



# AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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Dear Chair Evans and Members of the Board,

It is my pleasure to present you with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) report for the month of June 2017. The primary issues we reviewed were the platforms at the Braddock Road and Rhode Island Avenue stations, and the AAC's FY2017 accomplishments.

### **Issue of the Month**

#### Braddock Road and Rhode Island Avenue Stations Platforms

Metro outlined its short-term mitigation strategies and long-term construction plans to address platform-to-train gap issues found along certain points of the Braddock Road and Rhode Island Metrorail stations platforms. The issues originated during the initial construction of both stations. Metro has a plan to fix the platforms at each station; however, actual construction is still some time off. In the short-term, Metro has implemented the following mitigating remedies: painting "watch your step" messages approximately every 15 feet along both sides of the platform (the message is located directly on the bumpy tiles); providing station announcements, and announcing reminders by train operators for customers to watch their step. More recently, Metro staff have identified the areas on both sides of the platform at each station where level boarding is optimal. These areas will soon be identified as "optimal boarding area" painted directly on the platform. The optimal boarding area signage, which will be bright yellow with black lettering, will be located behind the bumpy tiles on the platform. The long-term plan to fix the platforms at both station could potentially involve performing a complete dismantling and reconstruction of the platforms; however, other options are still being considered at this time.

The AAC supports the short-term efforts and the progress toward a long-term solution. The AAC advises that Metro add information to the website and shares these upcoming additions to the platforms with the Commissions on Disabilities in Alexandria, Va., and Washington, D.C.

#### AAC's 2017 Accomplishments

In Fiscal Year 2017, the AAC advised Metro on a variety of issues related to serving all customers, particularly those with disabilities. Below are some of the topics, recommendations, and kudos aimed at enhancing the riding experience of customers:

1. Back2Good Initiative - The AAC expressed support for the SafeTrack and other initiatives in the General Manager's Back2Good portfolio, as viable strategies for

expeditiously getting the system back on track and restoring customer confidence and ridership in the system.

2. **Emergency Exercises** - The AAC believes that a comprehensive training program for staff and first responders is a critical aspect of Metro's safety plan. Over the last year, the AAC candidly discussed its concerns about aspects of Metro's planned emergency exercises with the GM/CEO, the Board, and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Fire Department Passenger Rail Safety Subcommittee. The AAC remains firm on its recommendation that Metro should amend the requirements for the liability waivers, so that first responder can get the necessary training to be skilled in working with the disability community during an emergency.
3. **Pentagon City Pedestrian Tunnel** – The AAC objected to the opening of the pedestrian tunnel adjacent to the Pentagon City station because it lacks access for Metro customers who use mobility devices. The AAC believes that the entrance violates the terms of the lawsuit brought forth by Richard Hedding under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Nonetheless, for the safety of all customers, the AAC recommended that Metro adds signage and information on the website to advise customers that the tunnel is not accessible for mobility devices and therefore should not be used as an exit or in an emergency.
4. **Between-Car Barriers** – To ensure that all customers, including those who are blind or low vision, are safe when traveling on the 7000-series rail cars and do not view the area between the railcars as an entry way, the AAC tested and recommended that Metro adopts the traditional link chain barrier on all 7000 series railcars. This change would make the series consistent with all railcars in Metro's fleet.
5. **MetroAccess ID Program** – The ability to have autonomous movement in every aspect of life is the hallmark of self-reliance for people with disabilities. The AAC views the new MetroAccess ID card as a gigantic step forward for customers with disabilities because it allows independent access to Metrobus and Metrorail for the customers and their personal care attendants. The new cards work like all other SmarTrip® cards, in that the customer will be able to add value, can be used for riding on participating jurisdictional bus services, and can be used to pay for parking.
6. **Station Lighting** – The AAC continued to endorse lighting improvements as an approach to improving safety throughout the system. In partnership with National Capital Citizens with Low Vision, the AAC recommended lighting standards met one-on-one with the CEO, and vigorously advocated for

maintaining lighting in the FY2017 budget. The AAC gives kudos to Metro's lighting team and staff for keeping the item on the budget.

7. Metrorail Platform Lights - The AAC advised on another safety issue in lighting, which was to change the color of platform edge lights to the color white throughout the system. The AAC applauded the move, which made platform lights uniform, more visible for all customers, and provided a greater contrast for customers with certain disabilities.
8. Customer Communication – The AAC believes that focusing on customer communication is important to the long-term success of the Metro system. To ensure that the channels of communication are open for all customers, the AAC recommended Metro use whiteboards (white boards with erasable ink), as a way to communicate effectively with people who are deaf or hard of hearing. This cost effective low-tech option is available at every Metrorail station kiosk to facilitate communication between Station Managers and customers. During an emergency, the tool will be used to post pre-printed alert messages to communicate with all customers.
9. Beacon Technology - The AAC continued to support the development of a station wayfinding system. With advances in technology, the second phase of the project will improve wayfinding information into the rail system by adding real-time iBeacon messages. The iBeacon messages will deliver audio broadcasts along the route for customers who are Blind, Low-Vision, or Deaf-Blind using the Metrorail system. Wayfinding information is being developed for the following stations: Metro Center, L'Enfant Plaza, Navy Yard, Rosslyn, Fort Totten, and Silver Spring. This work represents Phase 2 of the project.
10. Alternative Transportation Programs – Accessible transportation options are essential to the quality of life for people with disabilities. The AAC advised on the criteria for the Abilities-Ride solicitation. The AAC recommended that all services be available by telephone in addition to smartphone apps.
11. Board Engagement – The AAC believes that customer engagement is the best investment Metro can make in its strategy to increase ridership. Through the Chairman's oral and written reports, the AAC has invited members of the Board to attend AAC meetings. This year the AAC was pleased to welcome seven Board members to its meetings. The AAC appreciates the healthy dialogue with the Board and looks forward to having other Board members attend the AAC meetings as well.
12. Relationship with Metro – The AAC recognizes that the modern business environment is ever changing. It is leadership that sets the pace, destination, and direction in an organization. The AAC appreciates the proactive outreach to

the disability community and the general public by the GM/CEO. The AAC looks forward to this continuing this partnership.

Sincerely,



Patrick Sheehan  
Chair