

# **Accessibility Advisory Committee**

**Meeting Minutes  
June 7, 2010**

## **Committee Introductions**

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

## **Review of Agenda**

Phil Posner stated that a longer break would be needed for committee members to observe the new Q'Pod system that was installed on a Metrobus which was parked outside. There was a Q'Pod securement system demonstration that took place which enabled committee members to take part in accessing the system while it was installed on the bus. There was very good feedback from the committee. Although there are space constraints, the committee expressed that they would prefer the new Q'Pod system versus the current securement system.

Mr. Posner requested to add a discussion of the MOU update to the New Business section of the agenda.

Julius Fleischman requested the addition of bus idling to the New Business/Old Business section of the agenda.

Susan Holland requested that an update of the Bus Stop Survey be added to as a future agenda item.

Tapan Banerjee requested the addition of the Richard Hedding Award to the agenda.

Paul Semelfort requested that an update of the increase in MetroAccess fares be added to the Old Business/New Business section of the agenda.

## **Review of Minutes**

Minutes were accepted as written.

## **Public Comment Period**

Darrell Drake explained the difficulty he had over the Memorial Day weekend while the Metro trains were single tracking at the Ballston station. He expressed concern with treatment he was given by the station manager while at the Ballston station during the Memorial Day weekend. As he was seeking information from the station manager, the station manager refused to help him, became irate and acted very rude and physically abusive by slapping his hand when he presented his identification badge. When the transit police arrived at the station, they asked him if he wanted to press charges against the station manager and he decided not to. He suggested that Metro provide better communication to customers when changes to the normal system activity are being used paying special attention to stations with dual platforms. He will provide a detailed summary of the incident to Mr. Sheehan.

Mr. Sheehan stated that he would like to see further investigation of the incident.

Debbie Brown suggested that directions for persons with hearing impairments should be better communicated when final train destinations are changed from the end of the line to a station prior to the end of the line.

During the public comment period a member of the audience, Al Sonnenstraul, suggested that Metro improve signage at all stations. He explained a situation that occurred at a meeting of the Maryland Deaf Senior Citizen Association which involved a deaf/blind person who used MetroAccess to attend the meeting. When it was time for the MetroAccess user to leave the meeting, he was inadvertently left at the Silver Spring Senior Citizen Center for several hours because he feels the MetroAccess driver did not know that he was picking up a person who was a deaf/blind person. He asked if the drivers know how to communicate sign language to deaf customers and are they trained to know if the customer they are picking up is deaf/blind. He suggested that all MetroAccess drivers be trained how to effectively communicate with customers who are deaf and/or blind. The committee would like to know the ADA requirements, if any, of how MetroAccess drivers are supposed to communicate with deaf/blind customers. Ms. Matchett stated that drivers need to have information about customers' disability and functional ability in order to provide proper service.

Ms. Matchett suggested that drivers identify themselves as a MetroAccess driver to the customer they are picking up. She also suggested that the driver know the disability of the person they are picking up. She stated that there are constant mishaps that occur with drivers who pick up blind customers. She suggested that there be a presentation to the MetroAccess Subcommittee explaining the requirements when picking up customers with deaf/blind disabilities.

Mr. Sheehan suggested that this topic be discussed at the next AAC meeting as well as the next MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting. He asked that the committee obtain the customer's contact information so that there could be further investigation of the incident.

McKinley Young stated that people who are deaf/blind should receive the same assistance as others with disabilities since they are all under the same rules.

Mr. Sheehan agreed but stated he was unsure of whether MetroAccess or a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) is supposed to provide that assistance.

Mr. Banerjee suggested that there be some sort of identification method put in place to assist drivers with knowing the type of disability a customer has prior to picking them up in an effort to give better service.

Ms. Callahan stated that the driver should know the customer's functional needs as opposed to their disability. She stated that the customers should notify personnel of their functional needs during the eligibility process.

### **MetroAccess Subcommittee Report**

Doris Matchett gave an overview of the MetroAccess meeting agenda. During the MetroAccess subcommittee report, Ms. Matchett stated that concerns about abusive behavior evolved into a direct threat policy which means that customers that are abusive toward other riders can be suspended until they can exhibit positive changes when using the service. She stated that vehicle dwell time is being abused by MetroAccess passengers who are not ready when the vehicle arrives to pick them up which prevents other passengers from making it to their scheduled appointments in a timely manner. Dwell time will be strictly adhered to in the future. She stated that currently there are no penalties being enforced regarding the dwell time or other issues that are discussed at the MetroAccess subcommittee meetings. There were no MetroAccess personnel present at the meeting to address questions. The committee voted to write a letter to Christian Kent that embodies a list of action items that has been raised during previous subcommittee meetings but have not been resolved.

Mr. Semelfort stated that the rules should be followed so that service will run smooth and efficiently. There was a board presentation made to a dispatcher for outstanding service to customers and drivers which he feels sent a positive message. He stated that he feels bad personal hygiene while using MetroAccess is a safety and health

concern for other riders as well as the drivers and suggested that there be literature addressing the issue placed in the revised customer service guide.

Mr. Posner suggested that the MetroAccess subcommittee write a letter to Christian Kent that embodies a list of action items that has been raised during previous subcommittee meetings but have not been resolved. The committee voted to write the letter and will also request a meeting with Mr. Kent to discuss outstanding items.

## **Metrorail Signage**

Sean Gray gave an overview of Metrorail signage that was approved by the Metro Board of Directors in 2004. It included station signage areas, rail signs, updated stations, standardized signage samples, current signage projects and signage improvements. Several standard signage plans were shown during the presentation. There was discussion of specific areas of where the different types of signs will be placed throughout the station. Illuminated signs, such as exit signs, will be used at key areas that require customers to make decisions. There are 5 types of stations throughout the Metrorail. They are: above ground center platforms, above ground side platforms, below ground center platforms, below ground side platforms and transfer stations. Transfer stations are a combination of any of the above and below ground platforms. Every station has a pylon to identify the stations which entail the station name and is clearly visible from the street. The pylons are Metro brown in color, backlit letters and Metro "M", has the color of the line near the top and has Braille/raised letter tactile signs placed at the ADA required height. Audible voice recordings are not required on the pylons. The presentation will be sent to the committee electronically.

Debbie Brown stated that there needs to be more Braille/raised letter signs throughout the inside of the station that tells blind customers where the exits are and where escalators are located.

Ms. Otto-Anderson stated that Metro is meeting and exceeding the ADA requirements for signage.

Mr. Posner asked if the signage will inform customers of which elevator to use when directing them while traveling between different colored rail line directions.

Mr. Gray responded yes to Mr. Posner's question and stated that it will be incorporated in Metro's standards.

Current signage projects for stations to be improved by the end of 2010 are Brookland Ave., Dupont Circle, Farragut North, Fort Totten, Judiciary Square, Metro Center, Rhode Island Ave., Silver Spring, Takoma and Union Station. Architectural design and specific details of the information that will be included on the signs were also discussed.

Also shown were the new MetroAccess signs that will be located at MetroAccess stops. The signs will be installed after MetroAccess completes a survey of where to install them. It is believed that there will be 83 installed initially. The Bus Planning Department will determine location of the sign placements.

Mr. Posner suggested that the signs be placed near hospitals and shopping malls.

Mr. Sheehan suggested that the MetroAccess subcommittee discuss and advise Metro of proposed sign placements.

Ms. Otto-Anderson suggested that the committee make a list of where they think the signs should be placed and present it to Metro.

Mr. Semelfort stated that the New York Transit System has a similar placement of signs at airports, malls, Amtrak stations, etc....

Ms. Brown suggested that tactile Braille/raised letter signs be added to the bus stops also.

Mr. Gray continued to inform the committee that the new MetroAccess sign is designed to complement the new bus flag signs that will be placed later this year and will be placed on the same pole below the new flag. New fare charts will be placed throughout the system as well. By contract, neighborhood maps, mezzanine bus information maps and bus shelter maps will be upgraded every 2 years.

Mr. Posner suggested that a station line map be included in bus bays.

Mr. Gray stated that there will be signs that remind customers to use a SmaTrip card when exiting station parking areas. Rail prohibition signage placed inside of all railcars show restrictions for no eating, drinking, audio/video without earphones, littering, dangerous or flammable items and no animals except for service animals.

Mr. Posner stated that the prohibition signs are not in all railcars and suggested inspection of the railcars to identify those without the signs.

Mr. Gray stated that he is in the process of creating a 200+ page standard signage manual which will be completed by July 1, 2010. The manual standardizes all of the signage for all of the stations throughout the system. The current signage project for upgrades is the red line signage project. The stations to be improved by the end of 2010 are Brookland Ave., Dupont Circle, Farragut North, Fort Totten, Judiciary Square, Metro Center, Rhode Island Ave., Silver Spring, Takoma and Union Station.

Mr. Sonnenstraul requested information about the signage level heights while on the rail. He also suggested that more signs be installed, that there are directional arrows on the signs and Braille signage is consistent. He also wanted to know if the "Metro brown" color of the signs are ADA compliant.

Mr. Gray stated that the height of the signs are designed so that customers who are sitting down can look out of the railcar window and be able to read them which meets ADA requirements. The number of signs will be increased along the track bed.

Darrell Drake reiterated that the brown signs may be a challenge for people with low vision, tunnel vision or Usher's Syndrome to see colors at night time.

### **Q'Pod Demonstration**

There was a Q'Pod securement system demonstration that took place which enabled committee members to take part in accessing the system while it was installed on the bus. There was very good feedback from the committee. Although the space is constrained, the committee expressed that they preferred the new Q'Pod system versus the current securement system.

### **Old Business/New Business**

Mr. Sheehan informed the committee that the next AAC monthly meeting will be held on July 12, 2010 and he will not be present during the meeting.

Debbie Brown stated that she will email the bus idling motion to the committee. She would like to request an oversight committee to study the effects of bus idling for a minimum of 3 months. The results should be reported to the committee upon completion of the study. She expressed concern that a lot of buses idling present a safety issue for the blind community. Dates for the motion study will be from August 1, 2010 to November 1, 2010. She requested information of who will be leading the committee and what their plans are for the study. It is requested that a full report be presented to the committee at the November meeting.

The motion was voted on and passed by the committee.

Ms. Otto-Anderson stated that a copy of the press release concerning MetroAccess and fares. The MOU is still being reviewed by counsel. She suggested that the committee continue to operate under the guidelines of the old MOU until the new MOU is completed. The Office of ADAP is currently gathering information and working on ways to improve announcements on the trains.

Susan Holland stated that they are looking for 2 AAC members and 2 individuals from the disability community to serve as judges in selecting someone to be rewarded with this year's Richard Hedding Award. She would like to add a report about security concerns at the Prince Georges Plaza station and would like to know what security measures are being taken to ensure safety at other Metro stations added as a future AAC agenda item.

Ms. Matchett requested information of where the AAC gets its mandate to serve.

Ms. Otto-Anderson stated that there is a mandate to have a disability advisory committee.

Ms. Brown suggested that a subcommittee be formed to discuss website accessibility. She will create a list of specifics to present to Metro staff.

## **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.