



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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### **BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: January 12, 2015**

In attendance: William Staderman (Vice-Chair), Heidi Case (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair), Brianne Burger, Charlie Crawford, Marisa Laios, Mary Kay McMahon, Philip Posner, Doris Ray, and Denise Rush.

#### **Call to Order**

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair Case called the January 12, 2015 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

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

The BRS approved the January 12, 2015 meeting agenda as amended. The BRS approved the December 8, 2014 meeting minutes as amended.

#### **Ombudsman Report**

Antonio Stephens, ADA Ombudsman, provided an update on comments made at the December 2014 BRS meeting. During that meeting there was a comment regarding the cleanliness of Metro's stations platforms. Specifically, it was stated that waste and other debris was seen on the platforms of the Mt. Vernon and Shaw stations. To rectify the issue Mr. Stephens stated that he contacted Metro's Office of Plant Maintenance, which addressed both stations immediately. Ms. Case stated that she has visited the stations since making her complaints and the stations were free of debris.

There was also a comment about Metro's employment link to request reasonable accommodations being inoperable. Mr. Stephens stated that the Departments of Human Resources and Information Technology were contacted to address the issue, and it has been resolved.

There were comments about accessible signage in the Metrorail system. The issue was that the accessibility directional symbols were missing from the new signage installed in Silver Line stations, and those same symbols were also needed at other stations in the system. Mr. Stephens stated that the list of stations with incorrect signage was forwarded to Metro's Engineering Department and he will continue to follow-up on the issue until it is resolved.

A comment was made about priority seating on Metrobus, in particular the routes that serve the three major hospitals in the District of Columbia. The issue is the lack of available priority seating and the large number of customers who require priority seating along those routes. Mr. Stephens stated that two notice to operators (NTO) were recently distributed to Bus Operators regarding the subject, and that the Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP) is following-up with Bus Transportation to ensure that Operators are helping customers in need of priority seating to the maximum extent possible.

Mr. Stephens noted that when the priority seating area is full and there is a customer using a mobility device at the bus stop, it is Metro's policy for the Bus Operator to stop and notify the customer of the circumstances. To support improvements in this area Metro has launched a new priority seating informational campaign.

Dr. Posner provided comments on the recently launched priority seating campaign. He stated that many of the icons used on the signs are difficult to distinguish, and he believed that the campaign misses the mark because the font is too small and lacks contrast between the words and background. The small font and poor contrast makes it difficult for customers with low vision to view. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADAP, stated that Metro has developed four different posters for this campaign, and added that Metro is taking a more assertive approach to awareness of this issue with the target audience being the unaware customers. In response to a question about the campaign's rollout, Mr. Blake stated that the campaign on the rail system is in full swing, and then Metro will unfold its campaign on Metrobus. The campaign is design to complement Metro's current signage on the issue. Dr. Posner suggested that Metro place the signage on the opposite side of priority seating. He stated that when the signage is placed over the priority seating area it misses the customers who need to see it. Mr. Blake closed by stating that he would take all of the comments by AAC members into consideration for adjustments as the campaign matures.

Mr. Blake provided a follow up on a comment made about the stop location(s) of Metrorail trains when the system returns to automatic train operation (ATO). The concern was that previously under ATO trains would stop at various locations along the stations platforms, which made it difficult for customers to know where to stand to catch the train; a problem in particular to customers with disabilities. Mr. Blake stated that the Department of Rail Operation confirmed to him that all trains operating under ATO, six and eight car, will continue to make the "long stop" where the front of the train is aligned with the exiting end of the station platform, making such practice consistent with the current stopping profiles used under manual operation.

### **Public Comment**

Ms. Case made a comment about elevator outages at the Gallery Place Metro station. She stated that for the last two weekends the street elevators were out-of-service, but the information was not listed on the Passenger Information Display System (PIDS). With Gallery Place being a transfer station with lots of activities, both elevators should never be out at the same time. Mr. Stephens stated that he would follow-up and provide feedback.

Ms. Burger stated that a few months ago the AAC made a motion about improving information on the PIDS. She stated that when updates and announcements are not listed on the PIDS, it places customer who are Deaf and hard-of-hearing at a disadvantage. Mr. Blake stated that the PIDS on the platform are the older model and have limited capabilities. The newer devices are currently being installed and located on the mini-mezzanines, and they will eventually be installed on main platforms as well. In the meantime, customers are advised to sign-up for MetroAlerts, which provides information of service disruptions via email or text. Ms. Ray agreed with Ms. Burger, adding that the PIDS should include audible access to make it accessible for all customers.

In a follow-up, Dr. Posner stated that the lack of information was also an issue on one of the coldest weather day of the year. There were many customers at outdoor stations who reported that there were no announcements or communication from Metro during an extraordinary delay. For customers who were lucky enough to be indoors, Metro handled the traffic flow very well; however, that is no consolation for the customers in the cold. Mr. Stephens stated that he would follow-up and provide feedback.

#### **Reflections – 2014 TASH Conference**

Dr. Staderman briefly discussed his presentation entitled *Experiencing, Addressing, and Improving Accessibility within WMATA: WMATA Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)*. He stated that the presentation emphasized advocacy and the importance of civic involvement. The presentation also highlighted several programs with which the AAC has helped develop and recently been involved. Dr. Staderman stated that he believes the presentation demonstrated the benefits of organizations and communities working together to improve a public system. Dr. Staderman stated the presentation can be viewed at the following link:

[http://enhancinglivability.net/uploads/TASH\\_December\\_4\\_2014.pptx](http://enhancinglivability.net/uploads/TASH_December_4_2014.pptx)

#### **Detectable Warning Signals – Truncated Domes**

The BRS discussed adding truncated domes to all stations in the Metrorail system. Mr. Blake stated that Metro's initial plan was to have the detectable warning signals at every station by the end of 2014. He stated that Metro fell a bit short of that goal; however, the detectable warning signals have been installed at 84 stations in the system. The remaining stations are: 1) Arlington Cemetery; 2) Deanwood; 3) Eastern Market; 4) Minnesota Avenue; 5) West Hyattsville; 6) Eisenhower Avenue; and 7) and Landover. It is expected that all stations will have truncated domes installed by June 30, 2015. Mr. Crawford stressed the importance of the detectable warning to the blind and other disability groups.

### **Station Lighting – Update**

At the request of members, Mr. Blake provided a brief update on lighting in the Metrorail system. He stated that the progress of lighting improvements has been steady. Metro has completed mezzanines lighting improvements at 35 stations with 13 more stations slated for improvements in 2015. Mr. Blake stated that a full report was emailed to members and stakeholders. In response to a question about the next meeting for the BRS Station Lighting Work Group, Mr. Blake stated that the Co-Chairs, Ms. Ray and Mr. Stephens, are working with the public stakeholders to determine a date, and all members will be notified when a meeting date is determined.

### **Metro's Shuttle Service – Performance Update**

Mr. Blake provided an update on the performance of Metro's Shuttle Service. Previously, the BRS and Metro staff initiated a focus on the response time for shuttle service; whether customers could request a shuttle service prior to a customer arriving at a station which has the outage; and the protocol for long-term elevator outages.

Mr. Blake stated that this effort has resulted in better customer service and performance of the shuttle bus service. After a request has been made, most shuttles are available in 30 minutes, and he added that Metro has only received one complaint, which was addressed by the Ombudsman's office. Ms. Case commented that the option to call ahead for shuttle services has been working well. Ms. Burger expressed an interest in an email address to log complaints. Mr. Blake stated that he was not sure if Metro offered that as an option, but would investigate and provide feedback. Ms. Ray expressed an interest in the data on how long customers wait for shuttles and whether the use of shuttles are increasing.

Dr. Posner suggested that Metro add the option of call or text to request shuttle service to their application for smartphones users. He stated that they already have something similar for police. Dr. Posner also stated that the customers need to know where to wait at the Capitol South station for shuttle service. He stated that the elevator opens at the end of the Congressional parking lot, which is off limits to buses. Mr. Blake stated that he would investigate and provide feedback.

### **New Business**

In a follow-up to a point made at the January 2015 AAC meeting regarding the budget, Ms. Rush stated there was some discussion about the proposal to increase fares on the rail system. The reason given for the increase was low ridership. Ms. Rush stated that it is important for new members to understand that the cost of MetroAccess service is directly connected to Metro's fixed route service. When the Board raises fares on bus

and rail, MetroAccess fares are automatically increased. She added that it is important for the AAC to express our collective concerns to Metro's Board to ensure the base fare or the cap on the MetroAccess fare is not impacted by any proposed fare increase. Ms. Rush stressed the importance of attending the public hearings regarding fares. She stated that she will pay the fare for any customer that wants to attend the public hearing.

Dr. Posner stated that Metro has a shortfall resulting from several factors including more people driving, low revenue from the Silver Line, the government subsidy was not renewed, more people tele-commuting as opposed to using public transportation to get to work, etc. He stated that Metro must raise more money in order to maintain safety and sustainability. Additionally, the only way Metro can balance the budget is to raise fares or reduce services. Dr. Posner stated that in his view, nobody on the Board likes the challenge or the options facing Metro.

Dr. Posner stated that when heard about the possibility of raising fares he reminded some Board members of the AAC recommendations regarding fares. He stated that Metro could change the multiplier for paratransit service or use the increase as a surcharge instead of a fare increase. Ms. Ray stated that she would like the BRS to review the fare policy for Reduced Fare users. When fares increase it's just not paratransit customers that have to pay more, there are many customers with disabilities who only use the fixed route system and would be hurt by an increase. Dr. Posner stated that the AAC advocated for fixed route customers during the last public hearings. In response to a question about whether the increase was for 2015 or 2016, Dr. Posner stated that the proposed increase will be start July 2015, which is the beginning of Metro's 2016 fiscal year. To discuss the issue further, the Fare Policy Work Group will meet immediately following the MetroAccess meeting. All members are welcome.

The BRS expressed an interest in Metro's new Customer Care program. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that the topic be added to the work plan.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan