



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: October 7, 2013

Chairman Patrick Sheehan called the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

ATTENDEES

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Dr. Philip Posner (Vice-Chair), Dr. Tapan Banerjee (2nd Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Carolyn Bellamy, G. Robert Brown, Heidi Case, Darrell Drake, Kevin Hanretta, Regina Lee, Doris Ray, Paul Semelfort, Anthony Stephens, and Dr. William Staderman.

REVIEW OF AGENDA, AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The October 7, 2013 meeting agenda was approved as amended.

The Chairman's Report to the Metro Board, dated October 7, 2013, was approved as amended.

The September 3, 2013 meeting minutes were approved.

METRO'S PLEDGE TO CUSTOMERS

Lynn Bowersox, Assistant General Manager (AGM), Customer Service Communication and Marketing, discussed Metro's Pledge to Customers. She stated that the work performed by Metro Rider's Advisory Council was the catalyst for Metro to develop a pledge. Metro agreed that such a document would be beneficial due to the value it places on its customers, and the document's language is in line with Metro's Momentum strategic plan.

To develop the statement Metro benchmarked other transit agencies and conducted customer focus groups in each jurisdiction in the service area. Ms. Bowersox stated that the feedback from the focus groups yielded three major themes: (1) the pledge should be used as an internal tool for employees; (2) the pledge should focus on safety, security, and reliable transportation service; and (3) the pledge should be short, like a slogan.

Using the themes from the focus groups staff developed Metro's Pledge to Customers. The AAC expressed an interest in make the pledge more inclusive and recommended that the word vehicles be added to the language. The AAC also expressed an interest in adding language that emphasized the cleanliness of elevators and bathrooms along platforms in the Metrorail station. The AAC also recommended that Metro include timely communication in its statement and added that this approach would be extremely helpful to all customers during emergencies in the system. Ms. Bowersox stated that all the recommendations by the AAC were helpful and she would make every effort to incorporate the recommendations in the document.

Ms. Bowersox stated that the Pledge will be presented to the Customer Service and Operation Committee of Metro's Board of Directors in December 2013. The AAC commended Metro for taking this step as another demonstration of the value it places on its customers.

NEW BUSINESS – METRO'S FY2015 BUDGET AND METROACCESS FARES

At the invitation of the AAC leadership, Carol Dillon Kissal, Metro's Deputy General Manager, Administration and Chief Financial Officer, discussed Metro's fare policy. As part of the FY2015 budget process Metro's Board will review its fare policy and Ms. Kissal stated that the AAC's interest on this topic is timely. She also commended the committee on its productivity, and for providing useful feedback on initiatives and programs that affect the disability community and customers at-large.

Ms. Kissal introduced Mark Schofield, Senior Economic and Financial Advisor, Office of Management and Budget Services, to discuss Metro's budget. He stated that Metro's Board has the option to review its fare policy every two years, and that the last fare change was in July 2012. For the FY2015 budget process Metro's Board is taking a comprehensive look at fares including fare evasion control, maintainability, and capital and operating costs. Staff anticipates that major changes to the fare policy will not be undertaken until the New Electronic Payments Program (NEPP) is implemented. In response to a questions as to why the Senior Discount and Reduced Fare Program fares for fixed route services are not used for determining MetroAccess fares, Ms. Kissal stated that Metro views fares for customers who are unable to use the accessible fixed route services as a different level of service. Ms. Kissal stated that the Board is considering all types of options including maintaining the cap on the maximum fare on the MetroAccess service.

The AAC stressed that because the cost of MetroAccess service is directly connected to Metro's fixed route service, when the Board raises fares on bus and rail MetroAccess fares are automatically increased. Heidi Case stated that if Metro's Board raises the minimum fare and the cap, it affects MetroAccess customers doubly. She stated that this appears to be an undue impact under Title VI. As an example, a fare increase on Metrorail and parking at Metrorail stations could be viewed as a potential dual impact of a fare increase. Mr. Schofield stated that Board members are cognizant of the impact of fare increases on MetroAccess customers. Mr. Kent stated that the provision in the ADA of twice the equivalent fixed route fare does not equate to an automatic violation of Title VI, and added that Metro performs a Title VI analysis on any scenario under consideration. Staff understands the impact of fare increases on all customers, in particular customers with disabilities.

Mr. Schofield also discussed the MetroAccess Fare Calculator and its impact on fares. He stated that on an average, Metro delivers 180,000 MetroAccess trips per month. Of that number, only 150,000 trips are from paying customers with the remaining deriving from companions, personal care attendants (PCA), and children under 5 years old. Metro reviewed the impact of the Fare Calculator and concluded that approximately 40 percent of MetroAccess passengers are paying the minimum fare of \$3.60;

approximately 30 percent of passengers were paying the maximum fare of \$7; and the average fare a customer paid for MetroAccess service was \$5.

An additional review of the Fare Calculator showed that there was an increase from 40 percent to 47 percent of MetroAccess customers paying the minimum fare; and that the percentage of MetroAccess customers paying the maximum fare has dropped from 30 percent to 25 percent, and the average fare a MetroAccess customer pays is \$4.75. In response to a question about the dates of the review, Ms. Schofield stated that the review period was from July and August 2012, compared to July and August 2013. The data demonstrates that the Fare Calculator is doing what it was designed to do, which is to offer customers the lowest fare. Ms. Ray and Anthony Stephens expressed interests in whether external factors, such as inclement weather, are factored into the review. Mr. Schofield stated that the data is inclusive of inclement weather days and found it to be consistent even while some customers may change their individual travel patterns. There were no spikes in ridership numbers as a result of the hurricane or other events.

Regina Lee asked if the Fare Calculator is based on the fastest itinerary developed by the Trip Planner. Dr. Posner stated that using the Trip Planner begins the process and the Fare Calculator processes trip a trip calculation at every minute for fifteen minutes before the requested time and fifteen minutes after, and then provides the lowest fare within that window. That fare is then multiplied by two, providing the MetroAccess fare at twice the equivalent fixed route fare. He stated that the Trip Planner will give three options and of those options the Fare Calculator uses the fastest trip, and over a thirty-minute period to produce the lowest fare to be doubled. Ms. Lee stated that there was a discrepancy in the MetroAccess Fare scenario provided at the September 2013 meeting and the packet needs to be corrected. Mr. June stated that the scenario was correct and noted that if any of the parameters in the trip planner are changed, the results will be different. Paul Semelfort stated that the item is on the agenda to be discussed at the October 2013 MAS meeting.

The AAC thanked Ms. Kissal and Metro for their continued partnership and commitment. The AAC views affordable transportation services as one of its most critical issues and it is reassuring to know that Metro and its staff are listening.

QUARTERLY MEETING WITH BOARD EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

The AAC discussed the upcoming Quarterly Meeting with the Executive Leadership of Metro's Board of Directors, scheduled for October 24th immediately following Metro's Board meeting. Dr. Posner stated that since their initial meeting in February 2013, the AAC leadership has presented a plan for *Safe, Accessible and Sustainable* (SAS) public transportation on Metrobus, Metrorail, and MetroAccess. He stated that the AAC leadership will discuss MetroAccess Fare Policy as it relates to the sustainability of MetroAccess service.

The AAC expressed an interest in whether all the modes including trolley and streetcars around the jurisdiction are taken into consideration during fare policy discussions. Christian Kent, AGM, Access Services, stated that Metro's Trip Planner and the MetroAccess Fare Calculator include jurisdictional information and therefore they are part of any discussion on Metro's fares. Doris Ray stated that some of the jurisdictions charge less than Metro's fixed route fare and perhaps an approach to MetroAccess Fare Policy should begin with twice the jurisdiction's fare instead of Metro's fare. Mr. Kent reiterated that Metro's Fare Policy already takes into account jurisdictional-operated services.

In addition to the MetroAccess Fare Policy AAC members recommended the following topics for discussion with the Board: (1) Update on the recommendations from the initial meeting; (2) Bus Stop Improvements; and (3) Lighting in Metrorail stations.

PROGRAM ACCESS

As a follow-up to comments made at the May 2013 AAC meeting regarding access to all AAC-related events and field trips, some AAC members expressed an interest in making sure locations of AAC-related field trips are accessible. Adding that all members should be afforded the same opportunity to participate in all field trips and committee activities, Ms. Ray expressed an interest in updating the AAC By-laws with program access language as way to ensure access for future members.

Mr. Kent acknowledged the issue and stated that Metro has made a commitment to work harder on access. He stated that Metro will not convene any public meeting of the AAC or its subcommittees in an inaccessible location. The AAC expressed an interest in the exact language suggested for the By-laws. Ms. Ray stated that she would provide that language via email to all members and staff prior to the next meeting on November 4, 2013. Upon motion, the AAC deferred discussion until the November 2013 meeting.

BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) discussed the proposed Metrobus service changes. The service changes are designed to ensure Metro remains in a "State of Good Operations" by reducing crowding, improving reliability, increasing evening and weekend trips, and improving on-time performance. The BRS recommended that staff regularly provide updates to the subcommittee including information on upcoming public hearings.

The BRS received a comprehensive presentation on Metro's Travel Training Program. The program teaches customers various techniques and skills to independently use Metro's accessible bus and rail services. The BRS also learned that as an added service, all Metro System Orientation Specialists are equipped to sell Senior SmarTrip card and Reduced Fare SmarTrip cards to customers directly. The BRS also discussed the Metrorail Emergency Evacuation poster and commended Metro for making the poster and message more inclusive.

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) discussed the application and assessment process for MetroAccess eligibility. Completion of new functional assessments require between thirty minutes and an hour, while reassessments are usually quicker. Customers who complete the application process receive one of three determinations: (1) Fully Eligible, which means the customer is not able to independently utilize Metro's accessible bus or rail services due to their disability; (2) Conditionally Eligible, which means customers can utilize bus or rail for some trips, but may need MetroAccess for other trips; or (3) Ineligible, which means customers can take bus or rail at all times, but because they have a qualifying disability they are enrolled in the Reduced Fare Program. Individuals determined to be Ineligible may file an appeal.

The MAS also discussed developing a work group to determine MetroAccess stop locations at high-density locations around the region on private property e.g. malls, schools, and hospitals. The MAS was also provided an update from the MetroAccess Fare Policy Work Group. The Work Group's next meeting will be on October 21, 2013 immediately following the MAS meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

A comment was made about reducing the MetroAccess fare. Omari June, Director, MetroAccess, stated that the AAC, through it MetroAccess Fare Policy Work Group, has been working to address the issue and the next meeting is on October 21, 2013 immediately following the MAS meeting.

A comment was made about MetroAccess service area. The customer stated that she is fairly new to the service and recognizes that some customers have been grandfathered into the total service area. The customer stated that MetroAccess vehicles frequent her residential area, yet because the customer is new to the service, she is unable to make a trip to/from her home.

Mr. Kent stated that Metro is in the same position as many other transit properties across the country. To ensure that paratransit services are sustainable, the service is closely aligned with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) definition of paratransit service area. Mr. Kent added that Metro does recognizes the hardship this may cause to some customers, but this is necessary to ensure the sustainability of the service for all. Mr. Kent stated that in these cases, if customers could find a nearby location within the service area, staff would assist in setting up the service to/from that location.

Barbara Millville, President, National Capital Citizen with Low Vision, expressed an interest in sensitivity awareness training for Metrobus operators. On a recent trip, she noticed that the bus annunciator was inoperable, but the Metrobus operator was unwilling to announce the major intersections. She stated that this is an important feature for customers who are blind and have low vision. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, stated that his office would follow up with her.

Robert Brown expressed an interest in the impact of the government shutdown on MetroAccess service. Mr. Blake stated that Metro is continuing to run all service as

scheduled, however, Metrorail is running all six car trains as opposed to running any eight car trains.

A comment was made about the MetroAccess Door-to-Door Policy; some drivers are following the policy while others are not. One customer has printed a laminated sign to assist drivers in locating her door, but it has not been useful. This issue has caused the customer to be designated as a “No Show” on a few trips when she was actually waiting for the operator to come to her door. The customer provided a written statement further detailing each incident. Mr. June stated that a MetroAccess staff member would follow up with her.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 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 – 09	Program Access	10/7/13	AAC	Deferred until November 4 th meeting. Doris Ray will provide the language	
Info – 10	Accessibility Excellence Award	11/4/13	AAC	Reflection from Chair Sheehan	
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)	
Info – 13	Age-Friendly DC Task Force	11/4/13	AAC		
Info – 12	Momentum and Long Range Plan (update)	12/2/13	AAC		

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