



# AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

### **Meeting Minutes: October 2, 2017**

#### **ATTENDEES**

Present: Phil Posner (Chair), Denise Rush (1st Vice Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (2nd Vice Chair), Tapan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Hazell Brooks, Darnise Henry Bush, Tino Calabria, Charlie Crawford, Steven Kaffen, Phillippa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, Anthony Oberg, Randall Pope, Doris Ray, Paul Semelfort, Patrick Sheehan Herbert Treger and Franklin Torres.

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Posner 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 September 5, 2017 meeting minutes were approved.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated October 2, 2017, was approved.

#### **ABILITIES-RIDE REFLECTIONS**

The Abilities-Ride program launched in mid-September, and the AAC discussed their initial reflections of the program.

Paul Semelfort stated that he has taken about a dozen trips with the transportation alternative program. He stated that his experience has been mixed because some of the trips have been good while others were problematic. For example, on some of the trips the driver deferred to him for directions to the destination. On the other hand, when calling to secure a trip, the call dropped and the process have to start all over. Another example is the taxi cab picked him up or dropped him off across the street as opposed to in front of his residence or destination. Mr. Semelfort stated that the program needs some tweaking, and he hopes the service gets better over time. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP) stated that he will follow up with the taxi services on the issues raised.

Ms. Rush stated that she attempted to use the service for a trip to National Harbor. In the call to Regency Taxi, she was advised that the taxi company only operates in Montgomery County and was offered the telephone number to Silver Cab. The Silver Cab fee for the same trip was \$8. Ms. Rush stated that she followed up with Mr. Blake because she thought the cab was overcharging for the trip. She stated that Mr. Blake reviewed the distance of the trip with Silver Cab, and it was determined that a shorter

route to the destination was possible, but that the cab companies, not Metro determine the preferred route(s) for their respective services.

Mr. Semelfort stated that before contacting either service in the Abilities-Ride program, he used MapQuest to determine the shortest route and estimated cost. He expressed an interest in how the cab companies were calculating distance.

Mr. Blake stated that he too used Google Maps to determine the distance for trips for the Abilities-Ride program. For example, with the trip to National Harbor, the shortest route was 6.8 miles while the fastest route was 9.3 miles. Silver Cab quoted Ms. Rush a price that was based on the fastest route. Mr. Blake reminded the Committee that, through the Abilities-Ride program, Metro is subsidizing the use of private transportation entities by MetroAccess customers, and therefore cannot dictate how these entities operate their business.

Mr. Blake acknowledges that in the first few days of the program Regency Taxi was providing inaccurate information to customers. He stated that since then the company has corrected the issue. Both cab companies have partnerships in each county that allow them to fulfill trips regardless of origin or destination. Customers have the right to choose which cab service they like for their trip regardless of the county they are located in.

Ms. Bellamy stated that she is concerned about the cab companies approach to service. The cab companies should be more customer-friendly when serving the disability community. The companies in the program should provide customers using the service with basic information, such as the name of the driver and vehicle number. This would give customers a way to determine whether the vehicle that just arrived or is waiting is the one for them. Additionally, the cab companies should offer customers the shortest route at the lowest cost first. Ms. Bellamy stated that the companies should be adapting its services to the demand and need of the disability community, not the other way around.

Ms. Bellamy also expressed concerned about safety and integrity of the services provided. Metro's most vulnerable customers are using the Abilities-Ride program and because Metro is affiliated with the program, customers are trusting that Metro has done its due diligence to prevent the disability community from being taken advantage of. The taxi companies in the Abilities-Ride program and the TransportDC program should follow Metro's business practices and standards. Mr. Blake stated that in the State of Maryland, all taxi drivers are required to undergo background checks. The companies in the Abilities-Ride program have certified that they comply with the State of Maryland requirements on background checks.

Darnise Bush expressed an interest in whether the drivers in the Abilities-Ride program know the price in advance of the trip. Mr. Semelfort stated that on his trip with Silver Cab, the driver had received information about the trip, such as the pickup location, destination, and the cost of the trip.

Ms. Bush stated that the TransportDC program provides the customer with notification of the trip, the name of the driver, and vehicle number. She stated that this is helpful for all customers, including those who are Blind/low-vision. She expressed an interest in whether this process was occurring in the Abilities-Ride program. Mr. Blake stated that the process was not a requirement; however, Metro can request that the companies implement similar processes. Mr. Blake reiterated that in this program Metro is subsidizing existing private services as opposed to contracting out a Metro-specific service.

Phillippa Mezile expressed an interest in how the Abilities-Ride program will prevent longer trips that may result in increased cost to the customer. Mr. Blake stated that customers who use the Abilities-Ride program will receive a firm trip cost estimate upfront for each trip requested. It is up to the customer to decide if they accept the price quoted before finalizing the trip request. Once in the vehicle, the taxi driver may take a different route to the destination, but the cost of the trip will remain the same.

Patrick Sheehan stated that allowing the taxi companies to decide how to provide services on a Metro contract is not a good business practice. He stated that he used the Abilities-Ride program, and the cost of the trip was provided upfront. However, it took another 45 minutes for the cab to arrive for pick up. He expressed an interest in how the services could be improved.

Christian T. Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services, stated that Metro wants to work with the AAC on smoothing out some of the issues with the Abilities-Ride program. He stated that the alternative taxi program derived from the need to reduce the cost of MetroAccess services and provide customers with choice in services. Metro included the AAC comments in the request for proposals (RFP), and the companies in the program met the requirements. Mr. Kent stated that the landscape for taxi industry is changing. Not all the companies have the resources needed to provide services to the disability community, like the companies in the Abilities-Ride program. This is a new program that will require some tweaking. The Abilities-Ride program will demonstrate that taxi companies can meet the needs of the disability community. Mr. Kent stated that process to improve program will be a balancing act because the company wants lots of trips, and the AAC wants the minimum price for trips. If the taxi company selects a long route that prices the customer out of the service, the taxi company will ultimately lose business.

Dr. Posner suggested that the AAC and Mr. Blake meet with the Maryland Board members on this issue. Each of the Board members represents a local County or Commission. This approach may be helpful to making any changes in the Abilities-Ride program.

A comment from the public expressed an interest in when the contract for the Abilities-Ride program will be available via the website. Mr. Kent stated that Metro going through the process of making that information available.

Charlie Crawford stated that since the Abilities-Ride program began, he has taken rides with Regency taxi. He stated that the overall service has been good.

Mr. Blake stated that in the first ten days of the Abilities-Ride program 130 trips were provided including nine that were wheelchair-accessible vehicle (WAV) trips. Mr. Blake added this is similar to the beginning days of the TransportDC program. He said feedback from the AAC is important, and he will use this feedback to make this service work the way Metro envisioned.

Doris Ray stated that she uses taxis a lot, and the primary intent for a taxi driver is to perform a trip as fast and safely as one can, so they can get to the next trip. She expressed an interest in whether the Abilities-Ride had a performance requirement on the travel route. Mr. Blake stated that Metro has no provisions on trip routing in the contract. Metro does collect trip data for every trip. The data will be used to measure the equality related to wait times for sedans and WAVs; overall customer satisfaction; and use patterns.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

A comment was made about the Abilities-Ride Program. The customer stated that although the contract was awarded to two taxi providers, the AAC is only now learning that the taxi companies are partnering with other taxi companies to provide service. The customer expressed an interest in who are the partnering providers and whether when a customer contacts Regency Taxi or Silver cabs do the taxi companies share that the partner company is fulfilling the trip. Additionally, the customer stated that for Metro staff to suggest that Metro is hands-free from holding the taxi company to a standard is not responsible. The customer stated that the providers for MetroAccess service attend the AAC meetings, so should the providers of Abilities-Ride and TransportDC programs.

Mr. Blake stated that the two taxi companies in the Abilities-Ride program are partnered with the following taxi companies: Regency Taxi, which is based in Montgomery County, has a partner in Prince George's County, Yellow Cab. I Silver Cab, which is based in Prince George's County, has a partner in Montgomery County, Action-

Taxi. When a trip is going to be provided by a partner firm the customer should be informed of the necessary information. Mr. Blake stated that he will confirm with both companies that this information sharing is occurring.

### **FREE RIDE PROGRAM**

Frank Roth, Director, Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach, announced that customers who are certified as Conditionally Eligible for MetroAccess will now be able to use the City of Alexandria - Drive Alexandria Safely Home (DASH) system for free. He stated that this new travel option went into effect on October 1, 2017.

Metro tracks the usage of the conditionally eligible MetroAccess SmarTrip program. For the calendar year, there have been over 2 million bus and/or rail trips through Metro's Free Ride Program (FRP).

Mr. Sheehan expressed an interest in whether the aforementioned number could be used to track MetroAccess savings. Mr. Blake stated that the FRP is an excellent program that promotes the independence of people with disabilities. Programs like the FRP, and to a lesser extent TransportDC and Abilities-Ride, while replacing many MetroAccess trips, do not necessarily replace such trips in a one-to-one manner. More flexibility and lower out-of-pocket costs mean customers are probably taking some trips that they would not have taken if MetroAccess remained their only option. For this reason, Metro does not speak of savings in the context of the FRP alone. Metro simply wants to encourage MetroAccess customers to use fixed route services for as much of their transportation needs as possible.

### **SHUTTLE SERVICE FOR PLANNED ELEVATOR OUTAGES**

Mr. Blake announced that Metro plans to release an RFP for shuttle services for planned elevator outages. Currently, when an elevator is out-of-service, Metro uses a Metrobus to offer customers a shuttle to the nearest station on the same line and in the same direction. This approach is not the most efficient use of Metrobus resources. Therefore, Metro wants to contract the shuttle service to a private company or a consortium of private companies with WAVs to accommodate customers during planned elevator outages. Mr. Blake stated that while the vehicles will change, the experience of the customers impacted by elevator outages will remain the same. He stated that when the RFP is available, it will be forwarded to the AAC for comment.

A customer made a comment about shuttle service during elevator outages. The customer stated that she has been denied access to shuttle services because the bus operator was on break. Mr. Blake stated that the Ombudsman will follow up at the end of the meeting to obtain more information to address the issue.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in whether the private shuttle or a Metrobus would be available for unplanned outages. Mr. Blake stated that Metrobus will continue to provide shuttle service for unplanned elevator outages. He also stated that the shuttle service is not exclusive to customers with mobility devices. Shuttle service is for any customer with a disability who needs the service.

### **AAC ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

B. Moore Gwynn announced that the election period for the 2017 Richard W. Hedding Accessible Transportation Award is open. The Accessible Transportation Award is in honor of the AAC's first chairperson who led the cause of Metrorail Accessibility. The award honoree will be recognized at Metro's Accessibility Excellence Awards on November 2, 2017.

Dr. Moore Gwynn also announced that the AAC held elections for the leadership positions of Chairman, 1st Vice-Chair and 2nd Vice-Chair. The winners of the election of AAC leadership positions are as follows: Dr. Posner, Chair; Ms. Rush, Vice-Chair; and Elver Ariza-Silva, 2nd Vice-Chair. The new leadership team will serve for a two-year term effective October 1, 2017.

With a round of applause, many members welcomed the new leadership and thanked the former AAC Chair Sheehan for his long dedicated service on the AAC and to the disability community. Dr. Posner stated that in following the Board's structure, he recommended that Mr. Sheehan remain part of the AAC leadership serving as Immediate Past Chair. The membership agreed.

Upon motion, the AAC confirmed appointments for the subcommittees' leadership positions. Upon motions, the AAC appointed the following members for Bus/Rail Subcommittee (BRS) leadership: Ed McEntee, Chair; Tino Calabia, Vice-Chair; and Herbert Treger, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair. Upon motion, the AAC reappointed the following leaders to the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS): Paul Semelfort, Chair; and Denise Rush, Vice-Chair.

Dr. Moore Gwynn also reminded the Committee to complete the Confidential Statement of Affiliation and Financial Interest document.

Additionally, the AAC Travel Initiative is moving forward. The AAC has three Metro Board members and the General Manager interested in traveling with members of the AAC. The initiative will take place throughout October, and members will be traveling on all three modes of Metro transportation.

Anthony Oberg expressed an interest in how the AAC would document the experience on the trips with the Board members. Mr. Sheehan stated that one of the purposes of

the initiative is to give the Board members a greater understanding of the travel experience for customers with disabilities. Each AAC member has identified specific outcomes they want to share with the Board member. Many of these points are items the AAC has advocated for in the past like lighting, elevator signage, etc. Additionally, Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that it is anticipated that the Board members participating in the event will provide a report at the Board's November Customer Service meeting, and the AAC members will report out during the November AAC meeting.

Dr. Banerjee expressed an interest in having the election results, including vote count, shared. Mr. Blake stated that if the AAC makes a motion for the results by candidate, the information will be shared.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in a voting system that was totally anonymous.

Ms. Bellamy stated that the AAC should have oversight of all elections.

Steven Kaffen agreed with Ms. Bellamy stating that for documentation purposes, there should be someone reviewing the count and providing a signature.

Mr. Blake stated that ADAP will investigate other options for member voting. Upon motion, the AAC agreed that during an election, there should be a non-voting member to verify the AAC votes.

Mr. Sheehan expressed an interest in whether the motion about elections would pertain to future elections. Ms. Rush indicated that she understood the motion to be for future elections. Ms. Ray indicated that it was understanding the motion was for the current election. Upon motion, the AAC moved to table the issue until the next AAC meeting.

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

The BRS received an update on Metro's FY2018 State of Good Operations from Metro's Office of Bus Planning. Metro conducts regular evaluations of the bus service to ensure it is meeting the demand. Some of the proposed changes within the region include additional bus service along 14th Street NW and extending the Benning Heights line in DC. In Maryland, the proposal re-routes the B30, which travels from the Greenbelt station to the BWI airport, and in Virginia the proposal calls for restructuring bus service along Columbia Pike. Metro will conduct an open house and a public hearing on September 26, 2017.

The BRS discussed Metro's Interactive Voice Response system (IVR) with the Department of Customer Service, Communication & Marketing (CSCM). Metro's IVR system is approximately seven years old and handles approximately two million calls a

year. Calls not answered by the IVR system are handled by 30 Customer Service Representatives (CSR). The calls generally fall within three categories: (1) Metrobus information, (2) trip planning, and (3) Metrorail information. Metro is in the process of developing a request for information for developers of a new system and requested that the disability community provide specific information it believes needs to be included in the RFP. At the appropriate time, Metro plans to test the new IVR system with a focus group of customers that will include the disability community.

Mr. Sheehan stated that at the Board meeting last week, many members of the retail community spoke during public comment about late-night service. Additionally, the retail community also made comments about the fixed fare. He stated that the AAC has been on the record for a flat fare for MetroAccess and will work with any group interested in pursuing that approach.

Ms. Ray stated that she boards the bus on the line between Arlington and Fairfax. For statistical purposes, she expressed an interest in whether she is counted as an Arlington rider or a Fairfax rider when using the bus service. Mr. Blake stated that ADAP will follow up and provide feedback.

#### **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

Ms. Rush stated that the MAS yielded its time earlier in the meeting to discuss the Abilities-Ride program.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Kent introduced Terrian Williams-Hall, Acting Director, MetroAccess Service. He stated that she will be serving in the role of Acting Director through at least the end of the year, and well into 2018. Ms. Williams-Hall has a great deal of experience in project and program management, and Customer Service. She comes to MetroAccess from Metro's Information Technology Department where she held the office of Deputy Chief. She will now be the primary point of contact for the Office of MetroAccess Service.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.





**AAC**

**Accessibility Advisory Committee**

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**STATUS OF COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

<b>Item Number or Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Presenter</b>	<b>Status</b>
2018 – 4	<b>Paratransit Vehicle Vendor (Ford Motor Company)</b> <i>New Paratransit vehicle development</i>	11/5/17	TBD	
2018 – 9	<b>Federal Funding A discussion Federal grants</b>	10/2/17	Presenter: Regina Sullivan Government Relations	

**COMPLETED - COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

Item Number or Action	Description	Meeting Date	Presenter	Status
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	Elver Ariza-Silva & B. Moore Gwynn	
2018 – 5	<b>Abilities-Ride</b> <i>Update on the program</i>	9/5/17	Christiaan Blake	9/5/17
2018 – 6	<b>2017 Ride With Me Initiative</b> <i>Update from selected member and respond to any general questions about the event</i>	10/2/17		

**COMPLETED - COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

2018 – 7	<b>Free Ride Program</b> <i>Update on the program</i>	10/2/17	Frank Roth	
2018 – 8	<b>AAC - BRS appointment</b>	10/2/17		