



# AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

### **Bus and Rail Subcommittee Meeting Minutes: July 8, 2019**

#### **Attendees**

Present: Tino Calabia (Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Darnise Bush, Rico Dancy, Melanie Jackson, Mary Kay McMahon, Phil Posner, Denise Rush, and Remote Participation - Anthony Oberg (Vice-Chair).

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Calabia called the Bus Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm and started with introductions of the Committee members.

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

The meeting agenda was approved.

The June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Meeting Minutes were approved as written.

#### **Senior Rail Management: Meet & Greet Session:**

Lisa Woodruff, Senior Vice President, Rail Services, and Laura Mason, Chief, Rail Infrastructure Maintenance and Engineering, attended the Meet & Greet Session. Ms. Woodruff was re-hired at WMATA on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019. Before her retirement and going to Los Angeles Transit as the Deputy Chief of LA Metro for 7 months, she worked 28 years at WMATA. She has always been on the rail transportation side and spent 20 years in the Control Center. Her last job at WMATA was the Managing Director of Rail Transportation. Now she is back, has a dynamic team, and hopes to be moving in the right direction.

Ms. Mason has the responsibility of rail infrastructures, everything on which Metrorail rides on: tracks, structures that hold them, the traction power, and the light system. The wayside work planning, capital program, and understanding how we run the rail service, all fall under her responsibilities.

Ms. McMahon asked if the platform improvement project is Rail Division's responsibility. Ms. Mason stated the platform improvement project is not; however, Rail supports it within the Rail Infrastructure. The Rail teams figure out how to manage the shutdown, how to run the rails/rail services, how to coordinate bus services, customer communications, and then the schedule of all the work teams. While the platform work is happening, there are other projects taking advantage of the platform work, so that when we return to service, we do not have to do any further work in those areas.

Dr. Posner asked about waterproofing Red line stations, and on the idea of building a station within a station, is there a schedule on that yet? Ms. Mason stated we piloted the new technology around the Medical Center station about 2 years ago. It has proved to be quite effective. It is focused on certain areas and it gives us more opportunities to respond and address issues related to water infiltration. We are looking at other circle grounding potentially this winter. The evaluation period is being completed.

Ms. Jackson asked what is their vision to improve service for people with disabilities? Ms. Woodruff stated we have a campaign with inter-car barriers on the 7000-series and that has been completed. We listen to our customers with needs, determine what is reasonable, and see what can be done to accommodate those needs unless it is a funding issue.

Chair Calabria asked about the 8000-series contract and hopes that the Committee will be provided with an opportunity to share their feedback before it is designed. Dr. Posner stated 18 of the 21 recommendations by the AAC for the 7000-series cars were adopted. Ms. Woodruff stated she was part of that plan and will move forward with it. Dr. Posner stated the mock ups were great, however, the inter-car-barriers were missed and that could be a lesson learned. Also, the position of the lights is blinding. Ms. Woodruff stated the lessons learned are important. Chair Calabria congratulated the Rail leadership team.

**Status of Proposed Between-Car Barrier:**

Anthony Johnson, Deputy Chief Vehicle Engineer, and David Eisenhower, Assistant Manager, CMNT Engineer, provided a status of the proposed pantograph style inter-car barriers. Chair Calabria stated the Committee provided positive feedback and asked when could they expect to see the barriers on the railcars? Mr. Johnson stated the 30-day test is underway. Mr. Eisenhower stated the paired version is expected to go through the 30-day test. The barriers have been on all the lines except the Red Line and can be seen on various cars. He does not expect them to be taken off after the testing period ends.

Ms. Bush asked about the number of barriers tested and railcars for replacement. Mr. Eisenhower stated one pair is tested currently. There has been a review of a new design based on the comments received. Mr. Johnson stated barriers on 726 rail cars will be replaced. Dr. Posner asked if the pantograph is being tested for weather. Mr. Eisenhower stated it is not possible to test for snow at this time. Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services (ACCS), asked if the legacy cars will be retrofitted? Mr. Johnson stated that is under consideration. Chair Calabria thanked the guests.

**Status of Recommended Train Announcements:**

Donald Goings, Superintendent Rail Infrastructure and Support Services, stated because of the auto door operations, "this is a 7000-series" announcement has been eliminated. The current announcement is "please stand back to allow passengers to exit, the next stop is (name)." Dr. Posner asked when is it going in effect on other lines? Mr. Goings stated after the pilot is proved successful on Red line it may be rolled out on other lines. The elevator outage announcements will continue. The recommendation to display information at the bottom of the escalator will cause a safety issue; thus, it is being reviewed.

Dr. Posner stated the side electronic signs on older rail cars are sometimes blank. The automatic operation reduces the dwell time and asked if that will happen? Mr. Goings stated the automatic announcement is not on the operations, but on the door openings. Chair Calabria stated if it shortens the running time between stations, would that not give more time for dwelling? Mr. Goings stated the doors are closed manually by operators.

Dr. Posner stated the doors are being closed in the middle of announcements. Mr. Goings stated he will review it. Chair Calabria thanked Mr. Goings for coming and sharing information.

**Next Generation Faregate Project Update:**

Mr. Blake shared photographs of the next generation faregates with the Committee via an email prior to the meeting. A guest may be invited to a meeting, possibly in September, to provide an update and answer any questions that the Committee members may have. Chair Calabria shared an article about the fare evasion. Dr. Posner also shared his experience and observation about the fare evasion and stated with the decriminalization, Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) would not be able to do much about fare evasion.

**Ombudsman Report:**

David Shaffer, Ombudsman, ADAP, stated the lighting issues at the L'Enfant Plaza and the Friendship Heights stations were reviewed and it was found that the lights are extremely low. The responsible departments: Elevator and Escalator Department (ELES) and the Plant Maintenance, have been informed. Dr. Posner stated the new escalator lights are blinding. Either changing a bulb or putting a cover may be helpful. Ms. McMahon stated in normal usage those lights are very bright and very hard on the eyes. Mr. Shaffer will check on it and stated the lights at Rosslyn station have been cleaned.

Mr. Shaffer provided his report on the shuttles being used for the summer platform project, and the amount of help available at various locations that are affected by the summer platform project. His findings were that the staff were knowledgeable, they were personally escorting customers to locations: train platform, shuttles, etc. The staff members are really doing extraordinary work. The announcements at the Pentagon bus bays were very soft and that is being worked on. There were some safety issues found around Huntington and those are being reviewed.

Mr. Shaffer stated he has spoken with AIRA (a service that connects blind and low-vision people to remotely located trained agents) and a proposal is expected. This is being done in response to comments received by the Committee. Mr. Blake stated Ms. Rush had mentioned about another service "Be My Eyes", and asked if one service is better than the other? Ms. Rush stated that AIRA is better since people pay for the subscription. Mr. Shaffer stated AIRA trains their agents to know the system. They will have access to our website and trip planner as they help customers.

About the summer platform project, Mr. Blake stated there are many colleagues on site assisting our patrons with disabilities. The shuttle buses have been consistent in their locations. Mr. Shaffer confirmed that was his experience as well. He could have never found shuttles on his own. There are lines with cones and a lot of signs have been displayed for the convenience of the customers. It is not just the physical environment, but there are staff to help customers as needed. Mr. Blake stated we also need to train our staff to know what to look for to be able to assist customers with disabilities.

Mr. Dancy asked how can he call into the meeting while away on vacation? Mr. Blake explained the options. Tonight, we have Vice-Chair Oberg on the line as his commute was severely interrupted due to the weather, and it was needed for him to be able to attend the meeting. Dr. Posner, AAC Chair, is also able to dial in. We do have skype for members to connect. For Mr. Dancy, a resolution was discussed that the Skype video could possibly be turned on for interpreters (present in the meeting) and for him to connect via his video conferencing service.

Mr. Shaffer provided information about the elevator buttons. Four pictures of elevator buttons at the Friendship Heights station were shown to the Committee members. These elevator buttons are lit, which makes them easily visible. Dr. Posner stated the buttons can be found, however, they are not identifiable and that is an issue. Mr. Shaffer stated he will inform ELES. Dr. Posner stated at the L'Enfant Plaza elevators, buttons say "Street" or "Mezzanine" and that is an insufficient description for four entrances/exits, better description informing the exits, and platform levels are needed to reduce confusion.

#### **Beacon Wayfinding Project Update:**

Mr. Shaffer provided an update about the Beacon Wayfinding Project. The project is to develop an application and website that uses technology to assist patrons with disabilities in finding Metrobus stops, navigating Metrorail stations, and navigating transit centers. The existing Bluetooth beacons at seven stations (Gallery Place, Metro Center, L'Enfant Plaza, Fort Totten, Silver Spring, Rosslyn, Navy Yard) will be activated. An additional installation of approximately 150 beacons at Metrorail stations and estimated 2,200 Metrobus stops will be needed.

The project may employ a combination of several wayfinding application features, such as beacon, software, wi-fi, Bluetooth, and 5G (when available) amongst others. Some of the navigational features include: indoor/outdoor positioning, points of interest, mapping and localization, low vision maps, virtual tours, pre-journey planning, audio navigation, route directions, step-by-step navigation, distance calculation, and location-based announcement.

The project will be in compliance with the accessibility standards. The audio navigation routes will be drafted and approved by a certified Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialist. The audio navigation routes will conform to the Consumer Technology Association Inclusive Audio Navigation standard CTA-2076. The website and mobile app will comply with WCAG 2.1 AA, Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, and be as accessible as feasible, subject to testing by WMATA prior to acceptance. The website and application will comply with Title 6 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by being available in different languages, and at least Spanish.

Regarding the breakdown of tasks, the development phase is expected to be completed around December 1, 2019. That would be the initial 15% of the total tasks. With in-between two more milestone tasks, the last 20% of the tasks is expected to be completed in January 2021.

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

Chair Calabria asked about the status of Chevy Malibu that was under consideration. Mr. Blake stated three sedans were demonstrated to the Committee as we want to re-introduce sedans in the MetroAccess fleet. With the criteria set and the sedan of choice finalized, as we were getting ready to purchase 175 Chevy Malibu Hybrid vehicles, the dealer informed that the General Motors is having problems with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and they will not produce the 2020 model. The cost would have been about \$28,000 per vehicle.

Dr. Posner stated tremendous discounts are being offered on the 2019 model of Chevy Malibu. \General Motors have announced to discontinue 5 models and production of Malibu transmissions made in Kansas City, Korea, and China. The dealers will know in August if the Chevy Malibu will be available, thus, better to wait until then.

Mr. Blake stated the sedan now under consideration is the Honda Accord Hybrid, which has 39 inches of rear leg room. Dr. Posner stated the doors open at 90 degrees on the Honda Accord and it is very comfortable. Mr. Blake stated it will be viewed next Monday, July 15<sup>th</sup>, from 3:30pm to 5:00pm. The Committee can provide feedback, and then we'll see how the process proceeds. After receiving an update about the Chevy Malibu Hybrid in August, we will have information to share in September meetings. Mr. Blake stated the Honda cost was approximately \$3000 less than the Chevy Malibu.

Mr. Blake stated passengers may have an option to use the front seat based on preference. A new solicitation for our new generation of MetroAccess vans will be coming up and if the Committee has any recommendations, feedback will be received at that time. Dr. Posner shared his experience on Diamond cab provided by STAR (Arlington County service): the rear seats have attached slide out foot stool. Mr. Blake will review it further.

Chair Calabria stated the escalator usage topic was on a previous agenda. Dr. Posner stated he was informed that it is legal for people to take wheelchairs, strollers, and bikes on the escalators even though it is not recommended.

Chair Calabria asked about the status of the open stroller policy. Mr. Blake stated that was to be reviewed. Dr. Posner stated the AAC recommendations were to be considered. It may be an enforcement issue, but wheelchairs will be a priority. An update is requested.

Chair Calabria recommended for the Committee to be more involved in bus procurement as in the rail procurement and asked if the Committee could get more information. Mr. Blake agreed to have a speaker possibly in September.

Mr. Blake stated two of our members received the MetroAccess pre-arrival calls today. This pilot will, hopefully, be expanded to all the MetroAccess customers soon.

**Public Comment:**

Dr. Posner shared an experience from a recent visit to Philadelphia. All the transfer stations use an announcement on stations, "the next train will be (line), going to

(destination).” They have more frequent trains and more tracks, yet they can announce every single train. They also have a very big screen that displays train information of all the trains servicing. Mr. Blake stated we will review this matter.

**Meeting adjourned at 5:55pm.**