



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting (Virtual) Minutes: May 4, 2020

Attendees

Present: Phil Posner (Chair), Denise Rush (Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (Second Vice-Chair), Darnise Bush, Tino Calabria, Vanessa Coles, Charlie Crawford, Rico Dancy, Melanie Jackson, Steve Kaffen, Mary Kay McMahon, Phillippa Mezile, Anthony Oberg, Doris Ray, Paul Semelfort, and Patrick Semelfort.

Call to Order

Due to COVID – 19, the AAC meeting was held virtually. Anu Sharma, Accessibility Advisory Committee Coordinator, started the meeting at 5:31 p.m. by taking a roll call, making important announcements, and reading the Agenda. Thereafter, Chair Posner moved the meeting forward.

Approval of Agenda

The meeting agenda was approved.

A Moment of Remembrance for Brian Miller:

Chair Posner, AAC members, and Carol Peredo Lopez, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, paid tribute to the late Brian Miller for his service to the community. Chair Posner and Mr. Sheehan recommended Mr. Miller be recognized with the Hedding Award at the 2020 Access Services Awards Ceremony.

Approval of Board Report and Prior Meeting Minutes

The Board Report was approved as written.

The April 6, 2020, meeting minutes did not get approved due to time constraints.

Summer 2020 Shutdown: Metrorail Planning

Tatiana Kortikova, Project Manager, Capital Improvement Project, provided information about the upcoming Summer 2020 Shutdown - Platform Project, effective May 23rd.

Ms. Kortikova shared an overview of the project. After completion of the project, platforms at Metrorail stations will be safer and more accessible. The extended shutdowns are to improve safety and efficiency and enhance customer experience by replacing slip resistant tiles, LED lighting, large digital displays, and new shelters.

The scope includes platform edge rehabilitation; tile replacement; HVAC replacement; renovation of rooms and break facilities; upgrades of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV), Passenger Information Display Systems (PIDS), KIDS, Public Address (PA) System; concrete crack repairs; and station cleaning, however no upgrades to any facilities outside of station building are included.

Ms. Kortikova informed the committee about the stations on Orange and Silver lines that will be closed for this project. On the Orange line, stations from Vienna to East Falls

Church, and on the Silver line from Wiehle-Reston to East Falls Church will be closed. Ballston, Courthouse, and Rosslyn stations will remain open, whereas Virginia Square and Clarendon stations are closed due to diminished ridership as a result of COVID-19.

Ms. Kortikova provided rail service patterns. From May 23rd, 2020, until fall 2020, all stations on Orange and Silver lines west of Ballston will be fully shutdown. As a result, Ballston will be the terminal station. The Silver Line will be suspended during this time. The Orange and Blue lines will service every 20 minutes on weekdays and every 30 minutes on weekends.

Summer 2020 Shutdown: Metrobus Planning

Nick Perfili, Assistant Planning Manager, and James Hamre, Director, Bus Service Planning and Scheduling, provided an overview about the upcoming shutdown. The bus service plan, effective May 23rd is as follows: Orange Line Local will service between Vienna, Dunn Loring, West Falls Church, and Ballston. Orange Line Express will service between Vienna and Ballston. Silver Line Local service will run between Wiehle-Reston East, Spring Hill, Tysons Corner, and Ballston. ADA Shuttles will be provided upon requests between the impacted stations.

Mr. Oberg asked about the size of the shuttles and if they were wheelchair accessible. Mr. Perfili shared that Coach Buses will be used as shuttles. Mr. Hamre stated that the buses will be accessible, but not for all the mobility devices.

Ms. Ray stated her concerns about McLean station being shut down as it serves central McLean area. Ms. Ray asked how the service demand can be gauged when stations are shut down due to low ridership. Ms. Ray also asked about locations of shuttles at various stations. She had a concern about customers reaching county activities if economic openings happen during the summer-shutdown. Mr. Hamre stated there are many ways to gauge the service demand for stations that were closed in March due to low ridership. The service demand in other areas and jurisdictions ending their stay-at-home orders are valid indicators. The demand is expected to occur over the course of summer. Mr. Perfili stated unlike last summer there will not be any wholesale closure of bus routes. The buses will serve their stops at the various stations. Mr. Perfili stated the shuttles at Vienna will be on the South side at bus bay M, and at Dunn Loring, the shuttles will be bus bay H. Mr. Cowan stated his team is working on making the information available early next week to provide it to customers in a timely manner.

A customer stated the buses may be accessible, however the operators do not take the time to load and unload passengers. Mr. Hamre stated the coach buses are ADA accessible. We will complement the fixed route bus service and assist the on-demand customers. A large number of vehicles will wait for customers to take them to the next point of travel. A whole package of support including signs, shelters, waiting area, and staff will assist customers navigate the system.

Mr. Ariza-Silva shared his experience from the 2018 shutdown. There were lessons learned from 2018 and the service was improved tremendously for 2019 shutdown. For

2020 shutdown, coach buses and ADA vans will provide service to people using mobility devices at every station

Mr. Semelfort asked about MetroAccess fare calculators. Chair Posner reminded that the information was provided in April MAS Meeting.

Continuing with the presentation, Mr. Hamre stated that staff will be available at stations to assist the ADA Customers. The ADA-accessible wheelchair accessible vans (WAVs) and direct station to station services will be provided. Bus stop loading areas with curb cuts/ramps have been designated. There are shelters and canopies at each location with appropriate lighting. Banners, trailblazer, and stop signage in large font and symbols will be available. Staff will be available throughout the service period.

Chair Posner asked about communication with blind and blind-deaf customers. Mr. Cowan shared information about communication efforts. Information will be available on WMATA website, which is 508 compliant. The materials on website will be accessible. The updates will be available via blogs throughout summer. The signage will be in large text. There will be accessibility-trained street teams at stations throughout the summer and they will have white boards available for communication. Being mindful of social distancing, staff would be required to wear the personal protective equipment (PPE). A thought is to point people in the direction of the shuttle since people cannot hand out information. The staff has been trained on interacting with customers. There will be specific signs, color coordinated and larger signs for better visibility, amongst other resources that will be used.

Ms. Kotrikova provided information about parking during the summer shutdown. Dunn Loring and Vienna parking garages will be free for the duration of summer. There will be no customer parking available at East Falls Church Station because most of the parking is available for staging area with equipment. West Fall Church free parking request will be reviewed by the Board in May, this would be reviewed again before the shutdown begins and an update will be shared.

Ms. Ray asked whether buses would service through Route 7, especially in the central McLean area. Mr. Perfili stated the buses will service as usual. The Fairfax Connector is extending service and Metro's 23A and 23C routes would also service the area.

There was a discussion about how people who are blind and/or deaf-blind, would be helped in getting to buses or shuttles at Vienna and Dunn Loring stations. Ms. Ray asked about the signage and communication where the bus bays are spread out and one needs to get on variety of buses, what would be done for people who need sighted-guide while maintaining social distancing. Mr. Cowan will provide an update on this topic. Mr. Sheehan stated AIRA would be helpful. Ms. Peredo Lopez invited recommendations from the Committee, and stated some of the agencies have used batons held by people however it stays clean only until the first use. Chair Posner recommended the use of a 6-foot-long cane that can be held by either ends by two people, with disposable covers that can be peeled off after each use. Ms. Ray stated that is not a safe practice. She further

stated there is no visual contrast for the bus bays at Vienna. Someone who knows the bus bays might still run into difficulty due to the design of the place.

Mr. Dancy stated the Department of Disabilities can help people who are deaf or blind. He asked how deaf or blind people would ride back and forth and how would the communication happen? Chair Posner stated that is why MetroAccess exists.

Ms. Kotrikova provided information about fare vending machines. Most WMATA customers will not be affected because they will be able to load their cards at open stations where the shuttles take them. Customers are recommended to sign up for auto-reload online; add value online, at commuter stores and retail locations. Metro is working with Fairfax and Arlington counties to have Mobile Commuter Store available during the peak hours. More information will be available prior to May 23rd.

Chair Posner thanked the team for providing details about the upcoming summer shutdown.

Public Comments:

A Fairfax County resident raised concerns about insufficient bus service and asked whether carts will be allowed on shuttles. The customer stated residents face economic challenges during this time of pandemic, and transportation options lack for essential needs. She recommended transportation options for ridesharing and offered to email comments to Ms. Peredo Lopez. She asked about transportation bridges between Dunn Loring and Vienna. Mr. Perfili stated there would be a bus connection between Dunn Loring and Vienna which will run every 10 minutes on weekdays and 15 minutes on weekends. Responding to her question, Mr. Perfili clarified that the Coach buses will be used as shuttles and rolling carts would be accommodated just as on the road buses.

Mr. Dancy shared his experience regarding an X2 bus operator not allowing him to board the bus with his cart of food. Mr. Hamre clarified that is a different scenario. The discussion was about shuttle buses to be used for summer shutdown and will accommodate carts. Mr. Hamre also shared the current policy about carts on Metrobus.

Ms. Sharma provided information about how public comments can be received before, after, or during the meeting. Before and after the meetings, comments can be submitted via phone message at 202-962-1100, via email: AACChairMetro@wmata.com. Public comments can be received by joining the meeting via Zoom. This information is also posted on the AAC, BRS, MAS, and Calendar pages at wmata.com

MetroAccess Subcommittee Report:

Mr. Semelfort provided his report and shared the topics that were discussed during April's MAS Meeting. Terrian Williams-Hall, Director, MetroAccess provided an update about the GPS System. Glenn Millis, Senior Policy Officer, Access Services, provided an update about the Next Generation MetroAccess Vans, and received feedback from the AAC. Lastly, Ms. Williams-Hall shared information about the safety precautions during COVID-19. Mr. Semelfort had brought up an issue of signing the manifest, and he has experienced that most of the drivers do not require customer signatures any longer.

Bus/Rail Subcommittee Report

Mr. Calabria discussed an issue that was brought up in the last meeting, about providing transportation to the personal care attendants (PCA) of MetroAccess customers. Mr. Calabria motioned "That the AAC recommends that WMATA contact various local transportation firms to ascertain whether any might best enable authorized Personal Assistants to get to the homes of the People with Disabilities whom they serve."

Ms. Rush stated how we can ask for that when the transportation may not be available for approved MetroAccess customers. Dr. Posner asked for the motion to be seconded.

Mr. Ariza-Silva stated this is just for the pandemic and the PCAs who are essential workers. Ms. Ray agreed with Mr. Ariza-Silva and Ms. Rush, and also had a few questions about the motion. Ms. Ray stated we need to also include SSPs for deaf-blind people, they also provide sign language proficiencies, etc. This needs to be defined more, and asked how quickly this could be implemented, given the uncertainty of the current environment, and recommended to defer it to the BRS meeting.

Mr. Oberg agreed that some assistance is needed and also agreed with Ms. Ray about defining it more. Mr. Oberg stated this is a public health issue on top of the transportation issue. A question was asked if WMATA is handling some kind of response that we may not have asked about.

Mr. Blake stated Metro is already providing the essential services transportation on the weekends. We are running shuttle service from three Metrorail Stations to three hospitals. That is similar to the essential work going around in the country that he is familiar with. He is not familiar with any program in the country where people who are not eligible for paratransit, are provided door to door service by a public transit agency, as part of the essential service. Mr. Blake clarified that Metro's Office of Eligibility does not authorize for anyone to be someone's PCA. The customer at the time of booking a trip can inform that they will be traveling with a PCA and we will allow for that person to travel with the customer with no fare. Under that open policy, we can be transporting thousands of people, in this case as long as they are going to and from a customer's home. That could be someone who lives in the home, using MetroAccess for their personal transportation, not necessarily to serve the MetroAccess customer. Mr. Blake recommended this should be discussed and concerns need to be reviewed before we can address this issue.

Mr. Calabria asked Mr. Blake to help define those people (PCAs). Chair Posner asked Mr. Calabria who he would want to be covered. A customer stated Transport DC deals with this already. This is only for MetroAccess customers as they still need help during the pandemic. Chair Posner deferred the topic to BRS, to finish the discussion as it involves legality and it needs to be defined. Mr. Blake stated we will be prepared to have a discussion at the next meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:35 pm.