



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: February 10, 2014

ATTENDEES

Present: Dr. Phil Posner (Vice-Chair), Dr. Tapan Banerjee (2nd Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, G. Robert Brown, Heidi Case, Darrell Drake, Chanelle Houston, Regina Lee, Dr. Brian Miller, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Anthony Stephens, and Dr. William Staderman

Call to Order

Vice-Chairman Posner called the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

REVIEW OF AGENDA

The AAC discussed amending the meeting agenda to devote more time to the fare policy discussion. Upon motion, the AAC voted to extend the fare policy discussion; defer the subcommittee reports until the next AAC meeting in March 2014; and reduce the public comment period by ten minutes.

APPROVAL OF BOARD REPORT AND PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

The Chairman's Report to the Metro Board, dated February 10, 2014, was approved as amended.

The January 6, 2014 meeting minutes were approved.

SMARTRIP CONVERSION – REDUCED FARE CARD PROGRAM

Chris Colbert, Operations Manager, Eligibility Certification and Outreach, provided an overview of the new Reduced Fare SmarTrip Conversion pilot program. He stated that the Reduced Fare SmarTrip cards are linked to the regular Reduced Fare Cards, but provide customers with simpler access to fixed route services. In the pilot program, the Reduced Fare SmarTrip cards will have an insignia that indicates a personal care attendant (PCA) can accompany the customer. When both cards are used simultaneously in the system, the customer and PCA will both pay the reduced fare. The PCA will pay full fare when traveling alone.

In response to a question about whether the PCA has to be the same person all the time, Mr. Colbert stated that any person can serve as a PCA. The AAC asked if it were possible to use the Reduced Fare SmarTrip card and PCA's fare card concurrently at different fare gates in the station. Mr. Colbert stated that the customer and the PCA must use the same fare gate. Once the Reduced Fare SmarTrip card is tapped, the PCA will have a small window of time to tap their card to receive the reduced fare.

In response to a question about the number of customers participating in the pilot program, Mr. Colbert stated that 50 customers and their PCA's will participate in the pilot program. Mr. Colbert stated that the Reduced Fare SmarTrip Conversion Pilot program will begin on February 11, 2014 and implemented in April 2014.

FARE POLICY – A DISCUSSION AND STRATEGY MEETING

The AAC continued its discussion on Fare Policy. The AAC Fare Policy Working Group has had extensive discussions on the topic, which have been shared with the full committee. Dr. Posner stated that another approach to fare calculation has been proposed, but not yet discussed with the AAC; the use of bus fare only to calculate MetroAccess fares.

Ms. Case stated that the “bus fare only” proposal was introduced during the previous Working Group meeting. In researching the issue, she stated that Metro’s Trip Planner offers several choices with one of the options being a bus only trip. Many seniors and the disability community find this to be the most economical way to travel on fixed route. Ms. Case stated that, in her opinion, the bus service experience is most similar to MetroAccess service. The MetroAccess window of 30 minutes is similar to the amount time a customer may wait for the next bus.

Ms. Case suggests that Metro reduce the MetroAccess maximum fare from \$7 to \$6.50 and use a multiplier of 1.5x to calculate the fares. With an average MetroAccess fare of \$4.95 on approximately two million trips, the General Manager's proposed budget suggests that fare box recovery will be a little over \$8 million. Ms. Case stated that under the bus fare only proposal the fare box recovery would be reduced by \$2 million; however, the system will still be sustainable.

On average, a quarter of MetroAccess customers pay \$7; a large majority of MetroAccess customers pay a fare between \$3.45 and \$3.49, which is double the bus fare; and approximately five percent pay less. Customers who pay less have trips that begin and end in the jurisdiction. Ms. Case recommended that Metro change its formula to double the “bus only fare”. This would allow a greater number of MetroAccess customers to pay \$3.70, which is the average fare under her proposal.

Ms. Lee expressed an interest in whether the MetroAccess Fare Calculator calculates fares based on arrival times or does the calculation begin at the 30-minute widow. Omari June, Director, MetroAccess Service, stated that the Fare Calculator calculates fares based on the request time. Calculations for the lowest fare are scan over a 15-minutes window before and after the customer’s requested time. Ms. Rush requested further clarification stating that the cost of her trips are generally \$7; however, on trips that she has taken around midday, the costs have been \$5.50. Mr. June provided a further explanation stating that a MetroAccess customer can book a trip by pick-up time, ant the Fare Calculator will scan for the lowest fare 15 minutes before the pick-up time and 15 minutes after the pick-up time. In turn, when a MetroAccess customer books a trip by arrival time, the Fare Calculator generates a pick-up time and scan for the lowest fare 15 minutes before the pick-up time and 15 minutes after the pick-up time. Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, stated that the AAC recommendations on Metro’s Fare Policy may influence the outcome of some of the processes of the Fare Calculator. Dr. Posner stated that the discussion on the calculation of fares is important, but not the discussion on the table for the ACC today. He suggested deferring the discussion to the next MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting. The additional points to consider in a future discussion are: (1) calculation of the MetroAcces Fares based on the Fare Calculator, and (2) ensuring MetroAccess

customers are arriving to destinations several hours earlier than the customer has anticipated.

Mr. Ariza-Silva stressed the importance of understanding how MetroAccess fares are calculated. He requested that all future presentations be clear-cut, making it easier for everyone to understand the process. Mr. Kent stated that when MetroAccess customers make a reservation, the computer uses the same information customers using fixed route service would use to determine the cost of a trip.

Providing additional context for the discussion, Mr. Kent stated that it is permissible for Metro to charge less for fares. However, Metro adheres to the maximum allowed by law, which is twice the equivalent fixed route fare. If MetroAccess used a flat fare, some customers would overpay for transportation services. In response to Ms. Case's assertion that Metro had been sued over its fare policy, Mr. Kent stated that Metro has not had a lawsuit regarding fare policy, adding that the previous lawsuit was related to service quality, which Metro rectified long ago.

Metro is also required to comply with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) standards for length of time for a paratransit trip. All paratransit trips must be equivalent to comparable bus and rail service. Understanding this is a sizeable request, Mr. Kent stated that the FTA's position is that if the customer did not have a disability that prevented them from riding Metrorail, they would have gotten to their destination faster. With over 2 million trips a year, Mr. Kent stated the current trip length for MetroAccess service is still shorter than a bus route or a rail trip with a transfer and a walk to the destination. MetroAccess is in compliance of providing comparable ride times for customers with disabilities.

In 2006, the FTA performed an ADA compliance review on MetroAccess Services. As part of the review, there were inquiries about Metro's fare policy, and it was determined that Metro's fares were higher than the equivalent fixed-route fare in one of the jurisdictions. Mr. Kent stated that this was the reason Metro fare policy changed from a flat fare to twice the equivalent fixed route fare. Metro is compliant in regards to fares for all customers. Mr. Kent stated that indexing paratransit fares to twice the bus only fare would be similar to the flat rate fare because the bus fare does not change. This would mean less revenue for Metro. Ms. Case stated that in comparison to the other plans, the "bus fare only" provides the lowest cost to customers and only slightly less revenue for Metro. Additionally, it is simpler for customers to determine the fare.

Mr. Kent stated that Metro's Board recognizes that the AAC has spent time evaluating Metro's fare policy. The AAC leadership has also discussed some of the Committee's fare policy recommendations in the Quarterly Leadership meetings with Metro's Executive Board. Mr. Kent reminded the AAC that in the evaluation process of fares the Board weighs all the proposals against the cost of the service.

Dr. Posner stated that the AAC has three proposals to put forth to the Board: use bus only fare; reduce maximum fare; and reduce the multiplier. For a historical perspective, Mr. Miller asked about the AAC's approach to fares during Metro's last fare adjustment. Dr. Posner stated that the AAC recommended five different options and negotiated with staff. Ultimately, the Board made the final decision on fares based on sustainability, lawfulness, and achievability. Ms. Ray suggested that the AAC use language in its letter to the Board that strongly opposes the increase to rail and bus fares.

Mr. Drake recommended that the AAC share all its proposals and emphasize the customer's ability or lack thereof to afford public transportation. A comment from the public suggested that the AAC investigate the percentage of MetroAccess riders who are having financial hardship with fares. Metro should consider setting aside funds for that group of people if that number is high. Additionally, a reduction in fare box recovery can also mean a reduction in service. No one wants a reduction in service.

Ms. Bellamy commended Dr. Posner on his leadership with the Work Group. She stated that the body of information to review is enormous and that he attends all the Board's subcommittee meetings to bring to the AAC complete information so that the AAC can make a good decision. Upon motion, the AAC recommends to put forth all the proposals to the Board. Ms. Case will draft the correspondence, and a vote will take place at the February 18, 2014 MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

A comment was made about length of time a customer can remain on the vehicle for one MetroAccess trip. The issue is a combination of scheduling and operators who are unfamiliar with the route. Both increase the time on the vehicle. Additionally, some operators eat while they drive. This is an unsafe practice. Staff stated that they will follow-up with the customer at the close of the meeting to get details of the incident. The issue will be investigated and feedback provided.

A comment was made about the varying styles of elevator "call" buttons. The different styles make it difficult for customers to find the appropriate button to push, and that the buttons in new elevators are hard to push. Mr. Blake stated that ADAP is working the management of Metro's elevator, and he has shared with them recommendations provided by the AAC to make Metro's elevator buttons more uniform for customers. The current focus of AAC recommendations is on elevators at the Rosslyn and Reagan National Airport stations. Staff will continue to work on this issue and provide feedback.

A comment was made about the number fare options MetroAccess Reservationists offer customers versus being on-line and being offered only one option. Mr. June stated that in the interest of time, he would like to discuss the process in detail with the customer after the meeting.

A comment was made about MetroAccess reimbursements for late trips. Metro should make the information on the amount of the reimbursement clearer for users of the service. Mr. June stated that staff will meet with the customer to discuss the reimbursement process at the conclusion of the meeting.

A comment was made about challenges faced with updating personal information in the system. A customer stated that on several occasions, she has provided MetroAccess Reservationists with alternative numbers for contact. To this date, the system is not been updated. Mr. June apologized for the error and asked staff to update the information in the MetroAccess and Eligibility Certification systems.

A comment was made about the challenges some customers face in the process to be eligible for the service. The customer thanked Antonio Stephens, ADA Ombudsman, for his patience and assistance with restoring her MetroAccess service.

OLD BUSINESS

Barbara Millville, President, National Capital Citizens with Low Vision, expressed an interest in when the next Bus and Rail Subcommittee Station Lighting Work meeting will be held. Ms. Ray stated that she will work with staff to set-up a meeting and notify the community.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:48 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 – 13	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	11/4/13	AAC	Follow-up discussion after the event November 2013 event.	
Info – 18	By-laws Review	2/10/14	AAC	Deferred to March 3, 2013 meeting	
Info – 19	Role of AAC and Subcommittees in material preparation	2/10/14	AAC	Deferred to March 3, 2013 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
Info – 14	Attracting Riders with Disabilities to Fixed Route Transit	12/2/13	AAC	Donna Smith, Director of Training, Easter Seals Project ACTION	12/2/13
Info – 12	Momentum and Long Range Plan (update)	12/2/13	AAC		12/2/13
Info – 09	Program Access	10/7/13	AAC	Deferred until January 6 th meeting. Doris Ray will provide the language	1/6/14

COMPLETED - FY 2014 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info – 15	Bus Stop Accessibility on the Trip Planner	1/6/14	AAC	Presenter: Ed Wells	1/6/14
Info – 16	Fare Policy	2/10/14	AAC	Feedback on Metro’s Public Hearings and Strategy for February 2014 Board Meeting	2/10/14
Info – 17	SmarTrip Conversion – Reduced Fare Card	2/10/14	AAC	Presenter: Christopher Colbert	2/10/14