



# AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

### **Bus and Rail Subcommittee Meeting Minutes: December 10, 2018**

**DUE TO THE INCLEMENT WEATHER, METRO HEADQUARTERS WAS CLOSED ON JANUARY 14<sup>TH</sup>, 2019. AS A RESULT, THE BRS MEETING WAS CANCELED.**

#### **Attendees**

Present: Tino Calabia (Chair), Anthony Oberg (Vice-Chair), Elvir Ariza-Silva, Darnise Bush, Erin Coneys, Charlie Crawford, Melanie Jackson, May Kay McMahon, Phil Posner, and Patrick Sheehan.

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Calabia called the Bus Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

Chair Calabia started with introductions of the committee members.

#### **Approval of Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes**

The Agenda was approved.

The prior meeting minutes were approved.

Chair Calabia paid homage to the former President George Herbert Walker Bush for signing the ADA Act in 1990 during his Presidency. Dr. Posner also commented about the former President's support for the needs of persons with disabilities and seniors.

#### **Ombudsman's Report**

David Shaffer, Ombudsman, Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated he had resolved all of the pending issues. Mr. Shaffer provided an update on the lighting matters at various stations where lighting has been updated on the lower levels. Some of the stations are on the Green Line, for example Gallery Place, Archives, and L'Enfant Plaza. Dr. Posner stated that the lighting has not been updated at the Rosslyn station lower level. He also mentioned about higher fare evasion issues.

Christiaan Blake, Assistant General Manager (Acting), Access Services, provided an update about the issue of train operators not being able to see the entire length of a train, especially eight car trains, at platforms. A previous recommendation of the AAC was to put monitors at the end of platforms for train operators to see the entire length of the platforms. At both the Silver Spring and Rhode Island Avenue stations, on the Red Line platforms in the direction of Shady Grove, there is a monitor at the end of the platform, and operators can use see the entire length of the platform. Dr. Posner stated that the committee had suggested to use the security cameras. Mr. Blake stated he does not know if that is the feed being used, however, WMATA staff have taken up this charge and have started this experiment.

#### **Announcements**

Mr. Oberg initiated a document that was emailed to all the committee members prior to the meeting. The document was outlined into the parts that Steve Kaffen had provided earlier, stating that the AAC looks to shorten and clarify the messages given on the 7000-series trains. Excerpt from the circulated email is as follows:

*The AAC offers the following as a more pertinent message to all metro riders. We thank you for your consideration:*

***During RUSH HOURS:***

- *Careful of the gap between cars on this 7000-Series train;  
This is: [NAME of the station];*
- *This \_ \_ \_ line train goes to [last stop's name];*
- *Next stop [NAME of next stop];  
Chimes  
Doors closing.*

Mr. Oberg asked how does the AAC recommend the changes? Dr. Posner stated we will talk about the following forms of announcements: audio, visual, platform, in train, and bus announcements. Number of announcements are 18 seconds of time, there are five (5) seconds of time not used. It is important to use those five (5) seconds. Important information for announcements are as follows: type of train, destination, and train line. Coordinated information of arriving train should also be displayed on the Passenger Information Display System (PIDS). Dr. Posner also mentioned that there was a recommendation to have monitors at the foot of the escalator/elevator, so that people coming down the escalator and out of the elevator have information in front of them. Those are the visual announcements that go along with the verbal announcements.

Ms. Coneys commented about elevator outages to be announced in trains at-least two stations prior to the station with elevator outage. Mr. Oberg stated he mentioned this issue in his write up. Mr. Oberg also recommended to add information inside the trains along with bringing back that announcement. There is a disadvantage that visually impaired riders have because most of the information is displayed visually. Dr. Posner stated that in the morning, he received an email from WMATA to be informed that the alerts can be sent via text or email. People who have signed up for Metro Alerts, may start checking for outages while in trains. They (WMATA) are attempting to improve.

Dr. Posner asked Chair Calabria for his friends in New York to get activated and ask them to give information about their announcements and what has been working for them. It would be good to know what has been working for Philadelphia and Boston, and find out what they can do on their scroll (feature). Chair Calabria stated he had shared a New York Times article about New York Subway on announcements some time ago. Their announcement update might not be complete at this time, but we can get update. Chair Calabria also stated announcements to be broken down to two segments: rush-hour and non-rush-hour. Train announcements can be different for the two segments as appropriate. Dr. Posner stated five (5) seconds of silence should be utilized by adding the following announcement: please move away from the door so people can exit and

enter the trains. Chair Calabria stated modifications of sequence would be brought to the full committee meeting.

Dr. Posner stated that Mr. Kaffen has proposed some recommendations on the bus announcements: bus fare, destination, next stop, and a message about the priority seats. In New York they have information displayed on the monitors. For trains, they have important messages displayed on the monitors. For example, a message about giving up a seat for someone with crutches. Chair Calabria mentioned about scrolling messages that were removed from the WMATA system. Mr. Oberg recapped recommended announcements: differentiate for bus and rail. Sections could be added for trains: platforms vs trains, elevator outages to be reinstated, use the five (5) seconds of silence. Regarding recommended bus announcements, add: destinations, stop (being serviced), next stop, bus fare, and a message about usage of priority seating. For cashless bus system, it will be good to have an announcement that states: this is a cashless bus.

### **Mobility Device Safety**

Dr. Posner asked Dr. B. Moore-Gwynn, Eligibility Certification and Outreach, is there any information provided to customers on safety? Dr. B. stated travel training does provide some information about safety. Staff from Travel Training can attend one of the AAC meetings and share more details. Chair Calabria asked when is the next travel training session? Dr. B stated travel trainings are done for individual people, trainers go out as needed. Dr. Posner stated there used to be *Train the Trainer* sessions, where individuals of various organizations would get trained for them to train their own staff. Dr. B stated there will be another one in 2019. Ms. Coneys recommended for new Metro customers with disabilities to have a mandatory travel training session. Dr. B stated that ELIG encourages people to contact them directly for travel training. Dr. Posner recommended for people with disabilities and Reduced Fare customers to also get a form of travel training, and for them to receive a sheet with safety recommendations.

### **Cashless Bus Pilot and Expansion**

Chair Calabria discussed the two videos taken in New York that he had emailed to the committee members a few weeks ago. The videos were about the outdoor machines at bus stops along the routes of express buses. At that time Ms. McMahon had mentioned about cost associated with those machines. Dr. Posner stated WMATA is still gathering data for cashless program. They do not have initial data from the study. When it was initially tried they looked at machines, and the internal study showed it was not feasible for various reasons along with safety. In Seattle, WA, they do have cashless trains. Chair Calabria stated in the central part of Seattle they used to have free buses. Dr. Posner stated free buses still exist. He added that WMATA Board Chair Jack Evans proposed free buses in the WMATA system. If free buses were to go in effect, they must review how much fareboxes are collecting along with other costs associated. The study data may not be available until after the New Year.

Chair Calabria mentioned about decriminalization of fare evasion. If buses were free everywhere, there won't be any issue of fare evasion. Mr. Oberg stated until we have information from studies, we may not have anything more to say beyond what has been

discussed thus far. Dr. Posner stated WMATA will have to have public hearings before implementation of any change.

## **New/Old Business and Work Plan Updates**

### New Business

Chair Calabria discussed the Falcon Transportation vehicle that was viewed by committee members. This vehicle is used as an elevator shuttle at the Suitland station. Dr. Posner stated the seats were nice on the vehicle if there are no wheelchairs used at the same time. If a customer in a wheelchair board the vehicle, multiple seats will have to be removed. Ms. McMahon stated for someone more apt to step up to enter/exit the vehicle, the steps are narrow. Dr. Posner stated Mr. Crawford had difficulty exiting the vehicle. The handrail needs to be positioned outward. Ms. Coneys stated the steps should be skid resistant and there is no handrail on top. There could be a fold up kind of top handle/hand rail at the entrance door.

Mr. Blake clarified that the vehicle is intended for customers in wheelchairs. That van is used as a shuttle only for elevator outages, so that customers can be transported to another station with working elevator. He added, however, that all comments made by the committee members are being noted and will be communicated with the contractor, Falcon Transportation. Ms. Ray had made some comments in a previous meeting about rear loading of a customer in a wheelchair, and that was the reason for the committee to see this vehicle. Dr. Posner stated if elevators and escalators both go out of service at a station, there is no way for customers with disabilities to get in or out of that station. Mr. Blake stated comments will be shared with the contractor. Ms. Coneys stated that there was no place for a walker to be secured in the vehicle. Mr. Crawford shared his experience: it was very hard to maintain his balance due to narrow steps, he did not have to descent to the floor to exit the vehicle, but had no other choice.

Chair Calabria asked if the same shuttle will be used at West Falls Church station after Suitland? Mr. Blake stated the shuttle will be used at the next station that is scheduled to have the elevator work completed. Recommendations of the AAC are important. WMATA is looking at various options. Mr. Oberg stated since it is not a Metro vehicle, but a contractor vehicle, we may not get all the changes that are being recommended. However, we can move forward with our recommendations to be placed for future contracts. Mr. Crawford stated, for the record, that the General Manager says safety is first. The vehicle he saw has very narrow steps. It is a question of safety not just accessibility. Dr. Posner shared his conversation with the driver about seats. The driver informed that the seats get moved up for wheelchairs. Mr. Blake stated that is how the vehicle is set up for use.

### Old Business:

Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that he saw a cartoon video on the screen while he was aboard a 7000-series train. The video showed what will happen if you walk on bumpy tile, fall off the platform, and a train services the station at that time. The video was approximately 10 to 15 seconds long. To be more effective, the cartoon video should be shown on the entire screen instead of a small corner of it as it was shown. Dr. Posner stated there is a

cartoon video about the bumpy tiles and one about the buses. The AAC had recommended that for the 8000-series. Showing those cartoons will be more effective on platform screens.

Mr. Ariza-Silva shared his experience of a person using an elevator as a restroom. This incident happened at the Gallery Place station. This incident delayed Mr. Ariza-Silva in being able to use the elevator due to the foul odor not to mention uncleanliness of the elevator. Mr. Ariza-Silva asked what is the best way to stop this, can we use animated cartoons to teach people not to use elevators as restrooms? Chair Posner stated the District of Columbia (DC) is looking to have free restrooms for people to use. A motion to support DC's effort for free restrooms will be made in the full AAC meeting since there was no quorum in today's meeting.

Mr. Crawford discussed about Metrorail dwell time. He asked if it has been factored in as to how long does it take from the start time to end time of a route? There have been variations over the past few years. Is there an optimal way to measure dwell time and time of the route? Chair Calabria explained the background of this topic. Ridership is falling for various reasons. Schedule may not meet expectations for many riders. In July there were two long articles in the New Yorker magazine. The new General Manager for the New York subway reviewed how to reduce the dwell time as well as running time and found that the trains were running slower than they did a 100 years ago due to an accident a decade or so ago. Chair Calabria asked does WMATA have same kind of data on scheduling of trains and running time between stations? Dr. Posner stated, historically, when track-work or other work is being done, trains go slower. The Committee has requested for longer dwell time, so that seniors and persons with disabilities will have more time to enter and exit the trains. Slower trains are for safety reasons. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has been on WMATA for safety. Mr. Sheehan asked if trains will go in automatic mode soon? Dr. Posner stated it is scheduled for Red Line as a test. Mr. Oberg stated the AAC should remember the accessibility issues. Chair Calabria stated if trains go faster through the stations, it may provide more dwell time at platforms. Dr. Posner suggested for the Director of Metrorail Operations or a spokesperson to come and speak with the AAC and provide with information on this topic.

Chair Calabria asked if there was any further information about the two incidents involving persons in wheelchairs? Mr. Blake stated, as motioned during the AAC meeting, MTPD staff will come and talk about the issue with the AAC. Chair Calabria asked about update from the local first responders. Mr. Blake clarified that there was a motion and it was agreed upon that the AAC or members will request information from the local first responders.

Ms. Coneys asked if it is possible for a sensor to be placed that will alert people if they get too close to the edge of the platform. When trains arrive, the sensors disconnect. Mr. Sheehan stated what was tried previously and explained the reasons as to why it did not work.

#### Work-Plan Updates

Topics listed on the work-plan: Status of Recommendations and Actions, were discussed. An update on the Metrorail lighting project was requested. Some of the projects that have been completed were confirmed. Some projects that need to be left as ongoing, were discussed as well. What may be required for those projects was also discussed. Any topic that needs to be added to the document was also discussed. The Status of Recommendations and Actions document, will be updated accordingly.

**Public Comments:**

L. Thomas Mangrum Jr. commented about elevator outage announcements not being made on trains. Mr. Mangrum shared his experience while he was aboard a train, unaware of elevator outage. He exited the train and found out about the elevator outage when he arrived at the elevator. Had he known about the elevator outage while still on the train, he could have continued to the next station and could have avoided wasting his time as he had to wait over 20 minutes for the next train and continue his commute.

Mr. Blake stated that Denise Rush raised this issue at the last Board Meeting. As a result, there has been a change in the policy and process of implementation is in progress.

**Meeting adjourned at 5:52pm.**