



**AAC**

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

### **Meeting Minutes: August 4, 2014**

#### **ATTENDEES**

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Dr. Phil Posner (Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Carolyn Bellamy, Marc Brenman, Heidi Case, Charlie Crawford, Marisa Laios, Phillippa Mezile, Dr. Brian Miller, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, Mary Jane Owen, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Paul Semelfort, Anthony Stephens, 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.

The July 7, 2014 meeting minutes were approved as amended.

The Chairman's Report to the Metro Board, dated August 4, 2014, was approved as amended.

#### **ACC QUARTERLY MEETING WITH METRO'S EXECUTIVE BOARD**

The AAC discussed its quarterly meeting with Metro's Executive Board. The AAC leadership focused its comments on the "safety" portion of the Safe, Accessible and Sustainable (SAS) plan; the 2015 AAC and subcommittees work plans; the AAC's 2014 accomplishments; and the Silver Line. Dr. Posner stated there was also a discussion on the period of time railcar doors remain open on the platform before they close. Dr. Posner opined that the time is too short to alight and off-load customers, which is a safety issue for all customers including those with disabilities.

Additionally, Dr. Posner stated that he recommended Metro move the wheelchair parking spots to the ends of the rail cars rather than in the middle of them. He stated that this too is a safety issue. Dr. Posner stated that during an emergency situation, some customers might use wheelchairs as handrails when attempting to evacuate a train. The ends of the railcars offer a small space next to the Train Operator's booth where wheelchairs and other mobility devices can be placed safely out of the way.

Mr. Ariza-Silva disagreed with the Dr. Posner's recommendation related to the wheelchair parking space. He stated that customers who use mobility devices are not the only riders of the service. It is important to keep in mind that rush hour is the most difficult time to access the train and having the wheelchair parking spaces at the end of the train really will not make a difference. Having two or more mobility devices on one car along with other passengers, attempting to alight or off-load a train and the time constraints of the doors closing, does not provide enough space.

Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that Dr. Posner should reconsider his recommendation to the Board. Chair Sheehan recommended further discussion of the issue at the Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS). The membership agreed.

Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, reported that the Executive Board was pleased with the increased collaboration with between the AAC and the Riders' Advisory Council (RAC). The Board was also pleased to learn that the AAC is operating at full membership capacity. The AAC had a very engaging discussion with the Executive Board around the subcommittees' 2015 work plans and the AAC's accomplishments from last year. Mr. Kent stated that the Executive Board expressed strong interest in the progress of bus stop accessibility and the MetroAccess Long-term Sustainability Study. Ms. Case stated that the Study is an opportunity for the BRS to increase awareness of the accessible fixed route services and make recommendations for enhance accessibility of the bus and rail systems.

Chair Sheehan stated that partnerships with the various disability commissions and boards in the jurisdictions are important in moving both issues forward. He thanked the Chairs of each subcommittee, acknowledging that the real work of the AAC is done at the subcommittee level. Chair Sheehan also gave kudos to the work groups and disability community for all of their respective hard work.

### **AAC BY-LAW WORK GROUP**

The AAC continued its discussion on the AAC By-Laws. Paul Semelfort, Chair, AAC By-Laws Work Group, highlighted some of the significant changes being proposed by the Work Group. He stated that the Work Group proposes amendments to the following sections: (1) Responsibilities; (2) Attendance; (3) Rules of Conduct; (4) Termination of Membership; (5) Officer Qualification and Duties; (6) Membership Vacancies; and (7) Accessibility of Materials. In response to a question about protocol for getting new By-Laws approved, Mr. Kent stated that the document is to be reviewed by staff prior to forwarding to the Board for approval.

Mr. Kent stated that it is important for the Work Group and whole AAC to thoroughly discuss the changes being proposed, and he added that staff is available to answer any questions. One issue raised during the Work Group meeting was the AAC election process. Currently, the AAC has officer elections in July. Having those elections the same time new members are appointed does not appear to be the best timing because it does not offer new members an opportunity to acclimate to their roles and responsibilities or network with other members before being asked to elect the person who will represent them. Mr. Kent stated that staff supports the Work Group recommendation that the elections be moved to January. In response to a comment about officer elections and a limited amount of time remaining on a term, Mr. Kent stated that it is better for the AAC to build a process into the By-Laws that would address such an issue than to request a special exemption from Metro's Board.

The person the AAC selects as its next Chair must have a complete understanding of the role; be mindful of the obligations; and have the time to fulfill its many commitments. Mr. Kent stated that the current set of AAC officers really participate and do not miss an opportunity to support accessibility. Chair Semelfort stated that the Work Group will meet again on August 18<sup>th</sup> immediately following the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting. All AAC members are welcome to participate.

### **METRO'S PROPOSED SIGNAGE PROGRAM (UPDATE)**

At the June 2014 meeting, the AAC discussed Metro's proposed signage for the Metrorail system. Michael McBride, Program Manager, Public Art and Environment Graphic Design, provided an update since that meeting. For the benefit of new members, Chair Sheehan requested that the major elements of the proposal be discussed first and then highlight the changes since the last meeting.

Mr. McBride stated that Metro is exploring a new signage program in four main areas: Station Ahead List signs; Station Name signs; Exterior Wayfinding signs; and System Use and Tactile signs in the rail system. This change is to better comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and to accommodate a growing rail system. A review of Metro's existing signage program determined that the messages are not consistent system-wide; designs are not durable or affordable; the locations are not standard for customer viewing; and some signs are non-compliant with the ADA.

In the proposal, the layout design for Station Ahead List (SAL) signs will be much more intuitive. The information on the signs will be uniform, consistent, ADA compliant, and have 14 layouts system-wide. Mr. McBride stated that the proposed layout allows for a more balanced directional system and customers would have the advantage of knowing all the stations on the line. As an example, Mr. McBride stated that the Metro has already implemented one of the of the AAC recommendations of highlighting the current station on the SAL. This will help customer determine where they are in relationship to their destination.

The proposed signage program will use cardinal directions as opposed to end station names. Ms. McMahon expressed concerns with the concept and its impact on all customers including those with disabilities. She stated that she is a frequent rider of the Red Line and the line does not travel in an east-to-west direction. Mr. Stanley agreed stating that when applying cardinal directions to the Red Line, it is more intuitive to use north and south because line is built in a U shape. Ms. McMahon stated that the use of cardinal direction as oppose to end station names is too confusing and will require retraining of almost everyone who use the system. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that he also has concerns about the use of cardinal directions especially for the customers who speak languages other than English. Ms. Laios stated that the use of cardinal direction would also mean that Metro staff would need to be re-trained, which would be a huge undertaking.

Mr. McBride stated that in using cardinal directions, it is important to remember that the principles have to apply to every scenario. The relationship between end stations on the Red Line demonstrates that the line travels eastward and westward. Mr. McBride stated that this is also true for the Silver, Blue, and Orange lines. Mr. Stanley stated that the Red Line still should be north and south because as you go up Route 355 towards Rockville, Medical Center, and Bethesda, all those stations are considered north. A review of the other side of the line, Wheaton, Silver Spring, and Forest Glenn, all those stations are south. Mr. Stanley encourages Metro to reconsider its use of cardinal directions.

Ms. Case stated that she agreed with the concept being confusing and that cardinal directions are not intuitive especially in an urban environment. Mr. McEntee stated that he agreed with Ms. Case's comments related to cardinal directions. He stated that the system is confusing enough for new riders and sometimes even for frequent rides, that changing to cardinal directions will only increase the disorientation of customers. Dr. Staderman stated that he likes the use of the cardinal system. He says that most maps use cardinal direction and the use of the directional system does make traveling intuitive. Mr. Stephens also liked the use of cardinal directions. He stated that one key component to ensuring that the use of cardinal directions is effective is consistent and clear announcements. Having consistent announcements will mean that any change will become ingrained visually and audibly. Ms. Mezile agreed with Mr. Stephen's comments about announcements. She stated that as a person with low-vision, it is important to have clear and concise announcements. A comment from the public stated that the Interstate system uses cardinal directions and suggested that perhaps the use of cardinal directions also include the end stations name. This information will be more helpful for customers.

On the mock example of the SAL provided by Mr. McBride, Ms. Case pointed out that the accessible signage symbols were too small. She stated that Metro should increase the size of the symbols, which will make it easier for customers to see them at further distances. Mr. Ariza-Silva agreed with Ms. Case's comments related to the size of the accessible symbols. He stated that when both trains are on the platform, it is difficult for customers to see the signage on the wall. The alternative for customers is to use the pylons. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that it is equally important that the pylons also have clear signage. Dr. Posner stated that during the June 2014 meeting it was recommended that the accessible symbol be added to every sign. This recommendation was forwarded to the Board. Dr. Staderman also pointed out in the same mock example that the accessible signage was misplaced. The accessible symbol should be located on the same side as Amtrak because that is where the elevator is located. Mr. McBride apologized for the error indicating that the picture was a mock up for illustration purposes, not an example of an actual sign (language, direction, station, etc.). Ms. Ray expressed an interest in the listing of stations. She stated that the listing of stations all on one sign is helpful for the low vision community. Ms. Ray also applauded Metro for increasing the number of tactile signage. Ms. Ray stated that at the presentation in June 2014, the proposal stated that only the line color and cardinal direction will be used on signs.

Ms. Ray urged Metro to rethink its approach and add the end station. Ms. Owen also commended Metro citing the many improvements. She echoed Ms. Ray's comments about the importance of including the end station names along with the line color and cardinal direction.

Mr. McBride noted that SAL signs are just one of the proposed changes. Metro is proposing changes to the following additional signs: station name, exterior wayfinding, and tactile signs. Collectively, the proposed signage changes are designed to improve the traveling experience for all customers. As an example, Mr. McBride stated that the proposed station name signs are more prominent; the direction of the train is demonstrated clearly; and the signs include exit information with accessible signage symbols. Currently, it requires three separate signs to get the same information that is being proposed to be included on one sign. Metro has also increased the frequency of wayfinding information. Mr. McBride stated that customers will not travel more than 40 feet without seeing wayfinding information. Dr. Posner reiterated his comments about accessible signage on every sign. He stated that for a customer with the disability, 40 feet is a long way to walk to find out elevator is in the other direction. Ms. Case stated that in adding the Silver Line information to the Orange and Blue Lines, Metro failed to add the accessible signage. Mr. McBride stated that he will investigate and provide follow-up. Additionally, it is important that the wayfinding information not only point a customer in the direction of the elevator, but it should also give the destination of elevator. Dr. Posner stated that this type of information is more useful to customers.

The proposal also includes enhancements to the emergency pylons and mezzanine-level pylons. Mezzanine-level pylons are located at the entrance of the escalator and stairways. Mr. McBride stated that the current design with the end station name is too small and can be easily obscured by a customer. In the proposed design, the text size of the directional information is larger and is placed higher, making it easier for customers to view. Also in the proposed design of the emergency pylons, the words are more prominent. The pylons will have accessible symbols, raised lettering, and Braille at the same height on pylons throughout the system. Additionally, in the proposed design, Metro will also incorporate more pictograms. This feature will assist the international community in travel.

Brain Miller expressed an interest in directional signage on the platform. He stated that it is difficult for a blind person using the system to determine the destination of the trains, or find pylons with information because they are in different locations at every station. Having this information in the same place and format each time will be helpful.

Mr. McBride reiterated his point about accompanying signs in the proposal, stating that the SAL will be flanked by the station name, exterior wayfinding and system use, and tactile signs throughout the platform. Metro has made a strong effort to place the signage in a uniform location and format.

Mr. Brenman stated that the AAC appears to be in clear opposition to the use of cardinal directions. When customers are underground, most lack a sense of direction; therefore, cardinal directions are useless. In the system, the question that is asked is, where are you going, not what direction are you going. Mr. McBride stated that Metro mapped the level of communication it would take to verbalize directions in the rail system found that it takes less words to communicate directions with the proposed system compared to the current system. Mr. Brenman stated that the system should be user friendly because Metro is transporting people.

A comment from the public stated that the use of uppercase letters in the text on signage is very difficult for the low-vision community to read. Customers with low vision prefer a mixed-case text. Mr. McBride stated that with the proposed tactile signage, it is required that the text be in uppercase letters.

Mr. McBride stated that the next step in the process is to share the proposal with a range of stakeholders. A cost analysis will also be conducted, and approval from the Board must be obtained before an implementation strategy can be developed. Mr. McBride stated the goal is to have the proposal approved and implemented in Phase II of the Silver Line. Chair Sheehan forwarded the topic to the BRS for further discussion.

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

The BRS discussed the new Silver Line Metrorail stations and the (then) upcoming opening on July 26, 2014. The new rail line will include the following five stations: McLean, Tyson Corner, Greensboro, Spring Hill and Wiehle–Reston East. With the addition of these five stations, it is expected that Metro will carry an additional 15,000 – 25,000 people per day, with one-third being new riders.

Metro has been preparing for the opening of Phase I of the Silver Line by training personnel and conducting emergency drills to ensure staff and the local emergency personnel are prepared. The week prior to the Silver Line opening, Metro will operate trains in a pre-revenue mode. The simulated trains will operate every six minutes during the peak periods and 12 minutes during off peak.

Phase II of the Silver Line is underway with the contract to build the design and rail maintenance yard being awarded. The Washington Metropolitan Airports Authority has stated that Phase II of the project is on schedule to be finished by 2019. The BRS applauded Metro for a job well done on the system.

### **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

The MAS discussed the DC Taxi Pilot program known as DC-CAPS. Metro has been partnering with funding entities to coordinate the development of specialized transportation services that provide MetroAccess customers with alternatives for some of their trips. DC-CAPS will provide transportation to dialysis patients who are residents of the District of Columbia and attend dialysis centers in the District of Columbia.

Although, taxi services are supplementing some MetroAccess services in the pilot program, there are not enough taxi providers around the Metro service area with wheelchair accessible vehicles. The majority of MetroAccess trips are in the State of Maryland and certain areas in this region lack the taxi resources to meet the needs of all our customers.

Metro has required taxi companies that work for MetroAccess to adhere to stringent requirements in the best interest of the customer. Currently, taxi service on MetroAccess is managed by Veolia Transportation, as a part of their contract. There are a limited number of taxi providers working with Veolia, but none of them are based in the District of Columbia.

DC-CAPS presents an improved travel experience for customers, and allow MetroAccess vehicles to transport other customers more efficiently. Metro will provide vehicles to the District of Columbia so that they are able to increase the fleet of accessible vehicles. Metro will closely monitor the program in an effort to possibly help expand it beyond dialysis trips.

The MAS also discussed its 2015 Work Plan and added the following items: an update on the MetroAccess Long-term Sustainability Study; a study on the effectiveness of MetroAccess Door-to-Door Policy; Update on Metro's Customer Surveys; the possible development of a Mystery Rider Program; presentation on the paratransit eligibility process; and presentation by MV regarding the scheduling process. The MetroAccess Customer Guide was discussed and upon motion, the AAC recommended that Metro document customer preferences for information and provide the MetroAccess Customers Guide and future documents in the alternative format requested.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Barbara Millville, President, National Capital Citizens with Low Vision, stated that the bus flag, next bus information, bus stop number on the bus pole are very high. This makes it difficult for customers with low-vision to read. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, stated that he would follow-up and provide feedback.

### **AAC ADMINISTRATIVE DISCUSSION**

Dr. B. Moore Gwynn announced that the Department of Access Services will host its annual Accessibility Excellence Awards in November 2014. The event recognizes contributions to the regions disability community. During the event, the AAC will pay tribute to a person or organization with the Richard W. Hedding Accessible Transportation Award. The Accessible Transportation Award is in honor of the AAC's first chairperson who led the cause of Metrorail Accessibility.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.



**Accessibility Advisory Committee**

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

**STATUS OF FY 2015 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info - 8	Metrobus Voice Annunciator System	9/2/14	AAC	Phil Wallace, Bus Maintenance	
Info - 9	AAC By-Law Work Group	9/2/14	AAC	Governance Questionnaire	
Info - 10	AAC Administrative Items	9/2/14	AAC	AAC Subcommittee Work Plan (approvals) TASH Proposal	
Info - 11	AAC By-Law Work Group	10/6/14	AAC		
*Info - 12	Accessible Meeting Locations	9/2/14	AAC	Public Hearings (Bus Service)	
*Info - 13	Annual Report: Bus Stop Accessibility	11/3/14	AAC		



**STATUS OF FY 2015 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

*Info - 14	MetroAccess Long-term Sustainability Study	11/3/14	AAC		
Info – 15	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	11/3/14	AAC	Update (Follow-up discussion after event - November 2013).	
Info - 16	Momentum and Long Range Plan (update)	12/1/14	AAC		

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

**COMPLETED - FY 2015 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info - 1	Silver Line Tour	7/7/14	AAC	Reflections	7/7/14
Info - 2	Silver Line Emergency Exercise	7/7/14	AAC	Reflections (request from EOM during the Metrorail evacuation procedures review)	7/7/14
Info - 3	Bus Stop Working Group (Update)	7/7/14	AAC	Presenter: Chris Blake	7/7/14
Info - 4	Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Leadership	7/7/14	AAC		7/7/14
Info - 5	Metro's Signage Program	8/4/14	AAC	Update - from June 9 <sup>th</sup> BRS meeting	
Info - 6	Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Leadership	8/4/14	AAC	Feedback from July 2014 meeting	

**COMPLETED - FY 2015 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

Info – 7	AAC By-Law Work Group	8/4/14	AAC		
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