



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: January 5, 2015

ATTENDEES

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Dr. Phil Posner (Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Carolyn Bellamy, Brianna Burger, Heidi Case, Charlie Crawford, Marisa Laios, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, 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 as amended.

The December 1, 2014 meeting minutes were approved.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated January 5, 2015, was approved as amended.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Barbara Millville, National Capital Citizens with Low Vision (NCCLV), thanked Metro for the improvements in lighting maintenance within the Metrorail system. The lighting improvements have enhanced safety and travel for all customers, especially customers with low vision. She stated that she looks forward to continued improvements in the new year.

FINANCIAL BRIEFING

Dennis Anosike, Chief Financial Officer, provided an overview on Metro's Fiscal Year 2016 proposed budget. He stated that the proposed budget demonstrates the constraints in Metro's financial status. The proposed Fiscal Year 2016 budget has to bridge a funding gap while advancing Metro's strategic goals of safety, customer care initiatives, financial compliance, and efficiency. Mr. Anosike stated that 70% of Metro's annual costs support personnel to operate core services, and while Metrorail ridership has declined, Metrobus and MetroAccess ridership have increased. There has also been a small increase in non-transit revenues, but Metro's overall revenue has declined by about \$13 million dollars.

Given the financial shortcomings, Metro's General Manager has reduced the operating budget by \$60 million. To that end Metro has chosen to defer funding some initiatives, including the Priority Corridor Network/State of Good Operation; expansion of bus and station cleaning; and the addition of personnel for rail and emergency response teams. Metro will also eliminate 25% of non-safety sensitive vacancies authority-wide. This reduction will yield a savings of \$5 million. Mr. Anosike stated that the current proposed FY16 budget does not include any fare increases.

Mr. Anosike also discussed Metro's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). He stated that the CIP allows Metro to replace its aging fleet, facilities, and other aspects of the system. Like the operating budget, funding for the CIP also relies on local and federal contributions. If funds are not available, Metro cannot meet its CIP obligations.

To discuss other budget areas of interest to the AAC, Mr. Anosike introduced Mark Schofield, Office of Management & Budget Services. Mr. Schofield stated that Metro is facing many financial challenges heading into FY 2016. He stated that decreased rail revenue has placed limits on Metro's overall revenue. Although Metro has remained fiscally responsible in its spending, the lack of revenue causes the need for additional contributions from the local jurisdictions. Most of the increases in the operating budget are due to increases in labor and associated personnel costs, equipment parts, and electrical power. There has also been an increase in cost of MetroAccess contract and there has been significant growth in MetroAccess registrants and trips. These trends are forecasted to continue into FY2016 and beyond.

To offset these potential shortfalls, Metro is looking to the region to keep MetroAccess sustainable. Mr. Schofield stated that the future of MetroAccess service would need to include more coordination, such as the pilot projects with the District of Columbia and State of Maryland, using taxicabs and services contracted with or provided by human service agencies. This new model has the potential to reduce the total contribution cost to local jurisdictions while offering better service for customers. Metro has two pilot programs currently underway: 1) CAPS-DC, which provides taxicab service to certain medical facilities; and 2) CAPS, providing specialized transportation to/from the campus of Community Support Services in Montgomery County, MD. Both programs have shown great promise, and therefore, Metro is looking to expand both programs in FY2016 and beyond. Ms. Rush suggested that Metro consider expanding the taxi pilot program to Maryland. She stated that she is aware of many customers using the program, and she believes that it has great potential to free up resources of the MetroAccess service.

Ms. Bellamy expressed an interest in whether the budget situation will result in an increase in MetroAccess fares sometime in 2015. She stated that people are living longer, and with that comes more people with disabilities needing specialized transportation services. Mr. Anosike stated that the proposal from the General Manager reflects an increase in funding for MetroAccess, not a reduction, and added that there has been no proposal for an increase in fares for MetroAccess at this time. Ms. Case reminded everyone that MetroAccess fares are tied to the fares of bus and rail, therefore, any increase in fares of the fixed route services will automatically mean a double increase in fares for MetroAccess.

Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, acknowledged that affordability of the fares on MetroAccess has been an issue for many customers. He stated that Metro's Board listened to the public and lowered the MetroAccess maximum fare.

The growth in the number of people with disabilities and the need for specialized transportation service are the reasons the Board and General Manager are discussing alternatives to MetroAccess service. Mr. Kent stated that each time a customer is able to choose another option for their transportation service needs, resources become available for the growing demand for MetroAccess service.

Ms. Ray stated that since MetroAccess is the ADA paratransit service for the region, the standards for accessibility and comparability of fixed routes services cannot be compromised in an effort to balance revenues and expenses.

Metro is also considering recalibrating its bus service. This would change the way regional bus service is provided, with some of the non-regional bus services being returned to the local jurisdictions. Mr. Schofield stated that currently Metro provides regional bus service that crosses jurisdictions and links big activity centers. Non-regional bus service is provided at the request of a jurisdiction and is used mostly as local service. This initiative has been included in the FY2016 budget and the local jurisdictions have expressed an interest in this long-term program. Mr. Crawford suggested that Metro engage in a barter system with local jurisdictions to offset the cost of certain services. For example, the local jurisdictions could refurbish bus stops and in exchange for a lower contribution to Metro as the demand for MetroAccess by their constituents would be reduced.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in recalibrating the bus services. She stated that for some customers with disabilities who live on bus-only routes the frequency of services and coverage of the routes is imperative. Increased frequency and coverage will encourage people with disabilities to use fixed route services and move away from paratransit service. Ms. Ray stated that one of the trends in the Northern Virginia area is to move more people on the rail system by breaking up the regional bus service. She stated that this has an adverse effect to people riding the system because of the reliability issue and the long waits for service. Ms. Ray stated that the fixed route system worked better when true regional service was available.

Mr. Schofield stated that the proposed CIP budget also includes funding to allow Metro to run all peak period trains as 8-car trains. This funding includes investments for power, cabling and yard capacity to handle the increased number of cars. Metro will also purchase new buses and MetroAccess vehicles to replace the aging fleets of each; replace the bumpy domes at remaining stations; and continue elevator replacements and lighting improvements. Metro plans to complete its work on lighting in station mezzanines in 2016. However, due to the challenges of scheduling track access, the additional trackbed lighting is scheduled for completion in FY2018.

Mr. Stephens expressed an interest in funds for lighting maintenance. He stated that a lighting fixture at the Farragut North station was leaking water after the recent storm. He asked that since the overall completion date for lighting improvements has been stretched out a few more years, will today's investments sustain over that long period.

Mr. Schofield stated that the proposed budget has \$51 million allocated for lighting. He will follow-up and provide feedback on how much of the amount is directed toward maintenance.

A comment from the public expressed an interest in whether signage and pylon lighting was included in the proposed budget for lighting. Poor lighting is a safety issue, so it is important to have good lighting throughout the system. Mr. Schofield stated that he will follow up and provide feedback on whether pylon lighting was included in the CIP.

Ms. Case expressed an interest in another type of maintenance, the cleanliness of the rail system. She stated that cleanliness of the rail system is woefully lacking. As an example, some customers use Metro's elevators as restrooms. When that happens, it adversely affects customers with disabilities who rely on the elevators to use the system. She added that the cleanliness of platforms is also an issue, and that both situations draw rodents. Ms. Case encouraged staff not to reduce funding for those areas of service because it is already limited, and any additional reductions would decrease safety and increase barriers for customers with disabilities.

Ms. Burger agreed with Ms. Case, adding that there should not be any reduction in areas that maintain or staff the rail system. She stated that Metro lacks an effective system to communicate with the Deaf community so many customers have to rely on staff for assistance. Mr. Schofield reminded members that given the budgetary constraints, Metro is deferring some of its initiatives such as the one to expand bus and station cleaning; however, the initiative can be revisited in FY2017.

In response to a question about timelines, Mr. Schofield stated that there would be a work session with the Board's Finance Committee in early January and February 2015. Also in February, the Board will be approving the docket for potential public hearings. He reiterated that the Board is considering all its options, and it may be determined that a change in fares or service is necessary. If this occurs, Metro will conduct extensive public participation and outreach in addition to public hearings. The Board is expected to adopt the FY2016 budget in May.

AAC BY-LAW WORK GROUP (Update)

The AAC continued its discussion on the AAC By-Laws. In review of the final draft, the AAC recommended the following changes:

1. Under Article VIII – Subcommittees
Upon motion, the AAC unanimously voted to replace the words "Metro is Accessible" with "Bus/Rail Subcommittee".
2. Under Article V – Officers, Section C, Number 4
Upon motion, the AAC unanimously voted to remove the following language: All officers shall be chosen based on the most capable member independent of disability or jurisdiction.

3. Under Article V – Officers, Section C, Number 6

Upon motion, the AAC unanimously voted to add the following language: “All officers shall be chosen based on the most capable member independent of disability or jurisdiction.” Ms. Burger voted against the motion.

Upon motion, the AAC unanimously voted to remove the following language: “The officers shall be elected from separate jurisdictions of residence.” Ms. Burger voted against the motion.

4. Under Article III – Membership, Section B

Upon motion, the AAC voted to change member limits to three four-year terms. Ms. Rush, and Ms. Ray voted against the motion.

Upon motion, the AAC agreed to move the entire document forward. Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, reminded members that the document will be reviewed by staff but not amended prior to forwarding to the Board for approval.

BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) discussed how best to market fixed route services to paratransit customers. The purpose of the discussion was to identify ways to increase the number of people with disabilities using bus and rail services. Comments from the BRS ranged from polling customers about their perception and attitudes of fixed route services; the advertising travel training; Metro’s customer service; crowding; and reliability. Some members believed that, based on a person’s limitations, fixed route service is not always a good fit. With this dialogue, Metro is taking a first step to prepare for the future of fully accessible public transportation.

The BRS also discussed the focus group for the Click-And-Go Wayfinding Project. The goals of the focus group were to navigate practice routes and provide feedback that would improve the project. Some participants stated that the wayfinding system was useful, easy to use, and a significant advancement for traveling independently. Others viewed the system as an important tool, but added that it was no substitute for system orientation and the use of mobility skills when traveling.

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) also discussed how best to market fixed route services to paratransit customers. The MAS used the same format as the BRS and focused its discussion toward barriers to utilization. The goal of the discussion is to provide customers with disabilities the same freedom and independence that others have in terms of the ability to utilize fixed route service at their own convenience. Some comments focused on the challenges with navigating bus and rail while using wheelchairs and scooters. The lack of space to turn around on the bus is frustrating.

The MAS also made comments specific to some disabilities. Individuals with intellectual disabilities often have difficulties figuring out bus routes. The signage and bus schedules are not clear enough for this population. Other comments centered on the unreliability of elevators, insufficient customer service, training, and weather conditions when traveling.

The MAS agreed with the BRS that based on a person with disabilities limitations fixed route service is not always a good fit. The MAS comments (along with the BRS) will be incorporated into a Board-directed study that the Department of Access Services is conducting.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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STATUS OF FY 2015 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info – 24	Customer Care Initiative	2/2/15	AAC	Barbara Moulton, Office of Customer Care	
*Info – 17	MetroAccess Long-term Sustainability Study	3/2/15	AAC		
Info – 18	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	4/6/15	AAC	Update (Follow-up discussion after event - November 2013).	
Info - 19	Momentum and Long Range Plan (update)	5/4/15	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 th 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		8/4/14
Info - 8	Metrobus Voice Annunciator System	9/2/14	AAC	Phil Wallace, Bus Maintenance	9/2/14
Info – 9	AAC By-Law Work Group	9/2/14	AAC	Governance Questionnaire	9/2/14
Info – 10	AAC Administrative Items	9/2/14	AAC	AAC Subcommittee Work Plan (approvals) TASH Proposal	9/2/14
Info – 11	AAC By-Law Work Group	9/2/14	AAC		9/2/14
*Info – 12	Accessible Meeting Locations	9/2/14	AAC	Public Hearings (Bus Service)	9/2/14
*Info – 13	Annual Report: Bus Stop Accessibility	10/6/14	AAC	Moved to BRS – Discussion at October 2014 meeting	9/2/14

COMPLETED - FY 2015 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info – 14	AAC By-Law Work Group	10/6/14	AAC		10/6/14
Info – 15	Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Leadership	10/6/14	AAC		10/6/14
Info – 16	Accessibility Excellence Awards	10/6/14	AAC	Vote – Richard W. Hedding Accessible Transportation Awards	10/6/14
Info - 20	AAC By-Laws Work Group	11/3/14	AAC	Full Report and vote on governance questions.	11/3/14
Info - 21	AAC By-Laws Work Group	12/1/14	AAC	AAC Final Vote - Tabled until the Jan 2015	12/1/14
Info - 22	Metro’s Diversity and Recruitment Initiatives	12/1/14	AAC	Steven Boney, Manager, Recruitment Operations & Diversity Recruitment, HR David Shaffer, Accessibility Policy Officer, ADAP	12/1/14
Info - 21	AAC By-Laws Work Group	1/5/15	AAC	AAC Final Vote	1/5/15

COMPLETED - FY 2015 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info - 23	Open Discussion with CFO	1/5/15		Dennis Anosike, Chief Financial Officer	1/5/15
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Note: Quarterly Meeting Recommendations are marked with an asterisk symbol.