



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Bus and Rail Subcommittee Meeting Minutes: April 8, 2019

Attendees

Present: Tino Calabia (Chair), Anthony Oberg (Vice-Chair), Alver Ariza-Silva, Carolyn Bellamy, Erin Coneys, Charlie Crawford, Melanie Jackson, Mary Kay McMahon, Phillippa Mezile, Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Chair Calabia called the Bus Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Chair Calabia started with the introductions of the committee members.

Approval of Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes:

The meeting agenda was approved.

The March 11, 2019 Meeting Minutes were approved as written.

Ombudsman Report:

David Shaffer, Ombudsman, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, provided an update on the following topics WMATA website, Metrorail announcements, and the Restroom policy.

Accessible WMATA Website: Mr. Shaffer stated he has been working with the Information Technology (IT) Department on the new software. The website is up to 89% accessible as confirmed by automated testing. The goal is to have it 95% accessible by the end of June. The website is accessible for people with various disabilities.

Dr. Posner inquired if Mr. Shaffer is doing accessibility testing on various browsers? Mr. Shaffer confirmed it is part of the testing. Dr. Posner stated that the audio recordings of the meetings are only accessible on Internet Explorer, but not on other browsers. Mr. Shaffer was unaware of this issue and will review it further.

Mr. Sheehan asked if the content on the PDF documents will be tested for accessibility, and if the documents accessibility is being measured against 2.0, the web content accessibility standard? Mr. Shaffer stated the content that goes on the website is being tested for accessibility, and it is being measured against 2.1.

Chair Calabia asked Mr. Shaffer if there was a time table for getting it to a 100% compliant? Mr. Shaffer stated it is virtually impossible to have a 100% compliance, 95% to 97% is as close as we can get to being compliant. Mr. Sheehan agreed with Mr. Shaffer and stated if we can get it to 95% compliant, that will be good.

Metrorail Announcements: Mr. Shaffer stated he audited the announcements as did the Rail Department, and that their findings were like the ones reported by the committee. Donald Goings, Superintendent, Rail Infrastructure and Support Services, has worked on re-instructing the operators on making elevator announcements two stations prior to the affected station. Mr. Goings has fixed the missing link, so that the elevator outage

information is reaching the operators, and now they are making the announcements. The elevator announcements have been restored.

About the announcements being cut off at the end, the train operators are instructed to keep the doors open for the entire duration of 15 seconds. Mr. Shaffer has noticed the improvements. The sequence of the announcements is being reviewed. Mr. Goings agrees with the committee and its proposals. Any change in announcements is going to relate to switching over from manual to the automated operation sometime in the future. The "7000 series announcements" will be dropped at the same time. They are going to revamp the announcements and will not have the 5 second delay anymore.

Dr. Posner stated the "stand clear doors opening" and "allow passengers to board and exit" announcements are worthless as they occur at the time doors have already opened. Dr. Posner also stated that, in prior meetings, Ms. Ray mentioned about the outside speakers on the trains do not work and that she cannot hear the train announcements. Dr. Posner stated the outside speakers on the trains do work. The location where a customer stands on the platform may affect the volume level of the train announcements.

Mr. Crawford asked if the committee has agreed to the final order of the announcements? Dr. Posner stated the committee has agreed to the announcement sequence, and the two Board Letters included the order of the announcements proposed by the committee. Mr. Sheehan asked Mr. Shaffer if that is what the committee can expect? Mr. Shaffer stated Mr. Goings understands what the committee requests are, and he is working with the committee, however, they may not be able to adopt all of the recommendations. Dr. Posner asked for some reasoning to be provided for any recommendations that are not adopted. Mr. Shaffer stated he can get updates and share the information with the committee.

Restroom Policy: Mr. Shaffer provided the policy set forth by WMATA. The restrooms at Metrorail stations are available only in emergencies involving children, seniors, and/or persons with disabilities. If the customer-restrooms are unavailable, then station managers should allow the usage of the employee restrooms. In certain circumstances, restrooms may not be available. Many stations may only have one station manager on duty who must help all customers and may not be immediately available to unlock restrooms. At times, Metro officials may order the closure of one or more restrooms for security reasons. Due to security concerns, restrooms at Addison Road, Anacostia, Congress Heights, Pentagon, Rhode Island Avenue, and U Street stations are always closed to the public. If the restrooms are unavailable for any reason, the station manager must complete a form. If a customer experiences a restroom denial, they can report it and the matter can be reviewed to see if the denial form was completed. If not, then the matter can be further investigated.

Ms. Jackson shared her experience at the Bethesda station where she was denied the use of a restroom due to construction. She was not aware of this policy and had to go to a restaurant in the vicinity. The station manager did not allow her the use of the employee

restroom. Mr. Shaffer stated it may be closed for construction, also if there are more than one mezzanines at a station, there could be another restroom on the other mezzanine. Christiaan Blake, Acting Assisting General Manager, Access Services (ACCS), clarified that some stations may not have technically termed the customer restrooms. The new stations on the Silver Line all have customer restrooms.

A customer asked if restrooms within Metrorail stations are wheelchair accessible? The customer was at the Southern Avenue station, and the portable restroom was not wheelchair accessible. Mr. Blake stated we are working with our team to ensure that the portable restrooms are wheelchair accessible. About the station restrooms, not all stations were designed as customer or public restrooms. New stations on the Silver Line have customer restrooms. We are in the process of making all the restrooms customer accessible. Some of the restrooms have been made wheelchair accessible.

Mr. Shaffer provided information about stations with restroom renovations. The stations are either in the process of getting the updates or have been completed. Mr. Ariza Silva asked whether these restrooms are for employees or customers? Mr. Shaffer stated any restroom should be allowed to be used by the customer if it is available. Mr. Blake stated that the clarification may be required as to what is considered employee versus customer restrooms. Mr. Blake stated for WMATA, the term “accessible” means that either the guidelines are met or not met. Dr. Poser stated it is important to define the term “accessibility.” Ms. Ray stated it will be helpful to have an inventory as to which stations have customer restrooms, and which stations have wheelchair accessible restrooms.

Silver Line, Phase 2: Committee Discussion:

Mr. Sheehan asked about the status of the Silver Line Phase 2, is it going to open on time? Would the Airport Authority provide an update? Mr. Blake stated the Airport Authority is building the Silver Line (Phase 2) and will turn it over to WMATA this summer. We have a liaison between the Airport Authority and WMATA who can be invited to an AAC meeting to provide an update.

Mr. Sheehan asked if MetroAccess service will be expanded with Silver Line extension? Mr. Blake stated yes, MetroAccess service will be expanded all the way to the end of the Silver Line Phase 2. That also brings challenges about MetroAccess travel time. Fixed route travel time on Metrorail may be very different than travel time on the roads. We are talking to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as to how we are going to measure the fixed route times and compare them to MetroAccess travel times. We are going to look at service providers in the mix, and we are also talking to Loudoun County about other possible commuting options.

Dr. Posner stated drivers have trouble finding customers at the Dulles Airport. The Global Positioning System (GPS) sends drivers to a hotel in the vicinity. As a result, drivers sit at a wrong location. Mr. Blake stated some airports may have a designated location for commuting customers. The challenge is whether a paratransit service-provider can mandate for a customer to get to a location. At the Baltimore Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI), there is a private and a public-transit lane. If we can

use a public transit lane, it will be better for service providers as well as customers. We will bring this to the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting. Mr. Sheehan stated this spans to MetroAccess and Metrorail, therefore, recommended to discuss this topic at the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) Meeting. The Committee agreed.

Ms. Ray asked will MetroAccess go all the way to Ashburn, the last stop on the Silver Line? Mr. Blake stated MetroAccess will serve within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the last Metrorail station on Silver Line Phase 2.

There was a discussion about travel time for MetroAccess trips along the route of Silver Line Phase 2. Ms. Rush asked if the MetroAccess trips to Dulles Airport may take 3 hours? Mr. Blake stated that is correct. Ms. Rush stated that WMATA will go all the way to Ashburn, but will not provide service in Clinton on Saturdays. Mr. Blake stated that is a good point about fixed route service. As a member of the AAC, members may want to advocate for it and bring it up to the attention of the local jurisdictions, talk to the local officials, ask them what are their priorities on public transportation? If there is no public transportation, it does not just affect the persons with disabilities, it affects everyone. Ms. Rush stated Metro keeps cutting the service. Mr. Blake stated Metro is the regional service provider. The weekend service that is not in Metro's zone may be substituted by the local transits.

Ms. Ray stated there is nothing in this world that keeps WMATA from expanding the service. Ms. Rush said AMEN! to the comments made by Ms. Ray.

Elevator Call Buttons:

Mr. Oberg thanked the Committee members for providing him with feedback on the Elevator Call Buttons draft. Mr. Oberg provided the issues and the reasons. He wanted to inform WMATA that the Committee also knows the rules. Mr. Oberg took a few pictures of Metro elevator button panel, from his travel over the weekend. He also added a section on the lighting – chapter 4 (physical) and 7 (communication: Braille, Tactile). Mr. Oberg asked if the BRS approves to move forward with the draft. Chair Calabria stated we can hopefully move it to the AAC.

Dr. Posner provided his comments about the lighting and consistency of the signage. The lighting inside and outside of the elevators should be reviewed. The signage consistency along with understandability is needed. At stations with multiple levels, it may not be helpful to have M for Metro, T for Trains, and S for Street. It may be more helpful to clearly indicate information about the pertinent platform/lines served.

Ms. Ray stated we need to have a distinction between the call buttons, which are on the outside of the elevators versus what is called a control panel on the inside of the elevators. The raised letter signage is helpful. A longer word is hard to understand.

A customer stated it is difficult to even find elevators on the outside, therefore, signage is needed. Metro worked on putting working bulbs inside the elevators and that is helpful. Regarding the elevator buttons, if there is a way to always have those buttons lit, have

them in the same place on all the elevators (inside and outside), that will be very helpful and much more efficient.

The second customer reiterated the inconsistency of the elevator buttons. Some elevator call buttons are placed horizontally whereas some are situated vertically. The size of the panels is different. For many of them the color is dark brown, and it is too dark so see brown on brown.

Ms. Ray stated the intercom is so small and irregular, it needs to be replaced. There is a telephone signage. Is it still relevant? The signage needs to be easily readable.

Mr. Crawford stated the objective is to have uniform and consistent design to the elevators for easy access for all riders. The committee needs to ensure Metro implements the program. Mr. Crawford proposed a motion to accept the recommendations and proceed to the AAC, seconded by Mr. Sheehan, the motion carried.

Mr. Sheehan stated that regarding the Blue and Yellow Line projects, if recommendations were not added to the project by now, they will not be added. The elevator contracts have already been issued. Considering this, going forward, the Committee would like to see any recommendations be entered in any future procurements.

Dr. Posner asked Carol Lopez, Access Design Review Manager, ADAP, are the elevators involved in the project involving renovation of the stations south of the National Airport? Ms. Lopez stated this platform repair effort does not involve elevators. The escalators will be fixed at the Huntington station; however nothing is being changed on the elevators.

Dr. Posner stated his concern about an elevator that was rehabilitated and still the same colors (brown on brown) were used. Dr. Posner stated the history buffs that want us to travel in caves, rather than be able to have useful and functional (units), they had the new elevator that was replaced at the Capitol South station, again, in chocolate brown color. With brown on brown, it is difficult to see and use the buttons and makes it very dark. Ms. Lopez stated when we rehab the interior of a historical, per se, elevator, we do follow that type of design criteria. However, we have elevated our lighting standards within the new elevators to 10-foot candles instead of the 5-foot minimum requirement by the ADA. We should see better inside and outside of the elevator. Dr. Posner stated inside the elevator, our body blocks the lighting and creates a shadow and dark color does not help.

Ms. Ray provided a solution: retool the signage, change it from brown on brown, and have raised letters. Ms. Ray also stated that it is an inexpensive solution. Dr. Posner stated for this topic, today's quorum can be used in case there is no quorum in the AAC meeting.

Open Gangways:

Dr. Posner stated we should keep in mind that everything the Committee asks for, has a cost. The final decision will be made by the Board, the General Manager/Chief Executive Officer (GM/CEO), and their staff. Over the years power structure has changed and in the past 5 years, the GM/CEO makes a lot of the decisions. When the committee makes

recommendations, we need to say this would be great, how much would it cost, and what would be the return on the investment. When the committee presents the matter, we need to find out who is going to be the decision-maker and present it to that person or the decision-making group. We have presented the open gangways to the GM/CEO and the Board. They have weighed-in their decision. At this point, they are going to have the 8000-series. For future, we can send them updates as to why other places are adopting the open gangways, show the safety issues, show that it works, and is functional. The Committee can show that the open gangway is safe for boarding and evacuating the train, especially in tunnel evacuations. Dr. Posner stated do not be disappointed if it does not happen now. We need to be persistent and continue to provide relevant materials.

Mr. Oberg and Mr. Sheehan, both agreed with Dr. Posner's comments and stated we need to remain with what is in our streamline, what we like, and what is the scope of the work. As per Dr. Posner's comments, we do we have the safety issue identified for this subject. Moving forward it is a good idea to develop a white paper with developments and updates as they become available and to emphasize on safety points as that is a sound and makeable argument. Ms. Ray agreed and recommended to investigate if open gangways are accessible or can be designed with accessible egress for accessibility.

New/Old Business and Work Plan Updates:

Dr. Posner proposed to discuss escalator configuration and the Cashless Bus Project.

Dr. Posner asked Mr. Shaffer to provide an update on the Cashless Bus Project. He also asked about the status on the escalator configuration. At some stations, the escalator from the mezzanine to the platform is the furthest one. This is the case at Ballston and the Courthouse stations. Dr. Posner also inquired if street elevators are now defaulting to the street level? He noticed that at the Virginia Square Station, the street elevator defaults at the street level. He asked if this is a permanent change? Mr. Shaffer stated there are people who review the traffic flow and escalator direction and he can check on it. He will also confirm about the street elevator default position.

Mr. Ariza-Silva asked about the elevator cameras. Are all of the elevator cameras effectively working? He also asked if the glass at a bus stop shelter is broken, how long does it take to repair? Mr. Blake asked for Mr. Ariza-Silva to send information about the bus shelter location to his office for further review. Mr. Blake also informed the committee that a vast majority of the bus stops in the region are not Metro's property. In that case, it is the responsibility of the local jurisdiction. Mr. Shaffer stated bus stops at Metro stations are Metro property. He also informed Mr. Ariza-Silva that the elevator cameras status will be reviewed.

Mr. Sheehan asked for an update about the railcar barriers. Mr. Blake provided the update. As of Friday, April 5th, 120 cars have been retrofitted. A total of 140 cars are to be retrofitted in March. To date, 580 cars have been retrofitted. This number is 64 cars ahead of target. Mr. Sheehan asked if the information could be provided in percentage? Mr. Blake stated 580 represents 78%, and the expected completion is by the end of May.

Ms. Ray stated there still seems to be a significant inconsistency of the annunciators on Metro buses. There are times when buses are not doing proper annunciations, sometimes not at all, and sometimes the visual signs are not operating. Sometimes the annunciators are working but the volume is so low that you cannot even hear on the front priority seats. Ms. Ray rides the 30-line, 7-line, 28 buses, the CUE buses and others. When buses go through the residential areas, the volume is turned down. Ms. Ray stated they were going to have people in the committee to test it out, not sure if it has been done. Mr. Shaffer asked if Ms. Ray has had problems in any specific areas? He further stated that sometimes the cause is the GPS gets dropped. It is unusual to have a lot of annunciators out. They are tied into the computer system on the bus, that runs the farebox along with other things. Solving it is an Information Technology (IT) issue. Mr. Shaffer asked Ms. Ray if she can identify the bus routes, exact time and the stop location, so that the matter can be reviewed further.

Public Comment:

A customer stated he sees people eating on buses all the time. Where is the Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD)? Mr. Blake stated food is not permitted on Metrorail or Bus. Dr. Posner stated there is some history behind MTPD backing off from enforcing the no eating/drinking rule on Metro. The incident was about a rider eating a candy bar.

The second customer commented about alternatives to Metro service. One of the alternatives is the "first mile last mile (FMLM)" by Lyft, and late-night service. Some of the customers have reduced farecards and not the MetroAccess cards. One very new service is the "first mile last mile." She is not sure if it is for the late-night service. She wants to know about options for a customer who uses a wheelchair, in instances when Metro does not have late night service, and alternate services do not have accessible vehicles. Mr. Blake stated we are going to have our say in the matter before it is finalized. We have shared our feedback with the colleagues. This is a marketing exchange. Customers are not getting a subsidy from Metro. The late-night service is a budget commitment much like the Abilities-Ride program.

The third customer requested that the BRS reviews the issue of bus routes, elimination of bus stops, and service cuts. The service cuts impact everyone not just people with disabilities. She hopes that WMATA does not become privatized. When a customer gets a Fairfax County bus instead of the 2T and it takes double the commute time, it is not a replacement service.

Dr. Posner stated bus service was addressed at the last Bus Transportation Project meeting with Mr. Hamre. The bus service cuts are not made by WMATA, but by the local jurisdictions. WMATA cuts and adjustments are made twice a year on state of good operations. They look at what service is provided, how much it costs, and how much is used. Then they hold public-hearings. There are representatives from the local jurisdictions on the WMATA Board, and we can invite the Board members that represent the regions. We need to talk to them as individuals not as the committee members, as the money comes from the jurisdictions.

Mr. Sheehan stated the Riders Advisory Council (RAC) is also representing on the Bus Transportation Project and has a person on the group advocating on the bus service. WMATA is working towards what they can, along with the local jurisdictions. A preliminary report is going to come out on May 6th. Dr. Posner stated the preliminary report is going to be presented to the AAC, to the RAC, and to the Board.

Ms. Rush stated she has discussed the bus service issue many times. Ms. Ray also stated she has discussed the bus service many times and that the public hearings for bus service changes are held at 5:30 pm or at 6 pm, they are not at the bus stops, perhaps near the bus stops, but if no one shows up right on time, the hearing shuts down. They need to give time to people to get there. That is where the elected officials come together with the decision makers and say these routes are not productive and make the changes.

Mr. Crawford commented about the floating bus stops in the Montgomery County. The transportation in the Montgomery County is being analyzed and the floating bus stops are being reviewed.

Meeting adjourned at 6:05pm.