



# AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

### **BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: June 13, 2016**

In attendance: William Staderman (1st Vice-Chair), Patrick Sheehan (AAC Chair), Carolyn Bellamy, Brianne Burger, Darnise Bush, Steven Kaffen, Marisa Laios, Phillippa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahan, Doris Ray, and Denise Rush.

#### **Call to Order**

First Vice-Chair Staderman called the June 13, 2016 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

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

The BRS approved the June 13, 2016 meeting agenda as amended.

The BRS approved the May 9, 2016 meeting minutes as written.

#### **Ombudsman's Report**

Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy in Planning (ADAP), provided the BRS with updates on several issues:

#### Quality Assurance Issues

During the June 6, 2016 Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting Doris Ray raised concerns about the platform edge lights at the Courthouse and Metro Center station. Mr. Blake provided an update regarding his office's findings on the concerns raised.

1. Courthouse Station

On both sides of the platform at the Courthouse station, the platform edge lights flash brightly upon the arrival, boarding, and departure of trains. However, when there is no train arriving or departing the station, the lights go completely out. This is not in keeping with Metro's equivalent facilitation agreement for platform edge warnings. Mr. Blake has reported this as an accessibility finding to the appropriate personnel.

2. Metro Center - Blue/Orange/Silver Platform

ADAP did not find the platform lighting levels at the Metro Center station to be out of compliance. However, the lights on the Blue/Orange/Silver platform of the Metro Center station, while operational, were dim. Mr. Blake reported that he recommended to his colleagues the dim lights be repaired before they become non-compliant.

3. Pentagon Station

While following-up on the concerns raised by Ms. Ray, ADAP checked the platform lights at several other stations. ADAP found the platform edge lights at the Pentagon station on the Huntington side to be very dim, and the platform edge lights on the Largo side to be only slightly brighter. Neither side met the standards expected of Metro.

Mr. Blake stated that one responsibility of ADAP is to conduct quality assurance checks of all the Metrorail stations each year. He added that customers and stakeholders, like members of the AAC, play an important role in the quality assurance of the stations as well. He needs customers to be his eyes and ears throughout the year, and whenever an accessibility feature is not operating or is missing, he wants customers to contact ADAP at 202-962-1100 to report their findings. His office will investigate all reports of accessibility issues in the system.

#### Bus Stop Improvements

Mr. Blake reported that Metro recently improved seven additional bus stops to compliance with the ADA and Metro's Bus Stop standard. All of the improved stops are in Prince George's County MD, within the same group where Metro had previously improved the initial two stops using New Freedom grant funds. This practice maximizes resources by improving as many stops near one another as possible at the same time.

Carolyn Bellamy raised concerns about a bus stop near a new fire station on Georgia Avenue and Randolph Road. She stated that as a result of the construction of the fire station, the bus stop became inaccessible. For customers with wheelchairs or scooters, or those that need the lift/ramp can't use that stop. Mr. Blake stated that he is following up on the issue, but the stop was changed by the County, not Metro. He said he is working on it, but added that Metro has limited jurisdiction over the issue.

#### Mystery Rider Campaign for Elevator Outages

Metro has a new mystery rider campaign underway to test the effectiveness of shuttle bus service provided as a contingency for customers unable to access Metrorail stations when some or all of a station's elevators are out of service. The campaign is designed to test the quality of both Station Manager support when making requests for shuttle service upon arriving at a station with out-of-service elevators, and the Bus Operations Control Center when calling ahead to request shuttle service. At this point, Metro is only testing stations with planned elevator outages. Mr. Blake stated that more participation from AAC members and other disability stakeholders who use mobility devices is greatly needed. Mr. Blake stated that Dr. Staderman has been a participant, having completed three mystery rider checks.

Darnise Bush asked if, in addition to mystery riders, does ADAP have staff that go out and ride the system to look for problems? Mr. Blake said yes. That is the job of the ADA Quality Assurance Specialist. Ms. Bush then followed-up by stating she would like to volunteer to go into the system with the ADA Quality Assurance Specialist and point out issues in the Metro stations. Mr. Blake says he is willing to help organize such trips.

Brianne Burger asked if only people in wheelchairs can be mystery riders. She inquired about mothers with strollers. Mr. Blake said absolutely that mothers with strollers can participate as a shuttle bus service mystery riders, especially since Metro discourages the use of strollers on escalators.

Dr. Staderman stated that he completed both types of mystery campaigns; going to a station and calling ahead. He encouraged his fellow members to participate. A question was asked about what stations are checked. Mr. Blake stated that mystery riders are told which stations to go to.

Doris Ray asked if Courthouse station was or will be part of the mystery rider campaign, as she has significant concerns with the station. Dr. Staderman stated that the shuttle goes to the stop next to the elevator entrance. Mr. Blake stated that it is because it is one of the adjacent stations customers have to travel to/from when dealing with a shuttle. Mr. Blake stated that he will resend the email with information about the mystery rider campaign.

#### Auto Dispatch for Elevators

After the June 6<sup>th</sup> AAC meeting a customer raised a question about the status of Metro moving towards 100% auto dispatch for elevators. He said he had previously raised this in 2005. At the time, he was told auto dispatch would be in all stations by 2008. Mr. Blake stated that auto dispatch is the feature that eliminates the need to push a button once inside of an elevator for it to go to the alternate level. Mr. Blake added that auto dispatch is a very important accessibility feature for customers who have limited use of the hands, arms, and limbs.

Mr. Blake reported that the only elevators throughout the Metro system that do not have auto dispatch either have more than two stops, e.g. the Smithsonian street elevator, or have not yet been upgraded with a programmable logic controller (PLC), e.g. the Woodley Park platform elevator. The only elevators that do not have PLCs are those that have not undergone a long-term maintenance and upgrade. There may be cases where the auto dispatch may be inoperative at a given moment, and in those cases, Mr. Blake encourages customers to contact his office and report it.

Dr. Staderman stated that the elevator on the south side of the Ballston station is not operating on auto dispatch. Ms. Burger asked if this relates to street elevators as well, because the elevator at Woodley Park does not appear to be auto dispatched. Mr. Blake stated that Woodley Park is on the list of stations that have not been rehabilitated yet.

Marisa Laios requested a listing of all upcoming elevator outages. Mr. Blake stated that he will work to gather the information. Ms. Ray asked about Metro's preparation for upcoming conferences with expected large numbers of people with disabilities attending, and would Metro delay a planned elevator outage in light of these conferences. Mr. Blake stated that Metro takes into account upcoming conferences when building the schedule of planned outages. He also stated that Metro deploys additional staff for conferences that may task elevators more than usual. He encouraged members to contact his office whenever they are aware of activities and event that would be highly impact with limited elevator service.

Ms. Burger stated that next week the Hearing Loss Association of America will be in DC. In addition to signs and other information, there needs to be an improved way to communicate with customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing; she specifically mentioned white boards as a solution. Mr. Blake stated that her point is an excellent one, and a great segue into the next subject.

#### White Boards

The AAC had previously recommended to Metro a means of improving communication with people who are deaf or hard of hearing; the use white boards with erasable ink. Mr. Blake reported that Metro does have a procurement effort underway that will eventually result in every Metrorail station kiosk having a white board available for use to facilitate communication between Station Managers and customers.

Mr. Blake stated that his office has recommended a white board design that would be equivalent to the size of an 8.5" x 11" sheet. This size was recommended to ensure that it is manageable to hold, but still large enough for a person to write a reasonable length message using 5/8" text. The design also includes rounded corners to avoid injuring someone with sharp corners. At the moment, the AAC recommendation of free-standing white boards will be placed on hold, while Metro focuses on the handheld white boards, and address the challenges of the floor boards.

Ms. Laios stated that she wants Mr. Blake to push this issue with his co-workers because the disability community has waited long enough on this. Ms. Burger asked about white boards for the buses, which she stated is just as important, if not more important, than the station white boards. Mr. Blake stated that will have to be considered a possible phase 2 of this project. Ms. Bush recommends the purchase of Sharpies branded markers.

### Emergency Exercise

The next emergency exercise is scheduled to take place at the Greensboro station on Sunday, June 26<sup>th</sup> beginning at 6:30 a.m. Volunteers will be released between 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon. Mr. Blake reported that there are currently no volunteers from the AAC for the exercise, and only one person with a disability overall scheduled to participate.

Mr. Blake stated that this is a great opportunity to work with and educate Fairfax first responders on evacuating people with disabilities, particularly in the event of an incident on one of Metro's new 7000 series railcars. He shared that the scenario for the upcoming exercise will involve a train, with smoke, stuck in the tunnel between Greensboro and Tyson's Corner, and requiring evacuation.

Ms. Burger stated that she participated in an emergency exercise, but felt it wasn't for people with disabilities. She stated that it was though she was pushed to the side, and that the emergency responders were not listening to her. She asked about the possibility about a disability-only emergency exercise. Mr. Blake stated that when the idea was shared previously with Safety staff it was not accepted. However, he will raise the question again, but also believes that the currently scheduled exercises need to be realistic, and if members do not believe that is happening the appropriate staff need to be address. Ms. Burger added that emergency responders should not be alerted to who the customers with disabilities are.

Denise Rush expressed concerns about the waiver. Ms. Bush stated that the emergency personnel are not listening to the customers, who know their bodies and disabilities best. She would love to continue to participate, but would not recommend it as she has already been injured during one of the exercises. Ms. Ray recommended that the emergency responders engage in simulation training, in which they become the people with disabilities, so that they can understand what is happening to these customers during an emergency. Ms. Laios stated that first responders need to get a better understanding of how to work with people with disabilities. Dr. Staderman stated that he has volunteered for the upcoming exercise, and he would like an update on the MetroAccess transportation to/from the exercise.

### **Public Comment**

Steven Kaffen said that the Judiciary Square station seems to be very well lit, and is there any reason why other stations can't be more like it. Mr. Blake stated that is part of the AAC Station Lighting Workgroup recommendations that Metro then turned into

the Mezzanine Lighting project. This project has received a lot of positive feedback, but there is still a long way to go.

AAC Chair Patrick Sheehan reported that an individual shared with him concerns about the very high volume of the external announcements on Metrobus vehicles. Mr. Blake stated that he has been in contact with his colleagues in Bus about the issue. Mr. Blake stated the feature is in fact an accessibility feature, as it provides a tool for people who are blind/low vision. However, there does need to be a balance. Mr. Kaffen added that he is very familiar with the issue, and said the very loud announcements did not begin until Metro added the fare information. He said the announcements are now excessively loud. He also added that the fare information is actually causing more confusion and resulting in slower board times. Mr. Blake said he will follow-up with the added information.

Ms. Rush expressed concerns about the decision by metro to establish a bus route from Virginia to the MGM Grand, while at the same time continuously cutting bus routes in Prince George's County. She stated that people cannot get to church, shopping, or other places, but we are adding new routes to a casino.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.