

Accessibility Advisory Committee

**Meeting Minutes
January 11, 2010**

Committee Introductions

Thirteen committee members were introduced: Phil Posner (Vice-Chair), Paul Semelfort, Julius Fleishman, Doris Matchett, Marilyn Lutter, Debbie Brown, Nicole Miller, McKinley Young, Darrell Drake, Michael Brownell, Elliott Lapin, Susan Holland and Carolyn Bellamy. Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Tom Dowling, Emily Singer, Tapan Banerjee, Joyce Callahan and ex-officio, Sharon Moore were absent.

Review of Agenda

Marilyn Lutter asked for the report on the 7000 series railcar.

Phil Posner responded that the report on the 7000 series railcar has been scheduled for February 2010 so that the person in charge of the project can address the committee. Mr. Posner stated that he has forwarded all questions and comments provided by committee members concerning the 7000 series railcar. He also added the subject of elevator recordings for way finding at transfer stations to the agenda under New Business.

Agenda accepted with addition.

Public Comment Period

Audience member, Patrice Means-Marlow, expressed frustration about an incident she experienced on December 20, 2009; she was left outside for a prolonged period of time while waiting for a MetroAccess vehicle which caused her to miss more than one special event.

Allison Anderson indicated that she already had Ms. Marlow's information and would speak with her about the incident.

Review of Minutes

Doris Matchett requested a change to the last sentence of the third paragraph on page 2 to state that she is a user of the MetroAccess service. She suggested that meeting documents be provided to the committee at the committee table instead of the table at the entrance of the meeting room.

Minutes were accepted as amended.

MetroAccess Subcommittee Report – (Doris Matchett & Paul Semelfort)

Paul Semelfort advised the committee of a recent incident that occurred while on a MetroAccess vehicle. Mr. Semelfort stated he was offloaded from the vehicle and had to wait about an hour for another vehicle to arrive. Mr. Semelfort praised staff from Diamond Transportation for taking care of the situation and also praised Metro for taking proactive action on driver safety, but still has concerns regarding the roles and responsibilities of Dispatch because of a few issues that occurred.

Allison Anderson from MV Transportation agreed to follow up with Mr. Semelfort and provide information during the next MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting.

Doris Matchett made a motion to eliminate the December 2010 subcommittee meeting due to the holidays and to also allow extra time during the January 2011 AAC meeting to discuss any urgent MetroAccess business.

The motion passed.

Mr. Posner requested that the cancellation of the December 2010 MetroAccess subcommittee meeting be posted on the Metro website.

Michael Brownell suggested that an annual schedule of the AAC meetings be published. Mr. Brownell also made a motion to amend the bylaws to have the AAC meetings changed from the first Monday to the second Monday of each month.

Darrell Drake asked that the motion to change the meetings be put into the bylaws.

Mr. Posner suggested that the motion be contingent upon the acceptance of the new bylaws, Metro staff agreement, and the availability of staff and other resources.

The motion passed.

Ms. Matchett stated that subjects discussed during the subcommittee meeting included MetroAccess staff recognition for exceptional service, a presentation by Mr. David Siedentopf regarding the trip scheduling and dispatching process. Also mentioned were the new subscription procedures.

Mr. Posner asked if the committee can award monthly Merit certificates to individuals from various departments within Metro who exceed expectations while performing their duties.

Ms. Rayann Otto-Anderson responded that information on how to present the awards can be provided to the committee based on how MV's and BUSV's commendations are handled.

McKinley Young asked what would happen if there is no one chosen for to receive the award for a particular month.

Mr. Posner responded that the best candidate will be chosen. Metro staff will present the committee with the name and information of what that person has done and they will be chosen to receive the award.

Mr. Drake asked what would happen if there are no candidates that have met the criteria to be considered the best for any given month.

Julius Fleischman asked if Metro staff will decide the best candidate for the award.

Leland Peterson, MV responded that the person who is chosen will be someone who has gone above and beyond their normal duties.

Ms. Matchett stated that if there is no one chosen between Metrobus, Metrorail and MetroAccess, then no award will be given for that particular month.

McKinley Young suggested that the word "best" be excluded from describing the winning candidate. The word "outstanding" was the agreed upon term to use.

Ms. Otto-Anderson suggested that the committee consider focusing on disability services and exceptional customer service provided in a consistent manner when candidates are selected for awards.

The committee will send their commendation criteria to Ms. Otto-Anderson by email and an agenda item for February was requested to discuss the commendations.

Susan Holland stated that her name did not appear in December's minutes as being present or absent and neither were her comments during that meeting.

ADAP staff is researching and will make the necessary changes to the January meeting minutes and forward revised minutes to the committee.

Mr. Drake made a motion that Ms. Holland's notes be added to the minutes and that it

be recorded that she was present at the meeting.

The motion passed.

Eligibility Presentation – (Frank Roth & Selene Dalton-Kumins)

Frank Roth gave a brief description of his background. He stated that the Office of Eligibility Certification (ELIG) has been relocated to the Metro headquarters building to make it more efficient for customers. The eligibility team consists of employees with a wide variety of backgrounds of working with people that have disabilities. Improvements that have been made consist of a combined application that focuses on customers who apply for MetroAccess or Reduced Fare services. There's also now a Spanish version of all of their applications. The applications are available online and by email. ELIG has been working closely with ADAP and MACS to provide and coordinate travel training to customers. Blood pressure checks are being done as a part of the eligibility process because during functional assessment there could be strenuous activities such as walking done to determine eligibility. The blood pressure check determines the customer's ability to do the functional assessments and ensure their safety. In the event that a customer has high blood pressure beyond a certain threshold, paramedics will be called to examine and clear that person or transport them for further medical analysis. Paramedics will not be called if a customer has low blood pressure or a weak pulse unless it is accompanied by other critical medical conditions. Upcoming improvements within the next 3 to 4 months will consist of ELIG opening for one Saturday each month and some evenings during the week. There is a new application process that allows customers to fill out the forms and contact ELIG for a phone interview. All customers who come in to the office will be offered free roundtrip MetroAccess use for their appointment. There is also a standby list in case of canceled appointments or no-shows which will give others the opportunity to have an appointment set for earlier than originally scheduled if they can provide their own transportation.

Paul Semelfort asked what the procedure is for customers with a history of and consistent high blood pressure.

Mr. Roth stated that the customer would include that information on their application and the physician will be able to verify a history of high blood pressure and clear the individual. If blood pressure is consistently high and can't be controlled, there will be a visual observation instead of a functional assessment performed. An extension of the recertification will be granted if an unexpected emergency arises and a customer is unable to keep an appointment.

Mr. Young asked if there was any thought given to issuing a permanent status for people with permanent disabilities.

Mr. Roth stated that there is discussion of proposing a time limit of 5 years instead of 3 years for recertification for customers with permanent disabilities. Recertification is needed to ensure that demographic information is still current. Another reason is that the accessibility to the transit system may change.

Mr. Fleischman asked if there is a time limit for imposing the proposed 5 year recertification process.

Mr. Roth stated that there are plans to discuss the time limit at public hearings within the next few months.

Carolyn Bellamy asked is there a policy in place to deal with customer unable to keep their assessment appointment due to illness.

Mr. Roth stated that MetroAccess eligibility will be extended for a person who already uses the service if they communicate with ELIG of difficulties keeping their appointments. If a person does not currently use the service, then they would still have to be assessed when they are able to make an appointment. **In the event that a customer can't make it to their appointment due to unforeseen circumstances, then as long as they have communicated that to ELIG, they can reschedule and their benefits (if any) will be extended until their rescheduled date.**

Marilyn Lutter asked which specialist a customer should use to fill out the application if they had more than one medical issue.

Mr. Roth stated that a person should use their primary care physician. Multiple disabilities should be listed on the application. An addendum sheet can be added by the physician if more space is needed to list disabilities.

Mr. Semelfort asked if more space could be provided on the application for adding multiple diagnoses.

Mr. Roth stated that upgrades to the application can be done during the next revision.

Mr. Brownell asked if there was an approval rate of applications received vs applications approved and are the reasons for people who apply for MetroAccess categorized.

Mr. Roth stated that he will gather that information and provide the results.

Mr. Posner asked if customers who normally use the fixed route system 90% of the time are able to use MetroAccess for special circumstances such as when they are unable to use the fixed route system due to buses not running.

Mr. Roth stated that MetroAccess can be used for those special circumstances.

Ms. Brown stated that there should be something on the application addressing signage, sidewalks, traffic lights and bus routes.

New Bus Flag Design – (Jim Hamre, Bus Operations)

Mr. Hamre presented the proposed new flag bus stop design replica. Included on the new sign pole is the AAC recommended raised letter sign with the bus stop identification number. An option for the location of the sign would be to place it on the back side of the pole at a reachable height or above or below the information case. Mr. Hamre asked the committee for recommendations of where to place the sign.

Mr. Posner asked about the visibility qualities of the sign. He asked is it possible to have solar powered LED's with the sign.

Mr. Hamre responded that the sign is made of a reflective material and will be visible with passing traffic which will illuminate it. The individual letters are not reflective but by making them larger will make them more visible. Improvements include a larger font on the information panel than previous signs. Mr. Hamre stated that solar power can be explored in areas where there is no light source.

Susan Holland asked why the raised letter sign is not also in Braille.

Mr. Hamre stated that it is not a requirement to have Braille at a bus stop and that the most effective and widely used method is raised letters. Budget constraints will also have an effect on whether or not Braille can be installed. Mr. Hamre will research the costs associated with adding Braille and report his findings to the committee.

The committee recommended placing the raised letter sign at the ADA required height at the pole and in the inside to the left of bus stop shelters.

Mr. Hamre stated that Next Bus dynamic display signs will be installed at every stop and there is discussion of installing a 4 x 4 pole that the sign will be attached to which could possibly be a place to install bus stop bay numbers and bus route numbers for bus shelters.

Mr. Hamre received no recommendations about where the raised letter sign should be placed on the bus stop pole.

Revisions to Bylaws & MOU

According to Mr. Posner, some committee members are suggesting that there should not be any term limits for the elected officers of the committee.

Mr. Fleischman stated that there should be term limits for AAC members. He stated that when committee members make comments or state concerns, they are not pursued past the committee level. Mr. Fleischman also suggested that the elected officers serve a term of 2 years and then step down and not reapply for another 2 years.

Mr. Drake suggested that the candidate for chairman have several years of experience as a board member prior to being considered for election. He also suggested that the candidate serve at least 1 year on the committee before they can apply for chairman. Mr. Drake also suggested a 1 year limit for subcommittee officers.

Ms. Matchett suggested that a vote of confidence be done 6 months into an elected chairman's term.

Mr. Young stated that one of the strong points for having members serve at least two 2 year terms is because there is a lot of work and follow up that's done following committee meetings. Two 2-year terms would eliminate a constant change at leadership.

Mr. Brownell distributed proposed changes to the AAC Bylaws which included having everyone who joins the committee appointed to a 3-year term rather than appointing new members to serve the remainder of an unexpired term.

Marilyn Lutter stated that initially it was a 3 year term and still is but there were new provisions added because of the possibility of someone being unable to continue because of illness or death.

Mr. Young stated that one-third of the committee is elected each year and not the whole committee. Each year there are 12 {6} continuing members that have some experience.

Debbie Brown agreed with Mr. Young and stated that committee member's terms need to continue to remain staggered.

Mr. Posner suggested that in the event of an unexpected vacancy (unexpired term being vacated due to unforeseen circumstances) on the committee, an existing member whose term is due to expire should be able to be moved to the unexpected vacancy slot (the unexpired term) instead of having to reapply to the committee.

Mr. Brownell stated that another addition to the bylaws is that there should be a pool of already approved candidates sent to the General Manager in the event of unexpected vacancies.

Nicole Miller expressed concerned that if people start at varying times of the year there would be new members voting for officers of the committee that they haven't had the opportunity to become familiar with. She stated that the committee changed the term of Chair from one year to two years for this reason.

Old Business/New Business

Phil Posner informed the committee that a meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 27, 2010 at 5:30pm about the Metro budget and committee members are encouraged to attend to provide input and suggestions.

Because of the difficulty involved in locating elevators at major transfer stations within the Metrorail system, a motion was made by Michael Brownell and seconded by Nicole Miller to have the AAC Chairman write the WMATA General Manager requesting that the elevator recordings at major transfer sites have directions to the transfer elevator added to the current recording on those elevators. The letter should also request that text directions for finding the transfer elevators be placed on the Metro website. This motion was discussed and passed by the committee.

Ms. Lutter asked what information the committee is going to be able to receive about the visually impaired person who was killed by a Metro train.

Ms. Otto-Anderson stated that ADAP will research the information and provide it to the committee by email.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.