

Accessibility Advisory Committee

**Meeting Minutes
September 13, 2010**

Committee Introductions

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

Review of Agenda and Minutes

No new agenda items added. Paul Semelfort added the statistics for MetroAccess to the minutes. Minutes were accepted as written.

MetroAccess Subcommittee Report

Paul Semelfort gave the Committee an overview of the MetroAccess performance report that was presented during the August Subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Semelfort stated safety issues were also discussed during the last Subcommittee meeting; e.g. vehicle inspections, cell phone use by drivers, and securing mobility devices. Mr. Leland Peterson will be presenting the Subcommittee with safety initiatives and practices during the September Subcommittee meeting. The Subcommittee supported the proposed “No-Pay” policy but agreed the policy still needs some fine-tuning.

Mr. Semelfort stated that a call-drop update was given by Ryan Parr in the last Subcommittee meeting and testing is in place to find out the reason for dropped calls.

Mr. Semelfort stated he’d like to refer the “No-Strand” policy back to the Subcommittee for further consideration because there are still some lingering questions and concerns regarding the policy. Both the “No-Pay” and “No-Strand” policies were referred back to the MetroAccess Subcommittee per unanimous Committee vote.

AAC Governance

Christian Kent provided an overview to the Committee explaining the WMATA Board’s (the Board) position of wanting to create a direct-reporting relationship with the AAC, which will function similar to the Rider’s Advisory Council (RAC).

Mr. Kent stated that if the Board approved the AAC's report relationship with the Board, the Committee will increase its exposure and involvement, but there will also be some things that will inherently be different from the way things are presently. For example, the level of access the Committee will have to the Board will increase; the weight of the issues/concerns presented to the Board will increase, etc. Once the full meaning of the Committee reporting to the Board becomes apparent, the Bylaws will be different than what is currently in place.

Mr. Kent suggested to the Committee that they submit a letter in writing to the General Manager stating their recommendations of items they'd like to see in the Bylaws for the future governance to the Board.

Mr. Posner asked in what ways can a letter to the General Manager be submitted and Mr. Kent replied that a formal letter can be submitted directly or it can be submitted through WMATA staff via email to the GM with a copy to each Committee member.

Mr. Brownell asked instead of revising the current Bylaws, where "General Manager" is referenced, can it simply be replaced with the "Board of Directors" in the present Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Mr. Kent explained that the Board is pleased with the structure of the RAC and by using the RAC's Bylaws as a template, they will be able to ensure the AAC's processes and functions the same as that of the RAC's.

Mr. Kent suggested that the Committee submit their review of the proposed Board Bylaws to the Board, as was disseminated to the Committee by Mr. Brownell. Mr. Brownell also wanted to know the reason behind having the Committee sign a financial disclosure statement.

Mr. Sheehan asked how the AAC can ensure the suggestions from the Bylaws Subcommittee get addressed and Mr. Kent explained that the AAC will have opportunities to voice concerns and suggestions to General Counsel for interpretation and work out some of the process issues. Mr. Kent went on to explain that the AAC will now have a voice coming from the Board Secretary's office expressing the concerns brought forth from the Committee to ensure the issues are getting addressed and actions are being taken.

Ms. Callahan asked if there was a timeline in place as to when the Board would like a response from the AAC. Mr. Kent stated that the Board was not expecting the Committee to see this change as anything but positive but stated that since the Committee has some concerns, he suggests the Committee take the time to submit a letter to the General Manager to forward to the Board, voicing the Committee's concerns. Final resolution from the Board should be passed during the October 28th Board Meeting.

Mr. Banerjee asked if the Board of Directors will now appoint potential AAC members instead of the General Manager. Mr. Kent stated that the General Manager would be along the chain of reviewing applicants and making recommendations for appointment, but the Board will have the final approval and appointment of new members to the AAC. Mr. Young questioned if the AAC has the authority to refuse the Board's request that the AAC report directly to them and Mr. Kent stated he is unaware of any mechanism by which the AAC can choose not to abide by a Board decision. But Mr. Kent stated the AAC always has the ability to express any concerns or opposition they have with this decision made by the Board. Mr. Kent went on to explain that the decision was made to give the AAC more of a voice and the Board would be interested in knowing the concerns of the Committee. Mr. Kent reiterated that the Committee submits a letter in writing, to the General Manager, highlighting any concerns and any recommendations and/or suggestions regarding the current Bylaws.

Ms. Lutter stated she agreed with Mr. Young's comments and understands and sees the benefits of this Committee having the ability to do more and to be on the same level of as the RAC by reporting directly to the Board. Ms. Lutter also explained that having prior experience with having to sign financial disclosure statements only means the authority wants to ensure that Committee members will not have any conflicts of interests while serving.

Ms. Singer stated she believes it will be beneficial and it will add more visibility and hopes it will add more productivity from the Committee and the Authority, but stated it is important that the Committee know what the Board's vision of this Committee is and what direction they are trying to go with this Committee.

Comment from Paul Semelfort: I'm looking particularly at #6 [of the revisions to the Board Bylaws], Attendance & Community Meetings, while I guess that is expected as a part of that role, I would hope that accommodations are made because it is something that would be added on if we are brought to the level of reporting to the Board. Some may be retired and may have more time to do that, some are not public speakers, some have full-time careers and other medical issues that makes this non-negotiable to do all the extra work and that may be of high concern and may turn-off people. Some accommodation and balance is needed particularly with #6.

Phil Posner motioned that the Bylaws Subcommittee draft a letter to the GM comparing the AAC's Bylaws and MOU to the RAC's Bylaws and MOU to highlight the differences. The motion passed by the Committee.

Public Comment Period

Audience member, Emily Fogg, voiced her concern about shuttle bus service for elevator outages. Ms. Fogg stated often times she ends up waiting an hour for a shuttle

bus to arrive and would like WMATA to look into more efficient ways in providing shuttle service.

Audience member, Dennis O'Conner, also voiced his concern about shuttle bus service for elevator outages. He stated that he is unable to travel to and from work, which is near Union Station, because of the Capital Improvement Project to rehab the elevators at Union Station. He also voiced his frustration about his troubles in being unable to contact the station manager at Union Station to request a shuttle because the call button on the elevator was blocked. He said the Authority has a disorganized manner of dispatching shuttle buses and no one (street supervisors) knows where to dispatch the shuttle to pick him up.

Ms. Singer shared with Mr. O'Conner that Dave Lacosse from Elevators/Escalators addressed the Committee in August regarding elevator outages and it was explained in detail as to why removing both elevators from service was the most efficient and quickest way to get the elevators back in service in a timely manner.

Audience member, Doris Ray, stated her concern with the overuse of the street elevator at the Court House Metrorail station stating that the elevator is consistently out of service. She stated that priority is not given to individuals with disabilities and senior citizens and would like the committee to look into this issue. Ms. Ray also asked that the committee review elevator redundancy at older Metrorail stations.

Communications Plan for Upcoming Changes to MetroAccess Fare Structure and Service Area

Selene Faer Dalton-Kumins gave the Committee an overview of the upcoming changes to MetroAccess Fare Structure. Ms. Dalton-Kumins stated around the beginning of October, MetroAccess is intending to mail out a number of different hard copy pieces of information detailing the fare changes, which will include the new edition of the newsletter, Access Matters. Seat drops in MetroAccess vehicles and the new Customer Guide is intended to be sent out reflecting the new fare information as well. Updated Easy-Pay brochures are in the works as well. Appointments will be set up within the next few weeks with the Centers for Independent Living for MetroAccess to conduct meetings to answer any questions regarding the new fare policy. November 1st is the projected implementation date of the new fare changes. Ms. Dalton-Kumins stated that due to a delay in technological changes that need to be made, the fare increase was not implemented as previously intended.

Ms. Dalton-Kumins explained that MetroAccess fares will now be based on the distance and time of day a customer travels as of November 1st. The fare will cost the twice the amount if the same trip was taken on fixed route service but won't exceed the \$7 maximum cap. Similar technology is being put in place as that of the Trip Planner on Metro's website which will allow customers to plan their trips.

Fare collection has been addressed as a concern with the Subcommittee. Concerns like customers refusing to pay their fare and taking advantage of the system is one major concern. A new policy is in place because of the concerns voiced by the subcommittee; for example: if a customer refuses to pay upon the vehicle's arrival to their home, the customer will not be accommodated and will not ride. Since the customer will be at home, which is a safe environment, the customer will not be stranded. If a customer is taking a return trip and refused to pay or is unable not pay for some reason, the customer will be transported home and will receive a warning for the first infraction of the policy and the second infraction will result in a week's suspension from the service. Additional infractions will result in additional weeks of suspension as other issues are handled within the Abusive Behavior Policy. This new policy will be strongly enforced and will be shared through outreach practices.

Ms. Dalton-Kumins also mentioned that WMATA is working to eliminate the use of tokens and farecards on MetroAccess. The reason for that is because the fare for MetroAccess is no longer a fixed fare but will now be a variable fare and there will be no way for customers to utilize the fixed fare media (tokens) without combining it with cash. The goal of the elimination of tokens is to make the fare payment easier, currently only cash or payments through the Easy-Pay system are being accepted. As a result of this change, Metro Sales Offices will have the ability to allow customers to add money to Easy-Pay accounts using cash or credit cards. The first pilot location is planned to open November 1st. No location was given as of yet.

Customers who traveled into the non-ADA portions of MetroAccess' old service area before the Board's vote in June, between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010, are grandfathered in to be able to continue making those same trips outside of the current service area and outside of the current service hours. However, everyone else is now traveling inside the service area and hours.

Mr. Posner motioned that the full Committee approve the Fare Policy that was just presented by Ms. Dalton-Kumins, which was previous approved by the subcommittee. The motion passed.

Ms. Dalton-Kumins reiterated that communications will begin on October 1st in various methods.

- Information sessions for MetroAccess customers and other members of the general public
- Direct mail/distribution of information materials to current MetroAccess customers, including updated MetroAccess Customer Guide and Access Matters Newsletter (which will be available in Braille and alternative formats)
- Seat drops in MetroAccess vehicles
- Automated telephone calls to current MetroAccess customers

- Hold messages on MetroAccess phone lines
- Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System
- MetroAccess Web site w/ new information and Q&As
- MetroAccess e-alert
- News release

Mr. Sheehan asked for those customers who receive federal subsidy, is there a way to split the fare on a SmarTrip card to use for MetroAccess and fixed route and Ms. Dalton-Kumins replied that it is possible.

Rail Station Security

Captain Leslie Campbell addressed the Committee and provided information regarding station security at the Prince George's Plaza Metrorail station. Captain Campbell stated police presence has increased at the station and the green line as well. The patrol tactics include deploying plain clothes officers as well as uniformed officers, the installation of video cameras, talking to station managers and asking for their assistance in reporting suspicious activity, looking at crime statistics. Captain Campbell also informed the committee that projects to increase lighting and partnering with police in local jurisdictions are already underway.

Ms. Holland commended the Transit Police's efforts to increase police presence and its project to partner with local police departments.

Mr. Dowling asked Captain Campbell about the recently installed security system at Gallery Place. Captain Campbell stated the security system was put in place by Gallery Place security and was not done by WMATA.

Old Business/New Business

Mr. Semelfort stated there have been a few attacks on MetroAccess vehicles and requested a safety presentation for the next subcommittee meeting.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.