



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting (Virtual) Minutes: July 6, 2020

Attendees

Present: Phil Posner (Chair), Denise Rush (Vice-Chair), Darnise Bush, Tino Calabia, Vanessa Coles, Rico Dancy, Melanie Jackson, Steve Kaffen, Mary Kay McMahon, Phillippa Mezile, Anthony Oberg, Paul Semelfort, Patrick Semelfort, and Kelley Simoneaux.

Call to Order

Anu Sharma, AAC Coordinator, started the meeting by making general announcements followed by taking a roll call. Thereafter, Chair Posner moved the meeting forward.

Approval of Agenda, Board Report, and Prior Meeting Minutes

The meeting agenda was approved as amended to add MetroAccess Fare discussion.

The June 1, 2020 meeting minutes were approved as written.

The Board Report was approved as written.

Safety – Update:

Teresa Impastato, Chief of Safety, was unable to join the AAC Meeting.

Sounds for New Fare gates – Update:

Terri Anomnachi, Project Manager, Capital Funding, presented a new set of proposed sounds for the new fare gates. Ms. Anomnachi stated the last set of sounds she presented to the AAC were not liked for various reasons. At this time, she will present a new set of proposed sounds to determine if the committee has a preference for any of the sounds. Ms. Anomnachi played several sounds for failures, success, and alarms indicating something that should not be happening, is happening. The new fare gates will have multiple zone sensors to prevent closure on customers' mobility aid and/or luggage.

There was a discussion that ruled out the use of the sounds similar to train-door chimes and current bus sounds. Chair Posner recommended to test the sounds for station managers and determine which sound will get their attention. Chair Posner also recommended wireless speakers for inside the kiosk. Mr. Kaffen recommended a portable device to alert station managers as they have to move around. Mr. Kaffen also asked about the volume of the sounds and Ms. Anomnachi responded that the sounds are adjustable, and can be heard for up to 60 feet.

Ms. Anomnachi stated it is mandatory for WMATA to have failure sounds to alert customers. Along with the sounds/alarms, customers will be notified of the issue via text messages displayed on the fare gate screens. There was a question about accessibility of the fare gates. Ms. Anomnachi stated the sounds will be for all the fare gates. Carol Peredo Lopez, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, stated WMATA goes above

and beyond the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All the fare gates have sounds and visual messaging. Ms. Anomnachi has been working hard to ensure full accessibility.

Mr. Sheehan asked about the color contrast. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated the color contrast is compliant. Ms. Anomnachi stated the color background will be black with white color text. She also said this is not the final set of sounds. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated the accessible ADA fare gates are located closest to the station manager's kiosk to ensure quick assistance. Ms. Anomnachi stated station managers' feedback will also be considered for the new fare gates sounds.

There was a question about the possibility of adopting turnstiles similar to San Francisco and about width of the new fare gates. Ms. Anomnachi stated we already have the approved fare gates which will not be similar to turnstiles and the existing width will continue. Ms. Anomnachi stated she will be happy to share further information as it becomes available. Ms. Sharma invited the AAC to email any further feedback for her to forward it to Ms. Anomnachi. Chair Posner thanked Ms. Anomnachi for sharing the sounds.

MetroAccess Fares:

Mr. Semelfort shared his experience regarding New York City fares and stated that buses and paratransit are free for customers. Mr. Semelfort recommended that MetroAccess be free during the COVID pandemic. That would also eliminate the issue of operators having to deal with cash. Metrobuses are not accepting fares at this time. When Metrobus resumes collecting fares then MetroAccess can resume accepting fares.

Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services, stated that if the recommendation of fare-free MetroAccess is based on Metrobus not collecting fares, then to be equivalent to Metrobus, MetroAccess would need to temporarily suspend door-to-door service and instead provide only curb-to-curb service. He added that Metrobus fares are not being collected due to the COVID-19 crisis as a policy, but rather due to the rear boarding in an effort to promote social distancing between customers and operators. Throughout this crisis, MetroAccess has continued to provide door-to-door service and hands-on customer accommodation, when needed.

Chair Posner stated customer contact on Metrobus is from front door entrance whereas, it is on MetroAccess not because of door-to-door service rather due to securement within the vehicle. For door-to-door six feet distance can be maintained. Chair Posner referenced a previous comment by Mr. Semelfort with regards to money handling by MetroAccess operators and asked for an update about it. He added, if MetroAccess fares are twice the fixed route, for Orange/Silver lines shutdown, with free buses MetroAccess fare becomes zero.

Mr. Blake stated there is some cash handling for MetroAccess fares however, a majority of the fares are handled via EZ Pay, which is not handled by the operators. For many customers the door-to-door service is exactly that, door-to-door, that involves contact as operators may assist customers by providing their arm for support, as an example.

He went on to say there is a lot more customer contact on MetroAccess service, and it is difficult to maintain six foot distance and provide door-to-door for some customers. There have not been any fare changes on Metrobus by the Board. The fare on buses is not being collected due to rear boarding, which may be coming to an end in the near future.

Chair Posner recommended having the same Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for the safety of the operators as for the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT).

Vice-Chair Rush stated she does not concur with Mr. Semelfort's recommendation for free MetroAccess service during this time of pandemic. Customers are still able to travel using MetroAccess and they are still receiving door-to-door service. Fewer people are traveling and MetroAccess is scheduling direct trips for customers therefore there is only one passenger per vehicle at a time. The operators need to get paid and there are other expenses involved in providing the service. Vice-Chair Rush stated the AAC needs to review the entire picture and it will be confusing for customers to see a different level of service provided by operators.

Mr. Sheehan agreed with Mr. Semelfort's recommendation of free MetroAccess service during the pandemic. He stated if the argument can be made about fares not being collected on Metrobus then that should be good enough for paratransit.

A customer stated this is not going to be solved any time soon and recommended the AAC send out some kind of communication to MetroAccess riders and ask them to pay via EZ Pay. Some people may adopt that mode of payment and continue even after COVID. The Reservations Office needs to have an option of asking the rider whether they would like door-to-door or curb-to-curb service. This might provide added safety, and help expedite the service.

Ms. Coles supported the recommendation presented by Mr. Semelfort. She stated if the operators are still getting paid and only one customer is traveling at a time, then customers should have the option of not paying.

A customer asked about the protocol of MetroAccess service during this time of pandemic. Mr. Blake stated MetroAccess is still following the usual protocol. We are providing the full service. We continue to provide door-to-door service, and any customer who is confirmed with COVID or has been in touch with a person who had been positive with COVID-19, will be placed on a third party vehicle, which is a non-share ride. In terms of cleaning protocols, we disinfect every vehicle (in use) daily, versus weekly as per the prior practice.

Chair Posner deferred this topic to the MetroAccess Subcommittee Meeting. Mr. Sheehan stated we would have to review the contract.

ADA 30 Years Anniversary:

Ms. Peredo Lopez stated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990. This year, we celebrate the 30th anniversary of a law that prohibits

discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else. Title II of the ADA applies to public transportation and requires the provision of paratransit services by public entities that provide fixed-route services. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. With the help of the AAC advocacy and staff diligence, some of the accessible features not only make us compliant, but in many cases we exceed ADA Standards.

Mr. Calabria proposed a motion to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the ADA. He also recommended to display the ADA placards at all the stations. Chair Posner stated we should also commend WMATA for going above the letter of the ADA as that is only bare minimum, and the staff goes above and beyond to ensure accessibility. The motion carried.

Public Comments:

There were no public comments received via email and/or phone call message.

Ms. Sharma stated public comments can be submitted via phone: 202-962-1100, and via email: AACChairMetro@wmata.com. This information is also posted on the AAC, BRS, MAS, and the Calendar pages of wmata.com

Re-Opening of Metro:

Chair Posner stated in the last meeting the members were asked to share their comments via email to him and/or Ms. Sharma. He asked members to share their comments now. Mr. Sheehan asked if there was a change in timing of the re-opening. Chair Posner stated there may not be much of a change however, there may be some update on Thursday as the Safety Committee will provide its report to the Board.

Bus/Rail Subcommittee Report:

Mr. Calabria presented the Bus/Rail Subcommittee Report and reviewed the topics that were discussed in a meeting held on June 8th, 2020.

MetroAccess Subcommittee Report:

Mr. Semelfort provided his report and stated the topics that were discussed during the June 15th MAS Meeting.

Other Matters:

Chair Posner recommended discussing the re-opening of Metro in the next BRS Meeting, getting an update about MetroAccess issues as it relates to cash handling, maintaining social distancing, and the personal protective equipment for the operators.

Mr. Calabria will discuss San Francisco fare gates in the BRS meeting, and draft the motion that was passed today. Chair Posner will include it with the Board Report.

Mr. Oberg stated there was a discussion at the Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) meeting as to how WMATA would encourage social distancing, however relying on customers to do it. He recommended the AAC can help with the recovery and sharing the information.

Mr. Sheehan asked if August is off. Chair Posner confirmed that is the tradition.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:28 pm.