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## Accessibility Advisory Committee

### **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: July 16, 2018**

In attendance: Paul Semelfort (Chair), Denise Rush (Co-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Carolyn Bellamy, Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford, Edward McEntee, Dr. Phil Posner, Anthony Oberg, and Patrick Sheehan.

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Semelfort called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:10pm.

#### **Review of July 2018 Agenda**

The Agenda was approved with an amendment to discuss the MetroAccess Subcommittee work plan.

#### **Review of June 2018 Meeting Minutes**

The Minutes were approved as written.

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

Carlton Brown, Quality Assurance Administrative Services Manager, MTM, reported there were two customers who provided feedback regarding the Abilities-Ride program. He added a customer also provided feedback about being able to give directions to the driver. Mr. Brown stated there was a discussion on how can a customer provide input to drivers in regards to providing directions. Mr. Brown stated there will be more discussion about the matter. Ms. Rush asked what was the resolution on allowing customers to provide directions to the drivers. Mr. Brown stated there will be follow up discussions. Chair Semelfort stated he would like to add the topic to the MetroAccess subcommittee work plan for future discussion. Ms. Bellamy asked if MetroAccess staff explained to the customer the reasoning for circling the block before dropping her off. Ms. Bellamy added when the committee receives the customer resolution report that it be detailed as to how the complaint(s) were handled.

Allison Anderson, Operations Manager, Office of MetroAccess Services, stated there is no outreach information to share during this reporting period.

#### **Employee Recognition Award**

The Michael Wilson Award was presented by Michael Rademacher, Project Manager, MV Transportation, to Gabrielle Rivas, Dispatcher. Ms. Rivas joined the MV Transportation family in April 2015. During her career Gabrielle has managed reservationists and dispatchers. Ms. Rivas is a valuable team member, who is always ready to assist English and Spanish speaking customers with a smile on her face. Ms. Rivas stated what she loves most about her job is being able to help people like her, who are "differently" able.

The Denise Rush Award was presented to Doris Adkinson, Dispatch Supervisor, Diamond Transportation. Ms. Adkinson has been employed by Diamond Transportation since

October 2008. Her prior service in 2004 was with another provider. She has a total of 14 years of service with MetroAccess. Mrs. Adkinson was a model operator who always went above and beyond the call of duty. She received countless commendations while she was an operator, and had an excellent safety history. When we had severe weather Ms. Adkinson was there to call operators to keep them informed of any closures or scheduled delays to the service. In 2013 Ms. Adkinson was promoted to the position of dispatcher. She worked countless hours coming up with new creative ideas to be more proactive in her position. In 2015 she was again promoted to dispatch supervisor. Ms. Adkinson has truly been an asset to Diamond Transportation. Ms. Adkinson loves to relax with her family and friends. She loves to go out and eat with her husband. Ms. Adkinson also enjoys spending time with all of her grandchildren whom she spoils. She always has a smile on her face when she greets the operators. No matter what is going on you can count on her smile to brighten your day. She also enjoys spa days with her coworkers when they get a chance to have some "me" time. Recently, Ms. Adkinson lost her mom, who was her best friend. She misses her mom, but has had moved forward with her life, which would make her mom so proud of her.

Ms. Rush stated she is proud to present this award to Ms. Adkinson because she is an example of going above and beyond for the customers. Ms. Rush added Ms. Adkinson checks up on her and also makes sure that her hair is fixed nicely. Ms. Adkinson stated she is blessed, and that she loves her job and the people she meet along the way.

### **MetroAccess Subcommittee Work-Plan**

Chair Semelfort stated he would like each member to think about topics they would like to see in the Work Plan. He asked if Ms. Anderson had any input for the submission of work plan items. Ms. Anderson stated there was a robust conversation during the last meeting about the yearly MetroAccess Operations Control Center visit. Ms. Anderson asked if the members are still interested in visiting the OCC. Christiaan Blake, Acting AGM, Department of Access Services (ACCS) stated the committee made it very clear that they would like to continue the visit. He added the work plan should consist of the committee's ideas. He added when the committee returns in September, there will be a new work plan updated with new topics for 2019. Mr. Blake added if the committee would like to add another topic once the work plan has been created, the topic will be added to Status of Recommendations and Actions.

Chair Semelfort stated the new members will be able to add to the work plan in September.

### **MetroAccess Customer Guide Review**

Ms. Anderson stated, as mentioned in the last meeting, Mr. Blake pointed out some of the recommendations involving policy change. She added Metro is planning to take a different route when looking to incorporate the recommendations that involve policy changes. Ms. Anderson reported MetroAccess operations office met with Metro's customer research team to discuss the 5-minute wait rule. Ms. Anderson stated the

customer research team developed a proposal that will examine the 5-minute rule with focus groups that will consist of customers, reservationists, and dispatchers. She added there will be two focus groups. Ms. Anderson added it may be good to have one or two AAC members in the observation room while the focus group meets to discuss the policy. She also added, if there are questions the committee would like to ask during the focus group please assemble them and contact her. Chair Semelfort stated this is actually the first time the AAC has been engaged to this magnitude. He commended Metro Staff for including them.

Ms. Rush asked Ms. Anderson to reiterate what will be the focus group concentrate on? Ms. Anderson stated the focus group will focus on the 5-minute rule. Ms. Bellamy stated she was part of the initial group that developed the 5-minute rule. She added that while she was out sick Metro staff changed it to three minutes without notifying the committee. Ms. Bellamy stated the customer has 5 minutes to contact the driver once the vehicle arrives. Ms. Bellamy further added Metro staff just stated they cannot change the rules without following protocol. She added then why was the 5-minute rule changed and since that was changed, why can't Metro change the grandfather clause. Ms. Bellamy stated it is unbelievable that Metro changed the rule so they can recover and have excellent on time performance. She added the customers are people with disabilities, and are not able to get to the vehicle within 3 minutes.

Mr. Blake stated his understanding of the 5-minute rule is when the driver announces the arrival of the vehicle, the customer has 5 minutes to make contact. Ms. Rush stated there are times when drivers aren't at the actual address when they hit the arrival button. Mr. Blake asked Ms. Rush when the driver hits the arrival button where is she located. Ms. Rush stated she is outside waiting for the driver. Ms. Rush stated drivers are hitting the button early because they do not want to run late.

Mr. Blake asked Ms. Anderson is operations considering changing the rule. Ms. Anderson stated no operation is not changing the rule. Ms. Bellamy stated the rule has already been changed to 3 minutes. Ms. Anderson stated the written policy has not changed. She added the problem is the actual application of the rule, and whether companies are following the rule. Ms. Anderson stated the rule is customers have 5-minutes to present themselves for boarding. She added the arrival button must be pushed within the window. Ms. Anderson stated direction was given that dispatch should make contact with customers after three minutes. She added the 5-minute rule still stands.

Mr. Blake stated, after hearing Ms. Anderson's explanation, that dispatch should not make contact with a customer until the 5-minutes are up. Ms. Anderson stated if dispatch staff waited until 5-minutes before they make contact with the customer, ACCS needs to think about what type of impact that will have on on-time performance. Ms. Anderson stated the reason for the focus group is to hear the concerns from the customers, operator, dispatchers, and reservationists.

Ms. Bush stated there are times when the driver is not out front when the arrival button is pushed. Mr. Blake stated he will follow up with his team about the 5-minute rule.

Ms. Anderson stated the idea of the driver going to a second door will require a policy change. She added, some of the other changes were changed and incorporated in the draft version of the Customer Guide. She added, at the request of the members, she is willing to send a draft copy to members.

### **MetroAccess Van Design Update**

Chair Semelfort asked Metro staff to provide an update on the stool steps. Mr. Blake stated Metro heard from committee members about the high rear seat not allowing some customers to have their feet firmly planted on the floor while in route. Mr. Blake stated Metro is planning to treat this issue as a reasonable accommodation. He added the solution is to use a foot stool for each Ford Transit vehicle. Mr. Blake stated the current plan is that every time a customer sits in the high seat they will be able to request use of the footstool. Mr. Blake stated ACCS is currently working with Safety (SAFE) to make sure the footstool is safe to use as a reasonable accommodation on MetroAccess vehicles. Mr. Blake stated he shared with his colleagues in SAFE that MetroAccess contractor Diamond Transportation is using this solution for their private vehicles. Mr. Blake stated SAFE requested to see a demonstration. He added Metro is planning to test the footstool on Thursday, July 19, 2018.

Ms. Bellamy asked if Metro is considering changing the chair. Mr. Blake stated changes to the chair was a recommendation by the AAC and Metro did not accept that particular change. Ms. Rush asked was the AAC notified. Mr. Blake stated yes, in previous meetings. Ms. Bellamy stated changes will be made on the newer vans. Mr. Blake stated no changes will be made to the high seat on all vans. Mr. Blake stated Metro listened to the AAC comments and will advise when implementing the new changes to the Ford Transit vehicle. He added Metro accepted six AAC approved recommendations. Mr. Blake stated there will be a total of 684 Ford Transit vehicles with the accepted AAC improvements.

Mr. Blake stated Donald Scruggs, Assistant Director MetroAccess, stated they investigated how Metro could modify the seat and it was determined the seat cannot be modified. Ms. Rush stated the committee is talking about adjustments to the back seat. Mr. Blake stated from his knowledge the high seat will not be modified. Chair Semelfort stated the vehicle prototype they were shown two months ago had a new height seat. Ms. Bellamy stated Metro staff told the committee they cannot modify the front seat, however, they will adjust the high seat. She added the committee understood Metro could not fix the seat on the 207 vehicles that are currently being used, however, they are planning to fix the high seat on the remaining vehicles. Mr. Blake stated in order to make modifications to the seat Metro would have to restart the procurement process. Ms. Bellamy stated she would like Metro to put on record that they are not modifying the remaining vehicles.

Chair Semelfort stated the committee viewed and tested the new vehicle prototype a few months ago and that vehicle had a new seat in the back. Mr. Blake stated the modifications made to the prototype van the committee saw will be in the vans delivered. Dr. Posner stated he recently traveled in one the retrofitted Ford Transit vehicles. He added the seat that is located in the back against the wall is the seat that would get the reasonable accommodation. Dr. Posner stated the final shipment will have a longer front side seat, the small baby seat will stay the same, but the back bench seat will stay the same, which will get the accommodation. Ms. Rush stated the vehicle they were shown outside two months ago had a new seat. Chair Semelfort stated the prototyped van had two folding seats in place of the long back seat. Mr. Blake stated he will follow up with Don Scruggs about which seat will receive the modification.

Chair Semelfort asked how many vans have been retrofitted with the AAC recommendations. Mr. Blake stated currently 51 vans have been modified. He added by tonight the number will change to 60. Mr. Blake further added the modifications include the exterior steps, the additional expansion loop near the operator's right shoulder, modesty panel relocation to add knee room, relocation of Drivecam, and extension of the ranger mount to raise the ranger. Mr. Blake stated there is a delay in the hanger straps, but they are on-site and will be installed. Ms. Rush stated the 60 vans aren't complete because Metro must install the strap and purchase the stools. Mr. Blake stated the 60 vans are completed with the AAC approved recommendations. He added the stool became an accommodation after the AAC recommendations. Mr. Blake stated it is fair to say that after tonight the 60 vehicles will have 5 of the recommendations instead of six. Mr. Blake stated answering the committee question about the schedule for fixing the vans.

Mr. Blake stated Mr. Scruggs stated the schedule has not been consistent due to manpower availability, however they are working to retrofit 10 vans pre week mostly on the weekend. Mr. Ariza-Silva asked if the vans in question will have the rear seat, which height was 27 inches high instead of the recommended 22 inches. Dr. Posner stated the van in question has a seat on the driver side that high. He added the footstool will help alleviate restless leg. Mr. Crawford asked is Metro planning to fix the wheelchair tilting issue. Mr. Blake stated the leaning of the wheelchair lift is due to a softer suspension. Mr. Blake added Metro softened the suspension because customers were complaining about feeling every bump in the road. He added the compromise from the softer suspension is when the lift is over the curb it feels like you are going to tip off. He added there is no danger in having the soft suspension. Also, he added customers are safe and will not tip off. Ms. Brooks stated the van she saw had a swivel seat. She asked if the only seat changes involve changes to the length to add leg room. Mr. Blake stated a few meetings back Ms. Bellamy, Ms. Rush, and Ms. Bush stated they are unable to sit in that back seat because their legs will become restless.

Dr. Posner stated it could cause blood clots in the legs. Mr. Blake stated after hearing that he took action trying to find a way he could help. He added after researching solutions Diamond Transportation suggested a footstool. Mr. Blake stated making changes to the high baby seat Metro must open the procurement. Ms. Rush asked the group to explain if what she believed is wrong. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated no one is wrong; he thinks there is just miscommunication. Mr. Blake stated he will follow up with his team and send an email update to the AAC.

Dr. Posner stated the suspension is too loose. He added, if Metro can somehow find a happy medium, which can consist of a shock absorber that's solid, stiff like a rod or not having any shock absorber like the old vans. Dr. Posner asked when Ford Transit redesigned the new van make sure they take a look at the suspension because they created an issue trying to fix another issue.

Chair Semelfort asked is there an update on the number of incidents that occur on the Ford Transit vehicles. Mr. Blake stated his team wasn't clear on the question. He added, however, he will send an email follow up once he receives the information from his team.

### **Abilities-Ride Program**

Mr. Blake stated he is waiting for the ridership numbers and will email the numbers once received. He also added the Abilities-Ride policy will slightly change to state trips must begin or end in Maryland. He added, for example, you can start a trip in Maryland and end it in D.C. Mr. Blake stated he will follow up with the committee on possibly participating in the Abilities Ride Mystery Rider program.

Chair Semelfort stated he experienced an issue with Silver Cab drivers not showing up and labeling him as a No-Show. Mr. Blake asked if he notified Silver Cab management. Chair Semelfort stated he is planning to contact them, however they still haven't fixed the app. Mr. Blake stated he will follow up with Silver Cab about the app.

Mr. Blake announced Metro is looking to update the Abilities-Ride scope of work. He also added that committee members may hear that Metro is planning to solicit companies who can provide service in other parts of the region. Mr. Blake stated he will update the scope of work and when the committee returns from their break they will be able to review it, and have a brief dialogue. He added he will send the scope once it is available because Metro will not have a long vetting time. .

### **Public Comments**

A customer made a comment stating she is glad to hear the Metro is headed in the right direction when creating a region wide alternative transportation service. She also added while at a Transpor DC meeting a customer raised a concern about not being able to use the new Ford Transit vehicles because it causes issues to her back. Also, she asked if customers can call reservations and request a certain type of vehicle. Mr. Blake stated right now there is no way customers can select their vehicles. He added if there are

people who continue to have problems with the Ford Transit vehicles, please document the issues and email him.

Ms. Bellamy asked where are the white boards. Mr. Blake stated they are in the stations. Ms. Bellamy stated she traveled on the red and green line and asked the station manager at NoMa and PG Plaza stations about the whiteboards, and was told they have not seen one. Mr. Blake stated he will do an audit of the stations to make sure they are available.

Ms. Bush stated Mr. Scruggs allowed her to use the stool. She added it is very comfortable while you are using it, but she thinks the safety issue is that it's not attached to anything. Mr. Blake stated securement of the device is the issue. He added that his team told SAFE the stool will only be used when the customer is seated. Dr. Posner stated ACCS can reach out to Diamond Transportation to find out where they store the footstool. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated the recommendation presented to Metro is not to say who is right or wrong it simply to make transportation better for people with disabilities.

**Meeting adjourned at 6:01pm.**