



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: January 4, 2016

ATTENDEES

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Denise Rush (1st Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (2nd Vice-Chair), Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Brianna Burger, Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford, Steven Kaffen; Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, Dr. Phil Posner, Paul Semelfort, Anthony Stephens, and Roger Stanley.

Call to Order

Chairman Sheehan 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 December 2015 meeting minutes was approved.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated January 4, 2016, was approved as amended electronically by members.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

A comment was made about stop announcements on the 7000 Series railcars. The customer stated that this is a follow up to comments made at the October 2015 AAC meeting during which he suggested that Metro switch its announcements to allow critical instructions, such as line and destination information be given first when a train is on the platform. This will allow customers, including those with disabilities, to understand whether they are on the correct train. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that his office has followed up with Office of Rail Transportation (RTRA) for a response; however, at the moment he does not have an update. He stated that he will continue to follow-up with RTRA and inform the AAC and all stakeholders.

A comment was made about Metrorail station information on the website. The customer stated that when accessing the "Service Nearby" page, it shows the list of Metrobus service from a particular station. The customer stated that he suggested Metro list the bus route numbers directly on the station information webpage. This would offer all customers, especially those with disabilities who use screen readers, access to more pertinent information. Mr. Blake stated that he will follow-up with IT personnel to determine if the information can be enhanced to the level of detail being suggested.

Christopher Barnes, Rider's Advisory Council, stated that the elevator at the Fort Totten station has been out of service. The first notice of the outage was listed on the website in late December 2015 and it indicates that the elevators between the mezzanine,

upper platform on the Red line and elevators on the lower platform on the Green Line will be out-of-service for modernization until April 2016. Mr. Barnes suggested that train operators announce elevator outages at least one station prior to the impacted station; this would assist customers in planning their routes. Mr. Blake stated that in preparation for the long-term outage, Metro added signage in the station on each level; however, would add verifying the information on the website to the checklist for customer notification during elevator outages. He will also follow-up on train operator announcements. Dr. Posner added that the AAC had taken up the issue previously, and Metro adopted a policy to announce elevator outages at least two stations in advance of the impacted station (January 2014 – BRS Meeting). In response to a question about navigating the rail system during an elevator outage, Mr. Blake stated Metro provides shuttle bus service to/from the impacted station to the nearest station. The AAC agreed to add a reminder of the issue to the Board report.

Carol Tyson, Disability Policy Director, United Spinal Association, made a comment about Metro's proposal to partner with Uber and Lyft that would allow all customers that do not require wheelchair access to request a ride as an alternative to MetroAccess. Partnering with these organizations to provide paratransit service only for those without mobility impairments would lead to a two-tiered paratransit system, which is likely to result in an unequal class of service. The Association is disheartened by Metro's interest to partner with organizations that have yet to provide an accessible option for wheelchair users. Uber and Lyft do not comply with Americans with Disabilities Act. Additionally, this is being permitted by the department designed to protect customers with disabilities in public transportation at Metro. This sends a message to all customers that Metro does not prioritize access for all. Instead of "dillydallying on the issue," Ms. Tyson suggested that Metro uses its influence to engage Uber and Lyft in discussions regarding the need for accessible transportation for all. "Ensuring access for all must be the priority."

Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services (ACCS), stated that in April 2015, Metro's Board received a report on the MetroAccess Long-term Sustainability Study conducted by George Mason Center for Regional Analysis. Current statistics demonstrate that MetroAccess is expected to grow exponentially in the coming years. Currently, the service transports 2.2 million customers a year, but as people live longer and are diagnosed with disabilities, it is expected that MetroAccess will add more than a million additional customers. The goal was to understand how can Metro sustain MetroAccess into the future. The study recommended several models that should be implemented on a regional scale.

Mr. Kent stated that the Board requested additional information; in particular, the Board was interested to know whether a transportation network like Lyft or Uber could operate paratransit service with the notion being that these options would be less costly. Mr. Kent stated that before Metro makes any kind of business arrangement, a dialogue with the customers must take place first. This is important, because customers can advise Metro on what should be included before moving forward with any kind of

solicitation for services. Mr. Kent expressed an interest in the AAC views on whether a transportation network like Lyft or Uber should operate paratransit service. He agrees with many of Ms. Tyson's comments that any service provider needs to be accessible, have the knowledge of and qualifications to work with the disability community.

Charlie Crawford stated that Uber is evaluating a proposal to allow some drivers to purchase cars directly from the company. If indeed the company is considering this approach, it would a perfect opportunity for a regulatory entity to advance the point of accessibility.

Mr. Sheehan stated that it is his understanding that other transportation properties have approached Lyft and Uber to provide paratransit services. Both companies declined because it was not a good business model for their companies. He stated that it would be interesting to know what has changed.

In response to a question on a timeline for recommendations, Mr. Kent stated that he requested to defer the issue until July. He stated that once all the comments are gathered, Metro plans to host a pre-proposal conference. The conference will be similar to the one conducted for the paratransit contracts. Mr. Kent stated that the AAC Chair's presence sent a powerful message to each of the companies interested in bidding for the contract that Metro views accessibility as highly important.

Carolyn Bellamy stated that she was against a solicitation that only included large companies like Uber and Lyft. Metro should also open up the process to qualified small independent contractors as well. Mr. Kent stated that within the transportation network of companies, there are smaller companies that can provide the service to the disability community and will be welcomed to participate in the process. Dr. Posner suggested that Metro should issue a Request for Information (RFI), which would provide the small independent contractors an opportunity to participate in the process. Once that process is completed, the information can be reviewed at the AAC meeting to ensure all the appropriate information is included in a Request for Proposal (RFP).

Mr. Sheehan stated that the issue should be added to the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) work plan for further discussion. Anthony Stephens suggested that Metro provide a SWOT analysis (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) to ensure all the factors and points are being considered.

Denise Rush expressed an interest in a complete list of recommendations from the MetroAccess Long-term Sustainability Study. She suggested that members should be provided that information along with the SWOT analysis. In response to a question about whether dismantling Metro's Free Ride Program was a recommendation from the study, Mr. Kent stated the recommendation was informally discussed with the former AAC leadership. The leadership, along with other members of the committee and disability community, discussed it with the Board. Based on the results of the discussions, the proposal was not moved forward.

Mr. Blake stated that on the upcoming MAS agenda, there is an item to discuss – the proposed MetroAccess alternative, listed as *Maryland - Abilities Ride*. He added that he has developed a plan that attempts to take into account the concerns and recommendations of all disability stakeholders. The plan will be forwarded to the AAC a week before the meeting and members should come prepared and ready to discuss specifics of the plan and provide any additional feedback. He recommended that further discussion be tabled until members and the public receive copies of the plan. In response to a question about the process for feedback, Mr. Blake stated that July 1st is the goal to see such service underway in Maryland, which does not allow for an extensive review and feedback period. The January MAS meeting should be considered the primary opportunity for feedback. A robust discussion on the plan is expected. Many members did not agree with the accelerated process and objected. Mr. Sheehan requested that the BRS also have an opportunity to record their comments on the subject. The AAC also requested a timeline.

Barbara Millville, President, National Capital Citizens with Low Vision, made a comment about Metro's proposal to lock the equipment gates throughout the rail system. She stated that there are many people who use the gates because of the lack of assistance with the accessible gates. Ms. Millville stated that station managers should be required to carry their access card on them at all times. This would ensure that Metro has an accurate count of customers with disabilities using the Free Ride Benefit. Mr. Blake stated that a report will be provided later in the meeting.

A comment was made about rude and discourteous service of a station manager at the Pentagon City rail station. The customer stated that she was using a copy of her valid MetroAccess ID to access fixed route services. The Station Manager asked to see the MetroAccess ID and when the customer provided the copy, the copy was discarded. The customer stated that the Station Manager used a strong tone and made her feel like she was criminal. Ms. Rush expressed an interest in whether the customer was aware that MetroAccess IDs should not be copied.

Frank Roth, Director, Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach, stated that Metro's policy is that the card should not be duplicated. Using a duplicated card in the system is fare evasion, even when the copy is of a valid card. A motorist cannot make a copy of a driver's license and use it as identification. It must be the actual card; additional types of identification will not work in the system.

AAC 2016 PLANNING SESSION

The AAC began the process to plan its 2016 work plan priorities for the full Committee and subcommittees. At the top of the list were work groups. Mr. Sheehan stated that work groups are immensely useful because they provide an opportunity to fully research a particular issue and strategize on the best approach before forwarding to the AAC for a vote.

The AAC agreed to schedule work group meetings as the follows:

- AAC Fare Policy Work Group – Tuesday, January 19, 2016
- BRS Lighting Work Group – Monday, February 8, 2016
- AAC Fare Policy Work Group – Tuesday, February 16, 2016

- AAC/RAC Accessible Bus Stop Work Group – Monday March 14, 2016
- AAC Fare Policy Work Group – Monday, March 21, 2016
- BRS Lighting Work Group – Monday, April 11, 2016
- AAC Fare Policy Work Group – Monday, April 18, 2016
- AAC/RAC Accessible Bus Stop Work Group – Monday May 9, 2016
- AAC Fare Policy Work Group – Monday, May 16, 2016

The work group meetings will be held following the BRS or MAS subcommittee meetings, respectively. Dr. Posner suggested that the AAC consider developing a work group for safety and communications. He stated that the work group could track and handle issues of signage; announcements on the bus and rail; dwell time (rail); safety drills; and communication between staff and customers in the system. The AAC agreed to schedule the first work group meeting on safety and communication as follows:

- AAC Safety and Communication Work Group – Monday, June 20, 2016

Work group meetings are open to all members. Ms. Rush stressed the importance of attendance, and expressed an interest in member participation in Board work group meetings. The responsibility to support these meetings should be spread evenly among members.

Dr. Posner stated that the most useful Board committee meetings for the AAC to attend would be Finance & Administration; Customer Service & Operations; and Safety & Security. The materials are generally available the week of the meeting and meetings are broadcast via the web. Ms. Rush stated that it is great that the audio is available for listening; however, it is important for members to maintain a presence. She stated that if the AAC is not present, this action or lack thereof could cost the Committee to lose visibility at Metro. This is something the AAC and the disability community cannot afford; many members agreed. In response to a question about when these meetings are held and how often they take place, Mr. Blake stated that his office will develop a calendar and share it with leadership and the members.

Dr. Posner discussed his list of his potential projects related to fare policy and safety for the AAC. Regarding fare policy, the AAC should consider the following:

- The Coors-Miller partnership approved by the Board to offer free rides on New Year's Eve on Fixed route should be extended to MetroAccess. The MetroAccess fares are 2X the fare for fastest trip. On New Year's Eve: 2X Free = Free.

- The Board also approved a pilot to look at offering fixed route passes for various time periods. These should be extended to MetroAccess riders.
- With the extensive track work ordered by the FTA, Metrorail may not always be the "fastest" form of transportation. Unless the Fare Calculator can be modified to incorporate planned slowdowns for track work in determining MAC fares, it would be simpler and more accurate to switch to 2X the Metrobus fare until the major track work is concluded. A second option would be to employ the method of fare calculation proposed by Los Angeles and currently being studied by the FTA, which is a fixed fare based upon calculations of multiple routes in the area.

With safety, Dr. Poser suggested that the AAC consider the following:

- Unlock the emergency exit gates.
- Make changes to the emergency signage in rail cars. Since there is a difference in design between the various series rail cars currently in use, the signage should fit the correct configuration (one size does not fit all). The signs should state the location of the intercom in (that particular) car (end or by center door); the intercoms should have instructions for use next to them; and the signs should specifically state instructions for people with disabilities (wheelchairs and service animals) for evacuation.
- Move wheelchair spaces from under the emergency door latches at the center doors. They currently block access to these latches and present a hazard to the wheelchair occupant during evacuation.
- Continue monitoring the track and platform lighting projects with the lighting work group.
- Install armrests on the first row of seats by the priority seats on the 7000 series cars, as promised during development, to permit use by individuals with muscular weaknesses.
- Improve communication at the station manager booths and on the platform for people with hearing, vision and cognitive challenges.

Many members applauded Dr. Posner for his accurate and precise to-do list for the AAC. Upon motion, the AAC agreed to adopt the aforementioned points in Dr. Posner's summary. Mr. Sheehan stated that he will work with leadership in assigning each of the tasks.

Ms. Burger expressed an interest in the Metro budget and whether the budget passed. Dr. Posner stated that the topic is currently being discussed and it is anticipated that the budget will be finalized in April or May.

In a follow up to Dr. Posner's comments about communication, Ms. Burger stated that the AAC should take a stronger position regarding communication with deaf and hard-of-hearing customers using the Metrorail system. She stated that she has been documenting interactions (or the lack thereof) of Metro's communications patterns with these communities. Ms. Burger suggested that a low-tech accommodation like a white board would be suitable for communication. Upon motion, the AAC voted to send a letter to Metro's Deputy General Manager of Operations regarding the need for the accommodation and include the documentation.

OLD BUSINESS

In a follow-up to a discussion at the December 2015 meeting regarding the proposal to lock the equipment gate throughout the rail system, Mr. Kent stated that the loss of revenue from customers going through emergency gates is substantial. Metro is interested in reducing these losses. The AAC provided compelling feedback for the gates to remain open, which included implement initiatives like an audio cue to address the issue of customers using the equipment gates without payment. At fare gates where there is no station manager present, such as on mini-mezzanines, the AAC recommends that Metro provide customers with a card to access the gates independently.

Mr. Crawford suggested that the cards to access the gates independently should also be able to open the faregates as well. This would ensure that only users would have access. Dr. Posner added that the access should include anyone with a disability, not just MetroAccess customers.

Ms. Burger stated that the AAC has expressed such displeasure with the proposal to lock the gates that Metro has no other alternative, but to find a workable solution for all.

Mr. Kent stated that Metro is still evaluating all the factors. Many members expressed an interest in the timeline; Mr. Kent stated that he anticipates one will be developed soon. Mr. Sheehan stated that it is clear that this is an issue of safety and not a financial one. The AAC looks forward to a response from Mr. Troup.

Mr. Blake provided a follow up on public comment about using a camera system to allow train operators to see the entire platform before activating the door close buttons. It was suggested that ACCS use a portion of a grant from Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) for the platform cameras. Mr. Blake stated that MTPD grant is specifically for terrorism. He will continue to pursue the issue and keep the AAC posted. Both Dr. Posner and Mr. Crawford added comments that could potentially link this issue to benefits in thwarting terrorism.

BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The BRS was provided an update on the station manager's kiosk in the rail system. In the new design, the transaction window has been lowered by 4 feet; the base of the kiosk is only 4 inches; and the overall kiosk appears to be the appropriate height.

The BRS also reflected on past emergency exercises. Although many members agree that the exercises are important, members felt that their feedback was not being incorporated. The BRS is scheduled to discuss this issue with Metro's Emergency Management team at the next meeting. The BRS also received updates from the ADA Ombudsman.

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The MAS discussion centered on safety. The discussion was prompted by the number of MetroAccess customers opting out of using a seat belt. Metro has instituted a seat belt waiver for this process and established a policy to conform to State law. The subcommittee was provided some statistics from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety on safety belts. Members agreed that seatbelts are the most effective way to save lives and reduce injuries in crashes. Therefore, without a waiver, the MetroAccess operator may decline to provide service to a customer who refuses to allow his or her wheelchair to be secured. The subcommittee also received a demonstration on the proper wheelchair securement utilizing a portable platform and restraints. The MAS requested Metro provide members with a video of crash demonstrating what can happen to passengers without a seatbelt.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.



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STATUS OF FY 2016 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info - 09	Maryland – Abilities Ride Proposed MetroAccess Alternatives	2/1/16		Presenters: Christian Kent/Christiaan Blake	
Info - 04	AAC Quarterly Leadership Meeting	2/1/16	AAC	New approach: Joint AAC/RAC meeting	
Info – 06	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	12/5/16	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 - 02	25 th Anniversary of the ADA	7/6/15	AAC	Open Forum	7/6/15
Info - 03	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
Info - 08	Momentum and Long Range Plan (update)	12/7/15	AAC	Presenter: Jennifer Weeks	12/7/15

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