



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: April 2, 2012

Attendees, Review of Agenda, and Approval of Minutes

Chairman Patrick Sheehan called the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chairman), Dr. Phil Posner (Vice-Chair), Susan Holland, Paul Semelfort, Regina Lee, Tapan Banerjee, Debbie Brown, Georges Aguehoude, Doris Ray, Marilyn Lutter, Emily Singer Lucio, Darrell Drake, Michelle Clark, and Carolyn Bellamy. Not present: William Staderman, Elver Ariza-Silva, David Winsler, and Brian Hurley. The April 2, 2012 agenda and March 5, 2012 minutes were approved with corrections. The Chairman's report to the Metro Board dated April 2, 2012 was approved with corrections.

Public Comments

In response to a question about a MetroAccess Subcommittee work group, Carolyn Bellamy, Chair, MetroAccess Customer Information Materials Work Group reported that the meeting will be held on April 5, 2012. This meeting will be closed to the public. A request was made for clarification on the grandfather clause for MetroAccess service area. Staff reported that the service area was redefined to the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to trips that begin and end less than $\frac{3}{4}$ a mile from the bus stop or Metrorail station. The grandfather clause applies to all MetroAccess customers eligible for service who had traveled outside the corridor any time during FY2010. An inquiry was also made about potential changes to the MetroAccess Fare policy. Staff reported that Metro's Board had not made a decision on fare policy. The notification of any change in MetroAccess fares will occur well in advance of implementation.

Accessible Surveys

Ms. Alison Simon, Director, Customer Research discussed accessible surveys. She indicated that she develops various on-line surveys Authority-wide, and that surveys are designed to meet accessibility standards for the widest possible customer base. Ms. Simon thanked Patrick Sheehan, Chairman, AAC for his assistance in further identifying accessibility issues with the Metro's Budget survey. Ms. Simon reported that she is interested in collaborating with the AAC to develop surveys that would be accessible to everyone. The AAC suggested that survey in different languages should be in a separate link from the main survey page and that surveys should be accessible to lower version of software. The AAC also suggested that Ms. Simon enroll in an assistive technology class to understand better the technology used by disability community. The AAC will develop a Survey Work Group to assist Metro with future surveys.

Fare Policy and Public Hearing Follow up

Mr. Kent AGM, Access Services provided an update on MetroAccess Fare Policy and Metro's Public Hearings. He reported that the presence of the disability community at Metro's Public Hearings, the consistent discussion of MetroAccess fares in the AAC Board Reports, and meetings have heightened the awareness of the economic impact of fares and the complexity of determining those fares for MetroAccess riders.

Mr. Kent provided an overview of his memorandum on MetroAccess Fare Policy. He indicated the memorandum includes a study that provided a holistic view of MetroAccess services and fares. The research demonstrates that Metro's Travel Training Program, Reduced Fare Program, and the Free Ride Program have contributed to the reduction in MetroAccess ridership over the last year. The perspective of many has been that the increased fares are the cause for the decline in ridership, yet the study has found that the decrease in MetroAccess ridership occurred a full eight months prior to the fare increase.

Metro's cost to provide MetroAccess services is over \$40 a trip. The study concluded that the average cost of a MetroAccess fare collected from customer is \$4.85. Actual average fares are even lower because of the policy to provide complimentary trips to users of the services any time a vehicle does not arrive within the quoted pick up window. The study also indicates that there has been an increase among frequent users of the service. The decline in MetroAccess ridership stems from customers who use the service fewer than eight times per week. Mr. Kent reported that this drop in ridership has also reduced the cost of MetroAccess service overall.

The research indicates that Maryland accounts for the majority of MetroAccess residents and riders, yet residents in Virginia have the highest average fare. In proportion, residents of the District of Columbia experience the lowest maximum fare. Inaccessible bus stop and limited bus service in certain parts of Virginia and Maryland are just a few of the reasons customers use MetroAccess. The Committee requested a summary of the savings from the Free Ride Program and an analysis of the average cost of MetroAccess fares by county in Maryland and Virginia. Staff indicated that they would provide feedback to the Committee.

The current MetroAccess fare system complies with the ADA in that customers can be charged no more than twice the fare of fixed route service. Other considerations that may have an impact on MetroAccess fares are the upcoming new paratransit contract, long-term sustainable growth of the service, and MetroAccess service goals to deliver high-quality services to customers, while simultaneously meeting performance standards for safety, on-time performance and call center responsiveness. The findings also acknowledge that a flat fare would make fares more predictable.

The Committee expressed an interest in eliminating the Free Ride Program as a concession not to increase MetroAccess fares. Mr. Kent reported that an analysis on revenue and ridership was performed, and the results were inconclusive to whether the Free Ride Program influences ridership behavior. Mr. Kent reported that the data used for this study was from the same period in August for each of the years. Additionally, the AAC requested information on the surplus of funds reported by Metro's Finance Committee and suggested that the surplus be use instead of raising MetroAccess fares. Mr. Kent reported that Metro will use any additional funds to make continued repairs to the system. The AAC Committee suggested that the discussion on MetroAccess Fare Policy be continued at the MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting.

Upon motion, the AAC thanked Mr. Kent for providing a copy of the MetroAccess Fare Policy memorandum and explaining the study to the Committee.

Bus/Rail Subcommittee Report

Mr. Rodrigo Bitar, General Superintendent, TIES/ELES provided an update on the auto-dispatch features in the Metrorail system. He indicated that there are 36 elevators scheduled for rehabilitation and of that number, 11 elevators will have the auto-dispatch features. The remaining elevators have controller circuitry issues that are incompatible with the auto-dispatch system. The BRS recommended that standard configuration of buttons on elevator control panels and identical accessible signage identifying the location of the elevator be added throughout the system. The Subcommittee also recommended that Ballston Station elevators be considered for the auto-dispatch features. Mr. Bitar indicated that he would provide feedback to the Subcommittee.

Mr. Paul Bumbry, Superintendent, Metrorail Station Operations discussed train announcements related to the Rush Plus Service in the Metrorail system. He reported that microphones will be installed on the "left side" to facilitate announcements. Additionally, Metrorail staff will provide destination information sheets on the Rush Plus Service to customers.

Mr. Al Pegram, Deputy Chief, Network Communication discussed the TTY system in the Metrorail system. He indicated that with the increase of wireless services, TTY use has declined. Many in the Deaf community communicate by cellular and video phones. An RFP has been issued for payphones that will house the TTY system. The Office of Networks and Communications will provide feedback after the RFP has closed.

BRS Station Lighting Work Group had their first meeting. Metro staff provided an overview of the lighting in Metrorail stations and responded to NCCLV recommendations for improved lighting. The advocacy groups agreed to identify additional stations for lighting improvements and provide an updated list at the next meeting.

Upon motion, the BRS recommended that the AAC and Riders Advisory Council be included in the initial development of surveys or focus groups. Also upon motion, the AAC recommended that there be no penalty for users of cash or paper farecards in the system.

MetroAccess Subcommittee Report

The Subcommittee discussed the MetroAccess Town Hall Meetings and the comprehensive review of hiring and training practices of the paratransit contractor, MV Transportation. Those improvements include enhanced background and reference checks, driver and dispatcher training, and greater scheduling efficiency. Upon motion, the MetroAccess Subcommittee recommended that the actions be inserted into the Chairman's report to the Board. Additionally, the motion was amended to include the training video and referral system. Staff reported that the training video was on the work plan and the referral system in review by Metro's legal department. Upon motion, the AAC supported and endorsed the consultant's report on the paratransit contractor, MV Transportation, and commended staff on the work to develop the report.

The Subcommittee also discussed Metro's Public Hearings. There was strong attendance by the disability community. Comments ranged from onboard time, to scheduling, to Metro's travel training program. A summary of all public comments is being prepared and will include comments received at the open forum, by telephone and through email. Staff reported that nearly \$6,000 was exchanged in fare cards and tokens for EZ-Pay credit over four days of the Fare Media Exchange initiative.

New Business

Mr. Dwight Sayer made a comment about inaccessible signage at Metrorail Stations. He indicated that it is a challenge for certain customers with low vision to locate the bus lane. Upon motion, the signage at Metrorail Stations was placed on the BRS Subcommittee work plan.

Meeting adjourned: The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Attachment: Status of Recommendations and Actions (completed items are reported once in the minutes and then tracked along with all pending recommendations and actions in the AAC Compiled Work Plan)



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

STATUS OF FY 2012 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info -16	Metrorail and Wheelchair Ergonomics Study	4/9/12	BRS	Scheduled for May 7, 2012	
Info -17	MetroAccess Fare Calculator Demonstration	4/16/12	MACS	Demonstration	