



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

### **Meeting Minutes: October 5, 2015**

#### **ATTENDEES**

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Denise Rush (1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair); Dr. Tapan Banerjee; Carolyn Bellamy; Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford, Marisa Laios, Phillipa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Randall Pope, Paul Semelfort, Dr. William Staderman and Roger Stanley.

#### **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 July 6, 2015 meeting minutes were tabled until the November 2015 meeting.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated October 5, 2015, was approved.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

A comment was made about Metro's proposed bus service changes for FY2016. The customer expressed an interest in learning more about any bus stops being eliminated and the transition of bus routes to other jurisdictions. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, stated that he could provide an update to the customer at the end of the meeting.

A customer announced the development of the WMATA Rider's Union. The union is an independent group of riders that focuses on Metrorail, Metrobus, and MetroAccess service issues. The customer expressed an interest in MetroAccess customers joining the group. It was added that some members of the AAC are already on the list to receive information on-line, and that other members, as well as the public, are encouraged to get involved.

A comment was made about TransportDC Service. The customer stated that the service is growing quickly; it was estimated that in August 2015 almost 9,000 trips were taken using the service. When the number of trips taken is multiplied over a 12 month period, the result is over 100,000 trips. The customer stated that she has some reservations about the low forecasted number of future TransportDC listed in the MetroAccess Sustainability study.

A comment was also made about the proposed MetroAccess trip-by-trip conditional eligibility. The customer stated that in the AAC Chairman's verbal report to the Board, it was implied that the AAC reviewed the conditional eligibility proposal in the MetroAccess Sustainability study and endorsed its recommendations.

A comment was made about stop announcements on the 7000 Series railcars. The customer stated that line and destination information comes after the exit announcement. Critical information should be given first because it allows customers, including those with disabilities to understand whether they are on the correct train. Other transportation systems, such as the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (New York City), Chicago Transit Authority, and Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), emphasize the line and destination information as soon as the train doors open. Phillippa Mezile stated that she too has challenges with knowing which train she has boarded because the announcements are inconsistent. The customer recommends that Metro switch its announcements make the line and destination information first. Mr. Blake stated that he would follow-up and provide feedback.

A comment was also made about the door closing procedure on the train. The customer stated that some train operators close the railcar doors before looking down the platform to see whether any customers are still attempting to board. This is a safety issue because customers can get caught in the doors and injured. Other transit properties, such as MBTA, have implemented camera systems that allow train operators to see the entire platform before activating the door close buttons. The customer suggested that Metro review the safety implication of the door closing procedure on its trains. Randall Pope added that it is equally challenging for the Deaf/Blind customers traveling in the Metrorail system. He stated that he has lost several white canes because the doors have closed before he could fully board the train. This is a dangerous situation for all customers, including those with disabilities. Charlie Crawford expressed an interest in why the railcar doors did not operate like elevator doors. He stated that this would resolve the issue of customers being caught in the railcar doors. Mr. Blake stated that subway car doors are not designed to open like elevator doors because their purpose is different. It is not safe for customers to chase a small opening in a train car door; running along the platform can cause injury to the runner and/or to other customers. In addition, if train car doors operated like elevator doors, the vehicles would never remain on schedule as individual customers could hold doors open indefinitely with little ability of the operator to enforce closing.

A comment was made about the September 2015 AAC minutes. The minutes suggest that the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) discussed the MetroAccess Sustainability study. The customer recommended that the MAS add the study to its work plan for a full discussion.

### **METRO'S DIVERSITY AND RECRUITMENT INITIATIVE**

Ikemia Arrington, Senior Sourcing Officer for Disability Recruitment, Office of Talent Acquisition, provided an update on Metro's initiative to enhance the number of individuals with disabilities in its workforce. She stated that through targeted outreach, Metro intends to promote awareness of WMATA's many job opportunities to qualified, but underemployed communities.

Metro has streamlined certain aspects of its hiring process, and there are plans to have an ADA Hotline phone number that will allow candidates to request reasonable accommodations via the telephone. Talent Acquisition has partnered with other departments throughout Metro and externally with other organizations to create a culture of inclusion and awareness. Ms. Arrington stated that these efforts are designed to enhance the candidate experience in the application, interview and ultimately onboarding process. There are also plans to develop a metric to track the progress of this initiative.

Metro is searching for innovative ways to integrate its workforce. In June, AAC members completed a survey to brand Metro's diversity initiative. Ms. Arrington stated that several concepts for branding have been discussed, but feedback from the AAC was desired before the final selection. The two options for branding were: 1) *Metro Beyond Barriers*, and 2) *Metro EmployABILITY*. The AAC overwhelmingly selected *Metro Beyond Barriers, Your Abilities Matter at Metro*. This new brand will identify Metro as an employer that places great emphasis on diversifying its workforce. Ms. Arrington stated that the theme will serve as a core component of the day to day business of attracting and hiring top talent to the organization.

Metro is also developing an advertising and recruitment campaign to match this new brand. The purpose of this campaign is to demonstrate the wide variety of customer service duties of a bus operator. Many AAC members objected to the wording used in the advertisement, stating that it is too ambiguous and demonstrates lack of inclusion.

Edward McEntee stated that the campaign gives the perception that people with disabilities should be grateful for the assistance of non-disabled people, or at the very least grateful for the bus operator doing their job. Anthony Stephens, listening via Speaker, commented that the "drivers care" wording is more effective because it speaks to the organizational values. Additionally, the AAC suggested that Metro should refrain from using any kind of colloquialisms in the advertisement.

Ms. Bellamy stated that people with disabilities are a multifaceted group (like any other group of people) and Metro should capture that in its images. Ms. Arrington stated that she will take back the AAC suggestion to the marketing team. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that the messaging in the advertising campaign relates more to training than recruitment.

Ms. Arrington requested that members keep in mind that the advertising campaign is more related to the brand than recruitment. The branding focuses on some of the duties and expectations of the position, which includes customer service. To recruit, Metro is using a variety of strategies, such as the mobile billboard. This strategy allows Metro to target certain areas to attract talent.

The AAC also stated that pictures displaying the bus operator in performance of certain duties must be more accurate. A bus operator and customer bumping fists or assisting customers with bicycle display on the front of the bus is unrealistic and may be misinterpreted by the public. Ms. Arrington stated that she will take the AAC suggestions back to the marketing team.

Tapan Banerjee expressed an interest in the type of training bus operators receive. Mr. Blake stated that bus operators receive extensive training, which includes training on the ADA. Additionally, the Department of Access Services has created a computer-based training course for all front line employees. The AAC expressed an interest in targeted goals, recruitment goals related to people with disabilities and the accommodation process. Ms. Arrington stated that she will provide that information during her next presentation.

The AAC thanked Ms. Arrington for the update and stated that there are many successful models from around the country that make diversity and inclusion a priority. The AAC recommended that Metro portray people with disabilities in more empowering ways in all media formats to include print and advertising. The AAC also recommends that Metro re-examine its language in all media formats related to people with disabilities to ensure it is not unintentionally reinforcing negative stereotypes. The AAC views these issues as critical to breaking down barriers.

### **2015 STATE OF THE COMMITTEE ADDRESS**

Chair Sheehan discussed the current direction of the AAC and beyond. Over the years, the AAC has advised Metro's Board of Directors on issues affecting all customers, including customers with disabilities. Chair Sheehan applauded the former vice-chairs for all their hard work and stated that he is eager to work with the new leadership. Additionally, he stated that the leadership of the subcommittees have demonstrated good judgment and provided stability.

Chair Sheehan encouraged all members to take up the mantle and become more active in the works of the AAC. As a member of the AAC leadership, it is expected that members will attend any or all of the following meetings: Metro's Board meeting, Board Subcommittee meetings, quarterly leadership meetings with Metro's Executive Board, and meetings with the AGM of Access Services. Members can demonstrate their support by participating in the meeting and other activities of the committee. The AAC is a team, and everyone has a role in advancing the AAC for the community of people with disabilities and Metro.

Chair Sheehan also encouraged members to take the long view in examining how and what transportation will look like at Metro and around the region in the future. The AAC must continue to be the voice of inclusion of people with disabilities in all areas of transportation. Additionally, Metro's has many new Board members, so it will be important for the Committee to understand the expectations of this new Board and remain effective.

Chair Sheehan added that to ensure no one is overwhelmed, it is important to plan the Committee activities. He suggested that the AAC leadership uses a monthly calendar to sign-up for activities. He encouraged subcommittee chairs to participate, stating that this approach will offer mentoring opportunities for everyone. In response to a question about the weekly schedule of the Board meetings, Chair Sheehan stated that the meetings and materials are online. All members are encouraged to attend or listen to become better informed so the AAC can continue to be effective in advising Metro on transportation issues related to the disability community.

Vice-Chair Rush stated that she is committed to advancing the good works of the AAC and emphasized the necessity of members to attend and participate in all the meetings and activities. She stated that she takes the role of representing the public seriously and suggested that public meetings, emergency exercises also be added to the calendar as well.

Mr. Crawford suggested that another way to increase participation of members is to ensure that each member has an opportunity to speak on every topic before second comments are made. He stated that it is important for members to use their talents in a way that is effective. Not everyone may be able to participate in the emergency exercise; however, that member may be able to attend the Board's subcommittee meetings and report to the AAC in writing.

Chair Sheehan stated that he liked the idea of ensuring that each member has an opportunity to speak before a second round of comments are made. The AAC leadership will make a strong effort to implement this approach to ensure meetings operate more efficiently. The AAC and its subcommittees will use a two-minute rule on comments, questions, and responses from all members and the timer will be used to keep members on track. Mr. Ariza-Silva reminded members that interpreters are being used in the meeting. Members interested in speaking should be called on by the Chair and identify themselves prior to making a statement.

In response to a comment about membership, Mr. Blake stated that he would provide members with a summary of member's bios at the next meeting. In a follow up, Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, stated that the information to replace the resigned member has been forwarded to the Board. It is anticipated that the member will be confirmed in October 2015.

### **AAC ADMINISTRATIVE DISCUSSION**

The nominees for the 2015 Richard W. Hedding Accessible Transportation Award were announced: Elver Ariza-Silva, The ARC of Northern Virginia, and the Taxicab Limousine Paratransit Association-Diamond Transportation. Many members expressed an interest in voting electronically. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that an electronic ballot will be made available to all members, and voting will be open from Wednesday, October 7, 2015 until Sunday, October 11, 2015. The winner will be announced at the each of the subcommittee meetings in October. The award honoree will be recognized at Metro's Accessibility Excellence Awards on November 18, 2015. In response to a question about the location of the event, Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that the awards ceremony will be held at Metro's Headquarters, Lobby-level meeting room.

The next Rail Emergency Response Exercise is scheduled for December 13, 2015 in Montgomery County, Maryland. These exercises provide first responders with hands-on experience in working with the disability community in an emergency situation on the Metrorail system. A comment was made about other groups participating in the emergency exercise. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that she will investigate the possibility others in the disability community opportunity to participate in these exercises. Chair Sheehan stated that some disability groups have been underrepresented and opening the activity up to the wider community may change that issue.

Some members expressed an interest in the early morning arrival times of the emergency exercises. Many people with disabilities require assistance from a personal care attendant (PCA) to begin their day and most PCA are not available until later in the morning. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that she would follow up on the issue and provide feedback.

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

The BRS discussed shuttle bus service for planned long-term elevator outages. Metro has worked hard to improve the process for customers to request shuttle bus service. Customers now have two distinct options: (1) request shuttle service from a Station Manager while at the station; and (2) prior to arriving at the station where there is an elevator outage, call Metro's Bus Operations Control Center (BOCC) at 202-962-1825 to arrange for a shuttle.

The BRS also discussed slow elevators at NoMa-Gallaudet station and the possibility of improving the timing of the elevators to perform in a slightly higher acceleration. Additionally, the BRS discussed a better notification system to inform staff of elevator outages.

### **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

A committee member commented about staff texting and talking on cell phones during meetings; customers afraid of retaliation if they complain; drivers departing locations as customers approach the vehicle; and the need for outreach events at churches. Staff offered that they need to have phones available to assist with service issues that might

arise during the meetings and that there were other ways for customers to share feedback, such as through AAC members and customer surveys.

Members commented that dispatchers are not managing trips effectively, increasing the length of time customers are on board vehicles; conditionally eligible customers would be affected by the weather when trip-by-trip conditional eligibility is implemented; the lack of space on vehicles; and that WMATA should be very cautious before implementing trip-by-trip conditional eligibility. Staff indicated the intent was not to stop individuals from using the service. The intent is to remind customers that bus and rail service is available to them, and that the free ride benefit serves as an encouragement to consider this option, and that any changes would be discussed with the AAC for feedback.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

The AAC briefly discussed the upcoming quarterly meeting. The meeting will be held jointly with the Riders Advisory Council. The AAC recommended that the following comments be discussed: 1) MetroAccess fares; 2) new GM; 3) FTA; 4) alternatives to paratransit service; 5) impact of bus service changes in Prince George's County; 6) effective communication in audio and print; 7) emergency evacuation exercises; and 8) priority seating work group.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.



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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 - 04	AAC Quarterly Leadership Meeting	11/12/15	AAC	Feedback	
Info - 03	Momentum and Long Range Plan (update)	12/7/15	AAC	Presenter: Jennifer Weeks	
Info - 06	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	12/7/15	AAC	Update (Follow-up discussion after event - November 2013).	

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 - 01	25 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ADA	7/6/15	AAC	Open Forum	7/6/15
Info - 02	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

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