



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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### **BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: January 13, 2020**

In attendance: Tino Calabia (Chair), Anthony Oberg (Vice-Chair), Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford, Rico Dancy, Melanie Jackson, Philippa Mezile, Denise Rush, Patrick Sheehan, Phil Posner (Remote Participation), and Mary Kay McMahon (Listen to Meeting).

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Calabia called the January 13, 2020, Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

#### **Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

The BRS approved the January 13, 2020, meeting agenda.

The BRS approved the December 9, 2019, meeting minutes as written.

#### **Metrobus Changes – WMATA Budget:**

The meeting began with Chair Calabia asking Carol Peredo Lopez, Director, Office of Americans with Disabilities Act Policy and Planning (ADAP), about updates on the WMATA Budget. He asked whether WMATA coordinates with local jurisdictions in considering changes to bus service. Ms. Lopez answered that nothing has changed since December 2019. Concerns about using cash only with surcharge were raised in the previous meeting. Chair Calabia asked if bus routes in Maryland were taken into consideration with local jurisdictions; if bus routes were to be cut, would supplemental service in the area be considered. Chair Calabia shared that there is a pilot called Ride-On Flex in the Montgomery County. This pilot allows people who do not have fixed route service, to call for a van and be taken to their destinations at a low-cost. The pilot is servicing two of the townships (Silver Spring and Wheaton) within Montgomery County. A similar program has been implemented in Northern Virginia. A program of such nature can be considered as supplemental service when Metro bus cuts happen.

Ms. Peredo Lopez stated the pilot may be in the Rockville Station area, where a shuttle can be taken to go around a determined area. The objective is to develop that area and build it into a community. When the Office of Bus Planning changes routes they do an overall holistic study with other bus systems and review underutilized bus routes. Chair Calabia stated if the chosen area is Rockville or any other jurisdictions, the pilot in Montgomery County might alleviate problems for people who may lose Metro fixed route service. Ms. Peredo Lopez mentioned a program in Prince George's County and shared that the Maryland Transportation Authority (MTA) is ending its service to a park-and-ride-lot therefore, there will not be a need for service. In Virginia, bus routes 3Y, 7F, and 7A, are also being considered for the bus changes proposals. Chair Calabia asked for more information on Prince George's County, Montgomery County, and Northern Virginia. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated she would follow up on the requested information.

Ms. Rush stated cash is going to be accepted as mode of fare payment on Metro buses, however there will be a surcharge of 25 cents. People who are barely able to pay \$2, will

be penalized for using cash. Dr. Posner shared information about the budget proposals that were on [wmata.com](http://wmata.com): The General Manager is proposing an increase of 25 cents to cash fares, and 25 cents on cash loading on a bus. The Board is suggesting an even larger penalty and even a larger increase for fare. This will be discussed on Thursday, January 16, 2020, during the Financial Committee Meeting. Dr. Posner stated he will send out updated information that same evening. He also said that there is a recommendation for the weekend flat fare to be \$2.50 and \$2.75, rather than \$2.00. Ms. Rush stated if passed, that would increase MetroAccess fares. Dr. Posner stated the Committee can discuss are the bus fares and MetroAccess fares.

Vice-Chair Oberg stated after the Board Meeting, we will know what is on the docket and should tailor our points, as AAC members, accordingly as to what we want and what we do not want. The purpose of this discussion is to identify our concerns and be ready to participate in the public hearings with as many people as possible, as it sounds like they are going ahead with increases which were opposed by us. Ms. Rush asked if MetroAccess highest fare might change back to \$7.00. Dr. Posner stated nothing has been said about a MetroAccess fare increase. Chair Oberg recapped that the fixed route fare may increase, however the maximum fare on MetroAccess may not change. Dr. Posner stated the General Manager is proposing an increase on Metrorail, but has not mentioned anything about MetroAccess, and if they do not discuss it, they may be totally ignoring MetroAccess. We might have to come up with our points. Dr. Posner stated they are penalizing the poorest of the poor.

Chair Calabria asked if these concerns may be included in the talking points. Dr. Posner stated he will have all the information, i.e. proposals, impacts, etc. The information will be included in the Board Report, as well. The initial proposal is what the Board and the General Manager is asking for today. However, that is not the final proposal, therefore there is an opportunity. On several occasions we have asked for flat fare and along with the Riders Advisory Council (RAC), we have proposed no penalty for the cash fares. We must be prepared to be in attendance for the public hearings.

Chair Calabria stated there is a multi-million-dollar loss due to fare evasion, and if that could be recovered, perhaps it will help with some of the issues being discussed. He stated if we refine the existing technology of counting passengers and add an announcement asking if a fare is paid, it could be utilized for shaming the fare evaders, resulting in decreased fare evasion. Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services, stated we are very much in-line to your comments. For the sake of safety and beneficial to the fares point, we are adding video screens and audios to let customers view themselves and their interaction with operators in hopes of reducing assaults. It can be seen which customer has evaded the fare, and the customer see themselves, therefore it may help reduce the fare evasion. Chair Calabria stated regarding fare

evaders, it might be a concern that the video for facial recognition is very much flawed, (could be applied?), and for privacy concerns, what do you do with that? Mr. Blake stated when he was with MTM, they had video on buses. The ACLS sued MTM and the argument was that MTM is not a private venue. He thinks the video may be used for other aspects including prosecution purposes. Perhaps Ms. Lopez and Ms. Sharma may find the correct point of contacts and invite them to the BRS and share information.

Ms. Jackson stated some of the operators allow the riders to ride without paying, how can that be addressed? Mr. Blake stated it may be a method of de-escalation. The fares are posted, drivers are supposed to ask for fare, but they are instructed not to argue with customers, and to call Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD). It becomes a balancing act because if MTPD is called, the operators may end up spending 20 to 25 minutes waiting and wasting time of all the riders aboard the bus. We do have MTPD traveling through the system. For frequent evaders, the operators may inform MTPD and have the officers check specific routes and/or stops. Ms. Jackson stated the younger ones are the ones who evade most of the fares. She has seen under cover police officers on Routes 70s and 79s.

Chair Calabia asked Ms. Peredo Lopez to provide exact number of fare evasion. Ms. Peredo Lopez will provide the requested information. Vice-Chair Oberg stated sometimes the machines also makes mistakes and do not count the card, and you do not want to use that incident for shaming customers and hopes that would be considered.

Mr. Crawford stated a part of his responsibility as Access for All, Council of Governments, is for him to report issues to the Access for All. He asked the Committee if he could share with the Access for All, the disproportionate level of the proposed budget concerning MetroAccess and cash situations. Upon Chair Calabia's request, Mr. Crawford would provide specifics to the Committee.

Dr. Posner stated the Committee can review the entire WMATA proposed budget or review specific pages that he provided. Vice-Chair Oberg found the fare evasion amount as of July was \$26 million. Ms. Peredo Lopez would confirm this amount.

**Tech Accessible Station Lab:**

Prior to the meeting, Chair Calabia had shared an email about information on New York City stations. During the meeting, Chair Calabia reviewed the pictures that were previously shared with the Committee. The various pictures showed information and notifications posted for customers. Regarding a picture that showed information on the electronic board, Ms. Peredo Lopez reminded the Committee that the staff that presented the Passengers Information Display Systems (PIDS) in a previous meeting, had informed about the amount of information that could be placed as per the ADA guidelines, and the

side-screens are being reviewed for customer friendly information. Chair Calabia stated let us think of what can be done in the future using the existing technology used by other Transit agencies and perhaps using the larger screens to display the needed information could be an option. Since, the new Potomac Yards station is being planned. We should think what we can use and try it at that station. Vice-Chair Oberg stated the lab was at a single station to try several technologies and the pilot ended in December 2019 and recommended to get the results of that pilot. Chair Calabia stated the pictures he shared were taken over the past couple of years. He has contacted the New York System and is waiting on a response to get information about the lab. He has also contacted a couple of the advisory committees like the AAC and would prefer to speak with them to gather additional information about the current technology being used in their system.

Mr. Crawford recommended to share the information in audio, as well as pictorial options. Ms. Peredo Lopez asked for clarity on the pictorial information to be provided in audio. Mr. Crawford stated the means as to how it would occur would be a topic of discussion. The content being conveyed on the screen, whether it's words or pictures is not easy to describe unless stated verbatim. That may mean the train would have left the station before the information completes. Ms. Peredo Lopez clarified the information shared by Chair Calabia in the forms of pictures, have words. She read the message from one of pictures that was displayed. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated if we announce these general messages at the time of the train arrival, it may get lost with other possible announcements. To verbalize all the information and for the customer to hear it, headphones may be needed along with activation of the audio by a button.

Mr. Sheehan stated if these are canned information/announcements, they can be captured on a smartphone and/or a tablet application (app). Ms. Peredo Lopez stated that could be like a Beacon system, but how would that help the customers without a smart phone? WMATA explores a lot of technology and for a system like New York, we can possibly ask them how they are making the information accessible for people who are blind. Chair Calabia stated when he receives the information from New York System, he will share it with the Committee.

**Public Comment:**

There were no public comments for this meeting.

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

Anu Sharma, Accessibility Advisory Committee Coordinator (AACC), ADA Policy and Planning, provided an update on the previously discussed lighting issue at the Friendship Heights station.

Vice-Chair Oberg clarified an issue about reserved accessible parking spaces in Metro operated garages, previously mentioned by an AAC member. Ms. Peredo Lopez shared

relevant information: the reserved spaces are only until 10 am and there are 21 people on the wait list at the East Falls Church station. Ms. Peredo Lopez recommended that Kelley Simoneaux could park at the West Falls Church station, as there are more available spaces at that station. Chair Calabria stated not having reserved, accessible parking spaces amounts to unequal treatment. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated this is the first time we heard this issue and we are looking into it. Mr. Sheehan asked whether parking at the West Falls Church Station would meet Ms. Simoneaux's needs. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated we would really need to know what time Ms. Simoneaux is getting to the station. We need to work with her and accommodate her. Vice-Chair Oberg stated the issue is not that the spots cannot be reserved, the issue is that we do not have the capacity.

### **Bus Transportation Project Update**

Allison Davis, Director, Strategic Planning WMATA, and Lora Byala, provided an update about the Bus Transportation Project (BTP). The bus value proposition and the core values were provided to the Committee. The BTP is a collaborative transformation and it is a broad and deep process. The staff provided strategy recommendations. They also shared differences from the initial to the final strategy. There were several recommendations along with examples of activities that are underway in this region. The plan of action was provided, and the action plan was shared, with key outcomes of implementing the bus transformation strategy. The Committee was advised of the next steps to transform the bus service in this region. The strategy shared with the AAC is posted online for anyone who would like to view it. Due to insufficient time, any questions of the Committee members would be provided to the staff later, to be responded by WMATA and the consulting staff.

Chair Calabria commented about the Ride-On Flex program and asked how does that fit in with the BTP? There are other jurisdictions in Northern Virginia, and he would send his questions along with any other questions that the members may have. There was a question about Prince George's County's service. Ms. Byala stated Prince George's County was involved in the project from the beginning.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.