



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: September 6, 2016

ATTENDEES

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Denise Rush (1st Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (2nd Vice-Chair), Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Brianne Burger, Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford; Larry Haile; Steven Kaffen; Suzanne Kamel, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, Randall Pope, Dr. Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Paul Semelfort, and Will Schell.

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 July 11, 2016 meeting minutes were approved as amended.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated September 6, 2016, was approved as amended.

A DISCUSSION WITH THE GM

Paul J. Wiedefeld, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer, greeted members of the AAC and the public. This was his third AAC meeting since taking office nine months ago. He began by thanking AAC members Paul Semelfort and Larry Haile for participating in Metro's emergency exercise. These emergency exercises are the most effective way to training first responders throughout the region.

Mr. Wiedefeld also thanked the AAC and members of the public for working with Metro during Safetrack. The work is necessary to ensure the safety and reliability of the system. He recognizes the impact of SafeTrack on all customers including those with disabilities.

Mr. Haile expressed an interest in some of the things the GM has done to prepare and ensure that from the GM's level down, everyone understands the importance of accessibility. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that everyone on staff understands this. Providing access to public transportation is who we [Metro] are. Newcomers to the team, like the Chief Operating Officer from New York, have experience providing services to customers with disabilities. Metro is committed to providing public transportation to the entire community.

Mr. Schell thanked the GM for his commitment to safety. He expressed an interest in whether the GM had the same commitment toward improving accessibility throughout the Metrorail system, and whether it is clear to staff at Metro that the system is not as accessible as it should be. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that Metro staff, as well as the Board, recognizes that more needs to be done in the area of accessibility, such as ensuring that escalators and elevators are operating properly so customers have access to the system; operating a fleet of low-floor buses; and operating the MetroAccess program efficiently. These things are part of a larger plan to ensure Metro is providing access to all customers.

Dr. Posner also expressed an interest in safety. He stated that over the last few years the AAC has brought forth several issues with little resolution. A few years ago, Metro implemented a waiver for customers participating in the emergency exercises. The waiver absolves Metro from any liability if a customer is injured during the course of an emergency exercise. For customers with disabilities the waiver makes participation risky because if an injury occurs, the customer has to incur the medical expense. There have been some injuries, and because of this there has been a dramatic decrease in volunteers. Dr. Posner added that everyone understands liability. He encouraged the GM to review the issue so that first responders can get the necessary training to be skilled in working with the disability community during an emergency. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that emergency exercises are the most effective way to train first responders and other emergency personnel on the system. He will review the issue with Metro's General Counsel and provide feedback.

Dr. Posner also expressed an interest in improving communication in the system for Deaf customers by using whiteboards. For almost a year, the AAC has recommended using this low-cost tool for communication. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that at his last meeting with the AAC, the use of whiteboards as a communication tool was approved. Mr. Sheehan stated a few members of the AAC are working on the issue and progress is being made.

Additionally, Dr. Posner stated that the AAC has recommended changes to the emergency posters on the Metrorail system. The posters lack the detail and correct information for customers to use in an emergency. For example, on certain series of railcars, the intercom system is placed in different locations; however, the poster does not clearly identify that information. Also on the 7000-series rail cars, the evacuation area is located at the center doors, which is also the same place as the mobility device parking area. He stated that this is a problem because customers will probably climb over the person in the mobility device in an effort to evacuate the train. Dr. Posner stated that the AAC has worked feverishly to change this, but to no avail. Regarding the intercom poster, Mr. Wiedefeld stated that Metro has tested the intercom systems to ensure they are operable, and he will order a review of the emergency posters.

Mr. Kaffen expressed an interest in the Metro's fleet of new buses. He stated that some of the seats on the new buses have seats that tilt. This style of seating is uncomfortable and difficult to exit for customers sitting in the interior side of the bus. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that he will order a review and have staff provide feedback.

Mr. Kaffen also expressed an interest in the number of announcements on the Metrorail system. He stated that the Metro provides a number of announcements that customers appear to ignore. The announcement that advises customers to move toward the center of the railcars is no longer necessary. Mr. Kaffen suggested that Metro allow those types of announcements to be made by train operators as necessary. Mr. Wiedefeld agreed that making time for other announcements is important, but he added that the announcement reminding customers to move toward the center of the railcar is a very important announcement for crowd control and is useful for visitors and the general public alike.

Ms. Bush expressed an interest in SafeTrack for residents in Wards 7 and 8. She stated that customers in the region often have to catch a bus or shuttle to get to the Metrorail station. When a customer has to travel an extended amount of time because of delays in the system, it can be detrimental to their health. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that Metro recognizes the impact SafeTrack has had on all communities. He asked members and the public to remember the reason why SafeTrack is in place and to continue to work with Metro as it works to improve the safety and reliability of the system.

Ms. Bush also expressed an interest in the TransportDC program. The initial program allowed residents who are eligible for MetroAccess service to travel anywhere within the city limits. Recently, the program was amended to allow for trips for medical appointments and employment only. TransportDC is an excellent program because it offers same day service and is economical for customers on a fixed income. Ms. Bush expressed an interest in whether Metro and the District of Columbia can work collectively to restore the program back to its original intent. Christian Kent, AGM, Department of Access Services (ACCS), stated that each of the jurisdictions have an obligation and are mandated to fund the paratransit service. TransportDC exists because Metro and the District of Columbia wanted to offer another alternative to customers who use paratransit service. The program grew quickly. With the rapid growth, the District wanted an opportunity to assess the effectiveness as well as the budget for the program. TransportDC is one model, and Metro is interested in providing other alternative transportation services to paratransit customers.

A comment from the public stated that Metro was not being transparent on the issue. TransportDC was so successful they were required to have credits for people that would not use Metro access because of the poor quality. The customer stated that District of Columbia saved approximately \$5 million dollars on the TransportDC program last year. It was the pressure from Metro that caused the District of Columbia to limit the services

of the TransportDC program. The customer went on to say that she has been very impressed with the GM's integrity and the clarity in which he uses to present the issues plaguing Metro. The customer stated that transparency is not taking place throughout Metro. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that accountability is part of his agenda and he will look into the issue.

Another customer made a comment about TransportDC. The customer stated that as a long time rider of MetroAccess, she has spent approximately \$1500 to \$2000 yearly on transportation. However, by using TransportDC the cost was considerably less. The customer stated that by switching to TransportDC she has saved the District of Columbia approximately \$1800 in subsidy to Metro. The customer stated that she prefers using TransportDC because of the amenities, such as same day service and no ride share. TransportDC is an economical and viable alternative to MetroAccess service.

Mr. Semelfort expressed an interest in the planned emergency exercise. He stated that in the last exercise on the Yellow Line Bridge, there were some things that were done well and some areas that need to be improved. When evacuating a customer, some first responders appeared not to take the customers with the disabilities comments into consideration. Mr. Semelfort stated that the number of volunteers with disabilities is dwindling because of the risk of injury and the waiver. He suggested that Metro re-examine the issue. A number of AAC members agreed that participating in the planned emergency exercise was too dangerous. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that he would look into that the issue and reiterated his comments about the exercises being an effective way to train first responders.

Ms. Rush thanked the GM for making time to engage customers. In all her years of attending meetings and serving on the AAC, no one at the GM or Board levels consistently engaged customers. Ms. Rush stated that she appreciates the interest and time Mr. Wiedefeld is taking to build a good working relationship with the disability community.

Ms. Rush expressed an interest being notified of meetings and public hearings. She stated that last week the Board held an emergency meeting that was standing room only. She suggested that the AAC should be notified of all Metro Board and Committee meetings. Ms. Ray agreed, stating that Metro should also ensure information about public hearings be distributed to customers in a timely fashion. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that the AAC should be informed about all meetings and hearings.

Additionally, Ms. Rush expressed an interest in the alleged sexual assaults on MetroAccess. She stated that she knows Metro conducts full background checks; however, she was interested in what measures Metro is taking to prevent these types of heinous acts from occurring again. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that immediately after the incidents, he and ACCS met with all of the vendors to discuss ways to eliminate these

types of incidents in the future. Some of the recommendations included tracking vehicles, monitoring driver breaks and monitoring driver patterns.

Ms. Bellamy stated that society in general tends to treat senior citizens as second-class citizens. She suggested that Metro should be the first transit property to recognize that all lives matter and in an emergency situation evacuate seniors and people with disabilities at the same time as the general population. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that he will review the issue to ensure the planned emergency exercises are a real world experience for customers and the first responders.

Mr. Haile stated that he participated in the planned emergency evacuation on the Yellow Line Bridge and thought that the first responders did a good job of meeting the needs of the disability community. Initially, the first responders wanted to evacuate him using an Emergency Tunnel Evacuation Carts (ETEC); however, they eventually changed their minds and allowed him to walk with other ambulatory customers. Dr. Posner stated that the customers with mobility devices are generally evacuated using the ETEC.

Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that he was one of the members of the disability community who was injured during a planned emergency exercise in December 2015. Although he was injured, he firmly believes that the emergency exercises must continue because first responders need to be trained. Additionally, people with disabilities need to be able to participate in these exercises without fear of not being able to afford medical care if something occurs. On numerous occasions, the AAC has recommended there be pre-meetings held prior to each exercise to explain the scope of the exercise and for information sharing about an evacuation. These meetings should also be regional to minimize redundancy. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that the AAC also recommended that a central liaison be appointed to handle all the feedback from each exercise, and the distribution of feedback and lessons learned to each of the jurisdictions. Additionally, the AAC recommended that the process be broadened to obtain a cross section of disabled and non-disabled participants, thus giving first responders an opportunity to work with more types of disabilities. Mr. Wiedefeld reiterated his comments about reviewing the issue and training first responders.

Ms. Bush stated that although she too was injured during the planned emergency exercise in December 2015, the exercises are extremely important and should continue. The problem lies in the lack of knowledge among all parties involved. She agrees with Mr. Ariza-Silva's comments about classes that include some people with disabilities. This would allow first responders to work one-on-one with the person in a less stressful environment.

Ms. Ray stated that compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) should be of the highest priority on Metrobus, Metrorail, and MetroAccess. She stated that safety is the critical element for all customers.

In a follow-up, Ms. Ray made a comment about platform edge lights at the Courthouse Metrorail station. She stated that on both sides of the platform, the edge lights flash brightly upon the arrival of trains, during boarding, and during the departure of trains. However, when there is no train at the station or arriving or departing the station, the lights go completely out. This is not in keeping with Metro's equivalent facilitation agreement for platform edge warnings. Ms. Ray also suggested that Metro correct the gap between trains and the platform. She stated that repairs to these areas should be made promptly for everyone's safety. Mr. Wiedefeld stated he will have staff investigate and provide feedback.

A comment from the public expressed an interest in the Abilities-Ride proposal. The customer stated that the proposed program, along with programs like TransportDC, are leading to the fracturing or privatization of MetroAccess. The proposal stated that accessible taxis in Prince George's County will be used; however there are a limited number of accessible vehicles in the County. The customer encouraged Metro to simply expand MetroAccess services. The cost of providing paratransit services will greatly be reduced if Metro operated its own general and specialized public transportation service. In response to a question about releasing the Abilities-Ride proposal information, Mr. Wiedefeld stated it is a standard practice to release Request for Proposal (RFP) documentation to all interested parties at the same time. This ensures that the competition process will be even for everyone. A comment from the public requested to know whether Metro would hold a pre-proposal conference for the Abilities-ride proposal. Mr. Kent stated that the pre-proposal conference would occur.

In a follow-up to the comment about RFP, a customer stated that ACCS is scheduled to present to Metro's Board on the Abilities-Ride program on Thursday, September 8, 2016. The customer stated that she too has concerns about the State of Maryland being able to provide adequate service for customers who use mobility devices. The presentation listed on Metro's website is unclear whether all vendors will be required to provide mobility device-accessible service. The proposed service will do a great job for those who are ambulatory, however for customers who use mobility devices or must use a phone to call for trips, services will be greatly limited because the response time will not be the same. The customer stated that separate, but equal is not equal as established by Brown vs. Board of Education.

Another customer thanked the GM for his proactive approach on safety. She stated that she agrees with the proposal to change the hours of Metrorail service to work on routine maintenance issues. She also thanked ACCS for inviting the disability community to provide feedback on the 7000-series between-car barriers. She stated that engaging

customers early in the process can ensure that accessibility features like the between-car barriers work for all customers including those with disabilities.

Dr. Posner agreed with comments about the proposal to change Metrorail core hours to increase the time available to work on the tracks. He expressed an interest in whether a rotating shutdown supplemented by bus service between Metro and the jurisdiction would be better than a full shut down of the system. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that is important to understand the critical condition of the system. The proposal to change the hours on the Metrorail system is to address the basic maintenance issues in addition to all the other outstanding projects. Metro is reviewing all alternatives.

A comment was made about the attitude of Metrobus operators when asked to lower the bus ramp or deploy the lift. Some operators often make disparaging remarks and comments as if the customer is the cause of the problem. When the issue is reported, the customer is advised that there were no reported challenges with the lift. The customer suggested that Metro should train bus operators to better serve customers with disabilities. Mr. Wiedefeld stated he will investigate and provide feedback.

Additionally, the customer stated that on numerous occasions bus operators have passed him by because he was unable to access the bus stop. Some bus stops are inaccessible because of an obstruction or the sidewalk is broken. The customer reiterated his suggestion about training. Mr. Wiedefeld stated staff will investigate and provide feedback.

Mr. Crawford stated that he applauds Mr. Wiedefeld for the work he has done to correct the problems on MetroAccess, Metrobus, and Metrorail.

Chair Sheehan stated that the AAC appreciates this opportunity to have direct access to the GM. He stated that the work of the AAC could not be complete without the collaboration of ACCS. The support from staff is critical to meeting our goals and providing sound advice to Metro. Mr. Sheehan thanked the GM for attending the meeting and remaining past his originally scheduled time. Mr. Wiedefeld stated that moving forward, he is interested in regular quarterly meetings with the AAC. These meetings would allow him to hear directly from the community. The AAC applauded the comments of the GM. Mr. Sheehan remarked that the AAC wants to part of the solution to make all three modes better.

BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) discussed the volume level of external stop announcements with the Office of Bus Maintenance (BMNT). Metro currently has 1,583 buses in its fleet. On certain Metrobus lines, the volume level of the external stop announcements has risen, causing discomfort for some residents near bus stops. To mitigate the problem, Metro reviewed all the buses in the fleet, and after an upgrade in

technology, determined that the annunciator systems were averaging a volume range significantly higher than Metro's normal average level. The system was reprogrammed, so as each bus is placed into service, the annunciator system automatically calibrates to the appropriate level for the environment. All Metrobuses have an ambient sensor that will allow the volume to go higher or lower depending on the surrounding environment. For additional review, BMNT offered to provide a demonstration of the annunciator equipment on Metrobus.

The BRS also discussed leadership positions of the subcommittee, and received an update about lighting the Metrorail system from the lighting update from National Capital Citizens with Low Vision (NCCLV).

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) discussed the AAC final service recommendations for Abilities-Ride MetroAccess alternative. Over the last four months, the AAC has discussed the issue and members concerns ranged from service area; resolving complaints with the service; accessing the service by telephone; the proposed limited number of daily trips; and standards for driver training. The letter was approved during the AAC full committee meeting with additions from Ms. Bellamy and Ms. Ray.

The MAS also discussed the changes in the TransportDC program and ways to ways to secure funding for specific accessible transportation projects.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 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 – 17	A discussion with Metro’s Board Chair	10/3/16	AAC	Presenter: Jack Evans	
Info – 18	Communication with Customers who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing (Update)	10/3/16	AAC	Presenter: Jim Hughes	
Info – 06	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	12/5/16	AAC	Update (Follow-up discussion after event - November 2013).	
Info – 19	A discussion with Metro’s GM	1/3/17	AAC	Presenter: Paul J. Wiedefeld	
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 - 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 – 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

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COMPLETED - FY 2016 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

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