



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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### **Meeting Minutes: August 5, 2013**

Chairman Patrick Sheehan called the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

#### **ATTENDEES**

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Dr. Phil Posner (Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Carolyn Bellamy, Heidi Case, Chanelle Houston, Regina Lee, Brian Miller, Doris Ray, Nanette Roberson, Denise Rush, Paul Semelfort, Anthony Stephens, and Dr. William Staderman.

#### **REVIEW OF AGENDA, AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The August 5, 2013 meeting agenda was approved as amended.

The Chairman's Report to the Metro Board, dated August 5, 2013, was approved.

The July 1, 2013 meeting minutes were approved.

#### **HISTORY OF METROACCESS FARE CALCULATOR**

Paul Semelfort, Chair, MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS), provided brief overview of the Subcommittee's involvement in the development of the MetroAccess Fare Calculator. He stated that Metro's Board of Directors approved fare policy changes that moved MetroAccess fares from a fixed flat-fare to twice the equivalent fixed route fare and included increases for peak and non-peak travel periods. This change made it extremely difficult for customers to determine the cost of a trip. To understand the impact of these fare changes the AAC developed a Fare Policy Work Group tasked with developing recommendations of less complicated fare options for MetroAccess service.

The initial idea for the MetroAccess Fare Calculator was a web-based application that would allow customers to enter trip information and receive the lowest available fare 15 minutes before and 15 minutes after the requested pick-up time. However, many MetroAccess customers lack access to the internet, so this option was not pursued. Alternative solutions included customized software that allowed MetroAccess reservation agents to provide the cheapest fare available during the reservation process; the ability to query fares using an arrival time instead of a pick-up time; incorporation of the Fare Calculator into Metro's new paratransit contract request for proposal (RFP); and integration of the Fare Calculator with Trapeze. Ryan Parr, Project Controls Officer, MetroAccess, stated that some of the challenges with the development of the new system was the burden on-line access placed on the system. Additionally, the Fare Calculator was not addressed in the RFP because the RFP did not include policy changes. Over several months, each option was thoroughly explored and the integration into Trapeze being the most promising. On May 31, 2013, the Fare Calculator was completed and available for customer uses.

This new tool is revolutionary as it provided a sweep of fares across a 30-minute window, whereas a fixed route customer would have to enter several different trip times into Metro's Trip Planner in order to see the lowest fare. Many in the disability community viewed the Fare Calculator as empowering. Mr. Parr stated that customers automatically receive the lowest fare on all trips without any negotiation; this includes reservations made online, with MetroAccess reservationist, and subscriptions trips. Additionally, Dr. Posner stated that another great feature of the Fare Calculator is that it takes single tracking and other delays into account when determining the fare.

Some members expressed an interest in an on-line demonstration of the Fare Calculator in the different stages of development. Mr. Parr stated that there really is not a demonstration available because the Fare Calculator is one system that is fully integrated into Trapeze. Chair Sheehan expressed an interest in the marketability of the online tool. Mr. Parr stated that Metro has created a new market for this type of information and technology, and Trapeze has incorporated the Fare Calculator into their features for new customers.

Ms. Lee expressed an interest in the Quality Assurance process for the Fare Calculator. She stated that some MetroAccess customers are not receiving the lowest fare, and added that some customers are reporting higher fares since the implementation of the Fare Calculator. Omari June, Director, MetroAccess, stated that he would investigate and provide feedback. Ms. Bellamy stated that feedback from her customer base indicates that customers are receiving the lowest fare, but not at the requested time. Customers are offered times that are two or three hours earlier than requested. Mr. Parr reported that the addition of the Fare Calculator feature in Trapeze has no bearing on a pick-up time based on an appointment time. Metro has conducted extensive analysis on this issue. The Fare Calculator analyzes fares each minute over a 30-minute window to determine the lowest fare.

Dr. Miller expressed an interest in the process to calculate such a complex fare and consistency of the new tools operation. Mr. Parr stated that the Fare Calculator is consistent and takes into account the changes in service with the fixed route system. Ms. Ray also expressed an interest in the complexity of the system and stated that the system was designed to make understanding MetroAccess fare less complicated. Mr. Semelfort stated that the discussion on fixed route comparability at the upcoming MetroAccess meeting may provide new and current members a better understanding.

Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, stated that the AAC requested to review this topic as a precursor to understanding fare policy. He stated that as part of the FY2015 budget, Metro's Board is preparing to discuss fare policy. The Fare Calculator was design to address the concerns of the disability community related to choice. The ability to use the Trip Planner, know the cost of a trip, and have a choice of receiving the lowest fare was an issue that resonated with Metro's Board. The extension of that idea resulted in the development of the Fare Calculator. With this tool, Metro's existing fare policy has been tested and this data has been reported to the AAC.

Recognizing that some customers compare the cost of a trip today to the cost of a similar trip taken in the past, Mr. Kent stated that Metro continues to conduct analysis on fares. The analysis demonstrates that fares will vary because each trip is different based on the availability of Metrobus and Metrorail services. Metro also understands that this approach is not popular and can be viewed as more complicated than a flat fare system. Mr. Kent stated that the AAC leadership has discussed this topic with Carol Kissal, Deputy General Manager/Chief Financial Officer, Metro, as well as a brief discussion with members of Metro's Executive Board. Mr. Ariza-Silva expressed an interest in a real-time demonstration of the Fare Calculator with quantifiable examples. Mr. Kent stated that information will be provided/demonstrated at the next MAS meeting.

Ms. Rush stated that receiving the lowest fare is not her major concern since all of her trips cost the maximum fare. She expressed an interest in the availability of times a trip can be taken at the lowest fare. She added that Metro is not offering as many trip times as they have in the past. Customers should not have to take trips that are two or three hours earlier than requested to receive the lowest fare. Dr. Posner stated that when customers request an appointment time, the MetroAccessFare Calculator uses a 2-hour block to ensure customers arrive at their destination on time. He expressed an interest in the possibility of using a one and a half-hour block. This change would allow customers to take a trip closer to the requested appointment time. Mr. Kent stated that staff will follow up and provide feedback. Doris Ray expressed an interest in the dialogue between a customer and the reservationist. She stated that her understanding of the law, is that customers should be able to book a trip by the appointment time or a pick-up time with the understanding that if customer chose the pick-up time that there is a possibility that the customer may be late to the destination. Mr. Kent stated that the ADA allows one hour for each side of the request time and Metro's policy has been to offer 30-minutes for each side of the request time. As noted in the past, Metro exceeds the regulations.

Dr. Miller stated that he has a similar understanding as Ms. Ray and when he has used services such as the Super Shuttle, he has been offered pick-up times that are at least two hours earlier than he needed to arrive at the destination. He stated that when he has negotiated a shorter pick-up time, Super Shuttle does not guarantee that I will arrive at my destination on time. Dr. Miller stated that customers should determine what they value, the arrival at the destination on time or sitting on a shuttle ahead of the appointment time. Mr. Kent stated that this topic will be further discussed at the September 16, 2013 MAS meeting. Ms. Lee stated that in addition to the items already mentioned, that MetroAccess meeting should also focus on the complexity of the trip planner as it relates to the Fare Calculator; pick-up time verses arrival time; and the option of having reservationist offer two choices on trip times per call. Mr. Kent stated the system is not designed for the Reservationist to offer multiple options when a customer makes a trip. Trapeze has the ability to offer an additional time if the customer declines the first time, but the system was not design to be used in that fashion.

Mr. Kent stated that any discussion at the September 16, 2013 MAS meeting to change policy should come back to the AAC for approval. Chair Sheehan stated that the first order of business will be for members to understand the policy, and how that policy is being implemented. Dr. Posner asked members to keep in mind that any suggestions should lead to sustainability of the MetroAccess service.

### **AAC LEADERSHIP MEETING WITH METRO'S EXECUTIVE BOARD**

The AAC discussed its Quarterly Meeting with the Executive Committee of Metro's Board. As with the initial quarterly meeting, the AAC leadership presented a plan for Safe, Accessible and Sustainable (SAS) public transportation services on Metrobus, Metrorail and MetroAccess. Dr. Posner stated that the meeting was eclipsed by another meeting and the Executive Committee will be rescheduled with the AAC.

The meeting began with a discussion on the commercial and residential development occurring near Metrorail stations and some bus stops and the equity of fares for all customers. Dr. Posner stated that the Executive Committee is interested in the socio-economic impact of these changes on the average customer including those with disabilities. In an effort to enhance that discussion, the AAC provided materials on the fare distribution; the fare recovery on Metrobus, Metrorail and MetroAccess; budget data for the last 3 years; projected budget for FY14. Dr. Posner stated that at the last public hearings on Metro's budget, testimonies from the disability community made a huge impact on Metro's decision not to raise fares. Metro's Board will be discussing fare again and the presence of the disability community will be as equally important.

The AAC leadership also discussed the environment that surrounds many Metrobus stops. Dr. Posner stated that many bus stops are not accessible which make access to fixed route services limited or non-existent. He stated that the AAC has discussed this issue with each of the jurisdictions. Some members of the Board stated that they have used bus stops where the access was clearly obstructed. Board members asked the AAC to work with Metro to lobby the jurisdictions to improve access to bus stops. Board members recommended that the discussion on inaccessible bus stops should be framed by the cost of the jurisdictional contribution to MetroAccess services. Ms. Bellamy stated that inaccessible bus stops is not the only issue; many Metrobus Operators are not trained to operate the ramp or properly secure a customer using a mobility device. This is a safety issue the AAC should also be addressing.

The meeting also highlighted the integration of all the jurisdictional bus routes and rail service to the Metro Trip Planner. This has the potential to make the calculations of the Fare Calculator better. The AAC also discussed the data collected before and after the implementation of the Fare Calculator. Dr. Posner stated that approximately 40 percent of the ridership is paying the minimum fare, and approximately 30 to 35 percent are paying the maximum fare. Ms. Bellamy stated that when the fare is increased on Metrobus, it increases on MetroAccess. It is important for customers to understand Metro's Fare Policy process. Ms. Ray expressed an interested in a calculation that will use one and a half times the fixed route instead of the current two times the fixed route service. The Fare Policy Work Group plans to make similar recommendation to the AAC and well as other things related to accessible bus stops.

Ms. Case stated that Metro's own data demonstrates an additional drop of 220,000 MetroAccess trips than had been budgeted for in FY2013. She indicated that the reduced number of MetroAccess trips has also been budgeted for FY2014. Ms. Case stated that this concurs with the point that the cost of fare is reducing the trip. Mr. Kent stated that he recognizes how some of these issues may appear to the disability community. He stated that lower MetroAccess ridership does not automatically point to the lack of affordability. There are many factors that have changed customers' riding patterns such as the economy; Metro's Travel Training program; and the Free Ride Program. The issue of sustainable specialized transportation is occurring across the country at human services and transit agencies alike. Metro has had to re-think how paratransit will operate to be sustained. Metro is not in denial and recognizes that many people need the service. The AAC agreed that this issue is a greater issue for the wider transportation community.

The AAC expressed an interest in accessible locations for Metro's public hearings. Dr. Posner stated that in the past, some of the locations were as accessible to fixed route. Mr. Kent stated that staff will follow up with the Office of the Board Secretary and provide feedback. Ms. Rush stated that it is important for the disability community to attend Metro's upcoming public hearings. She offered to pay the cost of a round trip fare for any MetroAccess customer who cannot afford the cost to attend the hearings. She stated that the elderly and many in the disability community are on a fixed income and it will be critical to have their voices heard on this matter. Chair Sheehan stated that some of the most powerful testimony regarding the impact of fares came from the public.

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

The Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) continued its discussion on Metro's brochures for safety procedures on Metrorail. The new brochure will have eye-catching graphics, more white space and fewer words as well as include the emergency telephone number for Metro's Transit Police. The BRS recommended that the new brochure add information that tells customers to move away from the doors once they have boarded the train and language that will encourage customers that are unable to evacuate the train in an emergency to remain and assistance will be forthcoming. The BRS also reiterated its comments in the May 6, 2013 Board Report to have Metro's Office of Emergency Management add accessible signage to all E-Kits to communicate basic instructions to customers who are Blind, deaf or hard of hearing.

The BRS discussed its leadership and upon motion recommended that the current BRS Vice-Chair be appointed to the position of Chairman; Dr. Staderman be appointed to the position of BRS Vice-Chair; and Ms. Case be appointed to the position of 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair. The BRS added the following items to its 2014 work plan: update on Metro's public education campaign for priority seating; an update on the travel training program; an update on Wayfinding with Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind; Metro's Smart phone applications and 911 text technologies. Ms. Ray expressed an interest in adding lighting in the Metrorail Station and the upgrades of bus bays at Metrorail stations to the work plan. Dr. Miller stated those items are listed on the work plan.

### **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

The MAS continued its discussions on the transition to the new paratransit contract. The transition to the new paratransit providers was completed on July 1, 2013. The transition was nearly seamless and the complaint investigation and No-Show process has been transferred to MTM, and the transfer of over six hundred vehicles to their respective garages. It was noted that the success was the result of months of planning.

The Subcommittee discussed extensively the MetroAccess Customer Guide and made several changes. The Special Edition section, which was intended to explain any changes that had taken place, will be replaced by a Frequently Asked Questions section. The Essential MetroAccess Policies pamphlet was also discussed and staff will provide an update at the September 16, 2013 MetroAccess meeting. The MAS added the following items to its 2014 work plan: MetroAccess Grandfather Policy, Transit Accessibility Guide; technology for real time information on *where's my ride* for MetroAccess. Ms. Case expressed an interest in adding recommendations from related to MetroAccess fare policy to the work plan. Dr. Posner stated that the Fare Policy Work Group works with both Subcommittees and recommendations are forward to the main committee.

### **AAC ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS**

The AAC discussed BRS and MAS work plans and applauded the subcommittees for the work they do to enhance the transportation services for Metro riders with disabilities. Upon motion, the AAC approved the work plans of both subcommittees.

The AAC also discussed candidates for leadership positions on the BRS. The BRS recommended that Dr. Miller be appointed to the position of Chairman; Dr. Staderman appointed as BRS Vice-Chair; and Ms. Case as second Vice-Chair. Upon motion, the AAC appointed Ms. Rush to the position of MAS Vice-Chair.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

A comment was made about Metro's weekend track work on the Red Line. The entrance to the Metro Center Station was closed. This information did not appear on the website, the Public Information Display System (PIDS) or the news. This information should be distributed to the public so they can be aware of how to plan. Staff stated that they would follow up and provide feedback.

Ms. Rush expressed an interest in recognizing former Chair Debbie Brown. She stated that Ms. Brown is a tireless advocate that has served a number of years on the AAC. Staff stated that Metro has been working on the recognition of these members.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in the Hedding Award. Dr. Posner reported that members of the AAC were represented on the Awards committee. Mr. Kent recognized the life and legacy of Michael Winter. He stated that Mr. Winter was a pioneer in disability advocacy across the country and his legacy should be remembered.

**NEW BUSINESS**

The AAC discussed the upcoming Silver Line Emergency Evacuation Exercise. Dr. Miller and Dr. Posner expressed an interest in transportation to the event location. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning stated that he would follow-up and provide feedback.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.



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**STATUS OF FY 2014 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info – 05	Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Leadership	7/1/13	AAC	Follow up discussion after the meeting on 7/25/13	
Info – 06	Accessible Public Hearing Locations	9/3/13	AAC	Presenter: Loyda Sequeira	

**COMPLETED - FY 2014 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info – 01	Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Leadership (7/25/13)	7/1/13	AAC	AAC members recommended topics for discussion	7/1/13
Info – 02	Metro’s Title VI Program	7/1/13	AAC	Completed Presenter: Deborah Coram	7/1/13
Info – 03	PIDS at Mini-Mezzanine	7/1/13	AAC	Completed Presenter: Chief Asante	7/1/13
Info – 04	MetroAccess Fare Calculator (History)	8/5/13	MAS	Presenter: Dan O’Reilly and Ryan Parr	8/5/13