



Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes: September 4, 2018

Attendees

Present: Phil Posner (Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Tapan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Hazell Brooks, Darnise Bush, Tino Calabia, Steven Kaffen, 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 back from Summer and started off with introductions of the Committee members.

Christiaan Blake, Acting AGM – ACCS, introduced the newly appointed AAC Coordinator, Anu Sharma. He stated that Ms. Sharma has been with Metro for 16 years, and has had a focus on helping employees. Ms. Sharma made a brief comment to the Committee members.

The meeting agenda was approved.

The July 2, 2018, meeting minutes were approved with one exception; Ms Ray mentioned that her comments regarding Virginia not being prepared for the Abilities-ride program; the whole quote is completely inaccurate. It needs to be either removed or put in as stated.

WHEATON STATION IMPROVEMENTS:

Mr. Blake requested to have the Wheaton Report presented to the AAC to be sure the Committee was officially informed about this project, particularly the new pedestrian bridge. The presentation was led by Gary Erenrich, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), and Jane McAfee, Stone Bridge Terrace – Developers out of Bethesda, selected by the MCDOT for the project. Committee members asked about the status of the project. Mr. Calabi suggested that for future projects the AAC should be briefed prior to commencement of construction. Chair Posner stated that the AAC has been represented at most of the meetings and the hearing on the project.

AAC RECRUITMENT UPDATE:

Mr. Blake provided an update on the status of the AAC 2018 recruitment process. He stated that the Board is currently considering five individuals for appointment. He added that the process to get information to the Board took a little longer than normal, however based in part on AAC feedback; participating in the process for the first time in many years, - this effort should result in a successful outcome. Mr. Blake stated that he

expects the Board decisions to be announced during the September Board meeting. If that occurs the new members will be seated beginning in October. Orientation training for new members, and an ADA training for the appeals process for new and current members, will b

ABILITIES – RIDE SCOPE OF WORK:

Mr. Blake previously provided members with a draft copy of a modified Abilities-Ride scope of work (SOW). The document highlights the sections that have been changed. Metro intends to use this modified SOW to issue an RFP for the purpose of adding more service providers to the program and expanding the areas in which the program is available to MetroAccess customers.

Ms. Bellamy asked about the diversity of providers and the ride fare they charge. The ride fare structure remains as it is at present: customer pays the first \$5, Metro pays the next \$15, and the customer pays any fare about \$20. Providers have their individual pricing. With a new solicitation some providers may come in at, let's say 16 miles for \$5.00, while some may come in for only 5 miles for \$5.00. Mr. Blake added there is going to be more price diversity in the program as more providers are added.

Mr. Semelfort shared his observation that on Silver Cab, despite advertising 7 miles for \$5, the actual distance for \$5 has been around 8.4 miles. This was a positive news shared on the price aspect.

Anthony Oberg inquired whether Metro is trying to expand the numbers of companies that will be used? Mr. Blake confirmed that Metro is expecting to add several more providers. Metro is also trying to push providers to have partnerships, but not require the providers to serve enlarged sections of the service area. For example, a Prince George's based company may want serve Montgomery County and vice versa, but a company in Washington may not want to go into Virginia and vice versa. Metro believes this approach should create better prices and more options for MetroAccess customers.

Ms. Rush discussed the legality as to why a cab company may not pick up passengers from other jurisdictions: the taxi commission allows a Prince George's cab to bring a customer to Washington, but they are restricted from picking up a passenger in Washington to bring back in Prince George's. Mr. Blake clarified that under this program companies are allowed to pick up customer across jurisdictions since they are not going to ride hails. They are going to pick up a specific customer under a contractual agreement. That is the reason Abilities-Ride is already going from Maryland to Washington and reverse. This program is beneficial for customers as well as the providers, if used for shorter distances. Otherwise customers may end up paying more than they would on MetroAccess.

Heidi Case shared her knowledge about companies partnering together to be able to provide better service to customers. For example, the owner of Trans Co, and the Regal Cab owner have reached out and are planning to work together on this contract. This provides flexibility for a customer. If a customer calls Regal to come into Washington to work from Prince George's, they will contract with Trans Co to take that customer back. The cab companies will work out a way for everyone to get paid.

Public Comment:

Muriel Norman commented about the elevator outages when Metro shut down the blue and orange lines for single tracking. Metro shut down the elevators also on those sides. From Bethesda to downtown, when customers needed to change tracks Metro had those elevators out of service, but not for the repairs, simply shut down. This is very unhelpful for customers. Another issue brought up was for PIDS and information about elevator outages that will flash on the boards. The PIDS are not helpful, and do not give adequate information. The way messages are displayed is not helpful.

Information is key. When a customer called 1825, the Metro shuttle bus line, staff should be able to share information immediately. An instance when staff who answered the phone asked the customer, doesn't your internet work? The customer's point was that she called for assistance, which was not provided.

Chair Posner stated that Mr. Calabria is to cover these in the Bus Rail meeting, and also with the Elevator/Escalator (ELES) Director in the October meeting. These are important issues. Bus Rail ought to discuss them and come up with prioritized list we can give to the ELES Director before he gets here, and he can come prepared with specific answers.

Mia Rubeli commented that elevator outages are occurring a lot, and that the percentage of available elevators has not changed. In July, there were 14 out, today there are 13 out. There is not much of a change. Second problem mentioned is that when elevators are out, station managers do not tell customers about shuttles. One time in 2017, at 11pm at the L'Enfant station, the customer was told by an employee nothing could be done for her. She was stuck in that area and had to call a Lyft. On July 21st the same issue occurred, she could not get a shuttle in Glenmont. There have been repeated issues. On the other hand, shuttles used for Red Line outage were also problematic. Buses were equipped with wheelchair lifts, however the drivers did not know how to operate them. At one instance, they were not able to use the lift for 45 minutes. Ms. Rubeli waited for another bus, which happened to be a city bus. She used those buses a couple of times, but had to wait for 30-45 minutes. Contractors should know how to use the lifts. Another issue brought up was about train doors closing early. Announcements come on as doors close. It is a security issue for her and her service animal, and for people with hearing impairments.

Mr. Ariza-Silva shared his own experience about having to wait long time, sometimes 20-30 minutes, for shuttles. He added that signage also needs to improve, as well as having accurate information and better contractors (Red Line shut down shuttles). Mr.

Ariza-Silva also shared his experience from July 21st, when he entered the Wheaton Station at 12:11am, and the last train to Fort Totten was already gone. A better way needs to be implemented in order to find information on station closing times, as well as last train times.

Carol Leibowitz commented that her Smartrip card is supposed to be the ticket to freedom. She mentioned being forced to wait over 30 minutes for shuttle. She could not use the shuttle in front of her, but had to wait for the next one. She added that the Farragut North elevator has been out of service for a month, for what Metro is calling a "minor repair". Frequently faregates are not working, and Station Managers are not there or available. In such cases, previously Ms. Leibowitz could tap her SmarTrip card and go thru the emergency gate, but now that they are locked, and she has to wait for a Station Manager to return, which wastes a lot of time. She also reports that elevator shuttles are not available. At one time she was told at Silver Spring that there was no shuttle to Takoma, which was announced by WMATA. She wants better transparency and for WMATA not to lie.

Ms. Case commented about the elevator outages. During the Red Line shut down, companies contracted to transport customers were not even intended to transport people with disabilities. WMATA had its shuttles and it went well at Brookland. There was a contracted shuttle sitting at the station in the morning. However, later in the evening the shuttle program did not work. On July 16th, 17 elevators were out. These were at major transfer points, including L'Enfant and Gallery Place. Customers were told to use Green/Yellow lines as alternates, however, the elevators were not working. A lot of shuttles for the Red Line were being used and there were none elsewhere. Ms. Case reported reaching the U Street station and had to go back out, then went back to Shaw. When she spoke with WMATA employees, she felt like she was back to 2014 when bus and rail had a clear disconnect. The Bus people said we have nothing to do with that, and the Rail people said we have nothing to do with that. All this contracting needs to be upgraded and include a requirement for better training.

Ms. Bush shared her feedback about the Gallery Place station that since there is only one gate to go thru to the elevator, which is sometimes not working, it feels as if people with disabilities are being disregarded, and often there is no Station Manager to assist. She added that more than one person is needed at the station, and with emergency gates being locked, and customers can't let themselves out, it is humiliating as a customer and frustrating as a tax payer.

Mr. Blake responded to the concerns raised during the public comment period: For elevator outage, shuttle bus service is available. Customers should call 202-962-1825 directly.

As per the contracted shuttle service in support of rail station shutdowns, all of the coach buses have a wheel chair lift. This matter needs further review as to why drivers

did not know how to operate the lifts. There are Metro shuttle buses available as a back-up measure. This matter needs to be further reviewed as Metro will have on-going system repairs and the process needs to be more efficient. Customers were advised to contact 202-962-1100, if they experience similar situations going forward.

Regarding the signage outside of the Gallery Place station, Mr. Blake stated that adding signage has been a challenge since there are private properties all around, and property owners/stores are not interested in having Metro signs posted outside of their property. There has been improvement, but further review continues. Also, the matter of accessible faregates needs to be reviewed. The PIDS messaging upgrade is underway. Metro is in the process of updating the PIDS throughout the system. Metro has updated passenger information display systems on station mezzanines, and at the end of platforms at some stations, including Judiciary Square. Metro will eventually replace the current PIDS with 55" digital screens that will include a continuous scroll of elevator outage information.

In regards to the elevator issues, Mr. Blake stated the ELES Director is scheduled to attend the AAC meeting in October however, he did share a brief update from ELES to the committee. Farragut North has been the biggest challenge. It has been out of service since late July. The issue there is a corroded 3 inch line that runs below the street. Replacement requires coordination with our safety colleagues as well as specialized team for permitting by other contractors for completion of this difficult repair. Another challenging elevator is at the U Street station. There are capital and maintenance issues in the system. ADAP will continue to follow up on the repairs and other related issues.

METROACCESS Subcommittee Report:
Seats on MetroAccess Vehicles:

Mr. Blake provided update during the August recess. The seats are changing in the Ford Transit vehicles, but 317 vehicles will continue to have the existing long seat. 366 of the vehicles will not have the high long seat, but instead single seats no higher than 17 inches. Most people, including the three who raised the issue on this committee, will have added resolution through a reasonable accommodation, when necessary.

Ms. Bellamy inquired whether the seats will move? Mr. Blake confirmed that yes the seats have the capability of rotating, but Metro has not yet determined if this feature will be enabled. The pros and cons are still being reviewed of the swivel of the seat, but the main issue was the height of the seat, and that has been addressed.

Mr. Ariza-Silva raised a question about long seats versus single seats, and it was explained that the single seats will have the capability to rotate. Chair Posner and Mr. Sheehan have seen the seats that rotate. It was recommended to have a vehicle with the rotating seat at the next MAS meeting for everyone to see and test.

Mr. Semelfort motioned to modify the agenda for the MAS meeting.

Mr. Blake mentioned the 5 Minute Rule. He stated that following the discussion during the July MAS he went back and reviewed the 5 Minute Rule, and eliminated the 3 minute rush call. If any customer is still receiving the 3 minutes rush call, his office needs to be informed.

Ms. Mezile inquired as to what happened to Yellow Cab under Transport DC? Mr. Blake stated that in most, if not all procurement contracts, there may be a maximum money that can be spent. Often times when the maximum approaches, especially when a provider does a pretty good job, the entity will go back to their procurement teams and increase the spending amount. In this case, Yellow Cab was very popular thus spent funds quicker, but Washington officials did not add expenditure flexibility. Therefore, until the new fiscal year begins on October 1st, Yellow Cab won't be providing any trips through the Transport DC program.

BUS/RAIL Subcommittee Report:

8000 Series Discussion:

Chair Posner started off with the 8000-Series discussion and expressed his dissatisfaction with Metro beginning the RFP for design and construction before confirming which AAC recommendations the agency has incorporated and which one(s) it has not.. Hundreds of new 8000-series rail cars are to be delivered starting in 2024. Metro plans to acquire at least 256, 8000 series cars, to allow for retire 3000 and 4000 series cars at the end of their 40 year service life. Options in the contract will allow Metro to push up to 8000-series cars leaving the agency the flexibility to support a range of initiatives, including expanding of all trains to a maximum 8 car lengths; running trains more frequently during rush hour; and retiring the 6000 fleet. Chair Posner stated that when the Committee last met with the Project Manager, he said he would come back and speak with the Committee, and inform what happened in their discussions. This is an RFP for the Design and Construction, which may mean that the design has not been finalized yet. The Committee needs to get more information from Metro.

Elevator / Escalator Update:

Mr. Blake informed that the ELES Director was not able to make it tonight's meeting, but he is on the schedule for the October meeting to answer any questions raised.

Train Announcements Suggestion:

Mr. Kaffen discussed the announcements issue as how it is done in London trains versus Metro trains, and he read the announcements from London (using Metro Station names) and compared that to Metro's current announcements, and made recommendations of reviewing the possible changes. London train announcement example was as follows (using Metro Station names): "This is Metro Center. Change for Orange, Blue, and Silver lines, next station is Chinatown. This is a Red line to

Glenmont.” At certain train stations in London they have an issue that we have in-between rail cars issue; between the station and the rail cars, and they say “Mind the gap between the train and the platform.” These announcements are much shorter, and the station name is announced twice.

Metro’s current announcements are as follows: “This is a 7000 series car. Doors opening. Step back to allow customer to enter. When boarding, please move to the center of the car. This is a Red line train to Glenmont. The next stop is Union Station.” Then we have the chimes, then doors closing. Upcoming station name is not announced, which would be helpful, especially in rush hours. If there are too many components, it may also become a safety hazard. A train operator who may need to interject something very specific, has to wait up to 15 seconds before the announcement is finished playing. Recommendation is that WMATA undertakes a review of the train announcement.

Chair Posner stated that he has included mentions of other agencies, such as London, Paris, Rome, New York, and Chicago in the Board Letter. Chair Posner also stated that when a 7000-series train pulls in, it stops, and there is a gap of time where there is total silence. That time could be utilized to make announcements for the rail car series, and tap the floor to find the car. Mr. Sheehan how long the announcement of “This is a 7000 series car” will be played. Mr. Blake stated that Metro is operating on a timeline that will have the between-car-barrier retrofit completed by May 2019. Once completed, the announcements will stop.

During a discussion about the seat height, Ms. Ray, asked if there is an ADA seat height requirement for transit vehicles. Mr. Blake informed that the ADA states that bench seats will be set no lower than 17 inches and no higher than 19 inches. However, there needs to be more research as to whether this provision automatically applies to transit vehicles. Ms. Ray clarified that Mr. Ariza-Silva was talking about the priority seats on trains. On this, Christiaan Blake informed that 21 inches is likely the highest they will get. 22 inches appear to be too much out of the norm. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that while riding the train in rush hours, it is difficult for people with difficulty with arms or legs, and/or seniors, to stand up from those seats.

Chair Posner stated we are going to require clarity; find out what is being done; and try to have a better understanding by the Bus and Rail Subcommittee meeting, to be followed up with letter to the Board next month. Chair Posner also mentioned that if you are on a train, and there is specific parking space for customers using wheelchairs, there is no need for the transfer.

Procurement:

Mr Sheehan inquired whether as part of the Board report, does the Committee get information about the procurement process. Specifically on the 7000-series wiring issue, which was uncovered late in the process. Chair Posner clarified that the

procurement was not the issue of quality. The question being asked is whether quality was written into the contract, as quality was not met. The fault and repairs fell on WMATA rather than on the vendor. Any time a purchase is made, there should be some warranty. There should be some standard penalty for something that is not up to the standard that was in the original writing. The issue that came up this summer was that WMATA was having to pay for the repair. Similarly, the MetroAccess vans were procured by the Office of Procurement (PRMT) without input from the AAC.

Mr. Blake clarified that PRMT only purchases what is asked of them to purchase. The fact that this Committee didn't get the opportunity to provide input on the Ford Transits, for example, wasn't the fault of PRMT, but instead it was a decision of the prior leadership of Access Services. Chair Posner stated the Committee wants to know if someone from PRMT can tell the AAC what the process is? Because it's a black hole. Every time something goes to PRMT the Committee does not find out anything until the process is over. What the Committee is asking for is to understand how the contacts work. Mr. Sheehan wants to ensure WAMTA gets the best product out there that's possible. Related to the contracts, Chair Posner also mentioned about brakes of the buses along with a number of examples, including cars that came with Italian manuals that nobody could read, resulting in lack of ability in fixing the cars.

Ms. Ray inquired whether the AAC should bring this matter to the attention of the Riders Advisory Council, as it may not be appropriate to bring in the vehicle comment to the Board, since it affects everyone. Chair Posner clarified that it is a safety issue, thus, will be brought to the attention of the Board. In reference to the Board Letter, there was a motion on using the phrase "highly recommends". The motion passed.

Ms. Rush asked as to where would the Committee meet after JGB is sold. Mr. Blake e stated that the Transit Accessibility Center will remain somewhere in central Washington. That will also be the location of future AAC meetings. The remainder of Access Services including ADAP, will be connected with the MetroAccess office in Prince George's County willingness

Meeting adjourned at 7:55pm.