



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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October 1, 2018

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 September 2018. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Abilities-Ride Program Updated Scope of Work, 2) Elevator/Escalator Update, and 3) Cashless Bus Pilot and Expansion

Issues of the Month

Abilities-Ride Scope of Work (SOW)

The AAC received an update on the Abilities-Ride Program Updated Scope of Work (SOW), produced by Metro in advance of expanding the program throughout the entirety of the MetroAccess service area. The AAC is interested in having enhanced customer service provided by the Abilities-Ride cab company drivers. Specific items of importance to the AAC include: a) improved customer service by the providers, b) companies have better booking applications, and c) the AAC also recommends that rides are distributed via a central location versus customers having to call specific provider.

Elevator/Escalator Update

Staff provided data on the availability of escalators and elevators. A major problem presented was water intrusion to the street elevators and time needed for parts replacement. The AAC asked about the possibility of having the mezzanine to street elevators default position be the street to protect passengers in inclement weather. Staff said that this change might also serve to slow water intrusion and would move forward with testing.

Cashless Bus Pilot and Expansion

The AAC received an update on the Cashless Pilot and Bus Expansion. The AAC is interested to learn the impact on customers affected, and very concerned that, if expanded, this initiative could have a significant negative impact on low income transit users as well as seniors and people with disabilities. Specific items of interest to the AAC include: i) data obtained from the study regarding goals for dwell time and total trip time; ii) survey results in the next one to two months, iii) results of the public hearing that was held on September 17, 2018 and the plans for a pilot to test the effect of just eliminating SmarTrip® card re-loading and the use of larger slots that are at a more usable height for both wheelchair and ambulatory customers for paying with cash.

The AAC also requests data from the subject routes: currently how many customers use cash to pay their fares, and how many customers use cash to load their SmarTrip® cards versus other options, e.g. Metrorail stations, online accounts, and/or retail stores. The AAC is also interested in determining how ridership would be affected if certain routes became cashless permanently and how much dwell time and trip time will bus service save with the cashless bus routes versus just elimination of SmartTrip loading?

The AAC strongly opposes implementation of cashless bus routes before a Title VI analysis is performed. The AAC also strongly opposes implementation of cashless bus routes before a complete analysis of the pilot is presented with data and implications for impact on ridership statistics that includes persons with disability and minority populations. The AAC strongly supports a new pilot that tests the effect of maintaining cash payments, while removing the ability to re-charge SmarTrip® cards on the bus. Further, we recommend expanding the paper-money cash-slots in size and appropriate height for both, wheelchair and ambulatory customers, to improve the speed with which cash can be used.

We also suggest an announcement, requesting exit through the rear door, and also working with jurisdictions to maintain open paths for buses by removing impediments that have been placed in the route such as delivery trucks and large multicity commuter buses.

Finally we would like to re-inforce our request for higher priority seats with arm-rests on the 8000 series cars and retrofitting (if possible) on the 7000 series cars. As stated at the last Board meeting, the current low height of the priority seats, makes it difficult to impossible for seniors and people with muscle weakness to rise from these low seats. We also recommend that you look in to the use of “flip seats” in the wheelchair parking spaces. These type of seats are currently in use in the Metrobus and the DC Circulator systems as well as other transit systems around the country. At the AAC Bus/Rail meeting we had input from customers with short stature requesting that the seats not be raised to too much of a high level. One suggestion was to have the “flip seats” at the level of the current standard seats and the fixed priority seats higher for those with muscle weakness.

Sincerely,

Philip Posner
Chair