



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-962-6060

October 2, 2017

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 2017. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) the Abilities-Ride program; 2) Metro's Trip Planner Voice Application; and 3) Metrobus State of Good Operations plan.

Issue of the Month

Abilities-Ride Program

Metro announced its newest paratransit alternative program for MetroAccess eligible customers, Abilities-Ride.

Metro has partnered with Regency Taxi and Silver Cab to offer taxi services to MetroAccess eligible customers taking trips that begin and end within the Maryland portions of the MetroAccess service area. The program will offer same-day on-demand service, direct trips, and in some cases lower cost to customers. Customers will pay the first \$5, with Metro funding the next \$15 in fare. Any remaining fare will be the responsibility of the customer. Customers can pay for services with either cash or credit cards. Reservations can be made via phone, smart phone app, or website. Both taxi providers will offer wheelchair-accessible vehicles and accommodate customers traveling with a personal care assistant and/or a service animal at no additional charge.

Although the AAC is concerned about the four-trip per-day trip limit, training; and the lack of some features like door-to-door service; the disability community is thrilled about a new service that offers travel flexibility at a reasonable cost with same-day service, unshared ride and the use of either an smart phone application or phone to make reservations. The Abilities-Ride program seeks to provide an option for customers while ensuring equality across all customers; maintain MetroAccess as a safety net; and improve the travel quality of individuals eligible for MetroAccess. With a round of applause, the AAC thanked Metro for being innovative in its approach to providing greater transportation options for customers with disabilities. The Abilities-Ride program began on Monday, September 18, 2017.

Trip Planner Voice Application

The AAC discussed issues with Metro's Trip Planner voice application system. Metro's Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system is approximately seven years old. The system answers about two million calls a year with the remaining calls being answered by Metro Customer Service Representatives (CSR). All the calls into the Office of

Customer Service fall within three categories: Metrobus information; trip planning; and Metrorail information. Metro has recognized the dependency on the system and is interested in improving the system for all customers.

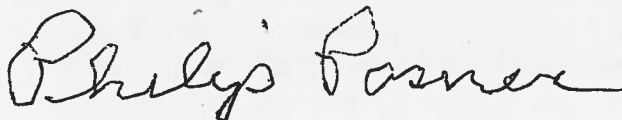
The AAC's challenge with the IVR system is its deficiency in functionality and lack of customer-friendly tools. The current system begins with lots of prompts and often fails to recognize various voice commands. The system also lacks the ability to advance the program to the section or information that would be most helpful to the customer. Additionally, the system is inoperative on weekends and during some holidays, which are the times when CSRs are not available.

Metro is seeking feedback from the disability community on the types of changes that would make the system more user-friendly for all customers, including those with disabilities. Many in the disability community view the IVR system as important to their quality of life. The AAC appreciates the opportunity to give feedback early in the process and plans to provide feedback for Metro's new Trip Planner voice application system. The AAC looks forward to being involved throughout the process to build a new and user-friendly IVR system.

Metrobus – State of Good Operations

The AAC received an update on Metro's FY2018 State of Good Operation proposed bus service changes. In FY2018, Metro is considering service adjustments in all jurisdictions with a goal of maximizing the number of customers who benefit from the changes. Metro will hold hearings on Tuesday, September 26, 2017.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Philip Posner".

Phil Posner
Chair