



**AAC**

## **Accessibility Advisory Committee**

### **Meeting Minutes: September 5, 2017**

#### **ATTENDEES**

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Denise Rush (1st Vice Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (2nd Vice Chair), Tapan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Darnise Henry Bush, Tino Calabia, Charlie Crawford, Phillippa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Anthony Oberg, Randall Pope, Phil Posner, Paul Semelfort, and Herbert Treger.

#### **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 July 10, 2017 meeting minutes were approved.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated September 5, 2017, was approved.

#### **IN MEMORIAM**

The AAC shared a moment of silence in memory of Roger Stanley, former AAC member from Montgomery County, Maryland. Mr. Stanley passed away in August 2017. Members expressed their heartfelt sympathy and prayers for the Stanley family, and requested information regarding the services be shared with the members via email.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

A comment was made about late trips on MetroAccess service. The customer stated that the overall service had been good, however as of late her trips have been excessively late or the vehicles have failed to show up. Paul Semelfort thanked the customer for her comment. He added that the MetroAccess Subcommittee meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of every month and invited the customer to be an active part of the process by attending those meetings. Mr. Semelfort also stated that a member of the MetroAccess team will be available to assist in resolving the customer's concerns before the end of the meeting.

A request was made for a bus stop at the intersection of MD Route 198 and New Hampshire Avenue. Metro currently operates the Z2 (Colesville-Ashton Line) bus line in the area. The customer stated that his daughter, who has an intellectual disability, currently uses MetroAccess because she is unable to navigate the busy roadway to access a bus stop. The customers stated that he has requested that Metro add a stop to the location, however Metro is unwilling to add a stop to the location citing issues of

merging. The customer requested that the AAC takes up the issue on behalf of his daughter and others with disabilities living in the area. Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that Metro does not own bus stops in local jurisdictions. Bus stops owned by Metro are generally located at Metrorail stations. Mr. Blake stated that he will assist the customer in connecting with the Bus Stop management team in Montgomery County, and will ask Metro's Office of Bus Planning of its knowledge of this particular request.

### **ABILITIES-RIDE PROGRAM**

Mr. Blake announced Metro's newest paratransit alternative program for MetroAccess eligible customers, Abilities-Ride. Mr. Blake stated that Metro embraces the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) goal of having paratransit services act as a safety net, and not the primary form of transportation for people with disabilities. Metro is committed to ensuring that the Metrobus and Metrorail system remain considered among the most accessible public transit services in America. However, for trips in which accessible bus and/or rail just won't work, Mr. Blake stated that Metro has been facilitating the establishment of alternatives to MetroAccess Service. Long-time services Specialized Transit Service for Arlington Residents (STAR) and Fastran, both in Virginia, and the more recently developed alternatives CAPS in Maryland and TransportDC have all demonstrated the success of this approach to addressing demand for MetroAccess service, and have led the way to the development of Abilities-Ride.

Metro has partnered with Regency Taxi and Silver Cab to offer taxi services to MetroAccess eligible customers taking trips that begin and end within the Maryland portions of the MetroAccess service area. The program will offer same day – on demand service, direct trips, and in some cases lower costs to the customer. Mr. Blake stated that MetroAccess customers will pay as little as \$5 per trip, and that an estimated fare will be provided to the customer before taking a trip. He stated that customers pay the first \$5 with Metro funding the next \$15 in fare. Any remaining fare will be the responsibility of the customer. At the start of the program customers will be able to take a maximum of four taxi trips per day. Reservations can be made via phone, smartphone app, or website. Both taxi providers will offer wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAV) and accommodate customers traveling with a personal care assistant (PCA) and/or a service animal at no additional charge.

Mr. Blake stated that all taxi drivers in the Abilities-Ride program will be required to undergo training on how to serve customers with disabilities, including those traveling with service animals, and accommodating customers who are deaf or hard of hearing or visual disabilities who may need assistance getting in and out of the vehicle. He stated that the Abilities-Ride program will start on Monday, September 18, 2017.

Phil Posner expressed an interest in whether any MetroAccess-eligible customer can use the new program regardless of residence. Mr. Blake stated all MetroAccess customers will be eligible to use the Abilities-Ride program.

Dr. Posner expressed an interest in whether the taxi companies that use the meter will charge more for luggage. Mr. Blake stated that the cost will be a straight fare.

A comment from the public expressed an interest in whether Metro will incentivize taxi companies in the Abilities-Ride program for transporting WAV customers. Mr. Blake stated that each time the participating taxi service transport a customer who uses a mobility device, the taxi drivers receive \$10 premium for that trip.

A comment from the public also requested additional information on determining the cost of a trip and mileage. Mr. Blake stated that an estimated fare will be provided to the customer before taking any trip and some examples of fares that would make the fare clearer will be shared. Every trip will receive a maximum of \$15 Metro subsidy for using the Abilities-Ride program.

Additionally, a comment from the public expressed an interest in whether the new program will see the same fate of reducing services as TransportDC by cutting the service. Mr. Blake stated that the District of Columbia (DC) manages the TransportDC program. The TransportDC program has a fixed budget, which pays for a certain amount of trips. As the budget in DC gets closer to its maximum, the program is adjusted to ensure services can be provided the entire fiscal year. Consequently, Metro will perform the same type of analysis of trips on the Abilities-Ride program, and if there are a large number of transfers to this program from the MetroAccess service, Metro has made a commitment to increase the budget for the service.

Charlie Crawford requested an example of the fee structure for the new program. Mr. Blake stated that customers will pay \$5.00 per trip up to the seven miles on Silver Cab and up to nine miles for trips of Regency Taxi. He reiterated that trips must begin and end in the Maryland portion of the MetroAccess service area. The fare expense of any trip that goes beyond the maximum Metro subsidy of \$15 will be the responsibility of the customer.

Denise Rush expressed an interest in the daily trip limit. Mr. Blake stated that customers will be able to take a maximum of four taxi trips per day.

Darnise Henry Bush expressed an interest in the number of vehicles that can accommodate mobility devices. Mr. Blake stated that there are approximately 70 WAV vehicles between the two taxi companies, and that reservations, though not required, are highly encouraged.

Ms. Bush also expressed an interest in whether the program will begin with a trial period. Mr. Blake stated that the first year is the base year with four one-year options. It is expected that customers will take approximately 150,000 trips with the Abilities-Ride program in the first full year.

Ms. Bush also expressed an interest in whether customers can travel from Prince George's County to Montgomery County using the new service. Mr. Blake stated absolutely, but to keep in mind that Metro will pay a maximum of \$15, so anything over will be the responsibility of the customer.

Tapan Banerjee expressed an interest in how customers will pay for services. Mr. Blake stated that the Abilities-Ride service providers will accept both cash and credit card payments.

Ms. Rush expressed an interest in who handles complaints about the Abilities-Ride program. Mr. Blake stated that complaints and commendations should be sent to the respective taxi company used by the customers. Customers should also contact ADAP at (202) 962-1100 for additional follow up. This will ensure that issues get resolved.

A comment from the public expressed an interest in whether the Abilities-Ride program would be a Door-to-Door service. Mr. Blake stated that the program will have service that is curb-to-curb. All drivers operating taxi service under the Abilities-Ride program will be required to undergo training on how to serve customers with disabilities, including those traveling with service animals, and accommodating customers who are deaf or hard of hearing or have visual disabilities who may need assistance getting in and out of the vehicle.

Phillippa Mezile expressed an interest in how the new service will prevent longer trips that may result in increased cost for the customer. Mr. Blake stated that customers will receive a firm estimate up-front of the cost and distance of the trip. The taxi driver may take a different route to the destination, but the cost will remain the same.

Ms. Bellamy expressed an interest in whether the new program will conduct background checks at the same level and standard as Metro. 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. Ms. Bellamy stated that she is concerned about safety. She stated that paratransit service transports Metro's most vulnerable customers, and the taxi drivers in the Abilities-Ride program should be held to the same standard as all Metro employees.

In follow up, Ms. Bellamy expressed an interest in whether customers can use both services, i.e. pickup via MetroAccess and a return via Abilities-Ride. Mr. Blake stated that Abilities-Ride is a customer-driven program. A customer can travel using both programs as long as the Abilities-Ride subsidized trip begins and ends in Maryland. The only way customers can be "moved" to the Abilities-Ride program is when the customer selects it by making their own reservation. In response to a question about whether the program offers same-day service, Mr. Blake stated yes, however Metro encourages all customers to reserve trips in advance.

Mr. Semelfort expressed an interest in whether the service area for the Abilities-Ride program is the same as Metrobus and Metrorail or is it the service area used by MetroAccess. Mr. Blake stated that the service area will be the MetroAccess service area.

Mr. Semelfort also expressed an interest in whether the rides in the new program could be shared at a reduced cost for each of the customers. Mr. Blake stated currently a shared ride is not an option, however this option is being explored for future service.

In follow up, Mr. Semelfort expressed an interest in the hours of operation and the average wait time for the new program. Mr. Blake stated the Regency Taxi and Silver Cabs are privately owned companies, and will operate as long as there is demand. Again, Metro is encouraging customers to make reservations. Metro will collect data on the trips requested and completed from each of the companies, and will be able to calculate wait times for each service. In response to a question about the length of time taxi drivers must wait before 'no showing' a customer, Mr. Blake stated that taxi drivers are required to wait at least five minutes, and they are not required to contact the customer. However, if customers use either the smart phone application or website when requesting service, they will have that information at their fingertips.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in whether the new program is available to all MetroAccess eligible customers regardless of residence. Mr. Blake stated yes, as long as the trips begin and end in the MetroAccess service area of Prince George's and Montgomery counties. In follow up, Ms. Ray asked whether the MetroAccess Grandfather rules applied to the new service. Mr. Blake stated that the service area for this program is inclusive of the "grandfathered" customers.

Additionally, Ms. Ray expressed an interest in whether the RFP for the new program included a performance measure for maximum wait time for WAV. Mr. Blake stated no. Metro's goal is to seek equality across all services. He added that Metro will conduct ongoing analysis of trips being provided, and if certain trips are taking longer, Metro will work with the taxi companies to make the appropriate adjustments to reduce wait times.

Ms. Ray also expressed an interest in who customers make complaints to regarding the service. Mr. Blake stated that complaints and commendations should be made with the taxi companies, but added that customers should also contact ADAP at (202) 962-1100 for follow up. Customers using the smart phone application or website can rate the driver after every trip.

Elver Ariza-Silva expressed an interest in sensitivity training for taxi drivers. He stated that when traveling, he often needs assistance with the door and seatbelts, and with TransportDC certain drivers provide this support while others do not. This is completely opposite of the service received with MetroAccess. Mr. Blake stated that all drivers under the Abilities-Ride program will be required to undergo training on how to serve customers with disabilities. He reiterated his comments about how to make complaints, commendations and/or rate the driver's service.

In follow up to Mr. Ariza-Silva's point about the obligation of the taxi company to fulfill particular services, Mr. Crawford stated that certain accommodations, such as the door-to-door service is important for him because he is blind. Having that service performed to allow him to know when the vehicle has arrived. Mr. Blake stated that service under the Abilities-Ride program is not a door-to-door. Customers can share information with the companies to request additional service needs.

Mr. Sheehan expressed an interest in whether the smartphone application has been tested for compliance. Mr. Blake stated the applications have undergone testing and they are accessible. However, recommendations for improvements are being solicited from a group of individuals with visual disabilities.

Dr. Banerjee stated that he was concerned about the training. He stated that if Metro is subsidizing the service, Metro should be conducting the training for consistency. Mr. Blake stated that Metro has supplied the company with training materials.

Christian T. Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services stated that the disability community has made it clear that more accessible transportation options would be helpful, and by allowing the taxi companies to provide transportation service to the disability community would be a win-win for all. Metro agrees and recognizes that with the volume of demand, additional service providers are necessary. He stated that Prince George's County and Montgomery County account for 2/3 of the trips on MetroAccess. Many of the service-related points made by the Committee and the public were related to amenities of MetroAccess service. However, if Metro designed the Abilities-Ride program with the same requirements as MetroAccess, there would be no opportunity to stretch the funds to serve more people. Mr. Kent stated that there are some features that the current program does

not provide, but is provided by the Abilities-Ride program, like same-day service. Customers wanted flexibility in the new service and that is what Metro has provided.

Randall Pope reminded everyone about overlapping conversations and to speak one at a time.

The AAC agreed that the disability community needs to stay informed about this new program and request periodic updates from staff. With a round of applause, the AAC thanked Metro for being innovative in its approach to providing greater transportation options for customers with disabilities.

### **AAC ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS**

The AAC discussed its administrative process. Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, gave a brief update on leadership vacancies with the AAC and the Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS), the upcoming awards ceremony, and the work plan.

The AAC is seeking nominations for the AAC and BRS leadership. Nominations for the AAC leadership will take place henceforth through the September meetings. The job descriptions are in the member packets. Elections for the AAC will take place electronically, and the new leadership will be seated by the October 2017 AAC meeting. Nominations for the BRS leadership will also take place during the September meeting. With the loss of the Chair and Vice-Chair, 2nd Vice-Chair Edward McEntee has assumed the role of Chair. Appointments to the BRS leadership will be made at the October 2017 AAC meeting.

Mr. Sheehan opened the floor for nominations. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that to date there has only been one nomination, Dr. Posner for Chair of the AAC. Dr. Posner nominated Tino Calabia and Herbert Treger for Vice-Chair and 2nd Vice-Chair of the BRS respectively. He stated that both members have shown great interest in service and the work of the committee.

Dr. Moore Gwynn announced that the nomination period for the 2017 Richard W. Hedding Accessible Transportation Award will be open until September 25, 2017. 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. Self-nominations are not permitted.

Dr. Moore Gwynn also reminded the Committee that the format of the work plans for the AAC and its subcommittees have changed. All work plan items require a description for each topic. As members suggest new topics, they should also share the type of

resources needed. Additionally, members must complete the Confidential Statement of Affiliation and Financial Interest document by the end of September 2017.

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

The BRS discussed bus stops in Prince George's County with BPLN. Metro has a regional goal of having 100 bus stops improved yearly. With the assistance of the Department of Access Services, Metro improved 10 bus stops in Prince George's County last year. Currently, Metro has plans to improve 51 more bus stops in Prince George's County.

The FY2018 budget proposal outlined several bus lines from Prince George's County that were reduced or eliminated. BPLN stated that at the public hearings, Metro received many comments related to the importance of bus services from Prince George's County residents. Instead of eliminating the routes, Metro will operate an all-day two-way service on the W14 (Bock Road Line) and the P18/19 (Oxon Hill Fort Washington Line) to the Southern Avenue Metrorail station. There will be no weekend service on the Bock Road and Oxon Hill Fort Washington lines.

The BRS thanked BPLN for the overview on bus stops in Prince George's County.

### **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

The MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) discussed the MetroAccess Customer Guide. MAS suggested that the updated Guide include new fare structure and service hours; frequently asked questions for Posey belt and seat belts; protocol for obtaining an EZ-Pay refund; list of Metrorail stations with assigned MetroAccess bus stop location information; and the designated pick-up/drop-off area at high-volume locations, such as Verizon Center, FedEx Field, and the Nationals Ballpark. It is anticipated that revision will be completed by late summer or early fall.

The MAS also discussed MetroAccess Ranger GPS Mapping System. The Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) is the main form of communication for operators and the method by which they receive their manifest and trips. Metro made enhancements to the MDT software and display screen. The updates to the onboard computer system will occur annually to reflect new streets and housing developments within the service area.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

The AAC discussed the new MetroAccess vehicles. During the meeting members were able to take a second look at the vehicles and provide observations.

Ms. Rush stated that she traveled on the vehicles several times and found the following issues:



- Single seats are narrow and cramped
- Lack of leg room
- Last step (plastic)
- Low overhang at entry door

Mr. Sheehan requested that Ms. Rush and others who have viewed the vehicle to document the issues on one list and present them to staff by the September 18<sup>th</sup> MAS meeting. Don Scruggs, Acting Director, Office of MetroAccess Service, stated that Metro is aware of most of the issues raised regarding the new vehicles and looks forward to the list compiled by the AAC.

Ms. Bellamy requested an updated on whiteboards. She stated that she has taken an unofficial poll in the system and it appears that no station managers are aware of the tool. Mr. Blake requested a list of stations where the poll was taken. Ms. Bellamy stated that the tool is not the NoMa-Gallaudet University station nor are they at stations along the Green line.

Ms. Ray requested that the BRS should discuss automated announcements on the 7000 series. She stated that on the Blue, Orange, and Silver lines the automated announces have been inoperable. Additionally, the trip planning by phone application has also been down, especially on the weekends. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated the trip planner by phone line has been added to the BRS work plan and a presentation will be made at the September BRS meeting.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Metro's Public Hearing on the proposed change to Metrobus service on Tuesday, September 26, 2017, at Metro Headquarters. The Open House begins at 5:30PM, and the Public Hearing begins at 6:00PM to 7:00PM or until the last speaker is heard.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.



**AAC**

**Accessibility Advisory Committee**

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**STATUS OF COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

Item Number or Action	Description	Meeting Date	Presenter	Status
2018 – 6	<b>2017 Ride With Me Initiative</b> <i>Update from selected members and respond to any general questions about the event</i>	10/2/17		
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		
2018 – 4	<b>Paratransit Vehicle Vendor (Ford Motor Company)</b> <i>New Paratransit vehicle development</i>	11/5/17	TBD	

**COMPLETED - COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

Item Number or Action	Description	Meeting Date	Presenter	Status
2018 -1	<p><b>Title VI Presentation</b>  <i>Overview of the proposed update for the Title VI Plan submission for 2017</i></p>	7/3/17	<p>Presenter: Corinne Remy                      Office of Equal Employment Opportunity</p>	
2018 – 2	<p><b>AAC Elections</b>  <i>By-laws require an election for AAC officers (two-year term)</i></p>	10/2/17	B. Moore Gwynn	
2018 – 3	<p><b>2017 Ride WITH ME Initiative</b>  <i>Advise the membership and respond to any general questions about the event</i></p>	10/2/17	<p>Elver Ariza-Silva &amp;                      B. Moore Gwynn</p>	
2018 – 5	<p><b>Abilities-Ride</b>  <i>Update on the program</i></p>	9/5/17	Christiaan Blake	9/5/17