or Rail. Ms. Kim stated we will have large static maps reflecting where the service impacts will take place, at all of our in-person events. She invited the AAC to look through the maps, if feasible.

Vice Chair Kaffen commended Ms. Kim for her work on this program. He asked if it has been considered in determining the new routes collaborating with the local jurisdictions. Ms. Kim stated they had reached out to numerous stake holders and are working closely with local jurisdictional services to collaborate. Chair Calabia thanked Ms. Kim for her presentation and asking the AAC to participate.

### **Public Comments**

Ms. Rush asked about all the public restrooms being accessible as she heard in the news, as that is incorrect information. She recommended to include information about the accessible public restrooms on the maps. She also stated that putting directional information on station ahead lists, is not helpful, rather, end of the line stations names should be listed. She referenced some alert system that went out in February and asked why no one was informed about it. Carol Peredo Lopez, Director, ADAP stated we will review and follow up. About the restrooms, Ms. Peredo Lopez stated some restrooms have punch list items. Some restrooms may be unavailable due to the location, whereas at Silver Line Stations, the public restrooms are more conveniently located.

Ms. Mezile commented about the station ahead list (SAL) and shared her experience at the Federal Triangle and L'Enfant Plaza stations.

Second Vice Chair requested Sarah Meyer to do a site visit to some stations.

Public Comments can be received via phone at 202-962-1100, or via email at [MetroAACChair@wmata.com](mailto:MetroAACChair@wmata.com)

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned late at 5:40 p.m.