



Accessibility Advisory Committee

300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: April 15, 2024

In attendance: Paul Semelfort (Chair), Denise Rush (Vice-Chair), Tajuan Farmer (Second Vice Chair), Vanessa Coles, Rico Dancy, Debbie Fisher, Marcie Goldstein, Steve Kaffen, Sandy Neuzil, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Anu Sharma, AAC Coordinator, started the meeting with announcements, took the rollcall, read the agenda, thereafter, Chair Semelfort moved the meeting forward.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The MAS approved the April 15, 2024, Meeting Agenda as presented.

The MAS approved the March 18, 2024, Meeting Minutes as amended by Sandy Neuzil.

Customer Service, Commendation, and Outreach Reports:

Customer Service Report: Dolan Chittams, MTM, stated there were two outstanding comments from March 4th AAC meeting that needed investigation. The first comment was about an Uber trip, it was resolved, and the customer was provided with helpful information. The second public comment was about customers' wait time for Where is My Ride, which is included in monthly MetroAccess reports. There were no outstanding public comments to be addressed from the March 18th MAS.

Commendation Report: Mr. Chittams stated in March, MetroAccess received a total of 446 commendations as follows: First Transit 82, Transdev 94, MV OCC 103, Challenger 63, Next Maryland 90, MTM 0, Eligibility 1, and Abilities Ride 8.

Outreach Report: Christiaan Blake, Vice President, Access Services, presented to the Sligo Creek Chapter this past Saturday.

Michael Wilson Award and AAC MetroAccess Safety Award:

AAC MetroAccess Safety Award (March): Will Ford, General Manager, First Transit, Capital Heights, presented the award to Dennis Berry, an employee for over four years. He is a model employee, he is always on time, and pays attention to what he does. He is excellent with customers and is what the company stands for. Mr. Berry thanked for the award and stated it is an honor to be working with First Transit.

AAC MetroAccess Safety Award (April): Gina Fletcher, Safety and Training Manager, Challenger Transportation, presented the award to Tyler D, an employee since December 2019. He is a great asset and is always asking questions to further enhance his knowledge and ensures customer safety. He recognizes traffic signs and patterns ahead of time, and recognizes safety concerns for people with disabilities. He has had no preventable

incidents and has not been on drive-cam at all, a reason for him being recognized for this award. Mr. D thanked everyone for the award and his association with Challenger.

Michael Wilson Award: Stacey Jackson, Operations Manager, Challenger Transportation, presented the award to Elias Jamal, an employee since September 2018. He walks in to work with high energy that is contagious. He has received many commendations and one of them was read by Ms. Jackson. He goes above and beyond to ensure customers have extraordinary experience.

AAC By-Laws:

Chair Semelfort started the discussion of the AAC By-Laws, from Article V – Officers, and went through the document line by line for the following sections (A) Chairs, (B) Vice-Chairs, (C) Chairs and Vice-Chairs: (1) Terms of Office, (2) Vacancy, (3) Temporary Vacancies, (4) Elections, (5) Failure to Elect, (6) Eligibility. Chair Semelfort further discussed the last section of this Article (D) Staff Support, invited comments from the Committee on this Article however, there no comments were received.

Chair Semelfort discussed the sections of the next Article, VI – Meetings. The first section of this Article was (A) Regular Meetings, (B) Special Meetings, (C) Quorum (D) Decisions and the Advice of the AAC. Under section A, Meetings, Mr. Sheehan asked for the correct name of the ADAP Office, which Ms. Sharma confirmed and Chair Semelfort corrected in the draft as Systemwide Accessibility. Ms. Coles asked if there is a mention about the Holidays. Chair Semelfort made a note of it to ensure it is covered in the draft under an appropriate heading.

Chair Semelfort discussed the next Article, VII – Agendas, Minutes and Rules of Order. Reviewing all the sections, Chair Semelfort started with points under (A) Agendas. Ms. Neuzil recommended to change MC (Main Committee) to AAC (Accessibility Advisory Committee) throughout the document. Chair Semelfort made the recommended change, and proceeded further with the discussion of the next two sections: (B) Minutes, and (C) Rules of Order. Mr. Kaffen recommended to include the following under Rules of Order: “Every member desiring to speak shall make that request known, such as by raising their hand, or by other means, (i.e., virtual raise hands) and upon recognition by the Chair or his/her designee, shall speak only to the question under debate or at hand.” This new language was added in the document by Chair Semelfort, to be further reviewed by WMATA Counsel. Ms. Coles recommended to include “virtual hand raise”, which was added by Chair Semelfort. Ms. Neuzil corrected Chair Semelfort not to change the paragraph, but the lines of the paragraph, as he had stated while incorporating the recommendations.

Chair Semelfort discussed the next Articles, VIII and IX: Subcommittees, and Bylaws Amendments, respectively. There were no comments or recommendations for the two Articles. Chair Semelfort reviewed the next Article, X – Term of AAC. There were no comments or recommendations for this Article. Chair Semelfort asked about the next steps. Ms. Sharma informed that once the AAC provides the reviewed draft, it will be reviewed by the Leadership, then that draft will be provided to the Legal Counsel for review. Afterwards, the final draft will be provided to WMATA Board, for approval and adoption. The adopted version will be made available to the AAC and will be published on wmata.com

Mr. Kaffen made the following recommendations for some previously reviewed sections, i.e., Emeritus Members. He read his recommendations, as follows: "Only AAC members who have completed their terms, or given an acceptable reason, shall be considered. It is expected that Emeritus designations shall be rare and should not be used to continue the service on the AAC, of a member, who has completed the maximum service, and otherwise would require the hiatus, before re-applying." Chair Semelfort asked Mr. Kaffen to send his comments in an email, so that he could incorporate the language as newly added recommended language. Mr. Kaffen made another recommendation as follows: "After 12 years, the Director of Systemwide Accessibility, in consultation of the Chair of the AAC, may ask, in the event of replacement has not been selected, and is not yet ready to serve, the departing AAC member to serve on a temporary basis, until his or her selection is identified and seated. It is envisioned this temporary selection should be in the realm of months and not an extension through the year and thus be equivalent to re-appointment." These recommendations were suggested under Terms.

Ms. Neuzil stated about the Emeritus, it is important to keep the historical knowledge and it is important to note that the Emeritus does not have voting rights. Ms. Neuzil further stated there is an existing clause about failure to select, as it relates to the second recommendation made by Mr. Kaffen. There was a brief discussion about the Emeritus position. Vice-Chair Rush asked if the time for Public Comments should be in the AAC By-Laws. Mr. Sheehan asked Ms. Sharma if we are following the Board, is that something in their By-Laws? Ms. Sharma informed that she could check on that.

Ms. Fisher recommended to put procedural items in a Policy Manual. She further recommended to include a chart of the AAC members with their end of each term, in the By-Laws. There was a brief discussion about it and the discussion resulted against placing this item in the by-laws. Mr. Sheehan recommended to check the RAC and WMATA Board

to review if members' terms are listed in the by-laws, accordingly, the AAC will follow the process. The term of members is informed to them individually by Ms. Sharma.

Chair Semelfort asked to verify the submission date of the by-laws draft. Ms. Sharma stated the draft should be submitted by the end of AAC Meeting on June 3rd.

Ms. Neuzil asked for clarification about the fourth paragraph of Article VI, Meetings, whether the members of the public could comment only during the Public Comments section of the AAC and the Subcommittee meetings. Mr. Sheehan stated that is during the Public Comments only. Chair Semelfort stated the By-Laws Workgroup had added language "during a prescribed public comment", to clarify the language.

Vice-Chair Rush stated the term of AAC members should not be included in the by-laws, that is a totally different subject. It is important to the members however, members would change with time, which would cause for the document to be reviewed repeatedly.

Ms. Coles asked if there is any language for the public, informing them that they can apply for the AAC. Ms. Sharma informed that anytime there is an opening, the information gets placed on our website, the information is shared with the AAC, jurisdictions are contacted, along with the local disability organizations. The openings are specific to the jurisdictions thus applications would be required from the residents of those jurisdictions. There is a criterion for application, and we need to balance jurisdictions vacancy. Mr. Sheehan also stated that the position is filled as per the vacancy per the jurisdiction, disability must be balanced which can get tricky, and we must have diversity. Ms. Sharma further emphasized about commitment from the applicants to fulfill their responsibilities.

Public Comments:

The first member of the public stated at the last meeting, she was informed someone from MetroAccess would contact her as a follow up on her concerns, however, she has not heard back yet. Mr. Blake informed her that MetroAccess Office had contacted her a few times and left messages, and credit for a few trips was provided to her EZ Pay account. This information was confirmed by Allison Anderson, Operations Manager, MetroAccess. Mr. Blake stated Ms. Anderson will contact her again the next business day.

The second member of the public stated she lives outside the $\frac{3}{4}$ quarter mile of Metro service area. She requested that MetroAccess considers providing service to people who live outside the service area and provide service not only on weekdays but also on weekends. Mr. Blake explained the service on weekdays may differ from the weekend

service. Depending upon the funding matter, the service area will be finalized, and the advocacy of many customers about the service area, is on the record.

The third member of the public stated she does not get notified about the provider ahead of time, whether it will be Uber, a taxi, or MetroAccess. As a result, she ends up canceling her trips, however the cabs still show up and they charge MetroAccess for the canceled rides. She mentioned about an issue concerning getting links for Uber. She mentioned how issues may affect her, particularly, when she asks for supervisor and the employee continues to try to resolve issues. Mr. Blake stated he takes mystery rides, they are sending text messages, if there is an issue with a particular phone number, that could be reviewed. He appreciates the advocacy of the customers and speaks with dozens of customers every day. Any individual incidents would have to be reviewed further.

The fourth member of the public did not speak when recognized.

The fifth member of the public asked about the automated system to book a ride, and asked what should be said if a customer wants to speak with a person. Ms. Anderson stated if a customer should get the digital assistant, and would like to speak with a live agent, they can say Agent, two times, to be directed to a live agent. The member of the public stated she appreciates the text messages and thanked for the service.

Vice Chair Rush asked about the number of approved cards for MetroAccess users. She was told the ID number is never repeated. She was concerned about the number of customers being impacted by the budget. She further asked if temporary cards are also counted in the number. Mr. Blake stated the numbers are not repeated. Over time, people have been eligible, however, if someone is not eligible for any reason, their card number does not come back in the count. There was a brief discussion about the number of people who could be impacted based on the budget depending upon the final decision. Vice Chair Rush thanked Mr. Blake for his question-and-answer period on Saturday, with the Sligo Creek members. Mr. Blake thanked the organization for inviting him to speak about the service.

Ms. Neuzil stated Bridget Doherty spoke with an organization in Reston to provide information. Ms. Neuzil asked if customer emails received to the AAC Chair mailbox come to the AAC. Chair Semelfort stated those should come to us as a part of the report. Ms. Sharma added that if an email is received from a member of the public, it gets shared at the next meeting, and gets referenced in the meeting minutes.

Ms. Coles asked about Tim, and stated calls have been dropped, and asked if it is just for new reservations or is it for modifying a reservation also. She recommended a tutorial for using the website. Mr. Blake stated we have travel training and tutorial is a great idea. In terms of Tim, people can say Agent twice, to speak with an agent. About the dropped calls, we are working on it, particularly, when we have any specific known issues, we try to work on it and take same day reservations. Mr. Blake stated we encourage customers to call earlier in the day. He mentioned about the text messages capability to contact MetroAccess and report incidents as well. Mr. Blake informed that to modify a trip, customers would need to speak with an agent.

Mr. Dancy submitted his concern via an email, as follows: "Last Wednesday, my return trip, Return operator call me hey big guy and that's not my name so they need to learn how to call people by their name. My name is not big guy so please address that." It was forwarded to MetroAccess for review and follow up.

Ms. Goldstein submitted her comments via email: "When Mr. Blake spoke about the automated system where you can say "agent" to get a person on the line. I have some concerns since many of these systems do not understand people that have speech disabilities. My suggestion is to "agent" or press one for an agent." The recommendation was shared with MetroAccess.

Public Comments: phone 202-962-1100, or email MetroAACChair@wmata.com

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.