



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: January 3, 2017

ATTENDEES

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Denise Rush (1st Vice Chair), Carolyn Bellamy, Brianne Burger, Charlie Crawford, Larry Haile, Steven Kaffen, Suzanne Kamel, Edward McEntee, Randall Pope, Doris Ray, and Paul Semelfort.

Call to Order

Chair 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 as amended.

The December 5, 2016 meeting minutes were approved.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated January 3, 2017, was approved as amended.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A comment was made about poor service on MetroAccess. The customer stated that over the last few months his service has declined significantly. Sometimes, the MetroAccess vehicle would not show despite him having reserved a trip. Other times, two or three MetroAccess vehicles would show up to transport one customer each going in the same direction. John Gray, Acting Project Manager, MV Transportation, apologized. He also acknowledged the challenges currently facing the system, and stated that MV is working diligently to improve service. Mr. Gray stated that his team would follow up on this issue and provide feedback to the customer.

DISCUSSION WITH GENERAL MANAGER

Paul J. Wiedefeld, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer, greeted members of the AAC and the public. He thanked the AAC for its efforts to improve Metro's services for all customers and for keeping the Board informed through the monthly report and other correspondence.

In 2017, Metro will continue to align its priorities with the safety, reliability, and fiscal responsibility of the system. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that Metro is working to move the system "Back to Good". Metro is listening and feels customers' frustrations. The "Back to Good" initiative is a plan to improve safety, reduce delays caused by problems with the tracks and railcars, and provide a balanced budget based on what the region can afford.

Additionally, Mr. Wiedefeld mentioned a change in the reporting protocol for the Department of Access Services (ACCS) led by AGM Christian Kent. ACCS will report to the Chief Operating Officer, Joe Leader. Mr. Leader has nearly 30 years of experience with New York City Transit (NYCT). At Metro, Mr. Leader is in charge of Metrorail, Metrobus, and now MetroAccess.

Mr. Sheehan opened the floor to members for questions.

Larry Haile thanked the GM for his proactive outreach to the disability community and the general public. He stated that this type of access to a general manager of a major transit agency is unprecedented, and it is greatly appreciated.

Mr. Haile expressed an interest in Metro's plans to improve safety for customers boarding trains. On a regular basis, customers, including those with disabilities, get caught in the train doors as they are closing. Some transit agencies use cameras to allow train operators to view the platform before closing the doors. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that transit agencies approach this issue differently. On a recent trip to Manhattan, the GM stated that he noticed NYCT transit personnel on the platform using whistles to alert customers that the train doors are closing. Mr. Wiedefeld will ask Mr. Leader to review the issue and provide feedback to the Committee.

Mr. Haile also expressed an interest in periodic updates on the "Back to Good" initiative. The GM stated that information will be made available to customers.

Charlie Crawford made a comment about music at the Gallery Place station; recently, the location has been playing soft music. He stated that it is really enjoyable and thanked Metro for adding sound to the system.

Mr. Crawford requested more information on Metro's new initiative. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that Metro used focus groups and surveys to get a better understanding of customers' frustrations and what customers deem important about the system. Customers were interested in service improvements and on time trains and buses. With the "Back to Good" initiative, Metro will implement programs that will establish new preventive maintenance efforts with the goal of cutting delays to trains caused by track problems in half; retire the oldest and least reliable rail cars in the fleet and convert all 8-car trains to new 7000-series cars; conduct focused maintenance campaigns on the legacy fleet for the most problematic issues; and prevent "near misses" on Metrorail tracks that endanger workers and inspectors. Metro will also visibly improve stations through better cleaning and improved lighting.

Steve Kaffen congratulated Metro staff for their impressive dialogue with the jurisdictions at the budget meeting in December 2016. Management was well versed on

the details and specifics of the budget. He stated that Metro did a great job in countering the comments made by others, and Metro added creditability to getting its fiscal house in order.

Given that Metro is in a financial crisis, Mr. Kaffen expressed an interest in whether Metro has a senior level third-party reviewer for expenditures that transcends operational staff. He stated that if the public knew Metro had this type of control in place, they would be more comfortable with changes in the fare structure.

Paul Semelfort stated that he would express comments on behalf of Phil Posner. Through email, Dr. Posner raised the following points for the GM: 1) the MetroAccess Fare Calculator is not always accurate in terms of producing the lowest fare due to a combination of Safe Track work, unplanned Metrorail outages, and/or other work in the stations; 2) there has been a downward trend in on-time performance of the MetroAccess service; most recently as low as 80%; and 3) staff must keep in mind that any increase on Metrobus and Metrorail fares would have twice the impact on MetroAccess fares. Mr. Semelfort stated that these issues are more than an irritant to customers who use the service, and these customers are looking for a change. Mr. Wiedefeld acknowledged the challenges with the MetroAccess. He stated that Metro is working with the vendors to turn their performance around. Some of the changes will include hiring more drivers and increasing benefits. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that Metro believes in treating all customers in an equitable manner, and added that changes in the fare for the general public are not done when work is being performed in the system; therefore, there will be no changes to the MetroAccess fares when work is performed in the system. He encouraged members and the public to attend the public hearing and voice their views on Metro's fare policy. The Board and Metro want to hear from the public.

Denise Rush expressed an interest in whether the GM had an update on the waiver for emergency exercises. The AAC has been discussing the issue for quite some time, and has now forwarded a letter to the GM outlining its concern. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that Metro is reviewing the issue. This is a complex issue with risk and liability, so further research is needed before any changes can be made to the policy. The GM indicated that the would research how other agencies handle this issue.

Suzanne Kamel made a comment about elevator and escalators outages. She stated that the escalators at the Columbia Heights station were out-of-service for nearly a year, and a few months after being returned to service, the escalators are out again. Mr. Wiedefeld stated he will follow up on the issue and provide feedback.

Ms. Kamel also made a comment about announcements in the Metrorail system. Metro makes many announcements, some at the platform level. When a train is at the

platform, the train operator also makes announcements. The two announcements occurring at the same time tend to cancel one another out. She stated that for some customers with disabilities, the competing announcements are confusing. Mr. Wiedefeld stated he will look into the issue and provide feedback.

Brianne Burger made a comment about communication. She encouraged Metro to strengthen its efforts in communicating with the public, in particular with customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. Although there is an initiative underway to use whiteboards, Ms. Burger stated that the tool is just a start. Metro needs to do more with communication for the deaf or hard-of-hearing community.

In a follow-up on communication, Ms. Burger expressed an interest in cell phone access in the system. When something happens in the system, Metro usually sends an alert. If a customer is in the tunnel, their cell phone does not work. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that Metro has a project underway to add cellular capabilities in the tunnels. Ms. Burger commended Metro for maintaining late hours in the system for New Year's Eve.

Randall Pope also made a comment about communication. He stated that he is a member of the deaf-blind community. Often times the issues of the deaf-blind community are not recognized. Although the deaf-blind community is in the minority of customers using the system, Metro can do more to communicate with these customers and ensure the system is accessible for this group. Mr. Pope encouraged Metro to enhance communication through the development of electronic applications for smartphones. He also suggested that Metro increase training for front line staff, so they can provide better assistance when necessary. For example, Mr. Pope stated that a deaf-blind customer with a service animal was having trouble using MetroAccess. During a recent pick-up, the MetroAccess driver failed to pick up the customer because the customer did not self-identify (and could not do so because as deaf-blind, he was unaware of the MetroAccess driver's arrival). This resulted in a no-show for the customer. Metro staff needs more training with different types of disabilities to ensure service is being provided at the highest level of customer service to all customers. Mr. Wiedefeld agreed that from the technology and training perspective, there are things Metro and MetroAccess can do to ensure customers are being served.

In a follow-up, Christian T. Kent, Assistant General Manager, ACCS, stated that ACCS has been reviewing the sensitivity training and door-to-door training for MetroAccess operators. In the review, Metro has been working with an occupational therapist to better understand the abilities and limitations of various types of disabilities. Mr. Kent thanked Mr. Pope for bringing the issue forward and stated that Omari June, Director, MetroAccess, will provide feedback on the training review to the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS).

Edward McEntee expressed an interest in the MetroAccess fare policy. He stated that his fares have increased anywhere from \$0.75 cents to almost a \$1 within the last week. He asked whether the changes in MetroAccess fares were tied to changes in the fixed route service. Mr. Kent stated that there have not been any changes to the MetroAccess base fare. When Metro is performing track work or there is a long-term outage, MetroAccess fares are lower because they are then based on a bus-only fare. Mr. Kent expressed an interest in whether the MetroAccess fares the customer was experiencing were for the same trip destination or to different places. Mr. McEntee stated that he has witnessed the increase in fares to the same trip destination. Mr. Kent stated that his team would investigate the issue and provide feedback.

Doris Ray stressed the importance of Metrobus and Metrorail to customers in the region. For many people, the fixed route system represents the family car. She stated that she uses the system for all of her transportation needs. With an increase in fares, Metro should provide more reliable service. Ms. Ray stated that she, as well as those using the Free Ride Program, save the transit system a great deal of money by not using MetroAccess. She suggested that Metro increase Metrobus service in areas where Metrorail will be reduced because of early closings. This would benefit all customers including those with disabilities. Additionally, Ms. Ray stated that she would like Metro to enhance compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on all three modes of service. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that Metro's goal is to move the system "Back to Good," and reiterated that the "Back to Good" initiative aims to improve safety, reduce delays caused by problems with the tracks and railcars, and provide a balanced budget based on what the region can afford.

Mr. Sheehan stated that the AAC appreciates this level of dialogue with the GM. He stated that the AAC supports the "Back to Good" initiative. He added that the work of the AAC could not be done without the support of ACCS. The support from staff is critical to meeting our goals and providing sound advice to Metro. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that moving forward, he is interested in regular quarterly meetings with the AAC. These meetings would allow him to hear directly from the community. The AAC applauded the comments of the GM.

ABILITIES-RIDE (Update)

Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that Metro hosted a pre-proposal conference for the solicitation. He added that the event was open to the public and well attended. The Request for Proposal closes on January 12, 2017, and after a thorough review by Procurement staff, an award (or awards) will be issued. Once the award(s) are issued, Metro will launch an educational and outreach campaign about the service available for subsidized payments.

BUS and RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) received a presentation on Metrorail signage from the Office of Infrastructure Services (OIS). Metro's Signage Program has one goal: to ensure all customers, including people with disabilities, are able to navigate the system effectively. Metro strives to ensure that the messaging is consistent throughout the system.

Although there are many elements that can limit the effectiveness of signage, Metro has a strict signage review process, and every proposed sign goes through a rigorous assessment before being placed in the system. Elements such as familiarization, consistency, simplicity, and continuity are used to ensure good wayfinding signage throughout the Metrorail system. Metro also conducts outreach with stakeholders; reviews pedestrian traffic flow; and obtains mapping of the area to ensure the needs of the disability community are met. OIS also works closely with ACCS on regulations that relate to the ADA.

The BRS was pleased to hear that Metro included the public in the process for the placement and development of signs, in particular the tactile signs. The BRS encouraged Metro to continue to work with the disability community for input on all signage in the system. The BRS thanked Metro for its work to improve wayfinding in the system.

The BRS also received a presentation on Metro's ADA Quality Assurance efforts. Marque Dixon, ADA Quality Assurance Specialist, outlined the work he performs on a day-to-day basis to ensure accessibility of Metro. He stated that his role is to ensure the operability all accessible features in the system. When an accessibility issue occurs, Mr. Dixon investigates the matter; notifies the appropriate office for repair; and monitors the progress of the repair until the issue is resolved.

Customers are encouraged to report issues of compliance to Metro's Customer Service at (202) 962-1328 and ADAP at (202) 962-1100. Customers can also email compliance issues to access@wmata.com. The BRS thanked Mr. Dixon for the important work he is doing in quality assurance to maintain access throughout the system.

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The MAS received a presentation on seatbelt extenders. Metro uses two types of extenders: 1) for securing a wheelchair and 2) for the vehicle seatbelt. All vehicles are equipped with at least one of each type of extender.

The MAS also received a presentation from MetroAccess provider, Transdev, which has been serving as a contractor with MetroAccess since May 2013. Transdev is a global

corporation with 100 years of public transportation expertise, and offers paratransit service in 40 cities including Baltimore, Las Vegas, and New Orleans.

The company employs 527 operators, 44 maintenance staff, 55 safety/training staff, and 34 operations and support personnel. All Transdev mechanics are Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certified. All safety and training staff are required to complete transit education units and paratransit transportation-related education units. New operators also receive classroom training, which includes behind the wheel training. Operators are also required to complete annual refresher training.

Transdev's facility is located in Hyattsville, Maryland and houses 336 vehicles. The company operates approximately 50% of the MetroAccess service and averages 330 routes daily, including taxi sub-contractors, which account for 5% of the trips performed. To maintain highly qualified drivers, the company offers various employee incentive programs that include free shuttle bus service to and from local metro stations; turkey and ham vouchers during the Thanksgiving holiday; and holding a safety Olympics where staff receive incentives for safety, attendance, and customer service.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in more presentations from vendors. With the number of complaints regarding service, she requested a presentation from MTM. Mr. Semelfort stated that the item is on the work plan. He asked that Metro move the item forward for the MAS to review.

In a follow-up, Mr. Sheehan expressed an interest in a presentation about MetroAccess on-time performance. He stated that the MAS wants to be involved in the solution. Mr. Kent stated that the performance issue of MetroAccess service is a resource issue. Staff is working on the issue diligently and vendors are reviewing their employment packages to attract better applicants/employees. Although the on-time performance report has been significantly better, Mr. Kent stated that he welcomes suggestions on improvements from the AAC.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Semelfort expressed an interest in MetroAccess policy for severe weather. Mr. June stated that MetroAccess will inform customers with as much advance notice as possible. He stated that this team is coordinating with the each of the vendors to make improvements in the process.

In follow up, Ms. Burger made a comment regarding a co-worker who uses MetroAccess service. When the Federal government is closed due to severe weather, her co-worker often works from home. She stated that vehicles still arrive at the person's home although the employer is closed. Mr. June stated that MetroAccess does not cancel trips

without a customer's approval. During inclement weather, staff coordinates with large centers to understand the organizations' severe weather policies and adjust MetroAccess trips accordingly.

Ms. Ray cautioned Metro regarding closing subscription service of MetroAccess during the Inauguration and on other Federal holidays. Many customers, who do not work in Washington, have subscription trips; therefore, trips should not be canceled across the board. Mr. June stated that Metro sends out notifications about MetroAccess service directly to customers, not just through the media. Canceling subscription trips for a Federal holiday does not prevent customers from booking that same trip on demand.

Mr. Semelfort expressed an interest in the plan for MetroAccess service during the Inauguration. Mr. June stated that his team has been involved with the coordination meetings on the Inauguration. As in years past, there will be a perimeter and certain rail stations will be closed. At the time a trip is booked, customers will know whether their trip is in a restricted zone and the location of how far a vehicle can travel in the area. Mr. June stated that because road and stations closures are so fluid during this time, he reminded members and the public to plan trips carefully.

In follow up, Mr. Kent stated that because of the security restrictions, all three modes will be impacted. It is a long walk from the security perimeter to the area where the Inauguration events will occur. He cautioned customers to take an account of their abilities and limitations before making the decision to travel during this time.

Mr. Sheehan expressed an interest in MetroAccess service for the day after the Inauguration. Currently, there are many protests scheduled, and he wondered whether these protests will impact service. Mr. June stated that MetroAccess has had experience in this area over the last few years. Members and the public should keep in mind that MetroAccess service will be fluid on this day as well.

The AAC discussed its work plan and added the following items for discussion: (1) stop announcements on Metrorail and Metrobus - review of standards; (2) bus stop signage at terminal stations; and (3) bus stop accessibility. The AAC also requested an update on the new MetroAccess ID cards, station lighting, planned elevator outages, Metrorail station signage, system wayfinding, and GIS system for bus stops.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.



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STATUS OF COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info – 06	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	2/6/17	AAC	Update (Follow-up discussion after event - November 2013).	
Info – 22	Wayfinding (Demonstration and Tour)	3/6/17	BRS	Presenter: Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind and Click-and-Go	
Info – 23	Dulles Phase II	4/3/17	AAC	Presenter: Jay Neider Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority	
Info – 20	A discussion with Metro's GM	5/1/17	AAC	Presenter: Paul J. Wiedefeld	

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

COMPLETED - 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

COMPLETED - COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info - 09	Maryland – Abilities Ride Proposed MetroAccess Alternatives	2/1/16		Presenter: Christian Kent/Christiaan Blake	2/1/16
Info - 04	AAC Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Committee	2/1/16	AAC	New approach: Joint AAC/RAC meeting	2/1/16
Info - 10	Announcements 7000 Series	3/7/16	AAC	Presenter: Debo Ogunrinde	3/7/16
Info - 04	AAC Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Committee	3/7/16	AAC	Feedback	3/7/16
Info - 11	A discussion with Metro's GM	4/4/16	AAC	Presenter: Paul Wiedefeld	4/4/16
Info – 12	Customer safety	5/2/16	AAC	Presenter: Chief Ronald Pavlik	5/2/16
Info – 16	A discussion with Metro's GM	9/6/16	AAC	Presenter: Paul J. Wiedefeld	9/6/16

COMPLETED - COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info – 17	A discussion with Metro’s Board Chair	10/3/16	AAC	Presenter: Jack Evans	10/3/16
Info – 18	Communication with Customers who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing	10/3/16	AAC	Presenter: Jim Hughes	10/3/16
Info – 21	Metro’s FY2018 Budget Presentation	12/5/16	AAC	Presenter: Dennis Anosike	12/5/16
Info – 19	A discussion with Metro’s GM	1/3/17	AAC	Presenter: Paul J. Wiedefeld	1/3/17

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