



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes: October 1, 2018

Attendees

Present: Phil Posner (Chair), Tapan Banerjee, Tino Calabria, Erin Coneys, Charlie Crawford, Steven Kaffen, Barry McGann, Phillippa Mezile, Anthony Oberg, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Paul Semelfort, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Chair Phil Posner called the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Approval of Agenda, Board Report, and Prior Meeting Minutes

Chair Posner welcomed everyone and started off with introductions of the Committee members.

Agenda was modified. A presentation about the proposed policy on open baby strollers aboard buses was added. Chair Posner also added a discussion of the Riders Advisory Committee (RAC) and its future; the appointment of the Sub-Committee Chair for Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS); and a report about the Board Meeting on Thursday, September 27.

Mr. Sheehan asked whether the 8000-series discussion was supposed to be in the AAC or the BRS agenda. Chair Posner stated, due to a scheduling issue of the presenter, it will be added to the BRS agenda. However, if needed, the topic can be discussed today as well. He presented a long letter to the Board regarding committee's thoughts about the 8000-series, and the addendum that he submitted to the Board. The modified meeting agenda was approved.

The minutes from prior meeting were approved.

The most important topic mentioned in the letter to the Board was about the cashless bus pilot. Chair Posner added re-enforcement of the height of the priority seats in the 8000-series cars. Retrofitting the 7000-series cars seat height so that older people and people with muscle disabilities can actually sit and get up with ease is also a priority. Benches at stations are easy for wheelchair users to transfer on/off the bench. Chair Posner stated someone like himself who has no quadriceps, getting up from the bench is difficult. Therefore, he stands on the rail against the wall. Chair Posner also suggested using flip seats in the wheelchair parking spots, so that when wheelchairs are not parked these seats are still available as they are currently in use in the DC Circulator.

Mr. Crawford stated that occasionally, clarity of reason about the change comes after the fact. For example, the change of bus announcements initially was not understood, however later on it turned out the purpose was to discourage certain people from

boarding. Mr. Crawford stated when the study comes back, we may find that the approach to resolve a problem may not have been questioned. Perhaps it is helpful to have the resolution and then have the understanding.

Chair Posner stated there is something fixed in their minds and what they want to do. They started this (process) in 2013. The pilot was exceedingly flawed as it left loading a card by paying cash. They are trying to rail road this too fast without having honest feedback about it.

Mr. Kaffen stated one thing is important that there was no data to support any of the inclusions they wanted to make. In the meantime right before our hearing, the pilot was expanded to 7 or 8 lines even though the first pilot had not completed yet.

Mr. Calabia, Chair, BRS, stated the BRS had a discussion about train announcements and concluded that they are becoming a bit long. At times, he has noticed that the gap before any announcements is as long as 20 seconds versus five seconds as mentioned in the prior meeting. Chair Posner stated he talked about it with the person who is responsible for the announcements, and added that they are aware of the problem and are working on it.

The Board Letter was approved.

Introduction of New AAC Appointees

Erin Coneys is one of the new members appointed to the AAC. She has been using Metro for 20 years, and recently started using MetroAccess. Ms. Coneys stated that the Rangers on MetroAccess vehicles take drivers to 13th Road instead of her home address 13th Street. She is an Arlington, VA resident.

Steven McGann, is an Arlington, VA resident. He has a non-verbal 22autistic son, who uses MetroAccess. He is a recent retiree from the State Department after 37 years of service as a Foreign Service Officer. Community service has always been his own mantra. He lives close to the East Falls Church Metro station.

Stroller Presentation

Yvonne Carney, Director of Performance, presented a proposed policy of allowing open strollers on Metrobus. Ms. Carney stated that the current policy is that no open strollers are allowed on board. Parents must remove their children and fold the strollers before boarding the bus. This policy applies whether the bus is full or empty. Feedback received via a call center reflects that parents have indicated it is stressful to take child out of the stroller and fold it, and it can also be a source of negative interaction with the drivers. It is also one of the reasons for riders not to ride Metrobus; though not the biggest reason, it is one of the factors of customers not riding with us anymore. On average, in 2017, Metrobus rides were recorded as 370,000 whereas in the year 2000 the ridership was recorded as 500,000 trips. There has been a steep decline in ridership. This is one small way to make service more attractive to families. Other agencies, such as the DC

Circulator, allow children to be in a stroller while aboard the bus. Ms. Carney stated that we talked to the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) about this and they did not report any problems with the policy. Other cities that practice this policy are as follows: Chicago, Boston, Seattle, San Francisco, and London. The strollers may not obstruct the aisles or other riders. The policy states that the priority seats should be made available to persons with disabilities. The proposed policy would be that children with open strollers are welcome on Metrobus. Customers may request the ramp for assistance while boarding with a stroller(s). Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other customers and adhere to these rules when traveling with stroller(s), and cannot block the aisles or doorways. Strollers must be kept up in the priority seating area in the front of the bus with the wheel brakes set. If a bus is too crowded to accommodate the open stroller, or if a person with disability needs to use the priority seating area, please fold your stroller to make room for others. The video from Transport in London handles the policy, how information is shared with customers, and how riders are educated on what to do. She stated that Metro's next step is to get our stakeholder's input.

Ms. Coneys stated she understands buses are equipped with a ramp. She has had encounters where a lot of the drivers do not even want to put out the ramp for a person with a wheelchair or walker. That could be an issue for somebody with a stroller. Ms. Carney stated that is something Metro needs to work on. Ms. Coneys stated if they can work that out, she thinks that would be great.

Ms. Mezile asked if Metro faults the strollers in the decrease of ridership. Ms. Carney stated we do not. Ms. Mezile asked about other cities that implemented this policy, can they attribute this policy to an increase in ridership? Ms. Carney stated she didn't know if they have done that analysis. Ms. Mezile asked about the safety issue.

Mr. McGann stated that in the video viewed as part of the presentation, there were a couple of assertions from the UK; why babies in strollers are safer on public transportation versus being in lap, and who is going to make sure that the parent or caregiver does actually apply the brake? There is a question of liability. If the brakes are not applied, is it the fault of the parent or the transit system? Ms. Carney stated on the safety front the issue is current policy is for the child to be on the lap? A stroller provides an opportunity for the baby to be strapped, and the brakes to be locked. In terms of applying the brake, a parent may decide not to do that. That could mean the stroller moves when a bus comes to a stop. Similarly the parent could get jostled with a baby in the lap. Certainly there are risks of injury in either scenario. Mr. McGann stated, I don't think it could be totally risk free. A stroller moves at the speed of the vehicle when a bus stops. It could be more dangerous than a parent who is jostled holding a child. You can create a situation where a child would be more in danger. Ms. Carney stated part of this input process is our Safety office as well. We are getting their feedback.

Ms. Rush asked if a wheelchair user gets on the bus and the stroller customer has to move, where are they going to go. They can't stand up, then somebody else may have to move. It may become a chain reaction of people moving. How are we going to get

that accomplished? Ms. Carney stated in that situation the stroller would need to be folded and customer with a child would need to find a seat.

Chair Posner stated his experience of riding the bus and train, a mother and her baby stroller never move. They are entitled. They don't care about people in wheelchairs. Ms. Rush stated unless we change the design of the buses that is not going to work.

Mr. Oberg stated the biggest hurdles are going to be education and outreach of riders who are not using these devices. The policy of requiring a stroller to have brakes applied is going to be difficult to enforce when you don't require wheelchair users to lock down. It is left up to the individual even though that is Metro's policy.

Mr. Crawford asked if there were multiple strollers on a bus, then how many babies can be accommodated with strollers?

Ms. Ray stated I ride bus every day and I also rode a bus in my mother's arms and in strollers when I was young. It would be very hard to enforce this policy. People who do not drive, they have to use a bus. When people hold a child in their arms and have to fold the stroller, that is difficult. She also mentioned that if somebody has to move for a wheelchair coming through, that would be upon boarding. If a person with a stroller is seated, they would be on the priority seats. One still needs to come down the aisle and that is going to be disruptive. Forward facing seats are also priority seats in her opinion. It's going to be dependent on the circumstances as to what is going on, on that particular bus. Buses have different designs, some have the flip down seats, and forward facing seats that have no barrier in between the priority seats. That's going to be difficult for people with strollers.

Mr. Sheehan asked aside from the restraints, assisting wheelchair passengers to securement, what is the current policy on bus; who is responsible to ensure that the brakes are on, is it the passenger or the bus driver? Ms. Carney stated current policy is that they fold the stroller before getting on the bus. Chair Posner clarified, the question is who is responsible to secure the wheelchairs? Mr. Blake stated the bus operator is in charge of enforcing the policy. Mr. Sheehan asked would it be the same policy with strollers? Mr. Blake stated the driver would be required to assist. The only challenge would be to instruct the drivers. Wheelchairs have different apparatus. This is something that would have to be worked out.

Ms. Mezile asked where this concept was born, is it because other cities do it or did Metro conduct a ridership survey and got feedback. Ms. Carney stated this started with significant decline in ridership and that's a problem for all of us. Then we asked our Customer Research Office to find out from customers who are not riding, why they are not riding? The top reason is driving, then Uber and Lyft, safety, and reliability. Other reasons included inconvenience for customers who now have families. Some were having difficulty in folding a stroller before boarding a bus. A good number of complaints were also received by the call center about this issue.

Dr. Banarjee stated when I get on the buses, drivers ask if I need to be tied down. In other words, if you can take care of yourself then I don't need to tie you down. Most of the times, depending on how busy the bus is, I tell drivers don't worry, I will take care of my brakes. I tie myself. In trains, there is no one to ask or secure me. I have to find the place and position my chair. The only place I feel more secured is in buses. Why can't the parent be more responsible and take care of the stroller. The parent should ensure securing the stroller.

Chair Posner stated the wheelchair parking seats are in the front of the bus right behind the driver. Everyone gets on the bus in the front. A parent with a stroller or new SUV type stroller, or with twins or triplet stroller, has two options: parent can sit in the flip down seats and put the stroller in the aisle, so no one else can board; or they can put that stroller under the flip seats, then they can occupy the other priority seats. They are taking up three spaces for one fare. Many of them use the stroller as a shopping cart. They take the child out, put them on their lap, put stroller in the aisle, and block the way of others. At the very least, this policy can be implemented only during non-rush hours. Permitting this policy during rush hours is a disaster. This is unenforceable and will make it difficult for everyone. If you want the ridership to go down even more, implement this policy.

Ms. Ray made a motion that non collapsible baby strollers of various sizes do present a hazard to seniors and people with disabilities, accessing the bus, and having to evacuate the bus – should there be a situation. Therefore, the AAC opposes this policy completely, but certain circumstances may be considered during non-rush hour.

Dr. Banarjee suggested putting limits on the age on the babies and the size of the strollers. Chair Posner asked Ms. Ray to amend her motion to add the age of the baby in a stroller.

Mr. Crawford stated I see this motion as being negative rather than what it is intended to do. He suggested to soften the motion by adding Metro should investigate ways of having strollers in future.

Mr. Blake recommended committee members use email to finalize the motion. He added that the final language will be included as an addendum to meeting minutes. Mr. Sheehan motioned to defer the topic to the BRS. Chair Posner agreed. The topic was moved to the BRS.

Elevator / Escalator Update

Mitchell Nici, Director, Elevator Escalator (ELES), and Renaldo Grimaldi gave an update of recent systemwide elevator reliability issues. Mr. Nici stated some of the issues have been water issues, especially with older elevators. From July to September, 95% was the elevator availability versus 96% - the accepted level. Some elevators were out of service due to capital improvement projects, some for safety, and some for jurisdictional inspection – water in the pits or wall room. Elevators taken out of service for water remain

out until the water is cleared, and a jurisdiction determines when the water issue is resolved. Other elevators were out due to fire alarms, non-water related issues.

Water issues were defined as water could be inside the machine room. Water could be in the pits, it gets into the pump and needs to be taken out. Water issues have been a main problem for outages in the last few months.

Mr. Oberg asked about the last time Mr. Nici came before the AAC in October 2017. He stated that some questions were asked at that time as well including the number of service elevators 278, whereas the total number of elevators in the WMATA system is 318. Mr. Nici clarified that 278 elevators are in the revenue side and 37 were used on the non-revenue side of Metro, these are non-public units.

Mr. Oberg stated we had some customers comment about the elevator outages, some of them were worse on the Red Line. It was also mentioned by out of town visitors that finding an elevator was not easy, signage is really bad. Around Gallery Place, private owners are not keen on having Metro signs. What are the sources of outreach to address the issue of signage? Mr. Nici stated that the signage is a big problem. Especially for someone who is new to the system. Sometimes, by the time they are told where the elevators are, they are already by the escalators.

Ms. Ray stated the biggest concern is with unplanned outages. The ADA has requirements. The Court House elevator was out of service for at least two weeks. Mr. Grimaldi stated that was related to water as it made it to the hoist way. We resolved it with the Plant Department and should not have that problem anymore. Ms. Ray stated that it is the only elevator for that station. Chair Posner stated there is another elevator by the County Administrator Building.

Ms. Mezile asked if the water issues are going to be resolved with the modernization of the elevators. Mr. Grimaldi stated when new elevators are installed, any water issue is resolved first.

Ms. Coneys asked how are the water issues resolved? How are you taking the water away because we have had so much rain? Mr. Grimaldi stated some water issues are caused by not cleaning the drain. We are working with the Plant Department to address that part of the issue, for what is on our side. Other reasons for the water issues are cracks in the concrete and water comes through. In some stations water comes through the hoist ways. Ground water is sitting and comes after a period of time. Water just starts coming out into the hoist way. We try to plan, but then water comes out from elsewhere. We are using pipes to collect water and drain it to the ground, instead of water going where it is not supposed to be going.

Chair Posner stated we have been requesting for street elevators to default at the street level instead of the mezzanine level. Mr. Grimaldi stated we are working on that, though for different reason (reduce water issues), however, for most of the elevators we can have them defaulted at street level.

Dr. Banarjee stated some elevators have sanitary problems, especially at the Dupont Circle station. Who is responsible to maintain the cleanliness, is it the City or Metro? Mr. Grimaldi stated it is Metro's custodians who clean the elevators and other equipment as part of the station cleaning.

Ms. Ray asked what is the protocol of elevators during an unscheduled outage? Mr. Grimaldi stated the protocol is to respond within two hours. Ms. Ray stated when a station has redundant elevators, what is the protocol? Mr. Grimaldi stated even with the redundant elevators, we still try to address the call in two hours.

MetroAccess Fleet Update

Mr. Blake stated for 2017 vehicle purchase, the committee didn't have much of any input. We have spent last year and a half on making changes after the AAC had a chance to see the vehicle. For our 2020 purchase, we are going to look at a lot of vehicles, with the following goals in mind: have the newest safety features, improve fuel economy, improve customer satisfaction, increase fleet reliability, and lower operating cost. There is the likelihood we end up purchasing two different types of vehicles: sedans and vans. Sedans will be no more than 25% of the fleet. Highly desired features are low floor ramps, closed-circuit TV, alternative fuels, and improved collision warning system. For vans, the current Ford Transit with some modifications may be an option. A van with two wheelchairs and four seats is an option. All seats do not have to be single seats, some could be double seats with seat height from 17 to 19 inches. Another option considered is the ability to record messages about service or a marketing. The vehicle would be less than 10,000 pounds. We will have a robust conversation at the end of the month during the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS).

Mr. Semelfort stated this will be part of the MAS meeting. Sedans were taken out because prior MetroAccess management wanted to have an all accessible fleet for all the riders, at all times. One possibility may be to have one wheelchair. Mr. Blake stated that having sedans in the fleet does not mean that accessibility for all customers cannot be achieved. You look at the overall ridership and demand, then engage in planning to ensure accessibility.

Ms. Rush stated she wants a bus where she does not have to bend down her knees, with real steps, and real seats.

Mr. Sheehan stated about a meeting with Easterseals, they are going to have a list of requirements for real time access, in January or February. They are going to bring the requirements back, so that we can review them, and they have people with the ability to put an application (app) together that will be accessible for all disabilities and will give information as to where your ride is and when it will arrive; similar to what Uber and Lyft already have.

Mr. Semelfort stated if you are going to look at bigger vehicles, you may want to look at vehicles with three wheel chair accessibility, similar to the one in New York City. If Metro considers vehicles with larger capacity, it may require a driver with a commercial driver's

license (CDL). Mr. Blake stated we are not trying to purchase an extremely large vehicle because we don't want to get into not only CDL, but also Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulatory issues. We can't have a big vehicle for various reasons, such as traffic congestion, fuel consumption that also causes economic reasons: low mileage. We get a lot of complaints from customers who don't want to share a ride.

Ms. Ray suggested to have ergonomics for ambulatory persons. Is there anything like an annunciator for a customer to have an idea where they are?

Mr. Crawford stated he was very impressed with the report. Categorically it went to the 2018, 2017, and provided all the information needed.

Mr. Blake stated on Mr. Sheehan's comment about Easterseals that initially they were looking for 30 people, but may be open for many more. If you have the time and if you are MetroAccess customer, I encourage everyone to participate in the Easterseals research project relating to what customers would like to see in an application.

Richard Hedding Award and Accessibility Excellence Awards Ceremony

Mr. Blake asked the Committee to communicate electronically amongst each other and decide on the nominations. He will send a notice for the Accessibility Excellence Award, to be held on Thursday, October 25th, from 6 to 8 pm.

Ms. Coneys asked if the nomination could include drivers. Chair Posner clarified that the nomination could be for someone who throughout their career has done most to improve accessibility, has volunteered, and made a difference.

Bus/Rail Subcommittee (BRS) Election:

Chair Posner stated that we did not have election for BRS Chair. Mr. Calabia and Mr. Oberg were interested. If no one else wanted then I will appoint Mr. Calabia. He has been acting, and now he is the Chair for BRS.

Board Report:

Chair Posner gave his report from the Board Meeting. He talked about the 8000-series, the seat height, the announcements, and about the safety. The letter to the Board included all the comments. He also talked about the importance of Committee being involved in what's going on. He talked about the rehab of the MetroAccess vans, and also recommended that the AAC be made part of the procurement process. The General Manager (GM) was writing vigorously as Chair Posner gave them the story of the ADA on the seat height. Regarding the 7000 announcements he got to talk to the people in charge of that and pointed out to them this is occurring as the doors were opening, that was a little late. They know that and they are trying to work with the programming to correct that. The monthly award was given to one of the station managers for saving somebody's life who had a heart attack in the garage, by using the first-aid training and the kit. The GM said all of our employees are trained that way and have equipment. Chair Posner took the opportunity to remind the GM that the first-aid kit is not available on the MetroAccess vehicle. There was shock at the Board level. It is not just on the

MetroAccess level, the Metrobuses do not have first-aid kit either. Chair Posner stated the Tri-State Commission for Safety Oversight has been disbanded by FTA. Instead, a private institution has taken over and they gave a presentation to the Safety Committee, they were very good. He had a long talk to them about the safety of senior and disability community, they were very receptive to that. They will be coming on board in middle of April, at that time we should invite them to the BRS.

Mr. Sheehan asked was there any update on the railcar barriers? Chair Posner said not yet. Mr. Sheehan asked any idea when they will get that. Chair Posner stated no. Mr. Blake stated our overall goal is to have it completed by May 2019.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

Ms. Coneys stated that the Rangers on MetroAccess vehicles are a catastrophe. She has been on a vehicle for two hours. Driver can't use their phones, and they have hard time contacting dispatchers, and she asked how do you fix that? Mr. Blake stated we just purchased some software and new hardware to improve our Rangers. The Ranger is designed like a GPS. Generally we may know the route. Rangers may have more information at that moment and may guide driver to another route the customer is not familiar with. The ride of two hours should not happen, unless it takes two hours on fixed route. MetroAccess is designed to be equivalent to fixed routes service. If you have any concerns about trips, call my office and we will review your recent trip history.

MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) Report:

Mr. Semelfort, Chair, MAS, stated in the last meeting the Committee discussed Abilities-Ride Scope of Work - that is going to be put out soon to expand the program in terms of service area and providers. Committee members gave their opinions. We had a demonstration for modifications for some of the vehicles. We talked about the Easterseals project. For this month's agenda, there is going to be a discussion about the future of the MetroAccess fleet. Mr. Semelfort stated he heard that the providers may be coming, and asked Mr. Blake if there a possibility we might be able to invite the current Abilities-Ride providers to an upcoming meeting. Mr. Blake said yes.

Ms. Rush asked when she is going to be riding the new buses. Mr. Blake stated as per Director, MetroAccess, we are a few weeks away from seeing them.

Bus/Rail Subcommittee (BRS) Report:

Mr. Calabria, Chair, BRS, stated we talked about the cashless bus pilot. Ms. Vanderwaart had mentioned about a hearing and paper surveys, and asked what happened during the hearing. Chair Posner stated it is all in the Board report. Several of the Committee members were present to give their feedback. Mr. Orleans also gave his feedback in the public comments.

Mr. Calabria asked about the future expansion, will it be in compliant with Title VI? Chair Posner stated that is being reviewed.

Mr. Calabria stated we talked about elevator issues, for which we got some information today. We talked about faregate outages, which was brought up by members before as well. Chair Posner stated I got some update about the faregates. After a certain number of passengers go through, they download the data from the faregates. From the time they are downloading the data from the faregates until it is complete, the faregates become inoperable. During rush hour, you may see red flashing lights. That reflects that the data is being downloaded. I have talked to them about fixing it. I have also talked to them about what had been mentioned that there are faregates that are just going out of service, particularly the disability faregates. They said they are going to start looking at those. Mr. Calabria confirmed data collection makes the faregates inoperable. Chair Posner stated it shuts them down. When data is being downloaded from the gate into the system, the gate does not respond to the SmarTrip card.

Mr. Calabria stated we also talked about lighting. David Shaffer, Ombudsman, stated we are going to have David O'Toole coming to the next BRS meeting, he is the accessible faregates person, and will give lighting information as well. Mr. Calabria asked Mr. Shaffer to remind Mr. O'Toole that we would like to have the lighting kit to gauge the Lumens and Kelvins.

Mr. Calabria stated we discussed a possibility of having a project manager for 8000-series cars and see if we can still put in our discussion.

Riders' Advisory Committee:

Mr. Sheehan commented about the RAC. He said the AAC should support the RAC, it is the sister committee that works with regular riders, works on policy issues whereas we only do the operational. There has been a movement by the Board to dissolve the RAC. I would like for us to make a motion to support having the RAC, their work is worthwhile, and I hope they continue.

Mr. Calabria motioned, Ms. Rush seconded. Motion passed.

Mr. Oberg asked Mr. Sheehan are there any other ways besides making this motion that the AAC can support the RAC? Chair Posner stated you can make public comment at the Board meeting, and I would make the public comment before the AAC. The best thing the RAC can do is hand in a list of everything they have accomplished in the past five years and show how valuable they are.

Mr. Sheehan stated I am not sure if Jack Evans will be there but there will be representation at the RAC. If anyone wants to show support, they can show up on Wednesday, from 6:30pm to 8:30pm. They may have public comment.

Chair Posner stated in Virginia Square station, where they have updated the wall lighting, it is very bright and good, but not at Rosslyn where downstairs they have not changed the lights, and the difference is apparent.

Ms. Ray stated about the report to the Board, the report on the cashless pilot, there was no mention of the things I had mentioned a couple of times, which is SmarTrip loading on buses is not accessible to people who are blind and have vision impairment. They should not go forward with this until they fix that before going cashless. Secondly, with regard to the lighting, there are some really serious problems. Yes, the lighting is bright where you see it on the walls, but not necessarily on the platforms. Specially the platforms that have been half done. The platform lighting is a problem because of eclipsing lighting. The effect of lighting of the wall along with the 7000-series foot lights, and going up on the escalator, it was difficult. That was a blinding light. People who are doing lighting need to go with us and see how lighting should be done.

Meeting adjourned at 7:31pm.