



AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

### Meeting Minutes: December 4, 2017

#### Attendees

Present:, Denise Rush (1st Vice Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Tapan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Tino Calabria, Charlie Crawford, Steven Kaffen, Phillippa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Anthony Oberg, Randall Pope, Doris Ray, Paul Semelfort, Patrick Sheehan, and Franklin Torres.

Listening Remotely - Phil Posner (Chair)

#### Call to Order

1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair 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 as amended to include a discussion of the MetroAccess vehicle.

The November 6, 2017 meeting minutes were approved.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated December 4, 2017, was tabled to allow for the inclusion of edits requested by AAC members. Ms. Rush stated that the Board Report did not go into enough detail about the AAC's concerns about the Abilities-Ride program or the MetroAccess vehicle. She suggested that the Board be provided a list of all the concerns of the AAC.

Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services, stated that given there is great detail in the minutes on each issue, the Board report should reflect the AAC's satisfaction or lack thereof of staff's responses to the AAC's concerns. He added that the Board report should also outline any actions needed by the Board to help the AAC facilitate its mission with respect to the particular issues. Mr. Kent stated that the Board should be told exactly what the AAC wants from them in response to the issues, not just be provided a list of concerns.

Dr. Banerjee suggested that the complete list of AAC recommended modifications to the new MetroAccess vehicles should be detailed in the Board report. Mr. Semelfort stated that as far as the Abilities-Ride part of the Board report, the AAC is requesting monthly statistics, and would like this request included in the Board report.

Dr. Banerjee requested that the Board report be amended with the comments of the AAC. The Board report was tabled to allow for the needed changes.

Staff agreed to coordinate with AAC members to incorporate all edits requested into the final Board report.

### **New MetroAccess Vehicle - Discussion**

Ms. Bellamy requested to see a prototype of the vehicle with all of the modifications during the next MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting. Don Scruggs, Assistant Director, MetroAccess, stated that a full prototype will eventually be shown to the committee.

However, a prototype with all of the modifications requested by the committee will not be ready in two weeks. Some of the individual modifications will be ready for review. Staff highly recommends that the committee reviews the individual modifications as they are made, to offer feedback before a full production model is produced.

Mr. Sheehan stated that he heard the next order of the new vehicles was or is suspended until the changes recommended by the AAC were made. Don Scruggs, Assistant Director, MetroAccess, stated that there was a hold on the assembly line, about 20 vehicles in, for modifications to the plates and floor. However, the plan is to have another vehicle brought to Metro to review the recent renovations. Mr. Sheehan stated that this type of information should be brought to the attention of the Board.

Ms. Bellamy stated that she doesn't believe the vans are "handicapped accessible." She suggested that no comment be made to the Board until the vans are modified to the satisfaction of the AAC. Mr. Kent stated that the Board report could include background on the development of the vehicles; and there was a need to have had more discussion with the community about the vehicle before production.

Ms. Rush stated that this effort should be to develop a vehicle that works for all customers with disabilities, and be a model for all agencies across the country. Mr. Kent stated that he agreed and that it is important to remind the industry to remember the broader audience during the design and development process. The participation of the companies at the meeting will likely have a positive impact.

### **Public Comment**

Ms. Rush stated that Dr. B. Moore-Gwynn has transitioned to a new position at Metro, in the Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach (ELIG). Ms. Rush added thanks to Dr. B. for her years of service, and stated that the committee will miss her. Mr. Kent stated that Dr. B. will be working as an Operations Manager managing the team that does the eligibility assessments.

A member of the public provided an update on the TransportDC program. She stated that through September 2018 there will be no trip purpose limits the first half of the month with medical and work trips only the second half of the month. She added that she understands that Metro is looking at ways to perhaps stimulate the additional funding for the program that could eliminate the trip purpose limits altogether. The customer added comments about the new MetroAccess vehicle, stating that there are reports of the vehicle providing customers with a smoother ride.

However, the wheelchair lift does not seem to be able to lift as much as the wheelchair lifts on the old vehicles. The customer wants to know the weight limit on the new vehicles' wheelchair lifts.

The customer also added that some Abilities-Ride customers are being told that they can be taken to DC.

Mr. Blake stated that Metro is studying the impact of TransportDC to identify other possibilities to add funding for the program. However, there is nothing set in stone, but Metro is working hard to identify opportunities to expand this successful program. Mr. Kent added that he sees the glass more half-full regarding the possibility of expanding the program. We are discussing with the District the impact of TransportDC on the overall DC transportation budget.

A customer suggested that the AAC have the Board report changed to state that the "AAC request the Board to direct staff to release the Abilities-Ride contracts." The customer also discussed a news story that outlined how the agency has retained a consultant to study the impact Uber and Lyft is having on transit in the region. The customer stated that Metro should stop spending money on consultants and instead ask the riders. The customer discussed proposed legislation by Maryland Congressional Representatives Anthony Brown and Jamie Raskin regarding Metro services, and requested that the AAC invite the representatives to a future meeting to discuss the legislation.

### **AAC Travel Initiative – Next Steps**

Mr. Ariza-Silva began by thanking everyone involved. He stated that to Board members participated in the AAC Travel Initiative. Next, the AAC would compile the recommendations from the various members, and then send a report to the Board. Despite only two members having participated thus far, this is a good start. The goal is to engage the Board members, and develop a complete feedback through the experience.

Mr. Calabria distributed a report of his observations and the recommendations based on his and the Board member's travel. He stated that both his and Mr. Oberg's reports deal with Metrorail, and there is a need for members to observe Metrobus and MetroAccess. Ms. Rush stated that the AAC will continue to encourage Board members to participate in this effort, and will mention the Initiative during the reports at the Board meetings.

Mr. Sheehan asked about the process. He asked if both reports will be sent to the Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) to vote on the recommendations and then sent to the full committee. If we move quickly, the recommendations can be submitted to the Board by February. Ms. Ray supports sending the recommendations through the committee process, and she feels that it is important for the BRS to look at the recommendations within the context of the ADA; prioritize the recommendations that have ADA implications over other recommendations that do not. Mr. Crawford suggested that the

AAC look at the universality of the recommendations to ensure all information and recommendations are accessible and beneficial to customers of varying disabilities.

Mr. Kaffen stated that it is important that the recipients of the AAC's report not consider the report a total list of all issues, but is a subset of other issues that may be identified later. The AAC needs to outline the scope for the reader. Dr. Posner (by remote) suggested that the recommendations should be presented in a manner to highlight the issues more clearly for Board members. Ms. Rush stated that the reports will be formatted in a matter to highlight the issues. Ms. Ray supports a summary or abstract, and she asked if more reports are coming. Mr. Oberg stated that he has a report from his trip and will send it out to the Committee.

### **MetroAccess Subcommittee**

Mr. Semelfort stated that the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) discussed the new MetroAccess vehicles, including recommended modifications, with Metro staff and representatives from the companies involved in the manufacturing process. The committee will continue to monitor the progress of the needed improvements.

The MAS also discussed the Abilities-Ride program with staff and representatives from Regency Taxi and Silver Cab. Members shared some of their challenging experiences when attempting to use either of the services, and made recommendations to improve the program overall, such as implementing a uniform fare structure for both companies.

Ms. Bellamy expressed concerns over the expenses incurred by Montgomery County taxis having to provide service to customers in Prince George's County. Therefore, the AAC needs to strongly push a uniform price. Mr. Blake stated that the idea of a uniform price is a good idea, and the AAC should continue to push the idea. However, neither Metro nor the AAC has a role in determining the profit/loss threshold of each company. The companies are required to provide service, and to this point, service is being provided.

Mr. Sheehan stated that he is interested in the use of Yellow Cab of Prince George's and Action Taxi by the two contracted companies. Mr. Sheehan also asked for data on Abilities-Ride trips to discuss with the Board members. Mr. Blake stated that data will be shared. He added that the publicly available data for the Abilities-Ride are monthly number of customers, monthly number of trips, and the monthly number of trips on wheelchair accessible vehicles.

### **BUS/RAIL Subcommittee Report**

Edward McEntee stated that the BRS was informed that MetroAccess customers who are Conditionally Eligible can now ride the DASH bus system in Alexandria for free through the Free Ride Program.

The BRS was also informed by Metro's Elevator and Escalator staff that the elevator and escalator performance stats are over 90%, and that a new remote access system is providing staff with real-time information, allowing for quicker response times. The BRS was also informed that Metro may use private companies to provide elevator outage shuttle service.

Mr. Sheehan asked about the upcoming public hearing on the Purple Line as well as a town hall meeting on the Red Line shutdown. There will be a public hearing on the Purple Line, but staff needed to confirm the town hall meeting.

Ms. Ray stated that she is experiencing serious problems with the announcements on the 7000-series railcars. She stated the announcements are stating the wrong stations. Staff will follow-up on this concern. Ms. Ray also stated that she has heard concerns expressed about the shuttle service being provided for the Red Line shutdown. She stated that the vehicles are not accessible. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, stated that the Coach-style buses being used for the shuttle service are wheelchair accessible. However, due to the time it takes to board a customer using the wheelchair lifts on those vehicles, Metro has staged Metrobus vehicles at each station to provide additional shuttle service for customers using wheelchair, much like if this were an elevator outage. A member of the public, who has used the shuttle bus service, confirmed the response of Mr. Blake, and added that after a slow first day, the shuttle service for people in mobility devices has been almost perfect. Ms. Ray wants to know if people with low vision were allowed to board the shuttle buses.

Ms. Ray also asked the BRS to get an update on Metro's station lighting improvement initiative.

### **New Business**

Ms. Bellamy stated that the bus stop at Georgia and Woods Place has been moved about a block. The new location makes it very difficult for customers, particularly those using mobility devices, to access the stop and use the bus service. Staff will follow-up on the change in the bus stop location.

Mr. Crawford shared a recent experience on the Abilities-Ride program. He stated that on Friday Regency did not have any vehicles available at the time he requested a trip. Mr. Blake stated that while the services of the two taxi companies are generally on-demand, the availability of taxi service is a reflection of supply and demand. Therefore, Metro highly recommends that customers book their trips in advance in an attempt to avoid resource challenges.

Ms. Ray provided an update on the taxi industry in Virginia, and thought of the possibility of a Virginia Abilities-Ride program. She also reiterated her request that staff report back to the AAC about the ADA standards for wheelchair lift weight standards.

Mr. McEntee expressed concerns with the Purple Line design and the lack of automation for boarding and exiting the light rail vehicles by customers using mobility devices.

Mr. Semelfort reported hearing concerns from drivers about the amount they are making on Abilities-Ride program trips, particularly very short trips. Mr. Kent discussed the Abilities-Ride RFP and selection process. He stated that many people were worried that Metro would not create an outcome that would be equitable. We kept our promise through these two small companies. These companies may not be able to produce the level of availability as some of the bigger companies, but they are the ones willing to meet the equity standards outlined in the RFP.

Dr. Banerjee discussed the news story on the MetroAccess statistics and the Metro Office of the Inspector General (OIG). Dr. Banerjee requested that the AAC get a copy of the OIG's report, and determine the role of the AAC in responding to the information in the report. Ms. Rush stated this subject will be added to the agenda of the next MAS meeting. Ms. Ray made a motion to have the AAC request the OIG performance reports be brought immediately to the MAS and full AAC. Mr. Sheehan asked if the OIG is releasable to the committee.

Mr. Kent stated that the new Inspector General had made it a point to be a transparent as possible, so eventually the report will likely be released. Mr. Kent also advise the committee that it should hear some feedback from staff on the context of this matter. He added that the report does not pertain to something that recently happened, it goes back a number of years, and that there are already mechanisms in place to verify the integrity of data that MetroAccess publishes.

The committee approved Ms. Ray's motion.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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**STATUS OF COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

Item Number or Action	Description	Meeting Date	Presenter	Status
2018 – 11	<i>Abilities-Ride (Update) Data for the 1<sup>st</sup> 90 days of the program</i>	1/2/18		
2018 – 10	<i>AAC Travel Initiative Follow up on Board and AAC member feedback to determine which items the AAC should pursue.</i>	12/4/17	Tino Calabia	Referred to BRS.
2018 – 12	<i>Review OIG Report on MetroAccess data</i>	1/2/18		

**COMPLETED - COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

Item Number or Action	Description	Meeting Date	Presenter	Status
2018 -1	<b>Title VI Presentation</b> <i>Overview of the proposed update for the Title VI Plan submission for 2017</i>	7/3/17	Presenter: Corinne Remy Office of Equal Employment Opportunity	
2018 – 2	<b>AAC Elections</b> <i>By-laws require an election for AAC officers (two-year term)</i>	10/2/17	B. Moore Gwynn	
2018 – 3	<b>2017 Ride WITH ME Initiative</b> <i>Advise the membership and respond to any general questions about the event</i>	10/2/17	Elver Ariza-Silva & B. Moore Gwynn	
2018 – 5	<b>Abilities-Ride</b> <i>Update on the program</i>	9/5/17	Christiaan Blake	9/5/17

**COMPLETED - COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

2018 – 6	<b>2017 Ride With Me Initiative</b> <i>Update from selected member and respond to any general questions about the event</i>	10/2/17		
2018 – 7	<b>Free Ride Program</b> <i>Update on the program</i>	10/2/17	Frank Roth	
2018 – 8	<b>AAC - BRS appointment</b>	10/2/17		
2018 – 4	<b>Paratransit Vehicle Vendor (Ford Motor Company)</b> <i>New Paratransit vehicle development</i>	11/5/17	TBD	
2018 – 9	<b>Federal Funding</b> <b>A discussion Federal grants</b>	10/2/17	Presenter: Regina Sullivan Government Relations	