



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: September 14, 2015

ATTENDEES

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Dr. Tapan Banerjee (2nd Vice-Chair); Elver Ariza-Silva; Carolyn Bellamy; Brianne Burger, Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford, Marisa Laios, Phillippa Mezile, Brian Miller, Edward McEntee, Randall Pope, Denise Rush, 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 approved.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated September 14, 2015 was approved.

Mr. Sheehan remind 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.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

A comment was made about the MetroAccess No Show/Late Cancellation suspension policy. The customer stated that there are times when their MetroAccess drop-off is so late that she is already within the Late Cancellation window for her return pick-up trip. When the customer attempts to cancel the return trip, she is issued a No Show/Late Cancellation penalty. This is an issue because too many late cancellations or no shows can result in a suspension from the service. Omari June, Director, MetroAccess Services, stated that a member of his staff will follow-up with the customer at the end of the meeting.

William Staderman made a comment about customers using the emergency gate in the Metrorail system. He stated that when he used the gate a Station Managers chastise him for going through the gate even though he showed his MetroAccess card. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP) reminded members that use of the free ride benefit must be done through the accessible fare gate with the help of the Station Manager, not through the emergency exit gate.

In a follow up to Dr. Staderman's comments, Phillippa Mezile expressed an interest in what do customers do when a Station Manager is not in the kiosk or at fare vending machines. Mr. Blake stated that Station Managers have other duties that

may momentarily take them away from their kiosk. Customers are asked to be patient until the Station Manager returns to provide assistance. If the Station Manager has been away for an extended period of time, customers should contact Customer Service.

A comment from the public stated that they have waited an extended amount of time for the Station Manager. It is a challenge to wait for a Station Manager when you are trying to keep a schedule. Brianne Burger agreed, stating that she has had the same experience on the red line. Mr. Blake reiterated his point about contacting Customer Service.

Elver Ariza-Silva stated that when he uses the rail system Station Managers always open the emergency gate. When he inquires about using the accessible fare gate to enter or exit in the system, the Station Managers appear to be unaware that they should be using the accessible fare gate. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that the issue appears to be an internal communication breakdown.

EASTABLISHING A CUSTOMER COMMUNITY

Jason Minser, Director, Customer Research, reported that Metro is using a new research tool to garner feedback from customers. In light of the recent challenges, Metro is interested in gaining a better understanding of the needs and concerns of its customers, and has developed a new research tool – *A Customer Community*, which will consist of riders from all three modes along with an advisory council of transit professionals. Metro's goal is to recruit 5,000 customers to participate in various research activities on an on-going basis.

Mr. Minser stated that the advantages to this type of research tool are that it is content driven; surveys can be conducted immediately; and it is cost effective. In response to questions about current research methods, Mr. Minser stated that the new tool will only augment Metro's current research methods. Metro will continue to use the following methods to obtain the customer feedback: telephone and web-based surveys; one-on-one surveys aboard buses, trains, or paratransit vehicles; focus groups; in-depth interviews; and ride-alongs. Mr. Minser stated that one of the benefits to using this new approach is the ability to secure a good mix of customers to participate in the panel on an on-going basis. In addition to the traditional forms of communication such as press releases, newspaper ads, and marketing events, Metro plans to use the technology of Facebook and Twitter to achieve its recruitment goal.

Mr. Minser stressed the importance of finding the right mix of customers to participate. He requested the AAC's assistance in helping Metro meet its recruitment goals. Ms. Bellamy recommended that Metro market this new research tool to the faith community. She stated that the churches, synagogues, and temples all have a diverse set of parishioners who use the service and can assist in the word of mouth campaign. Mr. Minser stated that Metro intends to engage with community-based organizations. In response to a question about requirements to participate, Mr. Minser

stated that customers must be 18 years or older, and have used at least one of the three modes of transportation in the last 30 days.

Ms. Burger emphasized the importance of access for the Deaf community. The Washington Metropolitan area has the highest concentration of people who are Deaf. She stated that members of the Deaf community (and other disability groups for that matter) may not be so readily available to participate unless they know that there will be accommodations provided. Metro has to make an extra effort to reach out to the Deaf community. Mr. Minser stated that Metro is taking steps early in the process to ensure access, so no voice will be silent. The tool is an on-line community open to all customers. In response to a question about question about customer who are not Internet savvy, Mr. Minser stated that this is just one tool in an arsenal of many that Metro is using to garner feedback from customers.

Randall Pope concurred with Ms. Burger's comments about access to the disability community in particular the Deaf-Blind community. He stated that people who are in the Deaf-Blind community are the most difficult to reach. There are many issues related to communication that can be expensive. Mr. Pope offered to provide staff an introduction into the Deaf-Blind community. Mr. Minser stated that he welcomes all opportunities to introduce this new tool and recruit members.

Mr. Ariza-Silva expressed an interest in the incentive for customers to participate. Mr. Minser stated that participation is strictly voluntary; however, there are plans to reward customers for participating. Mr. Ariza-Silva also offered to provide an introduction to the Hispanic community, in particular, parents of children with disabilities.

To assist with the marketing efforts, Paul Semelfort recommended a script for members to share. He stated this will allow everyone to be consistent in their messaging. Mr. Minser stated that he would provide script for members.

Some members are concerned that too many voices may overwhelm the process and emphasized that the AAC must still be the advisors on access issues. Mr. Minser stated that this is a tool to amplify voices and will provide the AAC periodic updates. Mr. Kent stated that this is another opportunity to open communications with the broader community of people with disabilities, and the AAC can ensure that the customer group fully represents the community of interest.

Metro kicked off the project in July 2015 and plans to begin recruiting customers in early October, and launch the Customer Community in late October 2015. The AAC is interested in being engaged in the development of this new research tool. To ensure this occurs, the AAC anticipates quarterly updates on the subject.

The AAC thanked Mr. Minser for this in-depth approach to listening to customer concerns.

QUARTERLY MEETING WITH BOARD EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

The AAC discussed the upcoming Quarterly Meeting with the Executive Leadership of Metro's Board of Directors, scheduled for October 22, 2015 immediately following Metro's Board meeting. The AAC recommended the following topics for discussion with the Board: 1) discussion on alternatives to paratransit service; 2) emergency evacuation exercises; 3) effective communication in audio and print; 4) impact of bus service changes in Prince George's County; and 5) fare policy. Mr. Sheehan reminded members that the quarterly meetings are held in the Jackson Graham Building (JGB) Lobby-level meeting room, and are open to the public.

AAC ADMINISTRATIVE DISCUSSION

Dr. Moore Gwynn announced that the nomination period for the 2015 Richard W. Hedding Accessible Transportation Award will be open until October 2, 2015. 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 18, 2015.

Also announced was Metro's Public Hearing on the proposed Metrobus State of Good Operations Service changes scheduled for September 17, 2015 at Metro's Headquarters. Some members continued to express objections to the one day customers have to provide feedback on the propose service changes indicating that this approach appears to disenfranchise seniors. Many seniors do not have access to the Internet or participate in surveys over the phone due to the potential for fraud.

Mr. Blake announced the nominations for the election of AAC leadership positions of Chairman, 1st Vice-Chair and 2nd Vice-Chair. The candidates are as follows: Patrick Sheehan, Chair and this candidate are running unopposed; Phil Posner and Denise Rush, 1st Vice-Chair; and Elver Ariza-Silva, Tapan Banerjee, Darnise Bush, and Roger Stanley. Mr. Blake stated that each candidate will be given two minutes to share why they should be elected to the position. Voting will be open until Friday, September 19, 2015. In response to a question about the results of the election, Mr. Blake stated that the results will be announced at the joint Bus and Rail/MetroAccess Subcommittees meeting on September 21, 2015. Ms. Bellamy expressed an interest in certifying the ballots and results. Mr. Kent stated that the ballots are electronic and will be forwarded to each member individually. Metro's Board Secretary will certify the results of the AAC election.

BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The BRS had a robust discussion on effective communication for audio and print for customers traveling in the Metro system. Topic stems from a comment made at the June 2015 BRS meeting regarding Passenger Information Display Systems (PIDS) in the Metrorail system. The issue cited was that whenever a major incident occurs in the system, Metro provides audio announcements, but fails to display the same information in printed on the PIDS.

The BRS made the following recommendation for future discussion on the topic:

- Metro's benchmarks for effective, accessible communication on Metrobus, Metrorail and, MetroAccess. The benchmarks should include communication on devices, such as the Interactive Voice Response system and the PIDS in Metrorail stations.
- Current data on this issue to compare with other transportation organizations similar to Metro such as Chicago Transit Authority and New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

The BRS also requested a presentation from Frank Roth regarding his visit to the Seattle (King County Metro) Transit System. The BRS could gain some insight on their efforts that may be applicable to Metro.

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The MetroAccess Subcommittee discussed the MetroAccess Long-term Sustainability Study. The study, is an assignment from Metro's Board that focuses on the increase in ridership on MetroAccess, and the costs facing the agency due to the increase in demand. MetroAccess is currently transporting more than two million passengers per year.

George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis (GMU) was selected as the research partner for this study. The research included information on the amount of people who will possibly ride MetroAccess in the future and the impact to Metro financially of the forecasted trips and national trends and demographics in the Washington Metropolitan Area. GMU's forecast estimated that the number will only grow in the coming years, adding more passengers per year. Over time, this increase would deem MetroAccess sustainable.

The findings include some of the following:

- Continuing to urge customers who are able to travel by bus and rail is key in the efforts to ensure the sustainability of MetroAccess. In the past five years over a million trips taken on bus and rail have been by people who are eligible for MetroAccess. This trend not only needs to continue, but be increased moving forward.
- Expanded travel training
- Encourage the jurisdictions to (a) provide more paratransit service directly, (b) provide more fixed route bus service, and (c) continue or develop pilot programs like the DC Taxi program.

It's important to know that many of these findings in the study are not firm, and that the Board will have a policy discussion based on the recommendation. Since the June 2015 meeting, the study has been shared with the AAC and will be made available to the general public. The study will also be posted on GMU's website.

NEW BUSINESS:

The AAC briefly discussed Metro's Emergency 'Victim' Exercise at the Stadium Armory Metrorail station. The exercise took place on Sunday, September 22, 2015 in the District of Columbia. Ms. Burger stated that she was very excited to participate and train first responders in her community. Although she had an interpreter, she stated that she refrained from using the interpreter because she wanted to make the experience as real life for the first responders and herself. Ms. Burger stated at the conclusion of the exercise first responders and staff indicating that they had not realized all the shortcoming related to communication. Ms. Burger thanked Metro for the opportunity to participate in the exercise and encouraged more members to participate.

Ms. Rush stated that this was her second time participating in an emergency exercise and the exercise in the District of Columbia was a lot faster. She stated that she was concerned that Metro used smaller wheelchairs to accommodate customers upon returning from the exercise. Members of society are larger now, and Metro should have devices that can accommodate larger people. Ms. Rush echoed Ms. Burger's comments about participating in these exercises. She stated that first responders in each jurisdiction need training so they know how to help the disability community. Ms. Rush stated that the exercise started late, because the MetroAccess vehicle could not find the location. MetroAccess should send drivers that know the area.

Recognizing that the AAC has participated in several emergency exercises, Mr. Sheehan expressed an interest in an update and feedback from first responders on exercises and have added the topic to the BRS agenda.

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 - 08	Metro's Diversity and Recruitment Initiatives	10/5/15	AAC	Presenter: Steven Boney and Ikemia Arrington	
Info - 03	Momentum and Long Range Plan (update)	11/9/15	AAC	Presenter: Jennifer Weeks	
Info - 06	Transportation Infrastructure	11/9/15	AAC	Discussion on the DGMO meeting with AAC Leadership	
Info - 07	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	12/14/15	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 th 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 - 04	AAC Quarterly Leadership Meeting	9/14/15	AAC		9/14/15
Info - 05	Survey	9/14/15	AAC	Presenter: Jason Minser	9/14/15

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