

## **Accessibility Advisory Committee**

**Meeting Minutes  
December 6, 2010**

### **Committee Introductions**

Patrick Sheehan, Chairman of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

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

Mr. Sheehan welcomed Committee members to the meeting and proceeded to address items listed on the meeting agenda.

### **Review of Agenda and Minutes**

No additions were added to the agenda and the October 4<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes were approved as written.

Per Committee vote, the next AAC meeting will be held on Monday, January 10, 2011, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month.

### **Tribute to Doris Matchett**

Sincere and heartfelt comments were shared from Committee members regarding Ms. Matchett's ongoing commitment to the AAC and her selfless efforts in improving transportation for persons with disabilities.

Mr. Sheehan stated that Ms. Matchett was one who was always firm but also respectful, courteous and professional as she chaired the MetroAccess Subcommittee and stated he has a great deal of respect for Ms. Matchett.

Mr. Semelfort shared his thoughts about Ms. Matchett by stating that she taught him a lot about humanity and always stressed the importance of taking care the customers and making sure their needs are being met and to treat them with respect and courtesy.

Ms. Holland stated Ms. Matchett's integrity stood out the most to her. Ms. Holland stated that although Ms. Matchett worked for the customers, she never hesitated to compliment or acknowledge staff on a job well done. Ms. Holland also stated that Ms. Matchett was one of the first in the travel training program and benefited immensely from the training and began utilizing the fixed route service instead of relying on MetroAccess service.

Ms. Bellamy stated Ms. Matchett was a very special person who left quite a legacy behind. Ms. Bellamy states Ms. Matchett touched a lot of people and helped a lot of people and will be missed.

Mr. Posner stated having worked with her on the AAC as well as with the MS Society; he never realized how hard it was for her until he went to visit her. Mr. Posner stated how amazing it was to see her make every meeting and always worried about others.

Mr. Sheehan asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of Ms. Doris Matchett.

### **MetroAccess Subcommittee Report**

Paul Semelfort gave the Committee an overview of the MetroAccess performance report that was presented during the November MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting. Mr. Semelfort stated there will be no Subcommittee meeting in December.

Phase 2 of the fare increase has been postponed as stated by Omari June in the prior Subcommittee meeting. The implementation date is now undetermined due to some technical issues but customers will be informed of the new implementation date once determined.

Leland Petersen along with Carolyn Bellamy have given updates on the continuing dispatch and driving training issues in hopes to improve service for customers and will continue to provide updates as information becomes available.

### **Communications Plan for Blue/Yellow Line Realignment**

Barbara Richardson, the AGM for Customer Service Communication & Marketing, presented the communications plan for the blue and yellow line realignment to the Committee.

Ms. Richardson stated the purpose of the presentation is to seek the input from the Committee to be sure ideas from the Committee are included in the plan. The proposed

changes are to shift 3 trains on the blue line from Franconia-Springfield to the yellow line that will serve the Greenbelt station and shift 3 trains on the orange line from Vienna or West Falls Church that will serve Largo Town Center station.

Ms. Richardson tests on messaging are also being done for effective ways to communicate these changes to customers and ensure a smooth transition when changes take place.

Ms. Brown stated how essential it will be to have consistent stop announcements made throughout the system to inform customers of the changes, particularly customers with disabilities, and hopes this takes place when implemented.

Ms. Richardson stated the approach to these proposed changes is to develop customer focused messages and to clearly describe the changes to customers. Another approach is to anticipate and mitigate any potential problems and challenges.

Ms. Richardson stated that this information has been presented to the Riders Advisory Council (RAC) along with the Jurisdictional Coordinating Committee (JCC) and that currently WMATA is conducting an internal audit as well as external research and developing a communications and design concept that will be developed in conjunction with an overall project management plan. Finally, the plan is to present the plan to the Board and should have a draft proposal of the entire plan during the month of December and Ms. Richardson sought feedback and suggestions from the Committee.

Mr. Brownell stated it'd be helpful to know the changes in any ridership patterns to show what the reason was for proposing these changes.

Ms. Callahan stated that the accessible route, including the elevators, escalators, the shuttle bus location, etc. is identified on the new station maps to be designed with this proposed plan and is available in an accessible format, for example, design the map using cardinal directions instead of a visual map.

Ms. Lutter reiterated and stressed the importance of announcements and how imperative they are to be made. Mr. Sheehan stated the Next Train System gives you real-time information for the rail system by calling the Customer Information line at 202.637.7000.

Mr. Dowling stated that the deaf and hard of hearing communities need an increase and better visual information available in rail stations as well as in the railcars. Mr. Dowling also stated that signage needs to be enlarged and installed at eye level for customers and adjust the color scheme to enhance its visibility.

Mr. Drake reiterated Mr. Dowling's comment and agreed increased signage is needed because all too often the Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) are not functioning and displaying a blank screen. Mr. Drake went onto explain how frustrating it can be if someone were to get on the wrong train then have to backtrack to get on the correct train if proper signage is not installed.

Mr. Posner stated all of the different types of accessible features needed to serve each disability; the first being tactile signage, efficient lighting and announcements for the blind and visually impaired; the second being better signage displays (PIDS) and lighting for the deaf and hard of hearing, etc. Mr. Posner also stressed the importance of travel training and how it has helped numbers of customers with disabilities travel independently. He stated that retraining may be necessary to those individuals who currently travel throughout the system using the same paths of travel each day to assist them with learning a new route or routes that may come with these proposed changes to the rail system. Mr. Posner stated these changes should be done and explained in the simplest way possible and used the recent fare increase as an example of how easily the information was confusing to those individuals with cognitive disabilities. Mr. Posner also questioned whether or not the 7000 series railcars would be available when the Dulles Rail Extension Project is completed.

Audience member, Doris Ray, stated she recognizes the reason(s) for these proposed changes and also agrees with all of the previous comments made by the Committee. Ms. Ray stated opinions should be sought from those individuals to be affected by these changes, particularly those who reside and work in Northern VA and recommended the Centers for Independent Living and The Arc of Northern VA.

Ms. Richardson stated mid-year of 2011 is the expected date for these changes to take effect but that all depends on when the actual overall plan is approved and stated she should be able to provide an update to the Committee around March.

### **Public Comment(s)**

Audience member, Patrice Means-Marlow, stated having trouble with finding the MetroAccess vehicle. She stated being left by a MetroAccess vehicle but the driver didn't bother to get out of the van to find her; door to door service was not provided. Ms. Allison Anderson stated she'd address Ms. Means-Marlow's concern privately.

Audience member, Doris Ray, addressed the removal of payphones agenda item and stated her opposition of the removal of the phones. She stated that everyone does not own a cellular phone and indicated that there are times are inoperable because of no

signal, dead battery, etc. and stated that the payphones should stay in place for safety reasons. Ms. Ray also stated payphones should remain in place in the event a customer may need to call a taxi from a station that does not have a designated taxi-stand where those vehicles frequent.

Ms. Ray requested again that redundant elevators are needed at older stations, particularly Court House, because the elevator is consistently out of service and abused by customers who don't necessarily need it and it's unavailable to those who do need it. Lastly, Ms. Ray stated lighting enhancements are needed in rail stations because most stations are not maintained properly.

### **Elevator/Escalator Reliability Discussion**

Dave Lacosse shared the Elevator/Escalator Assessment presentation that was presented to the Board in October with the Committee.

Mr. Lacosse stated that an audit was conducted that reviewed 30 escalators and 9 elevators from 4 rail stations; Woodley Park, Bethesda, Dupont Circle and Foggy Bottom, and noted the findings from the audit.

Mr. Lacosse shared next steps that are underway with the Office of Elevators and Escalators; escalator replacement at Foggy Bottom began in November and escalator replacement at Dupont Circle to begin in the first quarter of 2011.

Lastly, Mr. Lacosse shared the monthly elevator/escalator statistics from September 16<sup>th</sup>-October 15<sup>th</sup>: the overall system availability for elevators was 95.9% and 89.4% for escalators. The scheduled availability which includes capital improvements and schedule outages was 96.8% for elevators and 91.3% for escalators. The mean time between failures in hours was 390.4 for elevators and 147.4 for escalators. The mean time to repair in hours was 13.1 for elevators and 14.0 for escalators. The total number of elevator failures was 355 and 2,621 for escalators.

Ms. Callahan requested that all new escalators and any new staircases installed have the yellow contrasting on the edge of the steps.

Ms. Brown stated she has written a recommendation to be approved by the Committee to be submitted to the General Manager regarding customers being issued a free bus ride voucher to customers in the event all elevators and escalators are out of service at a particular station. Ms. Brown stated she will forward her recommendation to the Committee for review.

Ms. Singer stated there is a major need for escalators and an elevator at the Brookland station on the Catholic University side and recommended contacting the developer that is currently doing a redevelopment plan in the area mentioned. Mr. Lacosse stated he'd present Ms. Singer's request to the appropriate office that reviews adjacent construction.

Mr. Posner suggested that Ms. Brown and Ms. Singer develop a motion voicing their suggestions. Ms. Singer agreed.

Mr. Posner asked if there was a warning system in place to warn when an escalator is about to go out of service. Mr. Lacosse stated a warning system is in place on the escalator itself and the station manager should be alerted in his kiosk.

### **Segway Presentation (Automatic Balance Wheeled Conveyance)**

Gernae Weaver from the Office of ADAP and Officer Martin Murray from MTPD shared information regarding the proper procedures and what is needed to operate segways within the Metrorail system.

Ms. Weaver explained that customers who use segways as a mobility who wish to operate them throughout the Metrorail system must apply for the Reduced Fare Program and participate in a travel training session (system orientation) with ADAP and MTPD, thus be approved by these offices (if eligible). The customer will then receive a hologram decal to be placed on the horizontal bar of the segway to identify being enrolled in the program. For those customers who use segways as a recreational device that are not enrolled in the Reduced Fare Program must follow the Bike 'N Ride Guidelines; the segway can only enter the system during non-rush hour and must be pushed/pulled through the system, it cannot be ridden in the system.

Officer Murray added that the orientation is necessary to ensure the customer has the ability to properly use the segway, navigate throughout the system and utilize the accessibility features, i.e. elevators, to ensure the segway is operated safely.

Mr. Sheehan requested to receive the policy/requirements of being able to use a segway in the system.

Ms. Holland questioned if a visitor with a disability who uses a segway as a mobility device wanted to utilize Metro; stated that person may not have the time to participate in the system orientation because of their length of time visiting and wanted to know how would that person go about using the system.

### **MetroAccess Subcommittee Nominations**

Mr. Posner stated since the passing of MetroAccess Subcommittee, Doris Matchett, Subcommittee Vice-Chair, Paul Semelfort, has requested that the full Committee nominate a new Chair and Vice-Chair. Mr. Posner nominated Mr. Semelfort to become the new Chair of the MetroAccess Subcommittee, McKinley Young, seconded the nomination and the Committee voted Mr. Semelfort as the new Chair of the MetroAccess Subcommittee.

Ms. Singer nominated Tapan Banerjee (who was not present) to serve as the Vice-Chair of the MetroAccess Subcommittee. Mr. Posner moved that the Committee vote Mr. Banerjee as the Vice-Chair and the Committee. With a unanimous vote, Mr. Banerjee was voted as the Vice-Chair of the MetroAccess Subcommittee.

### **Removal of Payphones in Rail Stations**

Al Pegram presented the Committee with information regarding the removal of some payphones from some rail stations. Mr. Pegram stated the 10 year contract WMATA had with Verizon is expiring in March 2011. Mr. Pegram sought the Committee's opinions on what should be done regarding the contract.

Ms. Callahan stated the payphones should remain in place for emergency and accessibility purposes and used September 11, 2001 as an example of why the payphones should remain and recommended the Committee put effort to keep the payphones in the system.

Ms. Singer stated the Committee should begin to think of alternatives in the event payphones are removed from the system. Ms. Singer reiterated audience member, Doris Ray's, previous comments about the need to have payphones in place to be able to call a taxi and wondered if at all possible to have a designated, direct taxi phone line to taxi service providers.

Ms. Brown also recommended an alternative to payphones. Mr. Pegram informed the Committee that if the payphones remain in place, it would cost WMATA \$1 million per year to maintain the payphones.

Mr. Posner stated since phones are in every station manager kiosk, could customers with disabilities be allowed to use the phone in the event of an emergency.

Mr. Drake motioned to table the discussion until the January 10<sup>th</sup> meeting before any recommendations are made.

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

Mr. Fleischman questioned who within WMATA determines what projects get approved and funded and suggested that Board members attend these monthly AAC meetings. Mr. Fleischman stated it appears that some programs that are funded such as the Metro Is Accessible Train the Travel Trainers Workshop is one program that those funds could be allocated towards another more useful project elsewhere, especially since there are only 122 people utilizing the program.

Mr. Posner answered that the Board approves projects and recommended that Mr. Fleischman attend Board meetings to voice his ongoing concerns directly to the Board so they can hear Mr. Fleischman's concerns first-hand.

Ms. Singer motioned to table this discussion until the January 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.