



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
202-962-6060

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

In attendance: Tino Calabia (Chair), Anthony Oberg (Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Darnise Bush, Rico Dancy, Melanie Jackson, Steven Kaffen, Mary Kay McMahon, Phil Posner, Paul Semelfort, Patrick Sheehan, and Kelley Simoneaux

#### **Call to Order**

The BRS meeting was held virtually. Anu Sharma, Accessibility Advisory Committee Coordinator (AACC), started by admitting all the participants in to the “meeting room”, followed by a roll call at 4:01 p.m. Ms. Sharma read the Agenda for all the participants. Thereafter, Chair Calabia moved the meeting forward.

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

The BRS approved April 13, 2020, meeting agenda.

The BRS approved the March 9, 2020, meeting minutes as written.

#### **Handbook Metrobus Design Recommendations**

Chair Calabia started the discussion of the Handbook Metrobus Design recommendations. Given the current environment, recommendations could be helpful for future similar situations. Dr. Posner stated the protective and preventive measures that have already effective on Metrobus and MetroAccess: the new shields and their effectiveness, new cameras, rear boarding and no fare being charged, limited number of customers on MetroAccess vehicles for social distancing, are all part of protecting the operators as well as the customers. Chair Calabia stated matters that arose due to rear boarding for passengers using the mobility devices as front door boarding is for passengers using wheelchairs. Dr. Posner stated Paul Wiedefeld, General Manager/Chief Executive Officer (GM/CEO) has already taken appropriate steps that are being followed. As a result, there have not been any complaints about this matter.

Vice-Chair Oberg stated since the process of bus procurement is yearly, we need to review the topics to be discussed. He also recommended to review the changes that may have taken place from the previous procurement. Chair Calabia stated the handbook may be a guide not only for WMATA, but to be considered by other regions as well. Carol Peredo Lopez, Director, ADA Policy and Planning, clarified that buses are procured annually with some minor changes as needed. Ms. Peredo-Lopez welcomes the ideas of how to improve buses for the future. Chair Calabia stated the interest is to help WMATA, its riders, and other transit agencies. Dr. Posner recommended involvement in other Advisory Boards and local jurisdictions to present recommendations to improve regional buses for the future. Vice-Chair Oberg stated we are the Advisory Board for WMATA. The Committee can advise regional transit agencies through their advisory Boards by submitting

recommendations. Chair Calabia welcomed the idea and asked for various avenues to be shared.

### **Blue/Orange/Silver Lines Capacity and Reliability Study**

Mark Phillips, Senior Transportation Economist, Strategy Planning and Program Management, presented the Blue/Orange/Silver Lines Capacity and Reliability Study. The study has been going on for a year, it is an attempt to address the major issues we have. Three lines run on one track and tunnel from Potomac to Anacostia Rivers causing capacity constraints and reliability issues. The purpose is to review the needs, data, identify constraints, and create short/long term strategies for capital/operating expenses.

Mr. Phillips shared a map of two mile radius of the entire Orange/Silver line and for Blue line from Largo to Pentagon. It needs to start now because if this study reflects a need for a project to fix the Blue/Orange/Silver corridor, we are looking at a 10 to 20 year project. Mr. Phillips shared a graph showing impacts on other two lines in case one has an issue.

*The meeting was paused to allow the American Sign Language interpreters to switch.*

Mr. Phillips continued and stated it does not only impact trains, it also creates crowding on platforms, escalators, and stairwells. If there is a severe disruption on one of the three lines, it can impact the entire system except the Red line as Yellow line is in-line with Blue and Green lines. This project will review the capacity of trains through the tunnel, more flexibility, capability to move trains around the system, and respond to incidents in a more timely fashion.

By 2040, there is going to be exponential growth in this region that will impact the already crowded trains between Courthouse and Rosslyn stations. Even if 8-car trains are run at all times, it may help but not solve the problem. There is no way the existing system is going to keep up or allow us to deploy trains through that tunnel to carry the ridership demand.

Mr. Phillips shared a theoretical mass capacity of 26 trains per hour, in one direction on any one set of tracks. He explained how trains were run up to 2017 and the impacts felt by customers. Unless the service on one line is decreased, it cannot be increased on other lines, as was the case for Blue line service up to 2017.

Any of the projects that we study should further the goals to 2040. There are four goals:

1. Provide sufficiency to meet the future ridership.

2. Improve reliability and on-time performance.
3. Improve overall operational flexibility and cost efficiency
4. Sustainable development and access to opportunity.

Mr. Phillips stated since the beginning of the project in spring 2019, there has been some public input along with review of funding and plans. WMATA's Executive Leadership Team has been involved as have the technical experts, community advisory groups, and elected officials. Mr. Phillips shared the options that are under consideration:

1. Optional Train Turn-Backs.
2. NOVA Circulator.
3. New Blue Line Regional Connections.
4. New Core Loop
5. New Silver Line Connections, North of I-66.

Other options are being considered: reconfiguration of rail car seating, bike connections to buses and trains, reduce platform crowding by sending people to the mezzanine before next train arrival, enhancing bus parallel service, and increasing bus service. The alternative analysis will run through fall 2020. Mr. Phillips invited questions at this time:

Dr. Posner asked whether a concept similar to the Purple line was considered, and recommended the concept of express and local trains similar to New York. Mr. Phillips stated that is basically the street cars and he believes there are currently three cores. The recommendation of express/local trains was discussed and could be a possibility.

Ms. Peredo Lopez asked about the new Blue line regional connections with the Rosslyn Station. Mr. Phillips stated they have not gone into the engineering part, it may be a cross path intended to have a connection. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated the AAC had recommended to have moving walkways for long connections. Due to several reasons it could not be done on the Silver Line. However, for covered locations, that could be a viable option. Mr. Phillips made a point of the recommendation of moving pathways.

Chair Calabria asked challenges for approval of the project. Mr. Phillips stated this is a Metro project and representatives of the jurisdictions are on the Board. The feedback from stake holders has been positive. They have built collaboration and that might help in getting consensus. Chair Calabria stated if Montgomery County is not going to be an affected jurisdiction, then why should they contribute? Mr. Phillips stated that being the case, we have options and we can remove the options accordingly.

Mr. Sheehan asked how this would improve transportation opportunities within the Prince George's County. Mr. Phillips stated he could advise the AAC about the alternatives they move forward will serve Prince George's County in some way. The fourth goal (shared earlier) is to expand access to economic opportunity. There is not a much bigger need in the region for access to economic opportunity than Eastern DC and Prince George's County. He did not think we could claim to have met that goal if we do not serve that area better. Mr. Sheehan agreed and thanked Mr. Phillips for a very good program.

Chair Calabria asked about the number of new stations as per the chosen option. Mr. Phillips could not give a number as they are still doing the conceptual design. With the resources they have, they need to focus on the options rather than design as they cannot do that with a whole set of 18 to 20 alternatives. We have to have housing and employment density. We have to come close to rail serving density for future.

Dr. Posner provided clarification to Chair Calabria's earlier comment about Maryland contributing to this project. The turn-backs at Grosvenor and Silver Spring were purely for Maryland. Similarly, construction for the Silver Line is a regional project.

Mr. Phillips was thanked for the presentation and for joining the BRS meeting.

### **Ombudsman Report**

David Shaffer, Ombudsman, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, provided his report. The issue raised at a previous meeting was about passengers with disabilities boarding buses from rear doors. A few customer complaints were received initially however, there have been no negative reports in the last few weeks. The operators have received notice about the new procedure and it is being followed.

Mr. Shaffer provided an update about the Summer Shutdown. It might start earlier than the original schedule. As previously done, presumptive temporary eligibility may be granted for customers for the duration of the shutdown. The Committee can provide a list of organizations that should be informed about the upcoming summer shutdown.

On behalf of Ms. Rush, Dr. Posner asked for an update about accessibility of Hilton hotel restrooms. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated she did go to Hilton Hotel, and found the doors were a little heavy as stated by Dr. Posner, and the Hilton is working on that issue. There are other accessible restrooms in the building.

Dr. Posner asked about the basis of MetroAccess fares calculation during the summer shutdown. Chris Blake, Managing Director, Access Services, stated as done in past, MetroAccess fares for the impacted area would be based on Metrobus fares.

Mr. Sheehan asked about an update on AIRA, and about the recertification process for MetroAccess customers who need to be recertified in the next couple of months. Mr. Blake stated the customers needing to be recertified would be automatically extended until a time when we can reevaluate. Mr. Shaffer stated he would check on IRA update. Chair Calabia asked about a previously discussed topic of having some of the accessible parking dedicated as monthly reserved spots. Ms. Peredo-Lopez stated we are working on the details as to how it will be incorporated. Ms. Simoneaux had brought this topic to attention and asked if the recommendations that are under review by WMATA, can be shared with the Committee. Ms. Peredo-Lopez stated we are trying to get some accessible parking spaces as reserved parking spots, it is an involved effort. Ms. Simoneaux thanked for the update and hopes to get further update when available.

Mr. Kaffen asked about status of NextBus tool as it has not been providing predictions. Mr. Shaffer stated he would look into it and will follow up.

**Public Comments:**

Ms. Sharma provided information as to how public comments can be received, via email: [MetroAACChair@wmata.com](mailto:MetroAACChair@wmata.com), or via phone call message by calling 202-962-1100.

**Old/New Business and Workplan Updates:**

Chair Calabia shared Metro's Corona virus status: nine out of 26 reported employees are bus operators. He is concerned about the front-line employees and shared an incident from Detroit where a bus operator passed away after a passenger coughed on him.

B Moore-Gwynn, Eligibility Verification Operations Manager, provided contact information for the Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach, email: [Eligibility@wmata.com](mailto:Eligibility@wmata.com), and phone: 202-962-2700.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:59 p.m.