

**AAC**

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: December 7, 2015

ATTENDEES

Present: Denise Rush (1st Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (2nd Vice-Chair), Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Brianne Burger, Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford, Steven Kaffen; Marisa Laios, Phillippa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Randall Pope, Dr. Phil Posner, Paul Semelfort, Anthony Stephens, Dr. William Staderman, and Roger Stanley.

Call to Order

Vice-Chairman Rush called the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA, BOARD REPORT, AND PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

The meeting agenda was approved.

The November 2015 meeting minutes was approved.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated December 7, 2015, was approved.

Discussion with Metro General Manager/Chief Executive Officer

Paul J. Wiedefeld, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer, greeted members of the AAC and the public. He provided an overview of his 30-year background in transportation, which included time as the head of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), the nation's 13th largest transit system, which provides commuter rail and light rail in addition to subway, bus, and paratransit services. Mr. Wiedefeld also served as head of the Baltimore/Washington International Airport, and led the airport during the time of its most rapid expansion. He also has experience in the private sector, having worked as a Vice-President for a transportation consulting firm.

Mr. Wiedefeld stated that his approach is customer focused; he wants to recognize the customer's perspective of Metro services and their experiences with using the system. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that he plans to engage in communication with the public on a regular basis. He has also held several town hall meetings with Metro staff to gain an understanding some of the challenges Metro's front line workers are experiencing in providing safe and quality service the public expects. Additionally, he is keenly attuned to some the challenges faced by customers with disabilities, not only as a result of his vast transportation experience, but also because his wife's academic work includes disability services.

Dr. Phil Posner provided a brief history of the AAC. He stated that the AAC has a good reputation and strong record of accomplishment, and added that members are dedicated, committed, and persistent to achieve the many work plan items.

Dr. Posner added that the AAC is an active group that works closely with several departments within Metro improves access for all customers. As an advisory group, the Committee's goal is to provide recommendations that align with Safety, Accessibility, and Sustainability (SAS). Dr. Posner stated that the AAC recognizes that if customers believe the system is not safe, they will not use any of its three modes of service; if it is not accessible for all customers including those with disabilities, then they won't be able to use it; and, if it is not sustainable, there will not be a system to use.

Dr. Posner went on to say that the AAC is vast in its knowledge and experience in all areas of public transportation, and that many of the AAC's recommendations have turned into universal design features or safety improvements that have benefited all customers. Currently, the AAC is focused on improving communication in audio and print for all customers, particularly those who are deaf/hard-of-hearing and blind/low vision. The AAC has previously recommended that in addition to audio announcements, Metro should also provide written information during emergencies in the system. This will ensure that all customers have access to the same information. The AAC has also recommended that Metro amend its emergency evacuation signage on rail cars to include directions for wheelchair users in its evacuation procedures.

Ms. Rush stated that the AAC is aware that maintaining open lines of communication will allow the AAC to help Metro advance its mission while improving the customer experience. The Chair, speaking on behalf of the membership, expressed how pleased the AAC was that Metro's new GM/CEO chose to attend an AAC meeting so early in his tenure. She added that the AAC looks forward other opportunities to dialogue with Mr. Wiedefeld.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

A comment was made about stop announcements on the 7000 Series railcars. The customer stated that line and destination information comes after the exit announcement. Critical information should be given first because it allows customers, including those with disabilities, to understand whether they are on the correct train. The customer stated that this is a follow up to comments made at the October 2015 AAC meeting, and it was recommended that Metro switch its announcements make the line and destination information first. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, stated that his office has followed up with Office of Rail Transportation (RTRA). RTRA is reviewing the feasibility of changing the sequence of announcements. Mr. Blake stated that he will continue to monitor the issue and provide follow up.

A comment was also made about the door closing procedure on the train at the October 2015 AAC meeting. The customer stated that some train operators close the rail car doors before looking down the platform to see whether any customers are still attempting to board. This is a safety issue because customers can get caught in the doors and injured. The customer indicated that other transit properties have implemented camera systems that allow train operators to see the entire platform

before activating the door close buttons. Mr. Blake has also contacted RTRA on the issue and will continue to follow up for feedback.

A comment was made about Metro's proposal to lock the emergency gate in the Metrorail system. The customer stated that locking the gate is dangerous for customers that use mobility devices, and suggested that Metro review the safety implications before fully implementing such as program. Mr. Blake stated that the issue will be discussed at tonight's meeting.

A comment was made about one-way trips on MetroAccess service. The customer stated that a one-way trip was scheduled for a customer, who has an intellectual disability. The customer missed the telephone call regarding the vehicle's arrival and therefore was marked as a no show for the trip. The customer contacted MetroAccess to reschedule; however, was told that a recovery vehicle could not be dispatched to the location because MetroAccess was not used to take the customer to the location. With these types of situations, the customer suggested that MetroAccess reservationist should suggest alternate forms of transportation to the customer.

In follow-up, Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services (ACCS) requested clarification on the one-way customer trips. The customer stated that the trip was taken on Metrobus; however because the return trip was not from a usual location, the customer who has an intellectual disability was unable to successful navigate a return using the fixed route after missing the trip on MetroAccess.

A comment was made about the protective shields in Metro's new 5000 series Metrobus. The customer stated in the previous series, the protective shields reduced the entry space at the front of the bus for some customers using mobility devices. On the new series, the protective shields are on a rack which allow the shield to lay flat make it easier for mobility devices users to access the entry space at the front of the bus. Kudos to Metro for the equipment change that helps people with disabilities.

METRO'S FARE EVASION PROGRAM (PILOT PROGRAM)

Kevin Gaddis, Deputy Chief, Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) discussed Metro's Fare Evasion Initiative. Through fare evasion, Metro has been losing revenue on Metrobus and Metrorail. In April 2015, Metro launched a pilot program to address fare evasion on the fixed route system. Deputy Chief Gaddis stated that the fare evasion initiative has been effective. The statistic demonstrate that over a 6-month period (June 1 – November 30, 2015) that 2,376 contacts were customers for fare evasion. From that number, many customers were written citations and 50 led to an arrest. A total of 1,950 were on Metrorail and 426 were attributed to Metrobus. Deputy Chief Gaddis stated that Metro plans to continue to keep officers highly visible until this and other activity ceases.

On Metrorail, customers of all ages tend to jump the fare gates or enter and exit through the side gate by the Station Manager kiosk instead of paying the fare. As an

example of how rampant this issue is, Deputy Chief Gaddis stated that a station manager at the Southern Avenue Metrorail Station counted over 100 instances where fare evasion occurred in an hour. In response to question about the rail stations with the highest number of incidents, Deputy Chief Gaddis stated that Gallery Place, Congress Heights, Takoma and Tenleytown American University stations are a few. He stated that at rail stations, Metro uses undercover officers to deter this type of activity.

Deputy Chief Gaddis stated that fare evasion is also a problem on Metrobus. On certain bus routes, some customers consistently do not pay the fare. The role of the bus operator in these cases is to state the fare to the customer and log the information on the farebox device when they do not pay. Uniformed officers have been effective in eliminating this type of activity. The presence of uniformed officers has also reduced the number of assaults on Bus Operators. Darnise Bush thanked Metro for adding uniformed officers on the bus. She indicated that the presence of officers will deter negative activity.

The AAC expressed an interest in Metro's proposal to lock the equipment gates throughout the rail system. Deputy Chief Gaddis stated that the equipment gate has a magnetic feature that locks the gate. In the case of an emergency or a power outage, the gate should automatically open. Metro has countless hours of video that show customers entering and exiting through the equipment gate with paying. He indicates that MTPD cannot have an officer at every station in the system to deter evasion and addressing this issue is not the role of the station manager.

Dr. Posner stated that in the rail system, all the signage on the gates indicates that the gates are emergency gates and not equipment gates. It is good to know that the gates will open up in an emergency or power outage; however if a customer is having some other type of major medical emergency, can they get through that to help? Additionally, the button to open the gate in the station manager's kiosk must be continually pressed in order for the gate to open. This is a safety issue for customers in mobility devices and with limited strength because the Station Manager cannot hold the button and provide assistance with the gate too. Many AAC members echoed Dr. Posner's comment, indicating that in some stations the gate opens inward which makes getting through the gate a problem. The AAC suggested that at busy stations such as transfer points, Metro use additional personnel to open the gate. The additional personnel may also deter customers from jumping the gate. A member of the public suggested that Metro have additional personnel during the evening and late hours. The customer stated that it is critical during the evening hours, because the rail system has lots of predators during those hours.

In a follow up, Phillippa Mezile stressed the importance of keeping emergency gates open and available. She cited an incident where an establishment locked and chained an emergency gate. A fire occurred at the establishment and people were unable exit. This could potentially be a liability issue for Metro.

Anthony Stephens stated that in the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in NYC has an audio cue. He suggested that Metro consider using sound to deter a customer from using fare gates without payment. Deputy Chief Gaddis stated that Metro is considering all its options to address this issue.

A comment from the public suggests that Metro should modify the fare gates so customers cannot jump over the gates.

Steven Kaffen expressed an interest in the cost versus the benefit with fare enforcement program. He indicated that the program appears to be successful which is demonstrated by the additional revenue; however, this needs to be balanced against the cost of training, labor and company image. Mr. Kaffen urged Metro to perform this kind of analysis and may find that at certain stations, the revenue loss from fare evasion is minimal.

Brianne Burger stated that some transit systems abroad operate on the honor system. The system indicates that customers must purchase a ticket to board the system; however, tickets are randomly checked. Additionally, the system has lots of signage detailing the penalty for being violating the policy. Ms. Burger suggests that Metro post signs about the penalty for violating fare in the Metrorail system.

In response to a question about disability awareness training for MTPD, Deputy Chief Gaddis stated that Officers receive training in the academy; however, training beyond the academy is limited. He indicated MTPD is always looking for additional opportunities to enhance their skills with engaging all customers, including those with disabilities.

The AAC also expressed an interest in the long waits for access in areas where there is no Station Manager such as on mini-mezzanines. The AAC suggested that Metro provide customers with a card to access the gate without having a Station Manager present. A member of the public suggested that Metro modify the cards to deduct the fare; however, if the card is a MetroAccess card for fixed route, it automatically will let a customer through the gate. When the MetroAccess card for fixed route is used again, it will allow the PCA to go through. The customer stated that this is the system used in the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority.

Robert Troup, Deputy General Manager of Operations, stated that he has heard the AAC concerns related to safety. Metro will review its process and procedure related to the gate and provide feedback to the AAC.

The AAC thanked Mr. Troup for his presence and Deputy Chief Gaddis for the presentation. In light of the safety concerns raised related to the gate, the AAC recommends that Metro readdress its procedures to develop a safe and workable solution.

MOMENTUM AND LONG RANGE PLANNING (UPDATE)

Jennifer Weeks, Director, Long Range Planning, Office of Strategic Planning, provided an updated on Metro's strategic plan, Momentum. In 2014 the Office of Strategic Planning was developed to advise Metro on policy issues. The data used to provide the expert advice comes from the Office of Applied Planning Intelligence, which deals with ridership, revenue projections, land use, and performance measures, just to name a few.

Metro's strategic plan is a multi-year capital rebuilding plan that was adopted by Metro's Board in 2013. The purpose of the plan is to: 1) provide a safe and reliable transit system (build and maintain a safe culture); 2) establish a policy framework for decision making (meet and exceed expectations by consistently delivering quality service); 3) set capital investment priorities for all three modes of transportation (improve regional mobility and connect communities); and 4) establish Metro as the leadership in public transportation (ensure financial stability and invest in people and assets).

Annually, Metro charts the progress of each goal in Momentum. Ms. Weeks provided a sample of some of the progress made in FY2015. She indicated that the progress includes areas of improvement for the disability community. The Momentum plan demonstrates a "return on investment" to each of the jurisdictions. In response to a question about review of the plan, Ms. Week stated that Metro tracks its progression and milestones through the business planning process. Every department has to report performance of its goals for the previous year against Momentum for the same period.

Ms. Weeks stated that the Metro 2025 strategic projects are identified in Momentum. This \$6 billion capital investment program includes priorities such as Metro running eight car trains during peak periods; improving and expanding capacity at core stations; implementing priority corridor networks; restoring the frequency of Blue Line trains during peak periods; expanding the bus fleet; and investing in the next generation communication system. The Metro 2025 plan can be viewed as a guidepost. Metro also charts key milestones in its Metro 2025 strategic projects. These included the purchase of 220 additional 7000-series rail cars to replace poorly performing models and the purchase of hybrid and electric buses to update the fleet.

The focus on safety and reliability has shifted some of the capital investments away from Momentum and the Metro 2025 plan. Many view those investments more for capacity as opposed to being strictly focused on safety, customer service and reliability, and this is the reason Metro has not been aggressive with implementation. Ms. Weeks stated that some of the concerns related to communication issues and safety capacity enhancements would fall under Metro 2025. Ms. Weeks stated that Metro's strategic plan will be updated in 2017. It is anticipated that Metro will continue to develop programs of strategies and activities that focus on Momentum's goals, in particular safety, quality and customer service and efficiency.

The AAC expressed an interest in Momentum's reliability and customer services goals related to elevator cleanliness. Many customers including those with disabilities rely on elevators to move about in the system. Ms. Weeks stated that elevator and escalator improvements are included in the in Metro 2025 plan.

Edward McEntee expressed an interest in the new MetroAccess software and whether the improvements will allow trips to be scheduled in a logical fashion. Ms. Weeks stated that she will investigate the tool and provide feedback. In response to a comment about the status of lighting in the rail system on Momentum plan, Ms. Weeks stated that there is a continuous investment in lighting and she made a note of it to include the details of the investment in the update. Momentum is an inclusive plan because it includes transportation services to the disability community. The AAC thanked Ms. Weeks for her presentation and applauded Metro for including elements of accessibility in each goal in its long-term planning.

BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The BRS was provided an update on the wayfinding project from the Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind (CLB). The first phase of the project has virtual tours of entrances for 10 stations, as well as 110 routes into and out of the Gallery Place/Chinatown station. Phase II involves work at seven of the stations with virtual tours: L'Enfant Plaza; Silver Spring; Metro Center; Rosslyn; Gallery Place; Fort Totten; and Navy Yard (most of these are transfer stations, and can be more difficult to get in and out of). The work will involve improved routing (step-by-step); landmark identification; high-resolution low-vision maps; and the introduction of iBeacon technology.

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The MetroAccess Subcommittee was provided an overview of MV Transportation and their departments. MV Transportation operates the call center for MetroAccess. The MAS discussed how MetroAccess customers view the call center's customer service. To drive the point home, some statistics were provided, demonstrating the gaps between the employees' perception of their customer service performance and those of the MetroAccess customers.

MV Transportation acknowledged that in the past, the organization was more business driven. The organization's new approach is more customer centered and includes:

- Pursuit of new customer service training tools;
- Engaging employees with "on the spot" positive recognition for exemplary customer service;
- Implementing a commendations recognition program;
- Fostering positive working relationships between dispatchers and drivers by establishing a customer service committee where all involved can discuss improvements;
- Increasing live monitoring of phone calls and radio communication;
- Responding to customer complaints brought forward at AAC meetings;

- Having service providers forward driver complaints to MV management for resolution ; and
- Having management and supervisor staff promote customer service excellence by example.

MV will measure its success rate by a decrease in complaints, an increase in commendations, and feedback from WMATA and the AAC.

The MAS also discussed its work plan and added the following topics: seatbelts and seatbelt waivers; and the grandfathering process and its impact on the service and the system.

NEW BUSINESS:

Charlie Crawford made a comment about feedback on public comment. He stated that members should be kept informed of the progress or lack thereof on the customer' inquiries. Mr. Blake stated that he would provide feedback on those issues at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

STATUS OF FY 2016 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info - 04	AAC Quarterly Leadership Meeting	11/12/15	AAC	Feedback	
Info - 03	Momentum and Long Range Plan (update)	12/7/15	AAC	Presenter: Jennifer Weeks	
Info - 06	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	12/7/15	AAC	Update (Follow-up discussion after event - November 2013).	

Note: Quarterly Meeting Recommendations are marked with an asterisk symbol.

COMPLETED - FY 2016 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info - 01	Proposed 2016 Bus Route Changes	7/6/15	AAC	Presenter: Julie Hershorn	7/6/15
Info - 01	25 th Anniversary of the ADA	7/6/15	AAC	Open Forum	7/6/15
Info - 02	Proposed 2016 Bus Route Changes	7/6/15	AAC	Presenter: Julie Hershorn	7/6/15
Info - 05	Establishing A Customer Community	9/14/15		Presenter: Jason Minser	9/14/15
Info - 07	Metro's Diversity and Recruitment Initiatives	10/5/15		Presenter: Ikemia Arrington	10/5/15

Note: Quarterly Meeting Recommendations are marked with an asterisk symbol.