



**AAC**

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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### **BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: July 14, 2014**

In attendance: Brian Miller (Chair), William Staderman (Vice-Chair), Heidi Case (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair), Brianne Burger, Marisa Laios, Phillippa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, Mary Jane Owen, Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Anthony Stephens, and Roger Stanley.

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Miller called the July 14, 2014 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

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

The BRS approved the July 14, 2014 meeting agenda as amended. The BRS approved the June 9, 2014 meeting minutes.

#### **Ombudsman Report**

Antonio Stephens, ADA Ombudsman, provided an update on comments made at the June 2014 BRS meeting. He indicated that Anne Carey, Director, Training had to reschedule. Ms. Carey was scheduled to provide an update on Metro's Standard Operating Procedures on Wheelchair securement and a training video. Mr. Stephens stated that he will continue to follow-up until the issue is resolved.

Mr. Stephens stated that he followed up on the concern brought to light by Heidi Case related to space issues around construction sites near the escalators. Metro uses temporary wooden barriers to block off work areas, and often the barriers do not leave sufficient space for customers who use mobility devices to move freely on the platform. Mr. Stephens along with Carol Lopez, Accessibility Manager, conducted a site review at the Columbia Heights, L'Enfant Plaza and Bethesda rail stations, and recommended that the space for customers be maximized in those areas. This will allow customers with mobility devices to move freely along the platforms. In response to a question about the minimum requirement for spacing, Ms. Lopez stated that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires 5 ft from the edge of the platform.

Mr. Stephens also followed up on a comment made about parked cars in the bus lane near the Columbia Road area. He requested that Metro's Transit Police Department (MTPD) be more aware of these types of violations including Metro vehicles. Mr. Stephens reiterated the importance of reporting these issues to Customer Service. Doris Ray suggested that Metro take a broader approach on this issue. She indicated that lack of access in bus lanes is a common issue in other areas such as the City of Alexandria and Georgetown. This is a challenge not only for mobility device users, but for the low-vision community as well.

### **Public Comment**

Ms. Ray made a comment about Metrobuses that pass customers at bus stops along Route 50 and Route 29. She indicated that many buses along those routes run less frequently and when buses fail to service at a bus stop, it is a long wait until another one. In response to a question about the route, Ms. Ray stated it was the 4B Eastbound (Pershing Drive-Arlington Boulevard Line).

Dr. Posner stated that the DC Circulator bus stops at every stop, whether there is a customer at the bus stop or not. These buses are on-time even in the heart of DC, where traffic can be a challenge at times. With the changes in traffic patterns in Virginia and in other places, Ms. Ray stated that Metro should review its schedules to ensure flexibility so drivers are not so rushed.

Anthony Stephens stated that he has had this same experience on routes in Prince George's County, Maryland. He cautioned members that the motion may have unintended consequences because it could extend the length of a bus ride that is already inherently long because the bus is stopping at every bus stop. Mr. Stephens agreed with Ms. Ray that the BRS should research the impact of the issue further before passing the motion. A comment from the public indicated that they are opposed to the idea of having Metrobuses stop at every stop and agrees that the motion will have unintended consequences. The approach does not get to the root cause of the issue. The public suggested that Metro implement a mystery rider program and discipline and train drivers that are in violation.

Upon motion the BRS recommended that Metrobus amend its policy for buses that run less frequently than every 20 minutes to stop at every bus stop to ensure no passengers are passed. This measure would stop buses from passing customers, especially those with disabilities, and improve overall customer service. Staff from Metro's Bus Planning office will be invited to a future meeting and this issue will be added to the work plan.

Ms. Ray made a comment about voice annunciators on buses. She indicated that on some buses, the volume levels are very low which makes it difficult for customers to hear over the noise of the bus and other passengers. The annunciator is very important for Blind and low-vision customers traveling through the system. The Ombudsman stated that he will follow-up with the Bus Services and request that they remind Operators that the annunciators must remain at a level loud enough to be heard.

Heidi Case made a comment about navigating the system during unplanned elevator outages. She indicated that the platform elevator at the Gallery Place Metrorail Station was out of service. Ms. Case stated that she consulted with two different Station Managers for directions on how to work around the outage, but neither Station Manager knew the system well enough to provide directions and did not offer to call a shuttle. Ms. Case stressed that training Station Managers on their job responsibility to assist customers with alternatives when there are elevator outages. The Ombudsman suggested that customers use the center platform option during outages. It's the easiest way to navigate around the system when there is an outage. He indicated that the center platform option may only take a customer out of their way by a few stations. Phil Posner stated that most rail stations have regular Station Managers. At Gallery Place there is always someone different, which may contribute to the Station Manager not being able to provide directions. Mr. Stephens encouraged customers to report these types of instances to Customer Service.

Brianne Burger made a comment about the monitors above the Station Manager's kiosk in the station. She stated that system information such as elevator outages, train information and overhead announcements should be scrolled on the monitor. This would provide better access to information for Deaf customers that use the system on a daily basis. Dr. Posner stated that the 7000 series railcars will have scrolling announcements. Chair Miller stated that the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system makes written and auditory announcements. Upon motion, the AAC agreed that in addition to auditory announcements, Metro should provide the same announcements in a written format to scroll across the monitors or Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) for customers to read as part of Metro's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

Dr. Posner made a comment about Metro's new Emergency Evacuation signs. He stated that on the 5000 and 6000 series rail cars the signage has been split with one section obscured above the light and the other half of the sign is displayed below. Mr. Blake, Director of ADA Policy and Planning stated that he would investigate and provide feedback.

Dr. Posner also made a comment about the lack of air conditioning on railcars. He indicated that insufficient air on railcars can exacerbate some conditions for customers with disabilities and seniors. Some railcars appeared to have the heat on which made riding in the car even more unbearable. In response to a question about whether the dim lighting was a contributing factor to the lack of air conditioning on railcars in some railcars, Mr. Blake stated that he would investigate and provide feedback to both questions.

Additionally, Dr. Posner made a comment about weekend service closures. He indicated that with the exception of July 4, 2014 every weekend the Orange Line trains have been running every 24 minutes. This is the same for all trains traveling on the Red Line. Metro should rotate the rail lines that need work. Mr. Blake stated that Metro would investigate and provide feedback.

Phillippa Mezile made a comment about the policy for using the MetroAccess ID cards in the rail system. On a regular basis, she flashes her MetroAccess ID card and proceeds through the emergency gate. Recently, a Station Manager indicated that customers should be swiped in through the accessible fare gate. Mr. Blake stated that the emergency gate should only be used for emergency. The Station Manager was correct. All customers, including those that use MetroAccess service should be swiped through the accessible gate by the Station Manager.

Christopher Colbert, Operations Manager, Eligibility Certification and Outreach stated that it is important that customers using the Metro's Free Ride Program to be swiped into the system. Metro tracks this information to determine how many people are using the system in the program. He stated that the BRS receives a report on a monthly basis that tracks the number of MetroAccess users on the fixed route system. Station managers are trained to view all cards for validation and can confiscate expired and fraudulent cards. A comment from the public stated that number of MetroAccess users using the fixed route system are unrepresented because a good majority of Station Managers do not use the accessible fare gates to swipe customers into the system.

Ms. Burger also made a comment about the signage and announcements for priority seating on the bus and rail for people with disabilities and seniors. She stated that Metro should consider extending that policy to include pregnant women. Mr. Blake stated that pregnancy is not considered a disability. Metro encourages customers to be considerate and polite and provide seating to other customers. In response to a question about the location of priority seating on the train, Mr. Blake stated that priority seating is the first set of seats by the train doors. The area has signage directly above the seating area. Mr. Blake encourages customers to report rail cars where priority seating, signage is missing to Customer Service. Dr. Posner stated in the new 7000 series railcars, the priority seating area will be more pronounced, making the area more visible.

### **Silver Line (Update)**

Jim Hughes, Director, Intermodal Planning, provided an update on Metro's new Silver Line Metrorail stations. He stated that the new rail line is an extension from Northern Virginia to the system being built in two phases by the Metropolitan Washington

Airports Authority. Phase I of the Silver Line will open to the public on July 26, 2014 and include the following five stations: McLean, Tyson Corner, Greensboro, Spring Hill and Wiehle–Reston East. With the addition of these five stations, Mr. Hughes stated that it's expected that Metro will carry an additional fifteen thousand people per day, with a third being new riders.

Metro has been preparing for the opening of Phase I of the Silver Line by hiring and training personnel to operate the trains and buses, man the kiosks, and maintain the inner and outer areas of the stations, to name a few of the duties. Additionally, Metro is posting all its signage throughout the stations and bus bays, and cleaning and attending to other last minute details to get ready for the public. Metro also conducted two emergency drills to ensure staff and the local emergency personnel are prepared. Additionally, Metro's Safety Department has been working with the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) throughout the project.

Mr. Hughes stated that on July 20, 2014, Metro will begin operating trains in a pre-revenue mode on the Silver Line. The simulated trains will operate every six minutes during the peak periods and 12 minutes during off peak. Dr. Posner expressed an interest in whether the station descriptions are included in Metro's Trip Planner. Mr. Hughes stated that the station descriptions will be available prior to the opening.

Metro's Board will have an official opening ceremony and ribbon cutting event. The five new stations will open at 11:30 am. The inaugural train for the new Silver Line will leave at 12 noon from the Wiehle-Reston East Station. Fairfax County will operate shuttles from the West Falls Church Metro station for customers interested in attending the inaugural events. Metro will have personnel at all the stations to assist customers.

In response to a question about whether Metro's 7000 series rail cars will be in operation on opening day, Mr. Hughes stated that Metro is testing some cars; however, it is not expected to have any cars available for revenue service until December 2014. Mr. Stephens expressed an interest in Phase II of the Silver Line. Mr. Hughes stated that the contract has been awarded to build the design and rail maintenance yard. The Washington Metropolitan Airport Authority has indicated that Phase II of the project is on schedule to be finished by 2019.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in the color of the line that will appear in the window on the lead railcar. Mr. Hughes stated that the color will be Silver. In response to a question about bus service, Mr. Hughes stated that there will be total of 62 route changes: 12 new routes, 39 modified routes and 11 eliminated routes. The integrated bus service plan will be fully implemented by opening day. Chair Miller expressed an

interest in changes to the Washington Flyer service due to the Silver Line. Mr. Hughes stated that the Washington Flyer will begin serving Wiehle-Reston East station to Dulles International Airport beginning on opening day. It is expected that the Washington Flyer will have new vehicles, run every 15 minutes and the cost will be about five dollars.

Chair Miller expressed an interest in the travel time from East Falls Church and the Wiehle-Reston East Station. Mr. Hughes stated that it is 22 minutes. In response to a question about the Braille Flip maps, Mr. Blake stated they are available for customers.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in the pedestrian pathways to the stations. Mr. Hughes stated that the roads and sidewalks will be re-surfaced, striped and painted by the opening day.

The BRS applauded Metro for a job well done on the system. Many members indicated that they will be attending the inaugural events.

### **Old Business**

Mr. Blake announced that the new Member Orientation will be held today immediately following the BRS meeting. The AAC By-Laws Work Group will be held on July 21, 2014 immediately following the MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting. All members are welcome.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

Attachment: Work Plan