



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: March 6, 2017

ATTENDEES

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Denise Rush (1st Vice Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (2nd Vice Chair), Tappan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Brianne Burger, Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford, Larry Haile, Steven Kaffen, Phillippa Mezile, 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 February 6, 2017 meeting minutes were approved as amended.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated March 6, 2017, was approved as amended.

A DISCUSSION WITH BOARD MEMBERS

Metro Board members Jim Corcoran, Virginia, and Leif Dormsjo, District of Columbia, greeted members of the AAC and the public. Mr. Sheehan stated that over the last few weeks, the disability community has been engaged in discussions around Metro's proposed FY2018 budget and the projected reductions to fixed route and MetroAccess service. Therefore, members and the public are eager to hear from Metro's Board of Directors on these issues.

Mr. Corcoran stated that he was appointed by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia to represent the State as a voting member on Metro's Board. He added that this year, Metro's Board has evaluated many issues with the primary issue being the FY2018 budget. Mr. Corcoran anticipates the budget will move forward as proposed by the General Manager (GM) with some minor changes. The FY2018 budget requires shared sacrifices by all. Mr. Corcoran said his goal in attending tonight's meeting was to listen and address the concerns of the disability community.

Mr. Dormsjo stated that he has served on Metro's Board since March 2015 as an alternate member representing the District of Columbia. Metro's Board has been working on the budget for several months in an effort to balance the budget while minimizing the impact on populations that can least afford it, and to preserve as much service as possible. The GM has worked hard to close the budget shortfall. The Board wants to deliver more value to all customers including those with disabilities.

Mr. Dormsjo stated that he serves as Director of the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT). In this role, he is sensitive to the ways DDOT can make the transportation system and facilities more accessible. DDOT partnered with Metro to give seniors and people with disabilities residing in D.C. more transportation options through the TransportDC program. TransportDC has been a positive program offering residents more flexibility and convenience. The program is a reasonably-priced alternative compared to Metro's paratransit service. To ensure the program continues to thrive, DDOT is working closely with Metro and the D.C. Department of For-Hire Vehicles.

Public transportation service should be fair and equitable for all customers. To that end, DDOT has been working to enhance bus stops around the City. DDOT has committed funds in the budget to bring bus stops into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Mr. Dormsjo stated that, like his colleague from Virginia, he too wanted to listen and address any concerns from the AAC.

Mr. Sheehan opened the floor to members for questions. He reminded AAC members that members from the Board members' jurisdictions will be allowed to ask questions first and, if time permits, the floor will be open to the full committee for questions.

Tapan Banerjee stated that it appears that the jurisdictions have strong differences as it relates to the budget, raising the fares, and fixed route and paratransit services. He expressed an interest in whether Virginia was withholding its subsidy to the system. Mr. Corcoran stated that Virginia has not withheld any funding from Metro. There are several areas that make up the Commonwealth of Virginia's contributions to Metro. Contributions come from Arlington County, City of Fairfax, City of Alexandria, Falls Church, and soon Loudon County. Metro has a large deficit, and the GM is making every effort to close the gap. The discussion on dedicated funding for Metro through an increase in taxes would require legislative approval. Every jurisdiction has solutions that require hurdles of approvals.

Mr. Sheehan stated that the AAC is on record for supporting a dedicated funding source for Metro.

Dr. Banerjee expressed an interest in Mr. Corcoran's views on transportation network companies (TNCs) operating in Virginia. Mr. Corcoran stated that he has heard many different comments from the disability community regarding TNCs. Some customers like the services because they are not shared ride and do not require 24-hour advance planning. While the experience of others has been challenging because of their special needs. Mr. Corcoran stated that TNCs and taxi services can be a major part of the solution, but not the only solution in public transportation.

Charlie Crawford stated the local news reported that there are an abundance of accessible taxis not being used. He expressed an interest in how TNCs and taxi services can be incentivized to use more accessible vehicles. This would create more parity in services because this is also an issue for customers with disabilities who use service animals. Mr. Dormsjo stated that there were some parts of the fleet that the D.C. Department for Hire Vehicles (DFHV) had not utilized, however the issue had been addressed and all vehicles are being used to serve customers. Mr. Crawford stated that this is a serious situation that is resulting in separate and not equal service. Mr. Dormsjo stated that he would continue to monitor the issue.

Phillippa Mezile stated that a recent radio show discussed the crumbling infrastructure in public transportation. She expressed an interest in whether there would be a change in D.C.'s direction on public transportation. Mr. Dormsjo stated that D.C. needs a fully functioning public transportation system. The City's Land Use Planning program is based on having a high-capacity Metrorail system and an efficient Metrobus system. The City must work hand and hand to fix the issues at Metro.

Mr. Corcoran added that Virginia is also making improvements to the infrastructure that would improve access to public transportation. The Route 66 and Route 7 corridors have undergone improvements that will increase bus services in those areas. The City of Alexandria added dedicated bus lanes, making service more efficient.

In a follow-up on infrastructure, Steve Kaffen stated that in some areas of D.C. there are dedicated lanes for bus service. Bus operators who use those lanes also have the capability to override traffic signals. He expressed an interest in whether this will be used in other parts of the City. Mr. Dormsjo stated that DDOT, in conjunction with Metro, has identified a number of corridors for dedicated bus lanes. For example, dedicated bus lanes have been placed on 7th street near Howard University. DDOT is also conducting studies for dedicated bus lanes along the 16th street corridor, and the H and I Street N.E. corridors. Additionally, DDOT has been working with Metro to provide signal prioritization to buses in those areas.

Elver Ariza-Silva stated that for people with disabilities using the system, it is about the entire system working (i.e. elevators, escalators, bus lifts, and signage) and that personnel across the jurisdictions are prepared and trained to assist people with disabilities in any situation including an emergency in the system.

To offer a better understanding of the importance of accessibility to all customers (including those with disabilities) when riding the system, Mr. Ariza-Silva invited Mr. Corcoran and Mr. Dormsjo to travel with a person from their jurisdiction with a visible disability.

Denise Rush stated that bus service in Prince George's County has been severely diminished. Metrorail service in the southern part of the County is also limited, which means bus services need to be expanded. Mr. Corcoran stated that regionally, there are a lot of factors, including ridership, that determine where Metro service will be provided. Generally, the highest need for service will most likely determine the routes that are funded.

A comment from the public stated that dwindling bus service in southern Prince George's County is an issue that should be worrisome to all members of the Board. Bus service cuts in other jurisdictions where rail stations are more prevalent has less of an impact than it does where rail stations are limited. Metro can unite the region. The customer encouraged the Board to advocate for enhanced fixed route service and MetroAccess service for customers who reside east of the Anacostia River and into southern Prince George's County.

Doris Ray stated that the bus service in Northern Virginia is also critical and is the main mode to get to and from Metrorail stations. The main criteria to maintain bus service in any given area should not be ridership. Ms. Ray stated that proper routing and frequency are the keys to increasing ridership on any line. She stated that service should not be reduced, but enhanced across the County, so it meets the needs of everyone, not just a few.

A comment from the public stated that jurisdictions should not provide their own transit service. The customer stated that Metro's Board should aspire to a regional transit system.

Ms. Mezile expressed an interest in the purpose of the trains that end at the Mt. Vernon Square station. During sports games or entertainment events, Metro operate trains to this location and off loads trains creating severe crowding at this station. Mr. Dormsjo stated the idea is for Metro to operate overlapping service with the yellow and green lines north of the core downtown stations.

Ms. Ray stated that Metro should have rail service that operates until midnight all the time.

Mr. Kaffen stated that Metro and the DC Circulator should work together to better coordinate bus service in and around the City. He suggested the buses that run to Woodley Park should be extended to operate past the National Zoo, which would cover tourists. The two entities should also coordinate on bus service that operates from Rosslyn to Dupont Circle. He requested a contact person at DDOT to further discuss his suggestions. Mr. Dormsjo stated that DDOT is at the beginning of the service planning

process for bus routes, and that Sean Egan is the DDOT staff member leading this effort.

In a follow-up, Mr. Kaffen stated that there are two daily bus services that operate in DuPont Circle. Both of the daily buses regularly block Metrobuses and contribute to the traffic nightmares in and around the Dupont Circle area. Mr. Dormsjo stated that DDOT is familiar with the issue, and added that Mr. Egan is the contact for this issue as well.

Brianne Burger stated that the Washington metropolitan area has one of the highest populations of deaf people. When an incident occurs in the system, Metro provides audio announcements, but fails to display the same information visually on the Passenger Information Display System (PIDS). After the AAC advocated for almost two years for effective communication with customers who are deaf/hard of hearing, Metro implemented the whiteboards during the Inauguration. However, when following up with station managers, most appear to not know anything about the white boards. She encouraged Metro to announce that this new tool is available to aid communication in the system via a press release or a communication campaign. Christian Kent, AGM, Department of Access Services, stated that Metro provided instruction to employees when the new tool was rolled out. He invited Ms. Burger assist Metro in the any outreach efforts of this new tool.

Ms. Ray stated that the Endependence Center of Northern Virginia can help Metro get the word out about this new communication tool for Deaf customers.

Ms. Burger stated that Metro needs to do a better job of communicating with this community.

Mr. Corcoran stated that Metro's Board is aware of the communication issues with the Deaf community. The AAC Chair has been a great spokesperson in articulating the concerns of the disability community.

Dr. Banerjee expressed an interest in whether the reports regarding oversight of Metro by the Federal government are accurate. Mr. Corcoran stated that jurisdictions are working together to develop a new safety oversight commission. This would replace the Tri-State Oversight Committee. The region has passed legislation to form this committee. Many groups have recommended other types of oversight for Metro. The Board is working with the constraints to provide the safest and the most financially stable system.

A comment from the public stated that he does not agree with some members of the legislative body from Commonwealth of Virginia regarding the performance of the Board. Metro's Board should act as independent agents and only be responsible to the

riding public, not the jurisdictions. The customer stated that present and past members of the Board have done an excellent job.

Randall Pope stated that he is a Deaf-Blind customer who uses the Metro system every day. To ride the system with confidence, members of the Deaf-Blind community rely on technology and the need for all services to operate properly throughout system. Mr. Pope expressed an interest in whether Metro's financial hardships will impact research and development (R&D) of new technology for public transportation. Mr. Dormsjo stated that Metro's Board is sensitive to this issue, and although Metro would be an end user of technology developed through R&D, Metro's IT Department is active and innovative in identifying and evaluating different types of technology for the transportation system. Many in the transit industry and users of public transportation are awaiting action at the Federal level. There is some opposition to funding public transit and a lack of funds may impact R&D of new technology. This would be harmful to users of transit.

A comment from the public stated she is a Blind mobility device user who also uses the Metro system every day. There are many barriers that make traveling in the system challenging for Blind customers with mobility devices. For example, trains that are not level with the platform can make it extremely difficult to exit the train before the doors close. The customer encouraged Metro to test the load leveling of the trains on a regular basis and reduce the barriers that make it hard for customers with disabilities to travel in the system safely. The customer also encouraged Metro to remind train operators to look down the platform before shutting the railcar doors.

Paul Semelfort announced that Metro revised its FY2018 budget plan. Reading from a press release, he stated that the GM's revised plan would increase rail, bus, and parking fares for the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2017. Metro would keep its seven-day bus pass priced at \$17.50, thereby allowing frequent bus riders to avoid the quarter per trip fare increase. Other changes in the revised proposal include: 1) Rail service proposal would only reduce frequency in peak travel periods, so that trains would operate about every 8 minutes on all lines; 2) Off-peak rail service reductions originally proposed would not be implemented; 3) More than \$5 million in bus service changes have been withdrawn from the revised plan, mostly adding back routes in Maryland and Virginia that had been proposed for reduction or elimination; 4) No paratransit rider is left behind - Every MetroAccess riders whose home address is eligible for service today would continue to receive paratransit service. No bus routes are eliminated that would leave paratransit customers outside the current service zone; and, 5) Lifeline bus service is added to support riders impacted by the change in late-night rail service hours. Mr. Semelfort stated that the full Board will vote on the FY18 budget at its meeting on March 23, 2017.

Ms. Ray stated that MetroAccess service aligning with the ADA is problematic because it drastically affects the quality of life of people with disabilities in Fairfax County and the surrounding areas. She stated that Metro needs to address this issue and return the MetroAccess service area back to its original service area (the Compact). The residents of the Commonwealth of Virginia request that the Board take up this issue.

Mr. Kent stated that once the reductions in the budget related to bus service are made, there may be a possibility that a customer may come across a location that is no longer being served by MetroAccess. He reminded members that Metro's policy for MetroAccess service is still within three-quarters of a mile of the existing bus stop.

In a round of applause and cheers, the AAC thanked Metro's Board, General Manager, and staff for listening to the public. Mr. Sheehan stated that with these changes, the disability population has fared well.

The AAC thanked Mr. Corcoran and Mr. Dormsjo for a full discussion on public transportation. Mr. Sheehan stressed the importance of transportation and the role it plays in the quality of life. The AAC appreciates the direct attention from the Board on issues that matter to all customers including those with disabilities.

WAYFINDING (UPDATE)

Joe Cioffi, CEO, ClickAndGo Wayfinding, provided an update on the wayfinding initiative for customers who are Blind, Low-Vision, or Deaf-Blind using the Metrorail system. Metro collaborated with Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind (CLB), which contracted ClickAndGo Wayfinding to develop an accessible wayfinding system for the rail system. In the first phase of the project, CLB developed an accessible wayfinding database for its model station, Gallery Place. The Gallery Place rail station has approximately 100 routes alone.

Mr. Cioffi stated that in the second phase of the project, wayfinding information is being developed for six additional Metrorail stations. Those stations are Metro Center, L'Enfant Plaza, Navy Yard, Rosslyn, Fort Totten, and Silver Spring. The wayfinding information will include narrative directions related to slopes, sounds, tactile, and distance. The tool will also have high-contrast maps and real-time iBeacon messages that will deliver audio broadcasts along the route. One important feature of this wayfinding technology is that users can explore and virtually travel routes in advance. Although not included in this phase of the project, Mr. Cioffi stated that tactile walking surface indicators are another tool to enhance wayfinding. These tiles adhere to the walking surface and are key to ensuring customers with disabilities, in particular Deaf-Blind customers, are able to safely navigate the system.

The wayfinding information is free and available in text, large print, Braille, refreshable Braille, audio, and MP3 formats via Smartphones. The tool can serve multiple disability groups in any language. The interactive voice recognition system will be tied into Metro's Trip Planner. The system will offer a separate toll free number for customer assistance. Mr. Cioffi stated that with this tool, customers who travel to different places outside the Washington metropolitan area can access all the wayfinding information that ClickAndGo offers.

Mr. Cioffi demonstrated the wayfinding tool using his Smartphone. The audio narrative described the route to the escalators at the Gallery Place Metrorail station. He also played the audio narrative for the iBeacons, which announce landmarks along a designated route. Mr. Cioffi invited the AAC members and the disability community to attend a demonstration of the wayfinding tool on Saturday, March 11, 2017 from 9:00am to 11:00am, at the Gallery Place Metrorail station. Participants will test nine different routes at the station and use iBeacon technology along the routes.

The AAC stated that all customers will find this type of innovative technology is useful when navigating the system. The AAC thanked Metro, CLB and ClickAndGo for developing such an impressive wayfinding tool and encouraged everyone to sign-up for the demonstration.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A comment was made about late trips on MetroAccess. The customer stated that her return trips from appointments continue to be excessively late. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that a member of the MetroAccess team will provide follow-up on the issue at the conclusion of the meeting.

A customer provided an update on her MetroAccess service since the last AAC meeting. The customer stated that MetroAccess continues to add trips in the opposite direction that she is going, thereby making her late for work. The customer requested another review of her trip history. Mr. Blake stated that a member of the MetroAccess team will follow-up with the customer on the issue at the conclusion of the meeting.

A comment was made about the platform elevator button at McPherson Square in the direction of Vienna being mislabeled. The help button is labeled for the down button. Mr. Blake stated that ADAP will review the issue, and have it corrected.

NEW BUSINESS

The AAC discussed written remarks during public comment. Mr. Semelfort stated that customers should be present to make remarks during public comment. However, when a customer is unable to attend a meeting, but wants to present a written statement, that information should be submitted to staff and become part of the official record. He

stated that this process will ensure that a customer's confidentiality is maintained as well as the integrity of the 3-minute speaking procedure. Upon motion, the AAC agreed to amend the speaking procedure for written statements during public comment and all written customer statements will be forwarded to the AAC.

The AAC gave a heartfelt farewell to Larry Haile. Mr. Haile is returning to his native Massachusetts. With a round of applause, the AAC thanked him for all his work and contributions he has made to the AAC. Mr. Haile stated that he has enjoyed his time on the AAC, and invited members and staff to stay in touch.

Subcommittee Reports

Mr. Sheehan stated that the meeting ran past the time it was due to end and the interpreters are unable to stay; therefore, the AAC will postpone the reports from the subcommittees until the next AAC meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 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 – 23	Dulles Phase II	4/3/17	AAC	Presenter: James Van Zee Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority	
Info – 06	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	4/3/17	AAC	Update (Follow-up discussion after event - November 2013).	
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
Info – 22	Wayfinding (Demonstration and Tour)	3/6/17	BRS	Presenter: Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind and ClickAndGo	3/6/17

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