



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
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### **Meeting Minutes: July 1, 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, Robert Brown, Heidi Case, Darrell Drake, Kevin Hanretta, Chanelle Houston, Mary Jane Owen, Doris Ray, Nanette Roberson, Denise Rush, Paul Semelfort Dr. William Staderman, and Denise Thomas.

Not Present: Georges Aguehounde, Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Kristen Barry, Regina Lee, Brian Miller, and Anthony Stephens.

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

The July 1, 2013 meeting agenda was approved.

The Chairman's Report to the Metro Board, dated July 1, 2013, was approved as amended.

The June 3, 2013 meeting minutes were approved.

#### **INTRODUCTIONS AND ROLE OF THE AAC**

For the benefit of new members, Chair Sheehan provided an overview on how the AAC operates: issue research and discussions occur at the subcommittee level, and recommendations of the subcommittees are brought to the full committee for vote. Chair Sheehan stated that a more detailed discussion on the AAC's operations would take place during New Member Orientation.

To ensure meetings operate efficiently, the AAC and its subcommittees employ the use of a two-minute rule on comments, questions, and responses for all members. This process is also used during the public comment periods of the meetings. Chair Sheehan stated that a timer is used to keep members on track, and a 30-second notification will be provided before the speaker's time expires.

Chair Sheehan stated that the AAC success is due in part to Christian Kent, AGM, Department of Access Services, and his staff. The AAC thanked Mr. Kent and his team for their efforts to keep issues of accessibility in the forefront of Metro.

## **AAC ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS**

The AAC continued its discussion on the role and structure of the committee. Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, reported that the orientation for new members is scheduled for July 8, 2013, immediately following the Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting. The orientation will further familiarize new members with information on how the AAC and its subcommittees operate as well as Metro's policies and procedures.

Nominations for the BRS leadership will take place at the July 8, 2013 meeting, and appointments for new officers will take place during the August 12, 2013 AAC meeting. The AAC further discussed its role in the MetroAccess Appeals process. Training for new members will take place in October 2013 at Metro's Headquarters in the Lobby Level meeting room. The AAC and subcommittees will continue to develop their work plans for FY2014.

In response to a question about public comment, Dr. Moore Gwynn reported that public comment was placed at the end of the agenda to give the public more time to comment. This change also allows for uniformity of the AAC and subcommittee agendas. Additionally, the audience can participate during the meeting by using comment cards and assistance with completing the cards is available.

Mr. Kent announced that July 1, 2013 marked the first day of Metro's new paratransit contract. One of the Department of Access Services' goals was to have a seamless transition of service from a single contractor to three service providers and five contractors. He stated that the AAC provided technical input on the new business model, and staff from each of the new paratransit contractors are available for questions at all of the meetings. Additionally, another resource of the new paratransit contracts is Carolyn Bellamy. Ms. Bellamy serves as the AAC's Ex-Officio Consumer Advocate, and works to see better service and to reduce barriers for MetroAccess customers.

## **METRO'S TITLE VI PROGRAM**

Deborah Coram, Manager, Office of Equal Opportunity and Employee Relations, discussed Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. She stated that Title VI prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin by any program or activity receiving federal funds. As a recipient of federal funds, every three years Metro's must demonstrate its compliance with the provisions of Title VI. In the Federal Transportation Administration's (FTA) latest circular, one of the enhanced requirements for compliance under Title VI is public involvement and outreach. Metro is seeking the assistance of the AAC and the disability community advocates with this public participant requirement.

Ms. Coram stated that there are three policy decisions that require public involvement and comments under Title VI: 1. major service changes; 2. disparate impact; and 3. disproportionate burden. Additionally, Metro must perform an equity analyses for major service changes, fare changes, or other adjustments, and public participation is required for each. In performing an equity analysis for proposed major service changes, Metro must analyze the impact of the change on low-income and minority populations, and set a trigger for when those evaluations should take place. In addition, a threshold must be

established to determine if any proposed service changes, fare increases or other adjustments would have an adverse impact on low-income and minority populations.

Metro must also develop a formal plan for its public outreach and receive approval from Metro's Board. Outreach methods must engage all members of the community including minorities, low-income populations, and populations with limited English proficient. The initial phase of public comments will be conducted over a two-week period beginning July 21<sup>st</sup> with on-line surveys as well as focus groups. Ms. Coram stated that the assistance of the AAC in getting the word out to the disability community, as well as participating in surveys or focus groups, would be extremely helpful toward Metro fulfilling its Title VI requirements. The AAC recommended that Metro conduct surveys at the elevators in addition to escalators. This will give customers who use mobility devices an opportunity to provide input. Dr. Phil Posner suggested that anyone interested in participating in the focus group should read the Title VI analysis conducted on Metro's Silver Line rail station for background prior to participating in a group.

Doris Ray reported that there will be two major events taking place in the Washington Metropolitan area during the outreach period, which may limit the number of people with disabilities being able to participate. She suggested that the outreach take place over a longer period to accommodate more people with disabilities. Ms. Coram stated that this is just the first of many opportunities for outreach on Title VI, and Metro will provide other opportunities for the AAC and public to participate.

In response to a question about outreach strategies to customers who speak languages other than English, Ms. Coram stated that focus groups will be held with organizations that serve individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) such as the Hispanic Community of Virginia and Boat People S.O.S. to name a few. Metro's Office of Civil Rights (CIVR) also conducts Train-the-Trainer outreach with community base programs that serve individuals with LEP. Through this initiative, CIVR teaches staff at the community base program on how to train program participants how to ride Metrobus and Metrorail. Heidi Case expressed an interest in outreach strategies for customers with cognitive and developmental disabilities, and recommended CIVR conduct outreach at an upcoming conference that focuses on self-advocacy. Ms. Coram stated that she welcomes all ideas for engaging the public. She stated that another outreach strategy used by CIVR is intercept surveys in which customers are randomly asked questions, and staff records responses using tablets.

### **PASSENGER INFORMATION DISPLAY SYSTEM AT MINI-MEZZANINE**

Chief Asante, Engineer, Rail Transportation, discussed a pilot program to enhance the information on mini-mezzanine levels of rail stations by upgrading the Passenger Information Display systems (PIDS). He stated that at some Metrorail stations access to the platform level is provided through mini mezzanines that are not directly attended by Station Managers. Metro is enhancing the PIDS with new Light-Emitting Diode (LED) technology to display elevator outages on the mini-mezzanine level at these stations where information is needed to determine a course of action in traveling when there is an outage.

In a live demonstration, Mr. Asante displayed the information on the LED monitor that included which station elevators are out-of-service and which stations are operating bus shuttles to those stations. The AAC expressed an interest in the PIDS highlighting other travel options when there is an elevator outage, and have them provide more details on the outages, such as outage at platform elevator to street level. This kind of pertinent information is helpful for customers who use mobility devices such as wheelchairs or scooters to alter travel plans prior to reaching the station with the outage. Mr. Asante stated that in addition to information on elevator outages, the PIDS could also display information on service advisory, track work, and service delays. In response to a question about color used to display information, Mr. Asante stated that information will be displayed in the same manner as it is displayed other platforms in the Metrorail system.

The AAC also expressed an interest in audio for the PIDS. Mr. Asante stated that the information displayed on PIDS on mini-mezzanines will mirror the PIDS on the platform level, and they will scroll information to customers without audio. Mr. Kent stated that in addition to this information on the PIDS, Metro also makes announcements in the rail stations, and on the trains regarding service and elevator outages. In response to a question about the lack of audio messaging being an ADA violation, Mr. Kent stated that the PIDS are designed as accompaniment to other sources of information already provided to customers traveling in the system. The enhanced PIDS display is an additional tool in a family of many other communication devices that Metro offers to inform customers of service.

The AAC expressed an interest in the installation period. Mr. Asante stated that upon approval implementation is scheduled for October 2013. Upon motion, the AAC referred the discussion on PIDS at the mini-mezzanine to the Bus/Rail Subcommittee.

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

The AAC discussed the upcoming Quarterly Meeting with the Executive Leadership of Metro's Board of Directors. At the initial meeting, the AAC leadership presented a plan for *Safe, Accessible and Sustainable* (SAS) public transportation service on Metrobus, Metrorail, and MetroAccess. Dr. Posner stated that Metro's Executive Board was very receptive to the information, so the AAC should maintain this theme for the next meeting. The next meeting will be held on July 25, 2013 immediately following the Board of Directors meeting.

AAC members recommended the following topics for discussion with the Board:

1. Update on actions items
2. AAC Accomplishments
3. MetroAccess Fare Policy
  - a. Additional charge for paper fare cards
  - b. Impact of the MetroAccess Fare Calculator on the system as a whole
4. MetroAccess Ridership and Cost
5. Update on lighting in the stations

6. Update on Bus Stop accessibility (direction on advocacy to assist jurisdiction to move the issue forward in their budgets)
7. Maintenance and Repairs (elevator schedules; bumpy titles)
8. Silver Line (accessibility features)

Mr. Kent reminded the AAC that a discussion on fares should be associated with an accessibility issues. He stated that if the AAC uses its time to discuss economic impact of fares on people with disabilities, the Executive Committee is likely to refer the AAC to Metro's public hearings on fares. Mr. Kent reminded the AAC that the discussion on MetroAccess fares lead to the development and recent implementation of the MetroAccess Fare Calculator. Mr. Sheehan stated that new members of the AAC will hear more about this topic during the September 2013 AAC meeting.

Heidi Case expressed an interest in discussing issues of maintenance and repair of elevators with Metro's Executive Board. Dr. Posner stated that the AAC is continuing to provide advice to the Metro on this matter. Additionally, Mr. Blake stated that on a weekly basis ADAP discusses these issues with Metro's engineers to educate them on the impact of the maintenance and repair schedule of elevators on the disability community.

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

The BRS discussed the newly re-designed Metrorail map. Metro is updating the rail map to incorporate stations on the new Silver Line. The new map also adds features to improve the geographic accuracy of the stations and streets. The BRS recommended that Metro add information about stations that have center platforms; bring greater contrast to the green space on National Malls; make an audio version of the map; and install versions of the large map on all the rail cars. Adding the information about the center platform stations will assist customers needing to transfer to the next station or to take a different elevator to continue their trip during an elevator outage. The re-designed Metrorail map will be finalized later this summer.

As part of the action item from the AAC Leadership meeting with Metro Executive Board, the BRS discussed Metro's brochures for safety procedures on Metrorail. The BRS suggested that the materials be updated with information on the bumpy tiles and pictures of the Emergency Tunnel Evacuation Cart (ETEC). The BRS also suggested that Metro explore using fewer words and more pictures in the safety brochures.

The BRS also discussed the process of recognizing Metro staff for providing outstanding service to senior citizens and people with disabilities. The BRS recommended that on a quarterly basis Metro provide information on employees who received top commendation at Metro. This additional information will help the BRS formulate criteria for an award.

## **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

The MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) continued its discussions on the transition to the new paratransit contract. The transition to the new paratransit providers was approximately 85% to 90% complete at the time of the MAS meeting. The success of a smooth transition has been the result of months of planning. The MAS also discussed MetroAccess safety during the transition to the new service providers. MetroAccess staff and Metro's Safety Department have thoroughly reviewed all training materials of each of the providers and have provided specific topics to be incorporated into their programs such as door-to-door service, securement, electronic device policy, fatigue management policy, sexual harassment and inappropriate conduct. Additionally, a step-by-step explanation of MetroAccess emergency procedures was provided.

The MAS also discussed the MetroAccess Fare Calculator and applauded Metro's efforts for making tool available for MetroAccess customer to determine the cost of trip prior traveling. Upon motion, the AAC recommended that Metro communicate this new benefit to all customers.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

A comment was made about inaudible messages on the rail system. Inaudible messages make it difficult for blind customers to determine where they are in the system. Dr. Posner stated that the AAC has discussed this issue with Metro and has seen some improvements.

A request was made for materials in alternative formats for all MetroAccess customers. Mr. Kent stated that Metro does collect this type of information on MetroAccess customers, and since the implementation of Metro's green initiative, it has not sent any hard copy documents to customers.

A comment was made about an article in the *Architect Magazine*, June 2013 edition, regarding lighting at Metrorail stations. The article reports that the new lighting and other enhancements by Metro recently do not complement the work and vision of Harry Weese, the Metro system's original designer. Mr. Kent reported that many of the riding public, including the AAC, believe that Metro's "look and feel" should be refreshed. Metro makes a strong effort to ensure that customers are not severely impacted when the system is undergoing changes to enhance its appearance.

Deborah Titus from the Rider's Advisory Council made a comment about a customer's ability to text to 911 during an emergency. Mr. Blake reported that there are smart phone applications available, but they are not used by all jurisdictions. Upon motion, the AAC recommended that the issue be placed on the BRS work plan for further discussion.

## **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 – 04	MetroAccess Fare Calculator (History)	9/3/13		Presenter: Dan O’Reilly and Ryan Parr	
Info – 05	Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Leadership	7/1/13	AAC	Follow up discussion after the meeting on 7/25/13	

**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