



# AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

#### **Attendees**

Present: Tino Calabia (Acting-Chair), Anthony Oberg, Elver Ariza-Silva, Hazell Brooks, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, and Patrick Sheehan.

#### **Call to Order**

Acting-Chair Calabia called the Bus Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:02 pm.

Acting-Chair Calabia started off the introductions of the Committee members and guest speaker.

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

An update on the Cashless Pilot and Bus Expansion was provided by Catherine E Vanderwaart, Office of Bus Planning.

Ms. Vanderwaart stated that the process of collecting data is in progress. Specific surveys are being done on the 70 and 79 routes to see the impact on customers. Data analysis is being done to determine how well the pilot is working. Additional results will be presented to the BRS in one to two months. The Board will be provided with results of the pilot. A public hearing is being conducted in order to get feedback from riders about cash loading, paying cash fares, the possibility of eliminating cash fares, and cash loading on all Metro extra limited stop routes, which includes Metroway. Ms. Vanderwaart stated that cash transactions are slow and add to the dwell time. Public input is being received via paper surveys in English and Spanish that are being placed at rail stations, online at [wmata.com/bus](http://wmata.com/bus), signs at bus stops. The public hearing will be held on Monday, September 17, 2018.

Ms. Rush asked about accessibility for persons with visual impairment, needing to add a pin number on the farebox? Ms. Vanderwaart clarified there is no need for pin number since, riders cannot use a credit or debit card, they only use a SmarTrip® card. Ms. Rush asked about accessibility for persons with disabilities who may not have MetroAccess cards.

Mr. Alvir-Silva stated when a blind person uses a MetroAccess card, s/he simply taps the card at the farebox. For a person who does not use a MetroAccess card, s/he pays the reduced fare using a SmarTrip® card. Bus operators assist riders when requested, by guiding either in the loading of funds or letting that person go without having to add funds, in a situation where rider's card may have depleted funds.

Ms. Rush inquired about accessibility for a rider who depends upon cash or may not have a SmarTrip card. Ms. Vanderwaart clarified that the pilot route travels where other buses are servicing bus stops in the area. Riders will have the option to use one of the other bus routes. Christiaan Blake, Acting AGM, Access Services, stated accessibility

is built in, and that a person's inability to access some form of electronic payment media actually falls under Title VI. Mr. Blake reminded the BRS that their official jurisdiction does not cover Title VI, but encouraged Committee members to state their Title VI concerns as a matter of record.

Mr. Oberg asked, if assessments found that the pilot was not in compliance with Title VI what may happen. He also asked what kind of information will the upcoming hearing collect and how will that information influence further the deciding factors? Ms. Vanderwaart clarified that the Title VI analysis will have to be approved by the Board before any route could become cash free permanently. At this time it is under review whether route 79 would permanently become cash free or not. If it is determined that the pilot puts disproportionate impact or burden on customers, then further review will be done to ensure all aspects have been taken in to consideration to mitigate those impacts.

On the other surveys, questions are asked as to how people like to pay their fares, which routes they ride, are they transferring? Many people who ride these routes also use Metrorail, and maybe they can switch their loading behavior, i.e. load at a rail station instead on a bus, versus someone who only rides the bus in which loading is going to be much more inconvenienced. Metro is really looking to hear from people; do they like having the option of CVS, Walmart, or Giant? Do they use that? You really can't change how you pay cash on the bus, you have to have a lot of those options nearby, or people can say I can reload online or in rail stations. We know a lot of people feel strongly about this concept. We don't know which routes those passengers are on, so we are trying to get that sort of feedback, but very specifically about these routes, and about how people feel.

There is no pre-registration to speak at the public hearing September 12<sup>th</sup>, which will be held at the Jackson Graham Building. Riders may submit written or electronic comments up to a week after the public hearing. The purpose of the pilot is to determine whether the dwell time is reduced, and to see how the schedule and on-time performance improves.

#### **Approval of Agenda, Board Report, and Prior Meeting Minutes:**

Prior to moving forward, Acting-Chair Calabria asked if a quorum is needed since there were only five members present. Mr. Blake stated that any decision made in the subcommittee has to be brought to the full committee, where there is a quorum requirement, and therefore a quorum is not required for either subcommittee.

The modified meeting agenda was approved.

The July 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes were approved with a request to turn the minutes to bullet points.

#### **Elevator and Escalator Update – Recent Challenges:**

Mr. Oberg commented on feedback received during the AAC meeting from customers regarding elevator outages being a concern; along with accessible faregates that malfunction frequently; lack of sufficient elevator signage; knowing about elevator outages; and better information provided for visitors. He stated that these matters need to be addressed formally.

Mr. Ariza-Silva inquired about the purpose of the Elevator and Escalator Director attending the October AAC meeting, and his decision making powers. Mr. Blake stated that the Elevator and Escalator Director is responsible for making sure all of Metro's vertical devices are in good working order. The Director will explain the challenges the department has faced recently. Mr. Ariza-Silva commented that the Director attended the meeting in October 2017 and the same issues were presented to him during that meeting. He added that it will be interesting to hear as to challenges the department is facing

Ms. Ray asked about the number of elevators that were out during the summer. Were they all out at the same time; and were some of those outages scheduled as opposed to unscheduled. In part, a question was about unscheduled outages, in past meetings and prior, street to mezzanine elevator at Court House was out for two weeks due to some malfunction. Ms. Ray was informed by a station manager that a part was needed, thus the delay in elevator's return to service. She suggested that at stations where there is only one street to the mezzanine elevator, the parts should be available sooner.

Mr. Oberg volunteered to review the Elevator and Escalator Director's comments from the prior meeting, then prepare a list of questions:

- Challenges keeping elevators out
- Public comment took place over in the summer, there were numerous tourists, and people unfamiliar with the Metro system experiencing difficulty locating elevators
- What percentage of elevator outages are planned vs. unplanned
- What is the target for back into operation
- What is the process to get the parts to fix the elevators
- What is supposed to happen with shuttle buses

Ms. Ray stated that the ADA is quite clear and has requirements for maintenance of accessible features. The elevators need to be made accessible for maintenance of accessible features. The elevators need to be made accessible.

#### **Ombudsman Report:**

Mr. Shaffer commented about the numerous complaints about accessible gates. He has spoken with the Engineering staff, and was informed that when these gates are forced open for fare evasion, the accessible gates malfunction. Once reported, the gates were fixed quickly. The alternative is to have higher accessible faregates. Customers can call the Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP) to report these instances.

Mr. Shaffer reported about his test at the NoMA Station, and found really good guidance being provided to customers from the train platform to the shuttle. Lifts in coach buses did not work due to the driver's lack of knowledge or the lift malfunction. Mr. Shaffer also reported that when needed, WMATA buses arrived within three minutes. WMATA buses were parked around the corner, and when a customer could not board a coach bus, a shuttle bus pulled up. Mr. Shaffer stated that coach buses should be accessible at all times and the Office of Bus Planning (BPLN) is working on this issue to see how better service can be provided to customers. In response, to Mr. Shaffer's test, BPLN sent more directives and guidance to customers. In order to provide a better level of service, the issues brought up will be considered for the next track work. Mr. Shaffer also observed that shuttles were tied up in traffic, a lot of buses were delayed because of Georgia Avenue congestion.

Ms. Ray asked whether the coach buses have hydraulic lifts. Mr. Blake stated that we have not audited all the buses, however, coach buses usually have mechanical lifts, and they are very slow. We will continue to work to ensure every single coach bus has a working lift and all of the drivers know how to operate them.

Mr. Ariza-Silva asked whether a representative will be able to receive concerns about the accessible gate outages. Mr. Ariza-Silva commented that it would be helpful for a representative to inform the committee how the gates work and how the system works. Mr. Shaffer informed that he is working with the department to develop a quicker response time. Getting information to the department is the key.

Mr. Sheehan asked for an update about the complaints of customers who had been misinformed about elevators and information about policy. Mr. Blake provided an update on his conversation with the Bus Operations (BUS). As per the reports Mr. Blake received, for example, a customer would be informed that a shuttle could arrive in 30-40 minutes, however, in 3 to 5 minutes, a particular Metrobus will come. Station or Bus Managers are required to say you need a shuttle because the elevator is out of service, but also offer information about the most convenient option available. Due to numerous outages and planned shut-down, BUS has faced challenges in regards to the number of vehicles available for shuttle service .

Mr. Oberg asked Mr. Shaffer if there is any continuous monitoring that will be done, or would he have to depend upon the complaints received? Mr. Shaffer stated he will further monitor, however, he heavily depends upon customer complaints. For the convenience of customers, Mr. Shaffer also provided an email for them to provide their feedback via email: [access@wmata.com](mailto:access@wmata.com)

Ms. Ray asked about an unscheduled elevator outage on a Silver line station. Ms. Ray stated that this comment was brought up in the last week's meeting. Silver line stations have redundant elevators and why did that outage prevent someone using a Silver line station? Mr. Blake stated that he needed additional information on this issue. Ms. Ray stated she was not sure whether one or two elevators were out of service, however, it

happened and would like to know if the other redundant elevator was operating or not? There are many stations that have redundant elevators.

Acting-Chair Calabria requested to get a kit for Lumens and Kelvins testing. This will be helpful for committee members to gauge whether a station is well lit or not.

Mr. Sheehan asked if the lighting was upgraded at the Rhode Island Avenue and Brookland stations. Mr. Blake stated lighting upgrades may have been completed, however the primary focus was the platforms; each is now ADA compliant.

Acting-Chair Calabria asked about the status on the re-lamping, since the LED lights and re-lamping at 25 stations commenced, and was scheduled to be completed by August 2018. Acting-Chair Calabria also asked about the timeline of LED down light fixture replacement project in 14 stations, projected to commence on October 2018 and be completed in July 2019. Mr. Shafer stated he will follow up and provide updates.

Ms. Brooks asked whether escalators at the Southern Avenue station have been included for the lighting project. Ms. Brooks stated on two occasions, while she was attempting to board the train from a crowded platform, doors closed before she could board, however, her cane was in the door. The train operator closed doors, her cane was in the train doors. Had it not been for someone who told her to let go of her cane, she would have ended up on the tracks. This is very scary. She has lost 2 canes due to this is a safety issue. Train doors are closing too quickly. She added that train operators should check before closing doors. Mr. Shaffer commented about his similar experiences. Mr. Shaffer stated train doors are not meant to bounce back like elevator doors. What Ms. Brooks described is not a mechanical issue, it is the people issue. When the door does not close with big items train operators know. A cane is so small, it is hard to notice.

Ms. Ray stated she understands that the WMATA board and staff want to decrease dwell time, and that announcements have and will be made so needed barriers will be placed for customers to be able to find the door. Ms. Ray stated it should be the other way around, especially during rush hour. Ms. Ray commented on the lighting. Some stations, such as Court House and Metro Center, lighting changed half way and that is making it worse as half of the station where old lights still exist, it seems darker than before.

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

In the interest of time, Mr. Blake recommended to discuss the 8000 series recommendations. Mr. Blake stated the Project Manager will be attending the October full committee meeting. As per the RFP, Metro is looking for a contractor for design and to construct. At this time, specifications were not found. Mr. Sheehan asked if WMATA is looking at RFP or RFI? Mr. Blake stated RFP.

Mr. Oberg stated that Metro has put forth the proposal for someone to design this train. That any company will say we can build the train and then comes the design

specifications after that. Mr. Blake stated the bid seems to be on both: cost for design and build. In past, for the 7000 series, we had a proposal of who will design and build 7000. The AAC had 18 recommendations, and 17 were adopted and are in the fleet now.

Mr. Sheehan stated there was a mock up car in which we could walk in. Mr. Blake commented yes, there was a mock up car, but reminded the committee that the full committee took a motion to see a whole train, not just one car mock-up. Mr. Sheehan stated the Riders Advisory Committee (RAC) is also very much in sync with that recommendation for ridership reasons.

Acting-Chair Calabria recommended for a RAC representative to join the AAC discussion on the 8000-series car.

**Public Comment:**

Steven Gantt, a Washingtonian, stated that Metro is broken. Mr. Gantt's primary concern is about fare evasion. He uses public transportation and pays \$17.50 every week. Mr. Gantt sees police officers as he uses the rail system. He does understand that rail makes money for the entire system. If people do not pay fares, then what is the purposes of fareboxes on buses? Mr. Gantt sees fare evasion in Landover and District Heights the most. Mr. Gantt takes pride and pays his fare, however something needs to be done about people who don't pay. Fare increases do not affect the fare evader, however, it affects the rider who pays fares. Mr. Gantt rides Metro system from 9 am, and sees that 20 - 25 people who do not pay fares in the hour and a half of his ride. Mr. Gantt commented about the low level of maintenance and how it needs to improve around some of the following stations: Deanwood, Addison Road, Capitol Heights, and Minnesota Avenue.

Mr. Sheehan responded on fare evasion. This was the topic of last RAC meeting. A Police Officer shared information in the RAC meeting including M bus operators are instructed not to challenge a person who does not pay. Instead they will press a button to alert about fare evasion. They are assigning under-cover police officers to stop and will catch the fare evader when they get off. Also in stations, emergency gates are equipment gates. They are locked now. Fare evasion is a big issue and is widely known. The police department is working on it. They are very much focusing on it.

**Meeting adjourned at 6:02pm.**