



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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### **BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES: September 14, 2020**

In attendance: Tino Calabia (Chair), Anthony Oberg (Vice-Chair), Darnise Bush, Vanessa Coles, Rico Dancy, Melanie Jackson, Steven Kaffen, Mary Kay McMahon, Phil Posner, Doris Ray, and Patrick Sheehan.

#### **Call to Order**

Anu Sharma, Accessibility Advisory Committee Coordinator, started the meeting by taking a roll call, reading the Meeting Agenda and other general announcements. Vice-Chair Oberg moved the meeting forward until the time Chair Calabia joined the BRS meeting.

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

The BRS approved July 13, 2020, meeting agenda.

The BRS approved the June 8, 2020, meeting minutes as written.

#### **Rail Announcements Update:**

Donald Goings, Superintendent Rail Transportation Training, provided an update regarding the rail announcements. During the last meeting attended by Mr. Goings, the Committee addressed the importance of the series and clarity of the train announcements. Mr. Goings stated the announcement "this is the 7000-Series car" has been eliminated since the 7000 barriers were installed. The current announcements are as follows: "doors opening, step back to allow customers to enter, when boarding please move to the center of the car, this is a (train line) to (station), and the next stop is (station). Mr. Goings asked whether the Committee had any questions or concerns regarding the sequence or clarity of the announcements.

There was a discussion concerning the relevance of an announcement: "when boarding please move to the center of the car." Mr. Kaffen stated this announcement might be relegated to later on in the announcement process if WMATA feels it truly is necessary, so the key announcements get made first. Dr. Posner recommended removing this announcement due to lack of clarity in determining the center of the car. Mr. Kaffen shared his observation that most people stay within a reasonable distance from the doors. Mr. Goings asked if the announcement could be rephrased. Dr. Posner stated the objective is to move people away from the doors therefore, recommended "please move away from the doors." Mr. Goings stated the general purpose of the announcement initially was to encourage customers to move toward the center of the car, as people generally stay near the doors. Mr. Kaffen and Dr. Posner, both stated that the more important announcements come afterwards, whereas those need to be made first.

Moving on to another announcement, Mr. Goings asked whether the Committee members have taken trains and heard the elevator outage announcements. Dr. Posner stated he had brought up the issue previously, but since he has not taken Metrorail for a few months, he is unaware of elevator announcement issues, if any.

A customer recommended having the announcements of the train line and direction 30 seconds prior to the train arrival. This would provide extra time for customers with low vision or who are blind, to either get ready to board or step back. Mr. Goings stated the requirement is to make the announcement at the time of the pause after the train arrives. Dr. Posner stated if made earlier, the announcement may not be heard due to noise level.

There was a discussion about the sequence of the announcements. Ms. Ray referred to the previously requested sequence of the train announcements starting with train color, destination, followed by the next station. Mr. Goings stated the sequence as follows: doors opening, step back to allow customers to enter, this is (train line) to (destination), next station is (station name). Chair Calabria stated the sequence of the announcement was placed in the Rail Handbook and recommended that Mr. Goings follow that order. Vice-Chair Oberg stated the order that Mr. Goings stated is the same as per the recommendation. Later on, via email, Vice-Chair Oberg corrected his comment as the sequence Mr. Goings stated differed from the last version recommended by the AAC.

The next discussion was regarding station name announcements. Mr. Kaffen asked whether the station name is announced when the train arrives. He shared a practice from Paris where about 10 seconds before train arrival, the station name is announced electronically. Mr. Goings confirmed that the station name is announced. Ms. Ray stated the upcoming station announcement comes on as the train departs the previous station or in the middle of the trip before arriving to the (next) station.

Chair Calabria thanked Mr. Goings for coming and sharing information.

### **Inter-Car Rail Barriers Update:**

Robin Hahn, Project Manager, Car Maintenance, stated due to COVID-19, there has not been any further update. She informed the Committee during the last visit, the procurement process had to be restarted for a fair and open competition. The barriers will be tested on trains for at least 30, possibly 60 days. Now that the team can resume going into the office, they will re-start the work on the project and hope to move expeditiously. The vendors can be informed of any changes as needed from the testing results. As additional information become available, Ms. Hahn would share it with the Committee.

Dr. Posner asked when the barriers are finalized, would the vendor information be shared with the 8000-series team. Ms. Hahn confirmed this and stated when they go through the five suppliers, three may meet the criteria. Afterwards, the prototype would be mounted on the trains to be reviewed by the AAC. The barrier would be in place for about 30 to 60 days for proper testing and verification. During this time, we still have the opportunity to work with the supplier to get us the best design in terms of safety for all passengers.

A customer stated the low vision community requests incorporating neon colors. Ms. Hahn stated that is part of the proposal.

Ms. Ray stated the color contrast should be tested on underground, as well as above ground stations. Ms. Ray also asked about the priority between design features versus cost. Ms. Hahn stated our priority is best priced and technically sound, the technical piece takes priority over cost. Color contrast is a great priority to ensure that it is visible above and underground stations. Chair Calabia stated our priority is safety first. Ms. Hahn concurred. Chair Calabia thanked Ms. Hahn and invited her to a future meeting.

#### **Scooter Hubs:**

David Goodman, Jacobs, and Veronica Davis, Nspriegreen, presented possibilities for the scooter hubs on Metro property, specifically at Metrorail stations.

Mr. Goodman stated there is no specific location to park shared mobility devices, such as electric scooters. WMATA is looking for designated areas for scooters that are close to the stations that will not cause hindrance for other customers. Ms. Nspiregreen has been asked to develop concepts called scooter corrals to review the appearance, size, functionality, and locations of these areas. Some scooter corrals could be in the street, which might be a replace a parallel parking space. A parking space may be changed to place many scooters versus one vehicle. Another option could be to utilized landscaping areas on the sidewalks. A criteria is being reviewed for locations at Metro stations.

Chair Calabia read a quote by D. C. Council Member Mary Cheh who was reported in the November 4, 2019 Washington Post as saying during a Council hearing:

“Many scooter users weave in and out of pedestrians on the sidewalk at high speeds, do not follow important safety rules, ride while inebriated, and routinely discard scooters that block pedestrian walkways, private driveways, and handicap accessible ramps.”

Regarding the possibility of taking a car parking space for scooters, Chair Calabria recommended having sufficient space for an accessible (van) parking space for a person who uses a wheelchair, after the area designated for scooter corral.

Ms. Davis stated they are ensuring many options, including space availability, what's around, and clearance to the escalators/elevators/fire hydrants/bus stops, etc. Many of the stations need to re-think what is around. For instance, there are many newspaper boxes that are not utilized. There are places appropriate for scooter boxes but there are other boxes and they are trying to re-think what goes around the station. They have come up with some citing criteria and have been working on that from the design perspective. They are in a preliminary phase of the design, as the materials to be used are being explored. They are also reviewing the potential wheel stop, ensuring that people do not drive over it and that it is identifiable with a cane. An important aspect is to ensure that it will hold the scooters upright. There are some racks for scooters in use and they are in the process of identifying what may or may not be suitable for WMATA.

Chair Calabria asked for a time frame. Ms. Davis stated we have some concepts to share with WMATA and those will be refined, then we will talk about the materials. A final report is due about materials by the middle of August. Mr. Goodman stated it is hard to know when these things will be implemented. The design parts are not custom made and we are trying to work with commonly used materials for instance bollards, stop materials, paints, etc. There is urgency, as WMATA would like to install these corrals soon.

Ms. Peredo Lopez stated we have advised the team about the corrals as follows and asked the Committee to provide feedback specifically related to corrals:

- Three sides of the corrals should have protection to protect scooters from falling.
- Tactile element on one side where a person using a cane can detect something is behind it.

Dr. Posner stated there is a corral outside of VA Square Station that does not get used. Ms. Davis stated she knows about that corral and they are looking at proper signage to increase awareness about the corral location.

During her discussion Ms. Ray stated her concern of corrals being too close to the stations causing pathway inconvenience to customers, especially people who are blind or have low-vision. She also talked about local jurisdictions ordinances. Ms. Ray recommended that any tactile markings used, need to consider that people with low vision or who are blind, use different types of cane tips to identify objects. Ms. Davis stated they have been in communication with different jurisdictions for various reasons and have been

communicating with Mr. Goodman about the different cane tips for identifying objects. Mr. Goodman stated WMATA may be able to put the corrals at Metro stations, keeping in mind that the location must be appropriate. We want scooter users to intuitively look around to know where they can park their scooters. People prefer things direct and straight forward. We are trying to make them easy and safe for all. There is talk about geo-fencing, but until that happens we can provide something attractive for people to use.

Chair Calabia asked about corrals at bus stops. Mr. Goodman stated we are working on those as well, but proper location needs to be ensured.

Mr. Kaffen stated the measure of accountability can be judged by the guidance of the Department of Transportation.

Mr. Sheehan asked about experiences regarding usage and maintenance. Mr. Goodman stated we do not have direct experience, however if there is specific location that is well lit people are going to use more of the corrals. Ms. Davis stated scooter corrals are relatively new in the country and we are hoping to have better data of usage next year. They will be implementing a metric strategy. Mr. Sheehan welcomes the idea.

In response to Ms. Ray's earlier comment regarding the cane tip, Mr. Goodman stated we have been working with ADAP and are aware of the distinctions. One of the recommendations received was that guide strip material be used like at the Gallery Place Station which indicates the end of 6 car train on the platforms. Ms. Ray stated the corrals should be more like VA Square Station. In certain localities the sidewalks are narrower and may or may not meet the ADA requirements. Mr. Goodman stated locations like that will not be considered for using those sidewalks, and they will be working with ADAP.

Dr. Posner stated the enforcement is up-to the jurisdictions not WMATA.

Chair Calabia thanked Mr. Goodman and Ms. Davis for coming. Ms. Sharma recommended any further recommendations from the Committee to be sent to her in order to be further shared with Mr. Goodman.

### **Sidewalks Availability Leading to Metro Stations:**

Chair Calabia raised a concern about sidewalks leading to Metro Stations and/or bus stops. Due to COVID-19, the public sidewalks are being used by private restaurants in order to survive, causing hindrance for pedestrians and people who use wheelchairs. Mr. Kaffen asked if there has been a guidance issued by the local jurisdictions issued to the

restaurants. Chair Calabia asked David Shaffer, Ombudsman, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, about the legality.

Vice-Chair Oberg stated this matter is beyond WMATA's responsibility and recommended community awareness/education on how/where to report issues for resolution. The community can be proactive and talk to the restaurants directly if an issue exists.

Dr. Posner stated Arlington has a zoning issue. Any restaurant tables that moved out to street had to be approved by the Commission and they have closed off streets after having public hearings.

Ms. Ray stated Arlington adopted ordinance regarding the expansion or use of sidewalks for outdoor seating and it specifies clear space must be kept on street for the passage for wheelchair users and other mobility devices. The restaurants are using space as jurisdictions may have prohibited or limited the indoor service. Ms. Ray further recommended a question to be consulted with the US Department of Justice, does this constitute part of the restaurant? There are ADA requirements for passage between tables and access in and out of the area.

### **Ombudsman Report**

David Shaffer, Ombudsman, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, did not have any outstanding items and asked the Committee for any concerns that need to be addressed. Mr. Kaffen shared his experience concerning NextBus functionality issues. Mr. Shaffer stated he has reported the issue and will escalate it at this time.

### **Public Comments:**

There were no public comments received. Public comments can be received via email: [MetroAACChair@wmata.com](mailto:MetroAACChair@wmata.com), or via phone call message by calling 202-962-1100

### **ADA 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:**

Chair Calabia asked about the commemoration of the ADA's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Dr. Posner stated he has forwarded the letter to the Board for their meeting next week. Chair Calabia asked Dr. Posner to share an update from the Board meeting.

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

Ms. Sharma asked the Committee to email the recommended topics for the work-plan.

### **Adjournment**

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