



## **Accessibility Advisory Committee**

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### **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: January 19, 2015**

In attendance: Mr. Paul Semelfort (Chair), Ms. Denise Rush (Co-Chair), Ms. Carolyn Bellamy, Dr. Phil Posner, Mr. Edward McEntee, Mr. Patrick Sheehan, Mr. Charles Crawford, Ms. Phillipa Mezile, Ms. Mary Jane Owens, Ms. Marisa Laios, and Dr. William Staderman.

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Semelfort called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:00pm.

#### **Review of January 2014 Agenda**

The agenda was approved with the addition of a discussion of the establishment of drop off points for MetroAccess. Agenda approved with amendments.

#### **Review of December 2014 Meeting Minutes**

The minutes were approved without amendments.

#### **Customer Service and Outreach Report**

Ms. Sara Morris, Senior Administrative Coordinator, MTM, reported that all public comments from the previous meetings have been addressed.

Ms. Janice Carpenter, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, reported that there were no outreach events for the month of December 2014. MetroAccess has received requests to present information at community group events, and looks forward to providing the committee with a report on attendance at these events in February.

#### **Status Update of DC Taxi Project for Dialysis Customers**

Mr. Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, stated that the project has been a tremendous success. Customers are able to choose to take a taxi, subsidized by the District, to a dialysis center and return via taxi when they have completed their treatment without pressure to complete the treatment early or miss their ride. The DC taxi project drivers have credentials, been trained, and adhere to standard vehicle maintenance practices, and carry insurance. The project has grown just in the few months that it has been operating and now is available to thousands of customers who are DC residents. A potential impediment to the project is the perception of cost as there are some MetroAccess trips that are cheaper than the cost of the pilot. The DC taxi commission is taking a look at the fare charged.

There must be a "value pricing" to ensure that the fee is affordable to the customer but not so miniscule that it drives the demand to where service or supply is unable to meet the demand. The District sets the fare.

Mr. Kent asked for advice from the MAS on ways to better market the service. Customers who choose to use the service are not prevented from riding on MetroAccess. The main mission is to market and expand this project. The District has given several years for this pilot, so there is ample time to offer it to a larger segment of MACS riders.

The MAS comments and responses are summarized below:

**Is it possible for customers that have other medical appointments to utilize the DC taxi project? Are dialysis trips offered as subscription trips since they are regularly scheduled trips? How does a customer access the DC taxi project? Advertising at dialysis centers, leaflet drops and IVR messages would assist in marketing the project.**

Mr. Kent said that offering the service to other medical appointments has been and is still in discussions.

The project is personalized, and because appointment timelines vary at the dialysis centers based on the customer's condition after treatment, the project is able to adjust to the customer's timeline. Utilizing the MACS call center and reservations will not allow such flexibility. He said that the initial pick-up trip could possibly be set up as a subscription trip with the return trip being open ended. Mr. Kent said that he would verify if this is the current practice with the taxi project.

A MetroAccess customer, residing in the District of Columbia, and is either a dialysis customer or attends a facility that provides dialysis services can enroll in the DC taxi project.

Mr. Kent acknowledged the suggestions for marketing the project stating that they were good suggestions.

### **Committee Chair discussion of the Work Plan**

Chairman Semelfort opened the topic to the committee for discussion of appropriate items for inclusion on the work plan.

Dr. Staderman asked about duplications on the work plan (2015-11 & 12). Dr. Moore-Gwynn stated that when items are on the work plan more than once it is because it is a topic that the committee wants to discuss multiple times throughout the year.

Dr. Posner explained that the sustainability plan is posted on the website, but some part of the plan will be discussed at the present meeting.

Mr. Semelfort explained that the work plan is a guide for the committee and is constantly evolving and changing. He said that if committee members have a discussion or presentation, or topic of urgent concern related to MetroAccess that needs to be addressed it may be added to the agenda or plan.

Ms. Owen objected to the discussion of the marketing of fixed route service. She said that until the committee is provided a full report of devices that are available for disabled individuals to assist in the safe evacuation from the rail, she would not be recommending the use of the rail system.

**Mr. Kent addressed Ms. Owen's concerns stating that he understands that she and others want reassurance about their safety while utilizing the Metro system for travel. Presentations on safety procedures have been incorporated in the agenda at the MAS meetings as well as other meetings to discuss evacuation procedures and other safety procedures to specifically attend to the needs of the disability community. Metro expects to have those discussions again so that questions can be answered and that if there are things that need addressing that they are done. Though travel training assistance individuals with disabilities become more familiar with the bus and rail systems, there are still more that needs to be done to help people feel comfortable.**

Ms. Rush spoke about the silver line evacuation training in which she was a participant and the difficulty during the training to evacuate people with disabilities.

Dr. Posner commented that new signs on rail cars for emergencies, next to the door opening mechanism, have removed wheelchairs and replace it with strollers, bulk items, luggage, and bicycles. This signage was never brought before the MAS for discussion or approval.

A customer in the audience asked why the grandfathering policy is not on the MAS work plan since the Board discussed the importance of the policy.

Mr. Kent recommended that the topic of grandfathering as it relates to revisiting whether the current policy remains in place or allowing others to be grandfathered should be assigned to the fare policy working group as it has related implications.

### **Public Comments**

Comments received were with regard to: A report of Bus and Rail route changes, drivers arriving trips before they actually arrive, issue with fare calculations, a change in entrances at Providence Hospital, a request for wider vehicles and to have more MV1 vehicles in the fleet.

### **Comments from the Committee:**

**Ms. Rush commented that not all vehicles have the seat belt extensions.**

**Dr. Posner requested an updated bar graph of distribution of fares for MetroAccess for the past quarter be provided at the next MAS meeting.**

Mr. Hayford agreed to make that bar graph available to the committee at the February MAS meeting.

**Mr. Semelfort commended MetroAccess staff for providing periodic updates on the IVR and e-Alerts during recent inclement weather events.**

**Dr. Posner expressed a concern that communication regarding Metro's holiday schedule changes based on the Federal Government's holiday schedule requires some work. He stated that it was communicated via e-Alert, IVR, and MetroAccess website, it was not shared with the MAS meeting. He said that these changes affect many MetroAccess customers as not all MetroAccess customers work for the Federal Government and some require transportation to work or other important destinations on these holidays.**

Ms. Anderson stated that MetroAccess protocol is for subscription trips to be canceled on holidays. Subscription trips were canceled for both the Thanksgiving holiday and the day after Thanksgiving. This was erroneously done as the day after Thanksgiving was not a Federal holiday. She apologized for the inconvenience it caused customers. She agreed that as a result of the incident during the Thanksgiving holiday, notification via IVR messages, e-Alerts, robo-calls, and notification on the MetroAccess website were provided to ensure customers were aware of the schedule changes during the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

**Mr. Sheehan stated that at Holy Cross Hospital, MetroAccess drops customers off fifty yards away from the entrance particularly if the customer is not ambulatory.**

Mr. Antonio Hamlin, Field Operations Manager, MetroAccess Service, stated that Holy Cross Hospital established three spaces for MetroAccess that are thirty to fifty feet away from the entrance to the hospital. He said that he recently heard that some drivers are not utilizing those spaces and there is a plan to address this.

Mr. Kent recommended that the committee discuss how to reach out to hospitals and facilities administrators regarding pick-up and drop-off locations and the distance of those spaces or locations for MetroAccess customers.

**Mr. Semelfort requested adding this to the work plan.**

For detailed descriptions and resolutions of public comments made during the meeting, please refer to the January 2015 Complaint Resolution Report located at [http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy\\_policy/subcommittee.cfm](http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm).

**Meeting adjourned at 5:51pm.**