



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: July 7, 2014

ATTENDEES

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Dr. Phil Posner (Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Carolyn Bellamy, Brianne Burger, Marisa Laios, Phillippa Mezile, Brian Miller, 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.

The June 2, 2014 meeting minutes were approved.

The Chairman's Report to the Metro Board, dated July 7, 2014, was approved as amended.

ACC ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS DISCUSSION

Chair Sheehan welcomed the new members and provided a brief overview of how the AAC operates. He stated that issue research and discussions occur at the subcommittee level, and recommendations of the subcommittees are brought to the full committee for a vote. Phil Posner stressed the importance of reading the minutes and the Chairman's Report to the Board. He stated the documents are the official record of the AAC and its subcommittees' work.

The AAC has a reputation and strong record of accomplishment. Being a volunteer on the AAC requires a level of dedication, commitment, and persistence to achieve the many work plan items. Chair Sheehan reiterated the importance of attendance and keeping engaged with the disability community.

Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services (ACCS), also welcomed the new members. He stated that the AAC serves as an advisory entity to Metro's Board on accessibility issues. He added that ACCS was created in 2007 to encourage and promote Metro responsiveness to customers with disabilities and seniors on the bus, rail, and paratransit services. ACCS is responsible for providing staff support to the AAC and its subcommittees.

Many of the AAC's recommendations have turned into universal design features or safety improvements that have benefited all customers. Mr. Kent stated that he attends most meetings, and reminded members that the wheels of change turn slowly. It is important to know that his staff is committed and working toward many of the same goals identified in the AAC's work plan. To that end, when staff expresses challenges with making a change, trust that staff are being straightforward. As Metro is a public agency, there are often multiple approval processes that must be secured prior to implementing a change.

Chair Sheehan stated that the AAC's success is due in part to Mr. Kent and his staff. The AAC thanked Mr. Kent and his team for their efforts to keep issues of accessibility in the forefront at Metro.

Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, reminded new members that New Member Orientation is scheduled for July 14th, 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.

The AAC also discussed its yearly calendar. Metro's Board and the Riders Advisory Committee (RAC) do not hold meetings during the month of August. Upon motion, the AAC agreed to meet all twelve months without a break.

Paul Semelfort, Chair, AAC By-Laws Work Group, provided a brief update on the AAC By-laws. He stated that the group has reviewed five of the ten articles of the document. The Work Group will bring their recommendations to the AAC. The completed document will then be forwarded to Metro's Board for approval. Chair Sheehan emphasized the importance of completing the By-laws before the Board returns from its break in September. Mr. Semelfort stated that the next Work Group meeting will be held on July 21st immediately following the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting. All AAC members are welcome to attend and participate.

Dr. Posner suggested a change in the way the AAC leadership is identified in the By-laws. The current AAC By-Laws were modeled after the RAC's document. Dr. Posner suggested that the two AAC Vice-Chairs automatically serve as the Chairs for the two subcommittees. This change will make the positions more relevant; building leadership from within; and have a meaningful impact because it will mean the Board will be meeting with the actual AAC leadership.

In response to a question about the elections, Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that AAC elections will be postponed until the By-laws are approved. Chair Sheehan proposed that the AAC move its election to January. He stated that the change will allow new members an opportunity to understand how each Committee works and get to know the people that represent them.

In response to a question about the RAC elections, Chair Sheehan stated that RAC holds elections in January. Ms. Ray suggested that the proposed AAC Vice-Chairs/Subcommittee Chair combination position include members of each jurisdiction. She stated that this approach would further the diversity and equal representation of each jurisdiction.

Dr. Miller asked if a member with a limited amount of time remaining on the term were to be elected to a leadership position, how would that term work? Mr. Kent stated that the change in the AAC's reporting relationship means that any change to a term must be approved by the Board. Currently, members' terms expire in June, which also coincides with the natural election process for leadership elections.

Dr. Miller also expressed an interest in how the proposed AAC Vice-Chairs/Subcommittee Chair combination position would be managed. Chair Sheehan stated that he liked the proposed combination position because it gives the member serving in that role a clear view of the structure and responsibilities of the AAC Chairman's role. Ms. Bellamy stated that to be the AAC Chair, a person should have experience. The role has a great deal of responsibility since he/she represents the AAC and the disability community on a number of fronts. In addition to experience, the role requires being a good negotiator among other talents. Ms. Bellamy stated that the position is too vital to leave to a new person. The AAC could lose some of its leverage for lack of experience at the top. Mr. Semelfort stated that the Work Group has discussed this matter in depth. The proposed By-Laws will include language related to elections and the possibility of combining positions.

SILVER LINE TOUR - REFLECTIONS

The AAC discussed its tour of Metro's new Silver Line Station. Chair Sheehan stated that, along with the RAC and Metro Staff, about nine AAC members participated in a tour of the Spring Hill and Greensboro stations.

Mr. Semelfort stated that his impression of the tour was that both stations had considerable distance from the elevators to the gates and then to the platforms. Although Mr. Semelfort stated that he would have preferred benches or moving walkways, the pedestrian path is level and has poles that a person can lean on for resting. Carol Lopez, Accessibility Design Review Manager, stated that the pedestrian paths to the stations must cross over highways, so the distance could not have been any shorter. Additionally, there are handrails throughout the stations along with non-skid floor surfaces.

Dr. Miller thanked staff for the opportunity to tour the stations, adding that the staff served as great guides during the tour. The non-skid floor tiles coupled with the larger sized walkways are nice additions and are very different from the older stations. Dr. Miller expressed an interest in signage. He stated that the directional signs were not available. The placement of directional signs is important to blind users of the

system. Dr. Miller stated that it is a challenge for a Blind customer to locate way-finding signage in the system because they are in different places at each station.

Dr. Staderman expressed an interest in additional power sources for signage. He stated that as years go by Metro will want to enhance the Passenger Information Signage and may have difficulty if the proper power source is not available. Ms. Lopez stated the signage has lighting and an appropriate power source for its current configuration and beyond. Metro is exploring those kinds of ideas for the "station of the future" (Bethesda). Ms. Lopez stated that she would forward the suggestion to the appropriate staff person. Mr. Staderman also stated that the emergency call box on the platform was facing toward the train. This location would make it difficult for a customer trying to hear during an emergency. He suggested that the box be placed away from the platform. Corinna Sigsbury, Accessibility Planning Manager, stated that the emergency call boxes are placed on the outside at the ends of the platform to make them more visible at a distance.

Mr. Ariza-Silva gave thanks for the opportunity to tour the station prior to the opening. He stated the emergency gates near the Station Manager kiosks were light and the mesh fronts prevented his foot from getting stuck when pushing the gates. The benches on the platform were at the proper height. In the older rail stations, the benches are too low.

Mr. Ariza expressed an interest in the heaviness of the bathroom doors. A customer with a strength limitation will have lots of difficulty entering or exiting the bathrooms. Mr. Ariza-Silva suggested that Metro place call buttons in the bathrooms to assist customers who are stuck. He also stated that the elevator doors close too fast and the call box on the Station Manager kiosks are too close to the wall, which limit access. Ms. Sigsbury stated that the tension on the bathroom doors is being adjusted; Metro has moved the call boxes at the Station Manager Kiosks; and the timing on the elevators is being reviewed.

In response to a comment from the public regarding assessment of the lighting from a low-vision AAC member, Chair Sheehan stated that sundown occurred well after the tour was over. Ms. Ray stated that the color contrast between the platform tiles and the granite edge is not the same as in the older stations. The lighting on the escalators was good because it lacked glare, which is a better design than at other rail stations like Pentagon. Ms. Ray also stated that the openness of the station from the pedestrian path to the platform will make the stations extremely cold.

With the openness of the pedestrian paths on the Silver Line, a comment from the public expressed an interest in the amount of exposure to snow and ice during the winter months the paths will likely receive. Additionally, a comment was made about the safety of walking paths leading to or away from the station and platforms during non-peak periods. Metro should have emergency call buttons along the walking path. The members of the low vision community expressed interest in visiting the new

stations preferably at night. Chair Sheehan stated that the request has been submitted to staff.

Silver Line Emergency Exercise

The AAC also discussed the Metro's Silver Line Emergency 'Victim' Exercise. Dr. Staderman thanked Metro staff for the opportunity to participate. For the purpose of this exercise, the evacuation was one conducted from the lead car. Dr. Staderman expressed an interest in whether that same procedure will be used in a real emergency. Dr. Posner stated that in the presentation by Emergency Management (EOM) to the BRS it was stated that Metro's Emergency Tunnel Evacuation Carts (ETECs) would travel from train car to train car to evacuate the injured. Dr. Staderman noted that the ETECs ride on the tracks and cannot access train doors except the two ends of a train; the vast majority of cars that are not first or last on a train are not accessible via ETEC. Ms. Sigsbury stated that Metro would use all available doors on a train to evacuate customers.

AAC QUARTERLY MEETING WITH METRO'S EXECUTIVE BOARD

The AAC discussed the upcoming Quarterly Meeting with the Executive Leadership of Metro's Board of Directors, scheduled for July 24th, immediately following Metro's Board meeting. In addition to the FY14 accomplishments, AAC members recommended the following topics for discussion with the Board: (1) Update on the recommendations from the initial meeting; (2) FY2015 Work Plan; (3) Update on Regional Bus Stops Improvements and Funding; and (4) Funding for lighting maintenance and improvements in FY2016 budget.

At the last Board meeting, Chair Sheehan stated that the AAC received two compliments regarding lighting in the stations and bus stops improvements in Prince George's County from members of the Board. He stated that the Board recognizes the hard work of the AAC.

BUS STOP WORK GROUP UPDATE

Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, provided an update on the Bus Stop Work Group. He stated that Metro is analyzing specific bus stops throughout the region. Currently, Metro has analyzed 512 bus stops in Prince George's County. Of that number, 304 are being recommended to Prince George's County for improvement. Metro has focused on Prince George's County in an effort to support their grant-funded effort to improve bus stops in the County.

At the October Board Committee meeting, Mr. Kent will be presenting an update on bus stop accessibility in the region. During the meeting, Prince George's County will provide an update on the number of bus stop identified for improvements. The next Bus Stop Work Group meeting will be held in August 2014.

BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The BRS discussed Metro's New Electronic Payment Program (NEPP). Metro is changing its fare collection system, in part, to allow customers greater flexibility in their method of payment. A pilot program is scheduled to begin in January 2015 and run until June 2015. A total of ten mezzanines, 50 buses, and two parking facilities will be included in the pilot.

To accommodate a growing rail system Metro is exploring a new signage program. The BRS along with the RAC had a lively discussion related to the proposed signage program. The comments from both groups and the public were mixed. The suggested changes to the name signs, exit, and elevator information were viewed positively. However, the majority were opposed to the use of cardinal directions on the signs and trains. Most agreed that without the connecting information on the trains and Passenger Information Display System (PIDS), the cardinal direction information will be too confusing. The members of the AAC and RAC also agreed that the display on the railcars should still provide the color of the line and the end station. Upon motion, the AAC voted that Metro should add the accessible and directional symbols to the all the signs immediately.

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The MAS was provided an update on new MetroAccess vehicles. By the end of FY2014, Metro will receive a total of 175 new MetroAccess vehicles. As a safety initiative, bold chevron graphics have been added to the back of 30 MetroAccess vehicles in a pilot program aimed at reducing the number of incidents where adverse vehicles strike MetroAccess vehicles from behind. The pilot will run for six months and an update will be provided to the MAS.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

A comment was made about the attitude of Metrobus Operators when asked to lower the bus ramp or deploy the lift. Some Operators often make disparaging remarks and comments as if the customer is the cause of the problem. Dr. Posner stated that it is important for customers to report problems to Metro's Customer Service.

A comment was made about the length of time railcar doors stay open once a train has arrived at a station. When platforms and railcars are not level and it is crowded, it is difficult for customers who use mobility devices to board the train within the time given. The customer suggested that the doors should stay open longer and Metro should provide more of a warning when doors are closing.

A comment was made about the trains that stop at the very top of the platform. It appears Metro has been using this practice since the accident a few years ago. This issue causes crowds and force customers with low vision run for trains that are further down the platform. Dr. Miller stated that the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system announces the number of railcars coming into a station. Brianne Burger stated that it was her understanding that Metro trains would be stopping at the very top of the

platform as a preventive measure against suicide. Mr. Blake stated that they will investigate and provide feedback.

A comment was also made about poor quality service from MetroAccess Dispatchers, and Customer Service Representatives. Although the service is a shared ride, some customers experience long rides on the vehicles. This is a major concern for dialysis patients. After dialysis treatment, many customers are tired, weak and having an extended ride on MetroAccess further complicates a person's health. Staff stated that they will investigate and provide feedback.

NEW BUSINESS

The AAC also discussed the commemorating the anniversary of the ADA at the opening of the new Silver Line station. Upon motion, the AAC recommends that Metro recognize the landmark legislation of the ADA at the open of the Silver Line Grand Opening.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.



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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 – 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	
Info – 7	AAC By-Law Work Group	8/4/14	AAC		
*Info - 8	Accessible Meeting Locations	9/2/14	AAC	Public Hearings (Bus Service)	
Info – 9	AAC By-Law Work Group	10/6/14	AAC		
*Info – 10	Annual Report: Bus Stop Accessibility	11/3/14	AAC		

STATUS OF FY 2015 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

*Info - 11	MetroAccess Long-term Sustainability Study	11/3/14	AAC		
Info - 12	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	11/3/14	AAC	Update (Follow-up discussion after event - November 2013).	
Info - 13	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

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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

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