



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001

### **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE *VIRTUAL* MEETING MINUTES: June 15, 2020**

In attendance: Paul Semelfort (Chair), Denise Rush (Vice-Chair), Darnise Bush, Tino Calabria, Vanessa Coles, Rico Dancy, Phillippa Mezile, Anthony Oberg, Phil Posner, Doris Ray, and Patrick Sheehan.

#### **Call to Order**

Anu Sharma, Accessibility Advisory Committee Coordinator, started the meeting. Ms. Sharma welcomed everyone, took a roll call, and read the Agenda. Thereafter, Chair Semelfort moved the meeting forward.

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

The MAS approved June 15, 2020, meeting agenda was approved.

The MAS approved the May 18, 2020, meeting minutes as written.

#### **Customer Service and Outreach Reports**

Kay Clarke, MTM, provided an update about customer service follow up. All the customer concerns were addressed and follow up was performed.

Allison Anderson, Operations Manager, MetroAccess, stated there was no outreach performed besides for customers who contacted various offices of Access Services.

#### **Michael Wilson and Rush Awards**

*Michael Wilson Award:* Will Ford, First Transit, presented the award to Ava Toye, for her outstanding performance and service since May 6, 2016. Ms. Toye was recruited as a window dispatcher in July 2018 due to her exceptional, diligent, and always willing to help attitude. Ms. Toye has contributed to the dispatch team by maintaining a happy work environment and excellent customer service skills. Ms. Toye is considered as an invaluable member and First Transit Management is honored to have her in the team.

*Rush Award:* Vice-Chair Rush prefers to provide the Rush Award in an in-person meeting in September, otherwise will arrange via MetroAccess Office to present the award.

#### **Update Revision on MetroAccess Customer Guide:**

Allison Anderson, Operations Manager, MetroAccess provided a brief update on the Customer Guide revision. Over 90% of recommendations received from the Committee were incorporated. The major outstanding item in the final document is about the documentation of reservation-window pilot that changed from 60 to 90 minutes. The fixed route equivalent would be explained for customers, as well as the Abilities-Ride program needs to be finalized. The customer expectations during this pandemic needs

to be included for future reference. Finally, customers' signatures are no longer needed for trips taken and that needs to be included in the final version. As for the timeline, Ms. Anderson anticipates a draft with the Committee's participation this fall, and the publication in spring 2021. A brochure is also being reviewed for the revised document.

Chair Semelfort asked if bus stop locations and train stations along with the Silver line stations would be included in the revision. Ms. Anderson confirmed it will be included.

Vice-Chair Rush inquired if a tribute could be added in memory of Carolyn Bellamy. Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services, stated we will review it further.

#### **Shuttle Service Update – Platform Rehab Program:**

David Shaffer, Ombudsman, Office of ADA Policy and Planning informed that the ridership has been very low and he has not received any complaints with respect to MetroAccess customers having any trouble with the ADA shuttles that are being used during the Platform Rehab Program. The passengers are not waiting and the shuttles are running efficiently. Mr. Shaffer asked if there were any contrary reports. There were none.

#### **Update Abilities – Ride:**

Chair Semelfort recommended virtual Abilities-Ride showcases given the uncertainty due to COVID – 19, and the guidelines that must be followed. Mr. Blake stated he can consider the recommendation based upon how the ridership returns. Abilities-Ride is an alternative of MetroAccess. Since the ridership is low on MetroAccess, Abilities-Ride may not be warranted. We will watch for the demands to come back and evaluate at that time.

#### **Update MetroAccess Sedans:**

Mr. Blake stated the sedans are expected to be included in MetroAccess fleet during this fiscal year, by June 30<sup>th</sup>. The language about MetroAccess fleet will be also added in the revised Customer Guide. Contrary to the past, this time we are going to try and accommodate customer requests for types of vehicles. It will not be considered a reasonable accommodation, rather a customer accommodation. Mr. Blake emphasized on the importance of the language/terminology used appropriately and clarified the scheduling-window. Currently the scheduling window is 90 minutes, 45 minutes on either side. Mr. Blake stated MetroAccess will be more customer friendly.

Dr. Posner asked if sedans would be distributed within the contractors. Mr. Blake stated the sedans would be divided up proportionately. All 175 sedans will not be available on day one however, they will come gradually. Dr. Posner asked for clarification about

requesting the type of vehicle for transportation. Mr. Blake stated under reasonable accommodation, customers who need a specific type of vehicle due to reasons within Eligibility records, should only receive those types of vehicles for their trips. The customers' preference for riding a specific type of vehicle for other reasons may be considered however, not guaranteed.

Ms. Mezile asked how would MetroAccess handle a request for sedan-only. Mr. Blake stated we will try our best to place those customers on sedans however that cannot be a guarantee. Those customers could opt to use Abilities-Ride as needed.

Mr. Blake stated when a customer goes to the airport or rides a bus, s/he cannot chose the type of aircraft or bus s/he might board. However, MetroAccess will try to accommodate customers once sedans have been added to the fleet.

Dr. Posner asked if the vehicle request can be added via web booking. Mr. Blake confirmed that kind of information can be added via the call center and web booking.

**Eligibility Status Update – Platform Rehab Program:**

Antoine Johnson, Operations Manager, the Office of Eligibility, stated we have not had anyone needing the service during the project as of yet.

Chair Semelfort asked about the number requests received for MetroAccess. Mr. Johnson stated last week we had about 200 applications whereas, the initial weeks were slow.

Ms. Coles asked for contact information for the Office of Eligibility. Mr. Johnson provided a hotline number: 202-962-2701. When customers call the 202-962-2700, Mr. Johnson recommended to choose option 1. Ms. Coles asked about requirements for the application during the rehab project. Mr. Johnson stated anyone who has a disability and has trouble using the shuttle, can apply, even if they have been denied in the past, and they will received temporary eligibility.

Ms. Coles asked about the process for someone traveling from another state. Mr. Johnson stated instead of sending via a fax, it would be better if the person transfers the information via email: [Eligibility@wmata.com](mailto:Eligibility@wmata.com). Chair Semelfort recommended that given the current situation, the person should initiate the process in advance.

Ms. Ray asked about the easiest way to apply for MetroAccess currently, how to handle the section that is to be completed by a physician, the service area, and the approval time-frame. Mr. Johnson provided various modes: online, email, and/or mail and stated

customers can self-proclaiming and receive temporary presumptive eligibility. The service area remains  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from Metrobus and/or Metrorail and customers should be notified about the approval within a week.

Chair Semelfort asked how a person would provide their identification. Mr. Johnson stated a customer could email a copy of their driver's license or passport, or alternate arrangements can be made for someone who does not have computer access.

**MetroAccess Safety Update:**

Terrian Williams-Hall, Director, MetroAccess, stated now drivers are required to wear face coverings, it is no longer at their discretion. We recommend customers to wear face coverings.

Chair Semelfort commended a driver from Challenger who wore his face-mask as soon as the message came on his radio. Pierre Portabella, Challenger, stated he will be happy to pass on the commendation.

Ms. Coles asked for an update about the fire at Metro Headquarters. Mr. Blake stated public may not return to the building for a while that is why we discussed holding the Hedding Award virtually. The AAC meetings may be held remotely for several more months. Mr. Blake stated he has not been in the office since the fire as there has been no need and the crew that needs to do the maintenance needs the space to do their job. Mr. Blake informed that the ID Office has been moved to an alternate location.

Chair Semelfort asked about the duration to continue with current situation. Ms. Williams-Hall stated until the time we receive further guidance, we will continue to follow social distancing as recommended by the Centers for the Disease Control (CDC).

Chair Semelfort inquired whether WMATA would start providing face masks to customers. Mr. Blake stated there is a conversation about it and we are working on it.

Ms. Coles asked about the current MetroAccess service. Chair Semelfort informed that one party is picked up dropped off. The party may include a customer, a PCA, and/or companion(s). Ms. Coles asked if other rules remain the same. Mr. Blake stated all of the other rules remain the same. Ms. Coles asked if direct trips also apply on Abilities-Ride. Mr. Blake stated Abilities-Ride offers only direct trips however, if there was a shared ride on Abilities-Ride, the customer needs to contact that company. In past if a MetroAccess trip was placed on a taxi, there could be a possibility of having a shared ride however, not an Abilities-Ride trip.

Following up on Chair Semelfort's question, Mr. Blake asked Mr. Williams-Hall to share information as to what MetroAccess is doing to educate the customers about maintaining social distancing, etc. Ms. Williams-Hall stated the information has been placed on the interactive voice recorder (IVR), is shared with customers at the time of Reservations, and is available on web-booking. The drivers are instructed to avoid talking with customers while performing door-to-door service, assisting on and off the vehicle, and while securing the wheelchair, and performing their job.

Ms. Ray asked if there has been any thought of providing Braille format of policy on the vehicles or sending them through the mail. Mr. Blake stated we have not mailed anything, we are educating customers who are calling in. Instead of mailing to 40,000 people, we are trying to educate the customers who call and have a need for trips. We do not print Braille materials, it is generally done as per the request. He hopes that those are not damaged from the fire. Ms. Ray shared concerns about the second waive this fall. Mr. Blake stated he is making notes and will look into it. Ms. Ray asked about the masks being distributed to customers. Mr. Blake stated we do not have specific information yet.

Ms. Coles asked whether MetroAccess would take a customer to a protest site. Mr. Blake stated MetroAccess does not question an address requested by a customer as long as the address is within the service area. MetroAccess does not judge trip destination. If there is a situation where it is declared to travel across a certain location is unsafe, then we may not be able to take you there or pick you up from that location. Based on safety and security reasons, not because of Metro's decision, rather as per the guidelines of the jurisdictional restrictions, MetroAccess may have to inform customer about not being able to provide service due to the situation.

#### **Public Comments:**

There were no public comments received via the [MetroAACChair@wmata.com](mailto:MetroAACChair@wmata.com) email, nor via the phone number: 202 – 962 – 1100.

Ms. Sharma shared information about the Appeals Training. Chair Semelfort asked if there are any pending appeals. Mr. Blake stated probably there are none.

Dr. Posner asked the members to provide their questions for the Chief of Safety to be answered. The questions could be forwarded to Dr. Posner or Ms. Sharma.

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.