



# AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

### **BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: November 10, 2014**

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

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Miller called the November 10, 2014 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

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

The BRS approved the November 10, 2014 meeting agenda as amended. The BRS approved the October 6, 2014 meeting minutes.

#### **Public Comment**

Ms. Rush asked if Metro's New Electronic Payment Program (NEPP) is accessible. Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that yes, the NEPP system will be fully accessible. He added that NEPP will allow customers to pay Metro fares through a variety of media including personal credit cards, debit cards, smartphones or fare media from another transit property. The NEPP pilot will begin in January 2015, and the NEPP accessible faregate will be on display at the Metro facility on Telegraph Road. In a follow question, Mr. Stephens asked whether the new features in NEPP provide information on card balances. Mr. Blake stated customers can confirm balances at the fare machines in the stations; however, he will investigate and provide feedback on whether the new system will allow card balances at the fare gates. A comment from the public commended Metro for moving to an all-electronic fare payment system. The public stressed the importance of having audio tone or cues for blind and low vision customers at the fare gates and vending machines; this is considered an important feature for the visually impaired community.

Ms. Rush made a comment about increasing communication with large venues and other places for MetroAccess drop-off and pick-up locations. As an example, Ms. Rush stated that at National Park, the MetroAccess drops customers off at one location and then pick them up at another location. The change in location is confusing to customers. Additionally, she suggested that once the location for a venue is established, Metro should communicate this to customers through the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system and Reservations. Mr. Blake stated that Metro is working with various venues to establish Metro stops on non-Metro properties.

Dr. Posner made a comment about the lack of seating on the platform level at the Wiehle-Reston East station. He stated that the seating and shelters are located at the far end of the platform. Generally trains are six cars, and therefore do not extend the entire platform. Having seating at the far end of the platform makes it difficult for

customers who cannot stand for long periods of time to catch up to a train from the seating area. Dr. Posner suggested that Metro add another seating area, with shelter, closer to the elevators. Mr. Blake stated that he will investigate the possibility and provide feedback.

Mr. Stephens commented that when using a mobile application on his smartphone for real-time arrivals, the times for the terminus stations are not listed. Other members stated that they too have had the same experience. Mr. Blake stated that he would share the concern with Metro's IT Department.

Dr. Staderman made a comment about impolite Station Managers and the accessible faregate. He stated that he often asks to be swiped in at the accessible faregate as oppose to using the emergency gate. The request is often met by rude comments from the Station Manager. Dr. Staderman stated that when he tries to explain the importance and reasoning behind his request, the Station Manger would cut him off with a rude remark. Mr. Blake reminded members and the public to report complaints to Metro's customer service at 202-637-1328, and then follow-up with ADAP at 202-962-1100.

A public comment was made about the AAC's discussion on By-Laws. The member of the public stressed the importance of member attendance at AAC meetings, adding that the public is counting on the AAC to be prepared and on-time for meetings; ask the hard questions; and work in a cooperative manner with Metro to make the best decisions for all riders, in particular those in the disability community. If members are not present, they cannot help the public make transportation better.

### **Reflections - Wayfinding System**

The BRS briefly discussed a new wayfinding system. Chair Miller stated that the Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind (CLB), in partnership with Click-N-Go Maps, and supported by the Council of Governments and Metro, conducted its first public demonstration of the wayfinding system, beginning with the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station. Several AAC members were in attendance.

Mr. Blake stated that Metro is committed to supporting this project. The Department of Access Services (ACCS) is working on a method to provide CLB with station maps to facilitate the production of audio maps for all 91 rail stations in the system. ACCS is also working to determine the feasibility of using the iBeacon system in the stations.

AAC Chair Sheehan stated that he is excited about the wayfinding system and the possibilities it opens up on the fixed route system for customers who are blind or low-

vision. He stated that he found the new wayfinding system to be useful and easy to use. Mr. Stephens expressed an interest in the AAC writing a letter of support to Metro and the jurisdictions for additional funding for this project. To ensure there is no conflict of interest, Mr. Sheehan stated that the comments of support should be included in the Chairman's report to the Board and focus on the accessibility aspect of the system and the benefits to the disability community.

### **Bus Stop Accessibility – Application to the Trip Planner**

Ed Wells, GIS Manager, Department of Information Technology (IT), provided an update on bus stop accessibility information available on Metro's Trip Planner. In the review, he stated that the database will enable customers to obtain accessibility-related information about individual bus stops, such as the presence of a shelter, bench, bike rack, and other features. Mr. Wells stated that his presentation would demonstrate the application of the trip planner for the public. Also presenting with Mr. Wells were Diwakar Sharma, IT, and Corinna Sigsbury, ADAP.

The information can be accessed through Metro's website via the Trip Planner or Service Nearby applications under Rider Tools - Bus or Accessibility tab. After creating a route, customers can enter the bus stop's identification number and receive a list of amenities, photos, and other accessibility information about the stops along the selected route. The application will also offer various images of the bus stop or surrounding neighborhood in bird's-eye, aerial, or street views. Additionally, using the application, customers can report problems or issues of the bus stop directly from the site. Mr. Wells stated that the website is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); all the links have alternate text and were tested by CLB. In response to a question about the ADA Section 508 features, Ms. Sigsbury stated the site has high low contrast and descriptive alternate text for screen readers.

Mr. Sharma reiterated that customers can access the information via Metro's website, under Rider's Tools on the toolbar, by selecting Trip Planner or Service Nearby. Both require customers to enter a street address or intersection. Ms. Sigsbury stated that the system also uses a stop ID number, which is the same as the NextBus number. This information is also listed at Metro's bus stops. In response to a question about whether the service applies to Metro stops only, Ms. Sigsbury stated that customers will be able to use this application for any Metro stop. As an example, if Metro services a stop that is also serviced by Fairfax Connector, DASH or The Bus, the tool can be used.

The BRS expressed an interest in whether the bus stop accessibility information would be available through a smartphone application. Mr. Wells stated that the information

can be accessed through Metro's website on a smartphone or other mobile device, but currently there is not a separate mobile application. The BRS also expressed an interest in a description of the icons and some of the terms used in the accessibility and amenities section of the site. Ms. Sigsbury stated the site has a help button, which provides helpful information and tips. Ms. Ray stressed the importance of using regular transit terminology when describing the terms. This will make the information more useful for customers.

The BRS expressed an interest in whether Metro's Customer Service department will have access to the tool to provide assistance to customers. Ms. Sigsbury stated that there has been some discussions about having Metro's Customer Service use this tool, but nothing definitive at this time. In a follow-up question about terminology, Ms. Case asked whether the description of the bus stop was equivalent to the new bus stop standard adopted by Metro. Ms. Sigsbury stated that the descriptive information for the adopted standard is listed separately. Mr. Wells stated that Metro is programming that standard into the system as a single description. Ms. Case suggested that Metro should add the bus stop information to the walking map. Additionally, Dr. Posner suggested that instead of the cardinal directions, the walking map should include simpler language for directions such as exit on I street and walk toward Connecticut Avenue. This would make it easier for fixed route users to locate additional bus stops along a specific route. Ms. Sigsbury stated that she would forward the suggestion to IT.

Many members agreed that the application is a good tool for fixed route customers and applauded Metro for its due diligence in testing the site for accessibility. In response to a question about the timeline, Mr. Wells stated that Metro will launch the application for the trip planner on November 19, 2014, which is the official Geographic Information System (GIS) day.

### **Ombudsman Report**

Antonio Stephens, ADA Ombudsman, provided an update on Heidi Case's comments from the August 2014 BRS meeting. The issue was that the Silver Line stations are absent from the interactive map section under Rail maps on the webpage.

The Ombudsman stated that IT immediately corrected the problem and the webpage is updated for all Silver Line stations. Ms. Case stated that she appreciates that Metro resolved the issue so quickly, and that she has used the site many times since the update.

The Ombudsman also stated that to reinforce priority seating on Metrobus, Metro issued a Notice to Operators (NTO) regarding Priority Seating. The NTO states that

while you can't always tell if someone has a disability, Bus Operators are encouraged to say that 'Federal law requires that we reserve priority seating for those people with disabilities or for senior citizens. If anyone can give up their seat, it would be appreciated.' The Ombudsman reminded members that the NTO is used to update a policy between revisions of the Standard Operating Procedures.

### **Station Lighting (Update)**

Mr. Blake provided an update on lighting in the rail stations. He stated that Metro has completed the following lighting upgrades: 35 underground mezzanines; 13 underground mezzanine lightings have been designed and are ready for construction in 2015; 12 additional mezzanines designs are pending construction in 2016.

Metro is expanding its station lighting with LEDs. New LED lights are replacing florescent lamps under the mezzanines and in passageways. Mr. Blake stated that the lighting in the elevator and escalator are also being upgraded with full cutoff lighting fixtures that will improve lighting levels while minimizing glare. He stated that there will be more lighting installations to come as Metro's Elevator and Escalator office moves forward with its rehabilitation program. Old fixtures will be replaced at the Bethesda, Glenmont, Columbia Heights, Addition Road, and Potomac Avenue stations.

Metro is also upgrading lighting in the parking garages. At the Huntington station, Metro has retro-fitted 25 LED lights and new LED lights have been installed at the Greenbelt station along the pedestrian path. Mr. Blake stated that the conclusion of the BRS meeting, the BRS Station Lighting Work Group will have a brief follow-up meeting. All members all welcome.

### **Old Business**

Dr. Staderman briefly discussed his presentation entitled *Experiencing, Addressing, and Improving Accessibility within WMATA: WMATA Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)*. The presentation will discuss how organizations and communities can work together. To complete his research and presentation, he requested feedback from the BRS on the difference between advocacy and advisory, and Metro's policy to go beyond the requirements of the ADA. The 2014 TASH Annual Conference will be held December 3<sup>rd</sup> through December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in Washington, D.C.

### **New Business**

Ms. Case announced that she had been recognized as 2014 Advocate of the Year by Equal Rights Center. With a round of applause, the BRS commended Ms. Case for her good works.

**Adjournment**

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

Attachment: Work Plan