



# AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

### **Meeting Minutes: June 5, 2017**

#### **ATTENDEES**

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Denise Rush (1st Vice Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (2nd Vice Chair), Tapan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Brianne Burger, Charlie Crawford, Phillippa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, Randall Pope, Phil Posner, 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.

The May 1, 2017 meeting minutes were approved as amended.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated June 5, 2017, was approved as amended.

#### **A DISCUSSION WITH METRO GENERAL MANAGER**

Paul Wiedefeld, Metro General Manager and Chief Executive Officer (GM/CEO), opened the meeting by discussing his plan to keep the Metro system safe, reliable, and affordable. The plan seeks to change Metro's business model to address the long-term needs within the system to the capital and operations side of the budget over the next 10 years. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that the time to act on the issue of dedicated funding is now. He encouraged the AAC to discuss and support the concept within the disability community and to all stakeholders.

Elver Ariza-Silva stated that in the last few months the AAC received visits from several members of Metro's Board. During each of those meetings, the AAC invited the Board members to travel in the system using Metrobus, Metrorail, or MetroAccess with a person with a visible disability. Although the Committee is still working out the details, Mr. Ariza-Silva invited the GM/CEO to participate in this AAC travel initiative. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that he had participated in a similar activity in the past and would be glad to do it again.

Charlie Crawford expressed an interest in whether the 10-year plan included service interruptions similar to the ones experienced during SafeTrack. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that service interruptions will not occur to the degree of SafeTrack unless a safety issue arises. He stated that Metro will begin a preventive maintenance program starting June 25, 2017, and begin work on major parts of the system that are aging.

Randall Pope stated that he is a Deaf-Blind customer who uses the fixed-route system for all his trips. One of the challenges with using the system is communicating with staff. For example, many bus operators lack simple techniques, such as the print on palm method, to be able to communicate with the Deaf-Blind community. This issue is further compounded by Metro's policies that prohibit touching customers. Additionally, Mr. Pope stated that locating an elevator in the system is a challenge. He suggested that Metro implement a floor wayfinding system or install beacons in the system to assist customers in finding the elevators. Mr. Wiedefeld acknowledged that Metro needs to do more to support the community, and stated that the Department of Access Services (ACCS) is working on all those issues.

Phillippa Mezile stated that Metro moved the lists of stations on the pylons at the platform level. The lists of stations are now located along the walls past the retaining wall or above the advertising boards. For customers with low vision traveling in the system, the signage on the walls or high above the advertising boards is difficult to view. She stated that she was compiling a list to submit to staff, but in the meantime, she suggested that Metro return the lists back to the pylons on the platform. Additionally, she stated that street-to-mezzanine and mezzanine-to-platform escalators at the U Street – Cardoza Station are out of service. This means that more customers are accessing the elevators, which are small and are now being overburdened because the escalators are out of service.

Ms. Mezile also expressed concern about the loss of meeting refreshments at AAC meetings. The AAC meetings occur during the dinner hour, and many members come from work to help Metro better understand and resolve issues in the system. She suggested that Metro reconsiders the refreshments.

In a follow up on escalators, Mary Kay McMahon stated that a few weeks ago, for three days in the evenings, there was no access to the Navy Yard Metrorail station from the Department of Transportation side. The elevator was undergoing planned maintenance, and the street escalators were all directed in the up position. Additionally, the surrounding area is undergoing major construction. Christian Kent, AGM-ACCS, stated that the ADAP office will investigate and provide feedback. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that the key is to ensure there is maintenance staff available to assist at these stations.

Edward McEntee expressed an interest in the measures Metro was taking to make the system safe in light of the recent security threats. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that Metro monitors this issue regularly. Safety and security are issues for all transportation properties in the industry.

In a follow up on Randy Pope's comments about communication, Doris Ray stated that there are a number of low-tech options for providing information to the low-vision community in the transit system, such as raised and Braille lettering.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in how the GM/CEO's 10-year plan would enhance accessibility. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that the plan will address the overall reliability of the service, such as elevators, escalators, railcars, and station maintenance, which if not addressed will impact service for all customers.

Ms. Ray also expressed an interest in whether the GM/CEO will meet with the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) regarding the plan. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that he is scheduled to present the plan to TPB in the coming weeks.

Tappan Banjeree expressed an interest in additional funding from the jurisdictions in the form of increased property taxes. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that in his discussion with elected officials and stakeholders across the region, he focuses on educating them about the need for dedicated funding, and it is up to each group to determine how they can best support the system. Metro's Board has a policy to review fares every two years.

Phil Posner stated that Metro should consider offering MetroAccess customers a frequent rider travel pass. This pass would give customers who use MetroAccess regularly a discount on travel after so many trips on MetroAccess. This card would be comparable to the passes offered on fixed-route.

Dr. Posner also stated that Metro should amend the emergency posters in certain rail cars to read, "push button once to talk." The intercom still reads, "push the button to talk." He suggests that Metro adds the word "once" to the intercom signage to make it consistent with the posters, and indicate on the posters where the intercom system is located in that particular railcar.

Dr. Posner also stated that at the McPherson Square station there was signage indicating that the station would close at 8 PM. He stated that he checked the website, and there was no information regarding the closure. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that in the future, he will ask the Department of Rail Transportation to include ACCS in the planning of station closures. This will ensure that information is widely distributed.

In a follow up on the AAC travel initiative, Ms. Bellamy thanked the GM/CEO in advance for his participation and suggested that he rides the system anonymously.

Denise Rush stated that Metro purchased a new fleet of MetroAccess vehicles without input of the AAC. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that he will make sure that it does not happen in

the future. Mr. Kent acknowledged the issue stating that Metro is operating its current fleet of vehicles for a year longer than expected because the the manufacturer is no longer producing the current style of vehicles (Ford E350). Metro purchased the next generation, and was very constrained in its ability to make changes to the new vehicle style. Mr. Kent stated that the manufacturer (Ford Motor Company) will be invited to a meeting to take feedback directly from Metro and the disability community on this design.

Ms. Rush also stated that she was selected to join Geoffrey Cherrington, Metro's Inspector General (IG), for a mystery ride on MetroAccess. She stated that the ride was a one-way trip from her job to her residence. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that he was aware of the trip and has spoken with IG about his experience.

Mr. Sheehan thanked the GM/CEO for his time, and his support of the AAC and its initiatives to enhance access to the system. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that he and Metro's Board appreciate the AAC's monthly reports, which keep Metro connected with the disability community.

Ms. Ray stated that with the elections only a few months away, she expressed an interest in how Metro anticipated educating the new leadership in each jurisdiction on Metro's funding plan. Mr. Sheehan stated that the GM/CEO had another commitment and unable to remain for the entire meeting. However, he will ask this questions when Mr. Wiedefeld meets with Metro's Rider's Advisory Council later in the week.

### **AAC TRAVEL INITIATIVE**

The AAC discussed its invitation to Metro's Board and the GM/CEO to travel in the system using the fixed route system and MetroAccess with a person with a visible disability.

Mr. Ariza-Silva suggested that the AAC develops an action plan to move the initiative forward. He stated that the event can be held over a 1- or 2-day period, and include people with various disabilities who use MetroAccess and the fixed route.

Mr. Kent expressed an interest in whether the AAC's objectives are to educate the Board and GM/CEO about the service, or on the other hand, the difference with the way people with disabilities and those without disabilities access the system, and the limitation of MetroAccess service. He reminded the AAC of Board member Kathryn Porter's comment, which suggested that the AAC plan an official event to allow Board members an opportunity to include the event on their calendars.

Ms. Bellamy reiterated her comments about riding the system anonymously. The goal is to educate the GM/CEO and the Board on the paratransit experience. She stated that

staff should not be involved in setting the appointments because it would detract from the experience. The members should be allowed to book the trip to demonstrate the real experience of traveling in the system.

Mr. Kent suggested that the AAC should send invitation letters to the Board and GM/CEO as well as advise them of this travel initiative during the Chair's oral report to the Board.

Ms. Ray stated that the AAC participated in a similar event several years ago. The disability awareness day event had people with disabilities accompany Board members on their daily route. She stated that in her experience, this was a smooth process. Additionally, at the end of the event, all the participants met at Metro to discuss their experiences.

Dr. Banerjee stated that when the Fairfax Area Disability Services Board conducted a similar event, the group was in favor of making the arrangements to travel with each member. The staff should not be involved with making the arrangements.

Dr. Posner stated physical and occupational therapists are often trained on the challenges of their customers by using assistive technology (AT) to mimic certain disabilities, such as low vision or mobility impairments. AT will offer real-life experiences of traveling on public transportation as a person with a disability. He stated that with MetroAccess it is not necessary that the Board or the GM/CEO ride with the person with the disability like it would be on the fixed-route system. They should book their own trip to as many places as they need to experience the MetroAccess service for a full day.

Ms. Rush stated that several years ago, the local newspaper participated in a similar exercise in the disability community with customers who used MetroAccess. She stated that she agreed with Dr. Posner's plan of allowing the Board and the GM/CEO to book their own trip on MetroAccess and experience the service organically. Ms. Rush stated that in her experience traveling with Metro's IG, the trip was smooth with very few issues. However, the next two days MetroAccess service was late. The AAC travel initiative should offer a real-world experience as one of the goals of improving the services of MetroAccess, Metrobus, and Metrorail for people with disabilities.

Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that he will be the point person for this initiative on the AAC and will work with staff to develop a program and provide feedback by the next AAC meeting.

Ms. Ray stated that for fixed route service, she liked the idea of using AT to simulate a disability. This would give the Board members and the GM/CEO a firsthand experience

as a person with a disability using public transportation. She suggested that the AAC conduct two separate events--one for paratransit and the other for fixed route service.

Mr. Kent stated that Metro conducted a disability awareness event in 2007 in which several members of the Board participated. During this time, Metro had switched to a new MetroAccess contract and had automated the MetroAccess scheduling service. This event received lots of media attention and in turn yielded lots of improvements to the paratransit service. In developing this AAC travel initiative, Mr. Kent suggested that the AAC provides specific information about deficiencies and recommendations on how to improve the service on all three modes.

Mr. Sheehan stated that the travel initiative should not only show the Board and the GM/CEO what the issues are, but the solutions as well.

### **BRADDOCK ROAD AND RHODE ISLAND STATION – PLATFORM INITIATIVES**

In response to comments made at the May 2017 Bus/Rail Subcommittee (BRS) regarding the unevenness of the platforms at the Rhode Island Avenue Metrorail station, the AAC received an update on Metro's platform initiatives.

Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, stated that Metro has an issue with vertical gaps along certain points of the platform at the Braddock Road and Rhode Island Metrorail stations due to the original construction of the two stations. Metro is taking aggressive action in the short-term and the long-term to resolve this issue.

In the short-term, beginning at the Braddock Road station, to be followed by the Rhode Island station, Metro has or will implement the following mitigating remedies: painting "watch your step" messages approximately every 15 feet along both sides of the platform (the message is located directly on the bumpy tiles); providing station announcements; and announcing reminders by train operators for customers to watch their step. Additionally, Metro will identify the areas along both sides of the platform where level boarding is optimal. This area will be identified as the "optimal boarding area." Mr. Blake stated that the information will also be added to Metro's website.

Mr. Blake stated that Metro plans to fix the issues by performing a complete dismantling and reconstruction of the platforms at both stations. Metro has identified funding for the design, and some of design work is already underway. Mr. Blake stated that the strategy to implement this long-term solution has not been determined; however, implementation work may conceivably begin by Fiscal Year 2019.

Mr. McEntee stated that the short-term solution appeared to be mainly for ambulatory customers. He expressed an interest in whether the optimal boarding areas depended on the leveling the railcar. Mr. Blake stated that if a car is extremely overloaded, that

can affect the vertical gap, but proper calibration cars usually addresses that issue. Mr. McEntee stated that as a mobility device user, getting into the railcar is usually not an issue, the problem is with getting off the train. Mr. Blake stated that depending upon the station, particularly Braddock Road, and the section of platform, exiting the railcar can be challenging as well.

Ms. Ray stated that she is a user of the Braddock Road station. She expressed an interest in whether the painted signs on the platform were over the granite edge or the detectable warning signs. Mr. Blake stated that the "watch your step" message was painted directly on the bumpy tiles. The optimal boarding area signage, which will be bright yellow with black lettering, will be located behind the bumpy tiles on the platform. Ms. Ray suggested that Metro also share these changes in the platform with the Commissions on Disabilities in Alexandria and D.C., where these stations are located.

Ms. Burger stated that she supports the short-term efforts and the progress toward a long-term solution. She expressed an interest in whether Metro will mark the areas at the Braddock Road and Rhode Island Metrorail stations with the same materials used for 6-car train decals. She stated that those decals lacked durability, and many have almost disappeared from the platform. Mr. Blake stated that instead of using decals, Metro plans to paint the platforms so the markings will last longer than the decals.

Dr. Banerjee suggested that Metro also add signage to the train to demonstrate where it is easy for mobility devices to access the railcars. Mr. Blake stated that the option was investigated, but given that railcars are sometimes switched to form different trains, the best solution was to paint the message on the platform.

A comment from the public stated that the unevenness of the platforms to the train has been a problem at the Rhode Island Avenue Metrorail station for years. The customer stated that they are pleased to hear that Metro is addressing the issue.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Barbara Milleville, President, National Capital Citizens with Low Vision (NCCLV), shared comments from an email she received from a customer with low vision who uses the fixed-route system. The customer gave kudos to Metro on lighting, stating that they were impressed with the mezzanine lighting at the Dupont Circle, Van Ness-UDC, Bethesda, and Pentagon stations. Ms. Milleville stated that this is evidence that the efforts of the BRS Lighting Work Group are paying off. She discouraged Metro from painting any more of stations until all the lighting improvements are completed. She suggested that the AAC and staff review the lighting at Judiciary Square Metrorail station as a guide for future lighting initiatives.

A comment from the public stated that in her travels she had been hearing about the improvements occurring on MetroAccess. The public sees the efforts in the quality of their service.

A comment was made about the lack of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV) in the TransportDC program. The customer stated that there has been a huge decline in the number of taxis that provide WAV service. The customer requested that the AAC review this issue. Mr. Blake stated that Metro will invite the D.C. Department of For-Hire Vehicles to a future MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting.

A customer provided an update on her MetroAccess service. The customer stated that over the last couple of weeks, her service has improved.

A customer made a comment about the new bus operator shields. The customer stated that when the shields are open it is difficult for some customers who use mobility devices to enter the aisle of the bus. Mr. Kent stated that the shields were designed to prevent bus operator assaults. Metro plans to add more shields to the remaining fleet of buses. Mr. Blake reminded customers to report the issue to Metro's Customers Service at (202)637-1328 and to ADAP at (202)962-1100 for follow up. Ms. Ray suggested that the AAC examines the issue further.

Ms. Ray also expressed an interest in whether the upcoming reductions in bus service allow current customers with MetroAccess service to be grandfathered into the system. Mr. Kent said no.

### **BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

The BRS discussed pedestrian traffic flow and the future access design for the Gallery Place Metrorail station. The main issues are where to stand, crowds, and moving many people safely. The design of the Gallery Place station is in the shape of a letter T, which causes bottlenecks at certain points.

Metro is examining this issue of crowd control by surveying customers through Metro's Amplify program. Metro is considering reversing the escalators and adding a guardrail between the elevators and the escalators on the Chinatown side to the station. This will prevent customers from crossing over from either side to the other, and direct customers around the elevator area to access the Shady Grove side on the platform. Another consideration would be to improve the floor signage for where the six-car trains stop, or use an audio beacon system to alert customers as to whether the arriving train is a six- or eight-car train.

In evaluating whether to use the audio beacons to alert customers of the number of railcars on an arriving train, the AAC advises Metro to consider the decibel level



required, so customers can hear the beacons over the crowds and trains. Alternately, the AAC recommends that Metro require train operators to announce the number of arriving railcars entering the station. This is a practice of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system in Oakland, California. The AAC stresses the importance of continued research into the issue and involving people with disabilities in the process to ensure the proposed solutions will work for all customers.

The BRS also discussed the pedestrian tunnel at Pentagon City. The tunnel is adjacent to the Pentagon City station. For the safety of all customers, the AAC recommends that Metro add signage and information on the website to advise customers that the tunnel is not accessible for mobility devices. This would advise customers who use mobility devices that the tunnel is not accessible and therefore should not be used as an exit or in an emergency. The BRS also was updated on the construction at the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, and made a motion to have the word 'once' added to the emergency poster's signage including the tactile on the intercoms.

### **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

The MAS discussed at length the MetroAccess Service Delivery proposal. The issues focused on the lack of notification for the pre-proposal conference and the scope of work for the new service delivery proposal. Although the scope of work is relatively the same as previous solicitations, the AAC is concerned that a change in service providers could increase the cost of the service to Metro, which in turn would pass the increased cost to the customers in the form of higher fares. The AAC will continue to monitor the process. It is anticipated that a decision will be made in August 2017, and the new companies will begin operating service in October 2017.

The MAS also received a presentation on the new MetroAccess vehicles. Paul Semelfort expressed an interest in the timeline for distribution of the new MetroAccess vehicles to providers. Omari June, Director, MetroAccess Service, stated that Metro received approximately 10 vehicles per week. Each vehicle operator will go through a complete training program on the new vehicles. It is anticipated that the vans will be placed into revenue service by the fall.

Lastly, the MAS discussed a MetroAccess frequent riders travel pass. This pass would be similar to Metro's Select Pass for fixed route customers. Mr. Kent suggested that the MAS hold a work group meeting to ensure the pass would be compatible with other Metro fare media. Upon motion, the MAS agreed to work on a new pass for MetroAccess.

**NEW BUSINESS**

The AAC Chair thanked the following members for their service on the AAC: Dr. Brian Mille and Brianne Burger for their leadership on the BRS. He also thanked Suzanne Kamel for her efforts to improve transportation service to the disability community.

Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, reminded members to sign up for the 7000-series inter-car barrier review on Wednesday, June 14, 2017 from 11-12 at the Greenbelt Metrorail Station.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.



**AAC**

**Accessibility Advisory Committee**

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<b>Item Number or Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Presenter</b>	<b>Status</b>
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	Elever Ariza-Silva & B. Moore Gwynn	
2018 – 4	<b>Paratransit Vehicle Vendor (Ford Motor Company)</b> <i>New Paratransit vehicle development</i>	TBD	TBD	