



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: December 2, 2013

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

ATTENDEES

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Dr. Philip Posner (Vice-Chair), Dr. Tapan Banerjee (2nd Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Carolyn Bellamy, G. Robert Brown, Heidi Case, Kevin Hanretta, Chanelle Houston, Regina Lee, Dr. Brian Miller, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Paul Semelfort, Anthony Stephens, and Dr. William Staderman.

REVIEW OF AGENDA, AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The December 2, 2013 meeting agenda was approved as amended.

The Chairman's Report to the Metro Board, dated December 2, 2013, was approved.

The November 4, 2013 meeting minutes were approved.

MOMENTUM – METRO'S STRATEGIC PLAN (UPDATE)

Shyam Kannan, Managing Director, Office of Planning, provided an updated on Metro's strategic plan, Momentum. He stated that Momentum is a multi-year capital rebuilding effort that defines the next generation of public transportation services. Since the adoption of the plan by Metro's Board, over sixty businesses, organizations, and all three jurisdictions have endorsed the plan. Through special events, news articles, and interviews, Metro has built support for Momentum, and has received a large number of individual endorsements from customers and residents throughout the region. Additionally, Metro is working closely with the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) and Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to include Metro's 2025 strategic plan projects in the region's long range and regional transportation priorities. Mr. Kannan stressed the importance of the support from the regional partners as well as the public. Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, stated that Metro has a plan that demonstrates a "return on investment" to each of the jurisdictions.

Mr. Kannan stated that in the coming decade, the need for paratransit service will nearly double. It is estimated that by 2040 the Washington Metropolitan region will see a dramatic growth in the elderly population and the number of individuals with disabilities. To meet the needs of all the customers there must be regional connectivity, accessibility improvements, and cost-efficient paratransit alternatives to MetroAccess. Mr. Kannan stated that to address these issues Metro is developing a Regional Paratransit Plan (RPP). The RPP will address regional paratransit resources; inaccessibility of some fixed route services; enhance support for fixed route; identify future MetroAccess investments; and examine opportunities for increased specialization of services, just to name a few. Dr. Posner stated that with an aging population, there will be an increase in the number of people who use mobility devices in the system. He suggested that Metro take the lead and conduct research in this area to better understand the type of mobility devices that will be used in the future and their functionality on public transportation.

The AAC expressed an interest in Metro's 2040 projections for MetroAccess service that indicate the number of people registered are increasing but not the number of trips taken. Mr. Kannan stated that Metro used population statistics to forecast the number of people who would use MetroAccess in the future. Momentum can be used as a guidepost for preparing the region for this increase. Mr. Kent stated that the 2040 is a broader projection and the increase in eligibility of MetroAccess users than actually riders of the service could suggest that there are other factors affecting the numbers. He added that one point is clear; these estimates for MetroAccess service indicate that a larger number of customers will need the service in the future.

The AAC expressed an interest in whether the increases in population takes into account people migrate back into the city. Mr. Shyam stated that the forecast model does account for patterns and spikes across the region, and that Momentum takes into account some unmet demand. Mr. Kent stated that Metro has been collecting data on MetroAccess customers who live outside the service area but continue to use the system. This type of information can be used a preliminary indicator of the types of unmet needs and the cost of services in the future. It is important to note that many people outside our region use specialized transportation services.

In December, Metro's General Manager Richard Sarles will present the FY2015 budget to the Board of Directors. Included in that budget is a full year of service on the new Silver Line; the expansion of the fleet with the 7000 series railcars; core station improvement that will create better connections between certain key stations; enhanced station accessibility; improvements to Priority Corridor Network (PCN) Bus Stops; and the replacement of 100 bus stops. Mr. Kannan stated that the FY2015 Budget demonstrates Metro's commitment to Momentum. Dr. Posner gave kudos to the General Manager, stating that in the budget it outlines the contribution of each jurisdiction to MetroAccess service. This clearly demonstrates that it is less expensive for jurisdictions to operate their own paratransit system than to contribute to the larger system, such as Arlington County's STAR Program. Metro's Board is scheduled to take action on the FY2015 Budget in April 2014.

Momentum is inclusive because it includes transportation services to the disability community. Mr. Kent stated that this is the prime opportunity for the AAC and the disability community at large to raise its collective voice on the long-term plans for the region's public transportation system. This includes encouraging your respective jurisdiction to fund Momentum, so the services needed by the disability community can be available. If accessibility needs are not addressed, thereby creating more demand for expensive MetroAccess service, then some of the things we want improved on the bus and rail systems will be harder to do because there simply will not be enough money to do all the things necessary. Chair Sheehan stated that improving the fixed route service throughout the region ties into the bus stop accessibility initiative of the AAC. Ms. Case suggested that the approach to the jurisdictional leaders should be that for every dollar spent on improving accessibility on the fixed route is a saving on MetroAccess services. Mr. Kent stated that Access Services can assist the AAC with that type of messaging to the jurisdiction.

The AAC applauded Metro for focusing on accessibility in its long-term planning and for broaching the conversation of accessibility with the jurisdictions.

ATTRACTING RIDERS WITH DISABILITIES TO FIXED ROUTE

Donna Smith, Director of Training, Easter Seals Project ACTION, discussed attracting riders with disabilities to the fixed route system. She provided a brief history of paratransit services stating that it began in the 1970's when the fixed route public transportation system was mostly inaccessible and the terms of public transportation services were set locally. The demand for paratransit service was unclear and there was no way to measure potential ridership of paratransit service. Early perceptions and expectation of people with disabilities were limited and this attitude carried over into transportation services.

Nationally, equal access to public transportation has been operating a little off the mark. Ms. Smith stated that many people are dependent on a very costly paratransit system that is too difficult to maintain. Public transportation systems must re-think the way it views access. People with disabilities should learn travel skills to increase their ability to travel independently. Public transportation should view these skills as individualized to the particular customer, adding that that individuals' travel varies because people, even with the same disabilities, have different skill levels when it comes to using public transportation systems independently.

As time has progressed, attitudes have changed and equal access has become a reality in public transportation services. Ms. Smith stated that good customer services, bus stop accessibility, and advertising accessibility are some examples of the kind of things public transportation can do to encourage riders with disabilities on to fixed-route services. Marketing the convenience and freedom of fixed route service to school students and seniors is another approach. Educating human service providers on the accessibility of the fixed route service would make a huge difference in a person's life to travel independently.

Other approaches transportation agencies are using to move riders with disabilities on to fixed route services include tightening the eligibility determination process; implementing trip-by-trip conditional eligibility; and developing feeder services, making it possible for riders with disabilities to use both paratransit and fixed route services. Ms. Smith stated that all these approaches lead to a greater level of independence for the rider with disabilities.

Ms. Smith stated that public transportation systems must continue building and maintaining an accessible fleet; make customer service a job requirement; and embrace the equal access afforded by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In response to a question about why some people with disabilities are reluctant to express their use of fixed route services for fear of losing the paratransit service, Ms. Smith stated that most of the information Easter Seals Projection ACTION receives on this topic is anecdotal. However, it is important to explain to customers that taking fixed route services does not automatically disqualify a person from paratransit services. Transportation systems should encourage a full discussion with customers on their uses public transportation

service. This will lead to a better understanding of the customers' need and providing them better services. Ms. Case expressed interest in how to make training for accessibility a job requirement. Ms. Smith stated that Easter Seals Projection ACTION provide technical support to any agency, as well webinars, and as self-paced on-line training to increase knowledge in this area. Mr. Kent thanked Ms. Smith for making the presentation, stating how inspired he was by her quote about the freedom of accessibility on the fixed route system. This was empowering statement about the difference public transportation has made in your life. The AAC thanked Ms. Smith for the informative presentation, and thanked Easter Seals Projection ACTION for their innovative strategies to improve accessible in public transportation.

ACCESSIBLE BUS STOP (ADVOCACY LETTER)

The AAC discussed the letter to the TPB regarding prioritizing bus stop accessibility during the upcoming round of 5310 funding. Upon motion, the AAC unanimously approved the letter and its forwarding to the TPB.

BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE (BRS) REPORT

The BRS received an update on Metro's FY2014 Metrobus service changes. The changes will affect bus service on 49 different routes across the jurisdiction; expand bus service on six high volume corridors; improve reliability and travel time; and reduce crowding for approximately one in six Metrobus customers. In addition to the changes in bus service, Metro will also make changes to the Tariff that will prohibit smoking at all Metro bus bays and bus stops, and cover off-board fare collection.

The BRS discussed funding for bus stop accessibility in the various jurisdictions. Metro's Executive Board recommended that the AAC develop a scorecard demonstrating the progress of each jurisdiction. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that AAC Chair forward a letter to TPB requesting that bus stop accessibility be a 5310 funding priority; and have the AAC adopt Metro's definition of accessible bus stops. Upon motion, the BRS also recommended developing a work group to address the issues. Regina Lee will serve as the Chair. The BRS also discussed the Takoma Metro Station, and thanked the community group from Takoma for presenting this information to the committee

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) thoroughly discussed safety training for new MetroAccess drivers. Some of the topics covered by the training materials are fatigue management; accident, incident, and emergency procedures; defensive driving techniques; door-to-door service refresher; wheelchair securement; and the electronic device policy to name a few. A portion of the training consists of a skills course, on the road training, and cadetting. Incumbent driver training is currently on going and will continue through the end of the calendar year.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Persons in attendance offered no comments.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 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 – 14	Attracting Riders with Disabilities to Fixed Route Transit	12/2/13	AAC	Donna Smith, Director of Training, Easter Seals Project ACTION	
Info – 12	Momentum and Long Range Plan (update)	12/2/13	AAC		
Info – 09	Program Access	10/7/13	AAC	Deferred until January 6 th meeting. Doris Ray will provide the language	
Info – 13	Age-Friendly DC Task Force	11/4/13	AAC	Follow up discussion after the event on 11/15/13 at the January meeting.	

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
Info – 05	Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Leadership	7/1/13	AAC	Follow up discussion after the meeting on 7/25/13	8/5/13
Info – 06	Accessible Public Hearing Locations	9/3/13	AAC	Presenter: Loyda Sequeira	9/3/13

COMPLETED - FY 2014 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info – 07	Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Leadership	10/7/13	AAC	AAC members recommend topics for discussion for the 10/24/13 meeting. (includes time from the 7/25/13 meeting).	10/7/13
Info – 08	Metro’s Customer Pledge	10/7/13	AAC	Presenter: Lynn Bowersox	10/7/13
Info – 10	Accessibility Excellence Award	11/4/13	AAC	Reflection from Chair Sheehan	11/4/13
Info – 11	Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Leadership	11/4/13	AAC	Follow up discussion after the meeting on 10/23/13 (MetroAccess Real Time App for Smartphones; Grandfather Policy)	11/4/13