

**AAC**

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: June 2, 2014

ATTENDEES

Present: Dr. Phil Posner (Vice-Chair), Dr. Tapan Banerjee (2nd Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Carolyn Bellamy, Heidi Case, Darrell Drake, Chanelle Houston, Regina Lee, Mary Jane Owen, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Paul Semelfort, Anthony Stephens, Dr. William Staderman.

Call to Order

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA, BOARD REPORT, AND PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

The agenda was approved as amended.

The April 10, 2014 meeting minutes were approved.

The Chairman's Report to the Metro Board, dated May 5, 2014, was approved as amended.

ACCESSIBLE MEETING LOCATIONS

As a follow-up to an action item from the AAC Quarterly Meeting with Metro's Executive Board, the AAC discussed accessible meeting locations. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that his office collaborated with the Office of the Board Secretary to review a number of locations for an upcoming hearing related to Metro's Takoma Station Joint Development Project.

Mr. Blake stated that three locations were reviewed: Trinity Episcopal Church, Coolidge High School, and the Takoma Education Campus (TEC). Mr. Blake stated that no final decision on location had been made at the time of the meeting, but the TEC was the most accessible of the three locations evaluated. The AAC expressed an interest in the accessible path to each location in Takoma. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that the sidewalks in and around Takoma are narrow, which makes it difficult for customers who use mobility devices to travel in the areas around the station. Ms. Bellamy stated that in addition to the narrow sidewalks, the Takoma Park area is very hilly. In response to question about whether the District of Columbia side of Takoma was required for the hearings, Mr. Blake stated that for this public hearing, it must be in the District of Columbia and in the Takoma area because the issue affects that particular community.

To ensure the location meets the standards, Mr. Blake stated that Metro is using the checklist provided by the AAC. Many members suggested that Metro maintain a tally of all the locations, so it is easy to weed out an inaccessible location. Mr. Blake stated that Metro is establishing a list of locations that have been reviewed as Metro is also seeking other locations around the region to hold public hearings.

Ms. Bellamy suggested Metro consider the following locations in the Takoma area: 1) Unity Center; 2) Public Library; and 3) Takoma Police Station near Flower Avenue for future public hearings. For locations in Northern Virginia, Dr. Banjeree suggested Metro consider using the Capitol One Building in McLean. He stated that the location was new, has the capacity to accommodate large crowds, and is fully accessible. Additionally, a new Silver Line station is within walking distance of the building. Ms. Ray stated that the McLean location is not on the bus line. She stated that sites that are not along a Metrobus line should not be considered for public hearings unless shuttle service is provided.

For sites in the District of Columbia, Ms. Owen suggested Metro use the Martin Luther King Library. She stated that she has attended several events at the location and it is in close proximity to several rail stations. Dr. Staderman suggested that Metro use the Ronald Reagan Building for some public hearings in the District. The building is minutes from a rail station and fully accessible. Mr. Stephens stated that for people with visual disabilities the Reagan Building is challenge to navigate because of its enormous size and many entrances and exits. Dr. Banerjee added that the Ronald Reagan building is expensive and charges a fee to rent space. Mr. Blake stated that he will follow-up on all the recommendations.

WORK PLAN

The AAC discussed its new work plan for FY2015. The AAC moved the following items to its FY2015 work plan: Annual Bus Stop Report; MetroAccess Long-Term Sustainability Study; DC Age Friendly; update on Accessible Bus Stops; and By-laws Review. In response to a question about Metro's view of "long-term" in the MetroAccess Long-term Sustainability Study, Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, stated that Metro's perspective of long-term is ten years and beyond. The current paratransit contract is for five years with a five-year option. The study will examine the needs of specialized services in the region and provide recommendations. Ms. Case suggested the study include recommendations related to accessibility improvements to the bus and rail systems. Mr. Kent stated that leveraging fixed route services will be in the scope of the study.

Vice-Chair Posner expressed an interest in whether the AAC will be able ride the 7000 series rail car in FY2015. Dr. B. Moore-Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, stated that she would follow-up on the request and provide feedback.

The AAC also discussed its FY2014 work plan and identified the following items as accomplishments for that year: 1) MetroAccess Customer Guide; 2) MetroAccess Essential Policies Pamphlet; 3) Reduction in the MetroAccess Fare; 4) MetroAccess Contract implementation; 5) ADA Ombudsman for Fixed Route Issues; and 6) Productive Quarterly Meetings with the Executive Board.

The AAC also discussed the upcoming emergency exercise on the Silver Line. Vice-Chair Posner suggested that Metro provide some guidelines so members that volunteers for will know what to expect when participating. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that she will follow-up with the Safety office and provide feedback.

BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) discussed bus stop accessibility. Metro's Board has heightened the awareness of this issue in the region by pointing out that bus stop accessibility is an issue that impacts all riders, not just people with disabilities. The BRS also received an update on Metrorail station lighting. Metro has 45 underground rail stations. Of that number, Metro will complete lighting improvements at 26 mezzanines by the end of June 2014. All mezzanines are scheduled to be completed by the end of FY2015. Metro is in the design phase for platform lighting improvements at the 45 underground rail stations. The platform lighting improvements are scheduled to begin in FY2016.

The BRS added the following items to its 2015 work plan: updates on station lighting enhancements; bus stop improvements; rail announcements; and fixed route customer complaint resolution. The BRS also added two Quarterly Meeting items: accessible meeting locations (jurisdiction-wide); and the MetroAccess Long-Term Sustainability Study.

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) received an update on the MetroAccess Customer Guide. The guide is designed to familiarize customers with MetroAccess service and provide helpful tips for navigating the service. The AAC recommended adding the following items to the Guide: 1) the Riders Bill of Rights; 2) Riders' Responsibilities; and 3) the No-Strand policy.

The Guide will be available in the summer of 2014. Ms. Rush expressed an interest in whether all of the recommendations from the AAC related to the Rider's Bill of Rights were accepted. Mr. Kent stated that the right to a medical waiver for the seatbelt policy will not be added to the Rider's Bill of Rights. He stated that this a safety issue, and Metro will make it clear to customers that without the waiver on file, the shoulder strap and belt must be worn at all times while in the vehicle.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

A comment was made about the MetroAccess Door-to-Door policy. The customer stated that if her physician has stated that Door-to-Door is needed when MetroAccess is used; however, MetroAccess denies her from using the service. Mr. Roth stated that the physician's input is important but added that Metro performs a functional assessment on every customer. In cases where it is determined that a customer is able to use the accessible bus and rail services, then the customer does not qualify for MetroAccess. Customers found ineligible for MetroAccess service do have a right to appeal the decision.

A comment was made about the new Silver Line stations and whether the AAC would have an opportunity to view the station for accessibility before the grand opening. Mr. Blake stated that the AAC will have two opportunities to view the new Silver Line stations: 1) an accessibility advisory tour; and 2) a safety exercise currently scheduled for June 29th. Non-AAC members of the BRS Station Lighting group expressed an interest in participating in the tour. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that the two initial activities are open only to members of the AAC, but other opportunities will be made available for other Metro stakeholders and partners.

A customer also made a comment about the changes in bus routes with the new Silver Line station. He requested a list of all the bus routes that will change with the opening of the Silver Line. Vice-Chair Posner stated that the topic is listed on the BRS work plan. Ms. Ray stated that the bus changes will be handled by Fairfax County. Dr. Moore Gwynn reminded the AAC that the BRS Station Lighting Work Group will hold its next meeting immediately following the July 14th BRS meeting.

Carol Carter Walker, Chair, Rider's Advisory Council (RAC), stated that she enjoys attending AAC meetings, and the RAC will be adopting a few ideas from the AAC to help the RAC's meetings run more efficiently. The RAC is interested in collaborating with the AAC on topics that affect all riders. She encouraged all members to participate in the upcoming joint meeting of the AAC and RAC on June 9, 2014. Vice-Chair Posner thanked Ms. Carter Walker for her email comments regarding the last MetroAccess meeting.

Ms. Owen made a comment about Richard Hedding. She stated that she has a blog about people in the disability community who have not received the proper recognition. She asked members to share information with her to add to her blog.

OLD BUSINESS

The AAC continued its discussion on the MetroAccess policy on seatbelts and enforcement. In January 2014, the MetroAccess policy related to seatbelts was modified to comply with Maryland and Virginia seatbelt waiver laws. MetroAccess policy now allows customers using paratransit service to be exempt from wearing either the shoulder harness or the lap belt. Exemptions will only be granted if proper documentation is obtained from a physician. Customers interested in this option can obtain a waiver form from the Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach (ELIG). Once the exemption is granted, it is documented in the customer's file and in Trapeze. The information in Trapeze will be displayed on the drivers' manifest/Ranger. The AAC expressed an interest in whether Metro was going to inform customers about the seatbelt policy. Metro should give customers a window to complete the waiver form before enforcing the policy. Ms. Rush stated that a driver reported that she was approved based on a code in the system. She encouraged Metro to set a grace period for receiving the information and notifying the customers.

Mr. Kent stated that ELIG will process the documents in a timely fashion, eliminating any delay in notification in the Ranger system. Additionally, MetroAccess reservations will notify customers of the update during trip booking. The AAC recommended that Metro add the approval of the waiver to the profile for on-line customers and confirmation in-kind. In response to a question about subscription customers, Mr. Kent stated that subscription customers can also call reservations to confirm.

Ms. Owen stated she has a concern with regard to individual's right of privacy between a customer and their physician. Metro's physician should not be able to overrule a customer's personal physician's recommendation regarding the seatbelt. Mr. Kent stated that Metro's medical office will not be used to evaluate the customer. In an effort to understand the information provided by the customer's physician, the medical office may be used for clarification. Dr. Banjeree expressed an interest in the recertification process of the waiver. Mr. Roth stated that a customer's condition can change; therefore, customers will be required to re-certify the waiver. In response to a question about the process for re-certification of the waiver, Mr. Roth stated that customer can re-certify at the same time they recertify for MetroAccess eligibility. ELIG will include a waiver form with every application.

Ms. Lee stated that the information in the Guide says the opposite. Mr. Kent stated that the Guide is being revised, and that information will be clarified to include the wearing of the shoulder harness and the seatbelt as a requirement. Metro will inform the public about the policy; however, Metro will not do it at the expense of safety. The seatbelt policy is a requirement unless the customer has a waiver on file. Metro will also notify all vehicle operators as well as contact customers who are in the middle of the process. The AAC expressed an interest in a deadline for a completion of the Guide and the notification to all parties. Mr. Kent stated that Metro will have all the notifications and training completed by the end of July 2014. More details will be provided at the June 16th MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting. Ms. Bellamy expressed an interest in a presentation from Metro's Safety Office on the seatbelt policy. Mr. Semelfort reported that he would add that information to the 2015 work plan.

The AAC also discussed the MetroAccess No Strand policy, and expressed an interest in how the policy works. Vice-Chair Posner stated that MetroAccess recently stranded a customer and an AAC member. Mr. Kent stated that the purpose of the No Strand policy is to provide customers a return trip when MetroAccess is in error. The policy cannot supersede a customer choice. Customers must abide by all of Metro's safety regulations and if they choose not to, Metro will not be able to perform the No Strand trip. Vice Chair Posner stated that this incident has many teachable moments for MetroAccess service from the drivers to staff. Mr. Kent stated that Metro recognizes that there have been inconsistencies and apologized to Ms. Rush. Metro will use this incident as a teaching tool for customer service training.

Ms. Rush stressed the importance to having information in writing. She stated that there are incidents where a customer is in fear of the driver and may choose to get off the vehicle for their own safety. That customer has a right to expect that Metro will send another vehicle. Mr. Kent stated that more details of this information will be in the Guide. A draft of that information will be discussed at the June 16, 2014 MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting.

Ms. Lee expressed an interest in the MetroAccess 20th Anniversary Celebration. She stated Metro should have that celebration outside of the meeting. The MAS has a full agenda. Mr. Kent stated that the momentous occasion was meant to mark a historical event. Metro will review the date and provide feedback to the AAC.

NEW BUSINESS

Vice-Chair Posner stated this is the last full committee meeting for Ms. Lee, Ms. Houston, Mr. Drake, and Dr. Aguehoude. These members along with G. Robert Brown and Kevin Hanretta have decided to step down. Vice-Chair Posner stated that he has personally enjoyed working with each one of them and wish them all best in their future endeavors. The AAC applauded all the members and several members provided comments of appreciation.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.



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 Washington, DC 20001
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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 - 1	Silver Line Tour	7/7/14	AAC	Reflections	
Info - 2	Silver Line Emergency Exercise	7/7/14	AAC	Reflections (request from EOM during the Metrorail evacuation procedures review)	
Info - 3	Bus Stop Working Group	7/7/14	AAC	Update	
Info - 4	Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Leadership	7/7/14	AAC		
Info - 5	Metro's Signage Program	9/2/14	AAC	Update - Joint meeting with the RAC (June 9 th BRS meeting)	
Info - 6	Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Leadership	9/2/14	AAC	Feedback from July 2014 meeting	

STATUS OF FY 2015 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

*Info - 7	Accessible Meeting Locations	10/6/14	AAC	Public Hearings (Bus Service)	
Info - 8	AAC By-Law Work Group	10/6/14	AAC		
*Info - 9	Annual Report: Bus Stop Accessibility	11/3/14	AAC		
*Info - 10	MetroAccess Long-term Sustainability Study	11/3/14	AAC		
Info - 11	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	11/3/14	AAC	Update (Follow-up discussion after event - November 2013).	
Info - 12	Momentum and Long Range Plan (update)	12/1/14	AAC		

Note: Quarterly Meeting Recommendations are marked with an asterisk symbol.

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
Info – 19	Role of AAC and Subcommittees in material preparation	2/10/14	AAC	Deferred to March 3, 2013 meeting	3/10/14
Info – 20	Metro FY15 Budget (Fare Policy Change and Regional Study)	4/7/14	AAC	Presenter: Christian T. Kent, AGM	4/7/14
Info – 21	Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Leadership	4/7/14	AAC	Completed	4/7/14
Info – 18	By-laws Review	3/10/14	AAC	AAC Developed a Work Group. Meeting immediately following MAS - April 21, 2014 meeting	4/7/14

COMPLETED - FY 2014 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info – 13	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	11/4/13	AAC	Follow-up discussion after the event November 2013 event. Move to 2015 Work Plan.	5/5/14
*Info – 22	Annual Report: Bus Stop Accessibility	TBD	AAC	Move to 2015 Work Plan	5/5/14
Info - 23	Accessible Bus Stops	9/2/14	AAC	Report by the Work Group. Move to 2015 Work Plan.	5/5/14
*Info - 27	MetroAccess Long-term Sustainability Study	5/5/14	AAC	Move to 2015 Work Plan. Feedback due to Board by June 2015	5/5/14
*Info - 24	Accessible Meeting Locations	6/2/14	AAC	Completed – Takoma Educational Center	6/2/14
Info - 25	Work Plan Accomplishments	6/2/14	AAC	Round up of yearly accomplishments (all committees)	6/2/14
Info - 26	Joint Meeting with RAC	6/2/14	AAC	Meeting scheduled for June 9 th BRS meeting	6/2/14

Note: Quarterly Meeting Recommendations are marked with an asterisk symbol.