



Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes: July 11, 2016

ATTENDEES

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Denise Rush (1st Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (2nd Vice-Chair), Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Brianne Burger, Darnise Bush, Steven Kaffen; Suzanne Kamel, Phillippa Mezile, Mary Kay McMahon, Randall Pope, Dr. Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Paul Semelfort, and Will Schell.

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 as amended.

The June 6, 2016 meeting minutes were approved as amended.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated July 11, 2016, was approved as amended.

A VISIT FROM THE BOARD

Through the Chairman's report to Metro's Board of Directors, the AAC has invited members of the Board to attend AAC meetings. Those same sentiments have been echoed by Metro Board Chair Jack Evans. The AAC was pleased to welcome Carol Carmody, a new Board member representing the Federal government, to the meeting. The AAC appreciates a healthy dialogue with the Board and looks forward to having other Board members attend the AAC meetings as well.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

A customer made a comment about poor service on MetroAccess. She stated that this past May, MetroAccess failed to pick her up. After contacting the "Where's My Ride," a dispatcher added her to another trip that too never showed. The customer stated that she finally used a cab to get home which was an additional expense. The customer stated that this has occurred too many times, she has made several complaints, but she still receives the same poor service. The customer requested that her trip history be reviewed to resolve these issues with the service. Paul Semelfort, Chair, MetroAccess Subcommittee, stated that someone from MetroAccess would speak with her to get more details for an investigation and then provide her with feedback.

Phil Posner made a comment about Metro's plans to reduce its workforce. Dr. Posner expressed an interest in whether any of the reductions would occur in the Department of Access Services (ACCS). He stated that the Ombudsman role and

position is vital to the disability community. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, stated that although nothing is official, ACCS has discussed the issue and will provide an update to the AAC at a later time.

Dr. Posner also made a comment about the safety signage on rail cars. He stated that Metro removed certain language from the emergency evacuation posters related to the disability community, such as the word "wheelchairs" which was replaced by the term "large packages." Additionally, the safety signage provides instructions on the intercom system; however, it lacks details on the location of the system, which is in a different location in each series of rail cars. The posters in the system are in large print; yet, they lack raised lettering and Braille, making the posters inaccessible. Dr. Posner stated that the recent *Washington Post* article on SafeTrack and customers with disabilities who ride the fixed route system identified the lack of proper emergency evacuation signage as a barrier to customers with disabilities using the Metrorail system. The article also stated that many fixed route customers with disabilities are abandoning the Metrorail system because of safety. Dr. Posner stated that these are issues that the AAC has discussed before; however, little progress has been made to resolve them. He suggested that Metro redo the emergency evacuation posters and make the information more uniform, so core information is the same. Doris Ray added that the emergency evacuation posters should also have greater contrast making the information usable by the low-vision community.

Mr. Blake stated that Metro has made great efforts to educate all customers on safety including those with disabilities. The emergency evacuation posters and lettering are larger and more prominent than the previous emergency evacuation posters. Mr. Blake added that Metro also enhanced its safety brochure. The brochure now includes information on evacuation procedures for customers with disabilities.

Ms. Ray stated that Metro should consider electronically sharing the safety brochure with other organizations and requesting that the organizations share the information with customers via their respective websites. She also suggested that Metro forward the brochure to the *Metropolitan Washington Ear* to provide the information for people with visual disabilities.

In a follow-up to the *Washington Post* article, Ms. Ray stated that she received some comment from the disability community in Northern Virginia regarding the major service disruptions. Three phases of the surge maintenance plan have taken place mostly in Northern Virginia. Customers who begin their trip on the outskirts of the Orange line have to travel into downtown to get to a destination that is on the other end of the Orange line. Many have found it easier to skip the trip because the journey is too time consuming. For many people with disabilities and those in the low-income community, public transportation is their only means of transportation. Ms. Ray reiterated her comments from the June 2016 AAC meeting about shuttle services,

indicating that customers in South Arlington were heavily inconvenienced during these safety surges, and Metro should have extended bus routes and provided more shuttle service.

Ms. Ray followed up on her statements with a comment about lights on the platform. She stated that the platform lights at the Courthouse Metrorail station were (inbound) completely dark. The platform lights on the opposite side of the platform were illuminated; however, there were big gaps where there was no light. Additionally, at the lower level of the Pentagon station, the platform lights were dark too. Ms. Ray stated that this is a safety issue that needs to be addressed. Mr. Blake reported that the initial complaint was reported and the feedback received was that the issue was fixed. He stated that he would follow up on the issue again and provide feedback.

Denise Rush made a comment about poor service on MetroAccess. She stated that she received a comment from a new paratransit customer in Prince George's County. The customer stated that using MetroAccess service has been major challenge. Ms. Rush stated that she has been trying to assist the customer with navigating the process and resolving the issue. Staff stated they would investigate and provide feedback.

SAFETRACK AND THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

The AAC discussed a recent news article about the disability community's safety concerns with Metrorail and the SafeTrack initiative. The article highlighted an incident at the Woodley Park Metrorail station that is all too familiar for some customers including those with disabilities traveling in the system. The question on the minds of most customers in such a situation is how to get out of the system in an emergency. The customer in the article is former AAC member Mary Jane Owen, who stated that taking the train was no longer worth the risk. Other people with disabilities mentioned in the article stated that they were scared, but felt they had no other options because public transportation is their only means of transportation.

Phillippa Mezile stated that the article highlighted many of the things the AAC and the disability community at large have discussed about emergencies and feeling safe on the system. She suggested that the AAC discuss the issue and provide recommendations to the Board.

Brianne Burger stated that article was fair because it really captured all the issues and challenges that the disability community. The article also discussed AAC efforts to improve communication with the deaf community. Ms. Burger stated that two-way communication is vital in any emergency.

Ms. Ray stated that her first impression of the article was that the issue of safety should not have been linked to Safe Track. SafeTrack is designed to improve safety and some of the issues mentioned in the article.

Dr. Posner stated that the article reinforced many of the AAC recommendations. Over the Independence Day weekend, there were many tourists in town and because of SafeTrack, many of the popular destinations were cut off from service. He stated that while traveling in the system, he provided directions to tourists who had no idea how to navigate in the system. Improved communication is not just for the disability community, it is for all customers.

Elver Ariza-Silva stated that shuttle service for SafeTrack has been a challenge for him during the many maintenance cycles. Access to shuttle service at impacted stations is difficult for customers with disabilities. Metro staff are not looking out for customers with disabilities to ensure they have the right to board buses first.

In a follow-up, Dr. Posner stated that Metro should consider pre-boarding customers with disabilities on shuttle services, similar to how Airlines and Amtrak manage the issue. A comment from the public expressed an interest whether Metro has a policy on pre-boarding customers with disabilities. The customer also asked whether staff are aware of the procedures.

Ms. Mezile expressed an interest in emergency evacuation training for public. Mr. Blake stated that Metro, through the jurisdictions, has opened the emergency evacuation exercises to all customers. The emergency evacuation events are as close to reality in demonstrating what to do in an emergency on the system as one can possibly get.

Suzane Kamel stated that in reading the article, she reflected on her own reluctance to use the Metrorail system sometimes. Many times the announcements on the trains and in the system are unclear. Ms. Kamel stated that the lack of or inadequate communication make her fearful and uncomfortable when riding the system.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in whether Metro had a policy that would give priority to customers in mobility devices at elevators during an emergency. When a train is being evacuating in an emergency, people with disabilities are the last to get off and some must be separated from their device. Ms. Ray suggested that Metro should find an alternative to that system and document how long it takes first responders to reunite customers with their own devices after an evacuation has been completed. Mr. Blake stated that staff will invite the Office of Emergency Management to discuss procedures during an emergency.

Ms. Burger stated that she served on the Council for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Office of Disability Integration and Coordination (FEMA-DIC) which has developed some guidelines for evacuating people with disabilities in a disaster or emergency. FEMA-DIC provides information on best practices for emergency management. Ms. Burger stated that although the information pertains to assisting people with disabilities in a disaster, much of the information is universal and could be applied to an emergency in the Metrorail system. Mr. Blake thanked Ms. Burger for the resource and stated that he will forward it to his colleagues in the Safety department.

Darnise Bush stated that she found the stories in the article about traveling in the system for people with disabilities heartbreaking to read. To familiarize all customers including those with disabilities with emergency planning and safety, she suggested that Metro consider a program where customers can adopt a station. The initiative would host community meetings at or near the rail (or bus station), highlight safety, and discuss solutions to make the system better. Mr. Blake stated that adopt-a-station idea is an excellent one.

Tappan Banerjee stated that he is familiar with the FEMA-DIC program and agrees that its information could be applied to emergencies in the Metrorail system.

Dr. Banerjee also stated that he empathized with former member Mary Jane Owen about being afraid to ride the Metrorail system. When an incident occurs in the system, customers with mobility devices are the last to be evacuated. He predicts that the number of customers using MetroAccess will increase because customers with disabilities are so frightened to use the fixed route system.

In a follow-up on the comments about evacuation of customers with disabilities in the system, Dr. Posner stated that if mobility devices are the last to be evacuated, he suggests that Metro change the wheelchair landing areas in the railcars. Currently, the wheelchair landing area is located at the center doors of every train car. In an evacuation, if customers are coming out of the center doors they will be stepping over the customer in the mobility device. The safety signage states that for customers to open the center doors for emergency, the customer must unhook the latch to open the door. Dr. Posner stated that the AAC has worked feverishly to change this dangerous issue, but to no avail. Mr. Blake reiterated his comments about inviting OEM to address the issue.

AAC ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS DISCUSSION

Chair Sheehan welcomed the new members and provided a brief overview of how the AAC operates. He stressed the importance of reading the minutes and the Chairman's Report to the Board. He stated the documents are the official record of the AAC and the work of the subcommittees.

The AAC has a good reputation and strong record of accomplishment. Being a volunteer on the AAC requires a level of dedication, commitment, and persistence to achieve the many work plan items. It is important for members to attend meetings and be engaged with the disability community.

Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, reminded new and reappointed members that New Member Orientation is scheduled for July 18, immediately following the combined meeting of BRS and MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS). The orientation will further familiarize members with information on how the AAC and its subcommittees operate as well as Metro's policies and procedures. In response to a question about the elections, Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that the BRS Subcommittee is seeking two members to serve in the role of Vice-chair and 2nd Vice-chair positions respectively. A greater discussion will occur at the September 2016 AAC meeting.

The AAC was also reminded of the changes in the yearly calendar. To align with Metro's Board calendar the AAC will not meet in the month of August.

Mr. Sheehan expressed an interest in the replacement member for Montgomery County. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that the recommendation for the replacement member to the AAC has been finalized and forwarded for approval. The AAC will be informed when the appointment is approved.

QUARTERLY MEETING WITH METRO'S EXECUTIVE BOARD

Mr. Sheehan provided a brief update on the Quarterly meeting with the Board's Executive Committee. The AAC's Abilities-Ride letter was a key topic of discussion as well as customer safety on the fixed route system and the impact of the waivers on the disabilities community participation in the planned emergency exercises.

STATION LIGHTING WORK GROUP

Mr. Sheehan also provided a brief update on the lighting in the Metrorail system. He stated that Barbara Milleville, President, National Capital Citizens with Low Vision (NCCLV) has been a strong advocate and supporter of enhancing lighting throughout the Metrorail system. The BRS Station Lighting Work Group, along with NCCLV, has worked hard on assessing lighting and prioritizing a list of stations for lighting improvements. Together the group has recommended lighting standards that can be applied in the course of lighting improvements throughout the system.

This past May, NCCLV met with Metro's General Manager and had a robust discussion about lighting. Mr. Sheehan requested that Ms. Milleville provide feedback on the meeting at the next BRS meeting. It is important that members remain engaged in this process and participate in the station lighting work group meetings.

Additionally, at the last Board meeting, Mr. Sheehan stated that Board member Tom Bulger requested an update on lighting. He stated that the Board recognizes the hard work of the AAC on this issue. Upon motion, the AAC approved the lighting report to the Board.

ABILITIES-RIDE RECOMMENDATION LETTER

In lieu of reports from the BRS and MAS, the AAC agreed to discuss the Abilities-Ride letter to the Board. Over the last four months, the AAC has discussed the issue and members concerns ranged from service area; resolving complaints with the service; accessing the service by telephone; the proposed limited number of daily trips; and standards for driver training. The AAC recognizes that unconstrained growth in demand for MetroAccess is unsustainable, and is fully committed to helping Metro develop ways to provide reliable and sustainable public transportation services. The AAC also wants to ensure that the alternatives are equally accessible. Upon motion, at the May 2016 meeting, the AAC agreed to forward a list of recommendations to Metro's Board, General Manager, and staff outlining the minimum standard of service acceptable for the Abilities-Ride program. Mr. Semelfort, was designated to lead the efforts and read the letter in its entirety.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in amending the language to add that the Abilities-Ride service was a civil right.

In a follow up, Ms. Bellamy reminded members that the service is designated as an alternative service. She suggested that members should be careful about the language used in the letter. Paratransit service, per the ADA, is a safety net for customers who cannot use the fixed route system for all or some of their trips. Mr. Blake added that Metro wants to give people with disabilities as many options as possible for their travel needs. He stated that Metro has listened to the community, and while the process is not complete, Abilities-Ride will likely have multiple providers, possibly a telephone option, and options to pay for service outside of a credit card. He stated that the AAC should be pleased with the proposal. He added that Abilities-Ride is not a one size fits all solution. It will be just one of many options available to customers with disabilities, eventually leaving MetroAccess last on anyone's list. He stated "micro-transit" will likely be next, so members of the AAC need to keep an open mind and understand that many options will be available, and that is a good thing for all travelers.

Ms. Bellamy reiterated her comments 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. She stated that many local companies have served the disability community well and should be invited and encouraged to participate in the Abilities-Ride proposal.

A comment from the public expressed an interest in the schedule for the delivery of the AAC's letter to the Board. The customer also expressed an interest in who drafted the letter. Mr. Semelfort stated that he crafted the letter, with minimal support from Metro staff, based on previous AAC meeting materials.

Responding to a question about whether the AAC will get to review the RFP prior to its release to the public, Mr. Blake stated that the AAC will not be able to review the RFP prior to distribution. However, there will be a pre-bid conference where questions can be addressed.

Ms. Rush stated that she wanted make members aware the National Federation of the Blind recently won its lawsuit against a transportation network company for the improper treatment of the disability community. She urged Metro to rethink its business relationship with companies that do not abide by the principles or regulations of the ADA.

Upon motion, the AAC agreed to move the Abilities-Ride letter forward to the Board.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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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 – 16	A discussion with Metro’s GM	9/6/16	AAC	Presenter: Paul J. Wiedefeld	
Info – 17	A discussion with Metro’s Board Chair	10/3/16	AAC	Presenter: Jack Evans	
Info – 18	MetroAccess Conversion Program	10/3/16	AAC	Presenter: Frank Roth	
Info – 06	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	12/5/16	AAC	Update (Follow-up discussion after event - November 2013).	
Info – 19	A discussion with Metro’s GM	1/3/17	AAC	Presenter: Paul J. Wiedefeld	
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 - 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

COMPLETED - FY 2016 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

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
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

COMPLETED - FY 2016 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

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 - 13	SafeTrack Plan	6/6/16	AAC	Letter to GM Presenters: James Hughes and Jim Hamre	6/6/16
Info - 14	AAC Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Committee	6/6/16	AAC		6/6/16
Info - 13	AAC Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Committee	7/5/16	AAC	Feedback	
Info - 14	Lighting Work Group (Update)	7/5/16	BRS	Feedback on NCCLV Meeting with GM	
Info - 15	AAC Administrative Process Discussion	7/5/16	AAC		

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