



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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Washington, DC 20001  
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### **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: March 19, 2018**

In attendance: Paul Semelfort (Chair), Denise Rush (Co-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Charlie Crawford, Carolyn Bellamy, Darnise Bush, and Doris Ray.

Phill Posner (Remote Access)

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Selmelfort called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:03pm.

#### **Review of March 2018 Agenda**

The Agenda was approved as amended to include New Business.

#### **Review of February 2018 Meeting Minutes**

The Minutes were approved without amendments.

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

Jennifer Weber, Quality Assurance Administrative Services Manager, MTM, reported several customers provided public comment at the previous meeting; all customers were contacted; and resolution efforts were provided to address each service issue raised.

David Shaffer, Access Policy Officer and ADA Ombudsman, Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), reported meeting with the National American Counsel for the Blind. Information was shared and questions were answered regarding MetroAccess service, the Abilities-Ride program, Bus and Rail accessibility features, and the Travel Training program. Mr. Shaffer also reported he is planning to address DC Department of Aging on eligibility for MetroAccess and the Reduced Fare program.

#### **Employee Recognition Award**

Ms. Denise Rush presented the Rush Recognition Award to Frankie Lee, Educational Trainer, First Transit Transportation, for his consistent professionalism, customer service, and dedication as both an operator and trainer.

#### **New MetroAccess Vehicle Discussion**

Don Scruggs, Assistant Director, MetroAccess Service, reported that vehicle production had been halted at the Sonny Merryman factory due to the retrofitting. Mr. Scruggs stated at that time production was halted, 111 vehicles had been produced leaving 116 left for production. Mr. Scruggs added there are a set of six modifications that have been designed for the retrofitting for the 227 production vehicles with additional efforts

being made to have the 207 vehicles that are in use retrofitted later. Mr. Scruggs added all the kits to do the modifications have been prototyped and developed.

Mr. Scruggs stated the passenger and driver steps will be coated with a rhino liner type material for slip resistance. He added the passenger step will be widened with a lift on it to create more of a tactile feel from the edge of the step. Mr. Scruggs stated by April 16, 2018, the first 20 sets will be produced and the remaining balance of the 111 should be produced by May 4, 2018. Also, he added the standing grab straps are in place and ready for installation. The grab rail near the operator right shoulder will be extended further out. Mr. Scruggs stated since the aisle way cannot be reduced, this modified feature will move closer to the driver side. Mr. Scruggs stated the solution for the right seat is to relocate the panel near the wheelchair about 3 ½ to 4 inches away.

Mr. Scruggs stated many AAC members had concerns about the location of the Ranger being low, which causes the operators to look down. Mr. Scruggs added the modified feature is to extend the Ranger connector cord. Delivery of the Ranger diaphones are expected by early April. He added that the DriveCam will be moved about 4 inches closer to the driver. Mr. Scruggs stated that a contract modification is being prepared. Once the modification is approved the remaining 116 vehicles will replicate the prototype the AAC viewed three months ago.

Ms. Rush asked if there would be 111 vehicles that will be retrofitted April 16, 2018. Mr. Scruggs answered in the affirmative, adding that MetroAccess is planning to have most of the vehicles retrofitted by that date. Ms. Rush asked when Metro staff will schedule a viewing of the prototype that have all the changes implemented. Mr. Scruggs said the AAC should be able to inspect the very first retrofitted vehicle around April 15<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Rush stated that if plans change please be sure to notify the committee.

Ms. Bellamy asked if there were other issues wrong with the new MetroAccess vehicle. Mr. Scruggs stated he wasn't aware of any other issues. Ms. Bellamy asked who is responsible for fixing the vans. Christiaan Blake, Acting AGM, Access Service (ACCS), stated no one entity is responsible for maintenance on all of the MetroAccess vehicles. Mr. Scruggs added that fixing the vans depends on which parts needs fixing. Ms. Bellamy stated the warranty does not provide coverage if Metro fixes any items on the vehicle. Mr. Scruggs stated that's not correct; fixing the vehicle depends on the magnitude of what issue needs fixing. Mr. Scruggs stated the all vehicles are under warranty regardless of who fixes the issue. Ms. Bellamy asked why not retrofit the vans that are already in use first. Mr. Scruggs stated that the current schedule and plan call for the retrofitting of vehicles currently in use in July 2018. Ms. Bellamy asked why does Metro continue to order new vehicles that will need to be retrofitted, adding that the new MetroAccess vehicles design was wrong. Mr. Blake stated Metro ordered vans under a certain set of specifications, however the newest vans are being built to include the input of the AAC. He added the ADA is very specific when it comes to vehicles, stairways, elevators and everything. He added the vans, as built, were compliant with

the ADA. He stated that, as a result of discussions with the AAC, the vehicles are not only compliant, but even better for the customers.

Ms. Bellamy stated there is another issue with the seatbelt that should be addressed. She stated that a customer in a wheelchair who uses the seatbelt can choke due to the positioning of the seatbelt. Mr. Blake asked was the seatbelt a feature the AAC recommended for fixing. Ms. Bellamy stated this is a new issue. Mr. Blake stated he will have that issue looked at by the staff.

Ms. Bellamy asked are the retrofitted vehicles larger. Mr. Scruggs stated the previous ordered vehicles are not larger, however, vehicles under the new specs will be larger. Ms. Bellamy stated the chairs are smaller. She added that people are getting larger, so they need larger chairs to accommodate their size. Mr. Scruggs stated in the new prototype van the seats will be larger. Ms. Bellamy asked that Mr. Scruggs check and see if the seats are larger. She also requested that Metro staff check the seatbelt in the new prototype vehicle. Ms. Bellamy also added the operator seat is not visible. Mr. Scruggs stated that you can view the driver from the large mirror. Ms. Bellamy stated if someone in a wheelchair sits in front of the mirror you can not see the driver. Ms. Bellamy stated that the item behind the driver should be modified.

Mr. Ariza-Silva stated it is a must for customers to see the operator at all times. He added that he witnessed a driver falling asleep and he had to scream "Hey!" to grab the driver's attention.

Ms. Bush asked where are the 217 vehicles. Ms. Bush added she thought 207 vehicles required retrofitting. Mr. Scruggs stated in FY17 207 were purchased and they all are currently in service. He added FY 18 227 were purchased. However, out of the 227, 111 were on the production line when production was halted due to the AAC recommendations. Mr. Scruggs stated the remaining 116 will be the prototype that was on display out front that had the AAC recommendations incorporated. Ms. Bush asked right now does Metro only have plans to retrofit the 111 vehicles. Mr. Blake stated 207 vehicles were purchased last year. He added they all are in service. Metro is planning to retrofit them at a later date.

Ms. Ray asked what is the total fleet of MetroAccess vans. Mr. Scruggs stated that the current fleet size is 725. Mr. Scruggs stated as a new van enters the fleet an old van is phased out. Mr. Scruggs asked is Ms. Ray asking how retrofitting effect fleet availability. Ms. Ray stated yes. Mr. Scruggs stated the divisions retrofit vehicles on the weekend because less vehicles are in service. Mr. Scruggs stated retrofitting on the 207 vehicles cannot happen until all the kits are ordered and delivered. He added MetroAccess would like Sonny Merryman to work on the vehicles they already have. He added he will create a draft plan of how Metro could prioritize some of the 207 for retrofitting first. Ms. Bellamy stated Metro should fix the 207 first. Ms. Bellamy made a motion

requesting Metro apply the AAC certified retrofits to all 207 of the new MetroAccess vehicles currently in service prior to applying the retrofits to other vehicles.

Ms. Bellamy asked who is responsible for completing the retrofitting. Mr. Scruggs stated Metro is responsible. Ms. Bellamy asked why Sonny Merryman can't complete the retrofitting. Mr. Blake stated Sonny Merryman created the vehicle based off Metro specifications. Ms. Bush asked if Metro was obligated to accept the vehicles because Metro is under contract. She asked what can the committee do to make sure Metro does not order any more vehicles without the approval of the AAC. Mr. Blake stated Metro will commit to hearing from the AAC. Ms. Ray would like to add that going forward, the staff will notify the AAC when vehicles are being designed to the motion. The AAC did not accept the amended motion.

Ms. Rush asked if the vehicles are under Ford recall. Mr. Scruggs stated he is not aware of the vehicles being on a recall list. Ms. Rush asked when Metro stated they would stop production due to the issues with the vans, did Metro truly stop. Mr. Scruggs stated production was halted to implement the recommendations by the AAC.

### **MetroAccess Eligibility Process**

Christopher Colbert, Acting Director, Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach (ELIG), reported the first step in the determination process is the application process. This includes the following:

1. Customer calls ELIG with application to schedule an assessment;
2. Customer completes assessment(s);
3. ELIG makes a determination of eligibility within 21 calendar days, and the customer is notified by mail; and
4. If ELIG determines that the customer is not eligible for MetroAccess, the customer has a right to appeal.

Mr. Colbert stated customers can obtain the application by mail, email or [wmata.com](http://wmata.com). Mr. Colbert stated there are three types of assessments that help the certification team to determine eligibility. Mr. Colbert added the three types of assessments are Pre-assessment (phone interview), In-person Interview, and Functional Assessment. Mr. Colbert added Pre-assessment includes the following steps:

1. Verifies which service customer is applying for;
2. Confirms the application is complete;
3. Assists with determining type of assessment; and
4. Schedule the assessment.

Mr. Colbert stated the in-person interview involves the certification team having a conversation with customer about their current travel needs and abilities, and questionnaires tailored to specific needs of customers. A Certification Specialist provides information on the MetroAccess service, and discusses travel training and alternative transportation options. Mr. Colbert added this process is completed by all applicants.

Mr. Colbert stated the final stage to the types of assessments is the functional assessment, which includes 1. An assessment of the customer's functional ability to access and navigate Metrobus and Metrorail; 2. Assessment of the customer's balance and endurance, mental status, anxiety, mood, and bus route schedule knowledge. Any portion of the functional assessment may be omitted depending on customer's medical and functional needs.

Mr. Colbert stated there are two types of eligibility customers may qualify for once they are found eligible for MetroAccess service: (1) Conditionally Eligible for customers who are determined eligible for MetroAccess, but have demonstrated that they are able to independently use fixed-route service for some trips. These customers are encouraged to use fixed-route, when possible, at no cost; and (2) Fully Eligible for customers who are determined eligible for MetroAccess and have demonstrated that they are unable to independently use fixed-route service at any time. These customers are not issued SmarTrip cards that enable free use of fixed-route services.

Mr. Colbert added there are other eligibility determinations. Eligibility for the Reduced Fare Program; customers who are not eligible for MetroAccess, but do have a disability that qualifies for Metro's Reduced Fare Program. Then there are customers who are not eligible for MetroAccess or the Reduced Fare Program because customers who demonstrate the ability to independently use Metrobus and Metrorail, and do not have a disability that would qualify for Metro's Reduced Fare Program.

Chair Semelfort asked once the customer calls is the pre-assessment phone line wait still 30 minutes. Mr. Colbert stated that the wait time for responding to calls is between 15-20 mins. Mr. Colbert also stated that phone lines are closed at 11:50 – 1:00 pm, for lunch.

Ms. Bellamy asked how many customers appeal the MetroAccess determination. Mr. Colbert stated that ELIG is not part of the appeal process per the ADA. However, the office of ADA Policy & Planning (ADAP) can answer her question. Mr. Blake stated there are not many customer appeals. Mr. Blake added that the denial rate is low. Ms. Bellamy asked how many applications are processed per day. Mr. Colbert stated his office process between 50 to 60 customers per day. Mr. Rush asked, since Mr. Blake transitioned to the role of Acting Assistant General Manager for Access Service, who is the Appeal Officer. Mr. Blake stated that Glenn Millis is currently the Appeal Officer. Mr. Blake added Mr. Millis and Mr. Shaffer along with a member from the AAC serve as the Appeal panel. Ms. Rush asked when do appeals take place. Mr. Blake stated at the request of the AAC, appeals take place on Mondays. He added ADAP will work with the customer and members of the AAC to schedule during the best date and time for all parties involved. Ms. Rush asked, how many AAC members are trained to sit on the appeal panel. Mr. Blake stated nine members are currently active. Ms. Rush asked when ADAP will schedule training for the Appeals training. Ms. Rush added she feels with 20 AAC members there should be more than nine members who are trained to participate

in appeals hearings. Mr. Blake agreed with her statement, and said ADAP will schedule an appeals panel training between June or July.

Mr. Crawford asked what is the current number of people using MetroAccess. Mr. Blake stated there are more than 43k, but ELIG will follow up with a specific number.

Ms. Ray asked what is the purpose of requiring the customer to bring a photo identification card when applying for the service. Ms. Ray also asked for clarity about agents asking customers about their needs for transportation during the assessment process. Ms. Ray asked is it required that the customer schedule another appointment for the Functional Assessment. Mr. Colbert stated the photo ID is required to confirm that the application belongs to the customer applying for service. He also added that they do not discuss trip purpose with the applying applicant. His office just states MetroAccess is a form of public transportation and they are able to travel anywhere inside of the service area. Answering Ms. Ray's last question, Mr. Colbert stated everything is done in one day depending on the level of determination. Ms. Ray asked what is the process for approving an eligible customer who lives outside of the service area. Mr. Colbert stated his staff lets the customer know that they are outside of the service area. He added that his staff works with the customer to locate an address inside the service area they could use for pickup.

### **Public Comments**

A member of the public commented she does most booking online however, she does not understand why you need to wait two hours before the return trip. The customer understands this is a shared ride service but suggest trips should travel in the same direction for example she had a trip Thursday afternoon traveling from Bethesda going to her home in Vienna, the driver had to drop a customer office in Lanham then pick up a third passenger in DC before dropping her off. Also, the customer stated that when scheduling customers why not make sure the customers are traveling in the same direction. Mr. Blake thanked the customer for using web booking. He stated that MetroAccess is public transportation, and there are times when customers are on the vehicle for a short time, trips are scheduled based on the fastest fixed route trip. Mr. Blake added however, if the trip is longer then the comparable time on Metrobus/ Metrorail, then that's a problem. Terrain Williams-Hall, Director, MetroAccess Service, stated she will have her staff look into the two hour wait time before requesting a return trip.

A member of the public commented March 5, 2018, a customer had a trip from Arlington to Centerville that never showed. The customer called three times for 20 minutes to speak to MV dispatchers who insisted that the driver was on the way. The customer stated that luckily her sister was there and she was able to stay overnight. Also the customer added when she takes three trips using MetroAccess her trip total is \$19.70, which she can not afford. The customer also stated when she uses online booking to schedule a trip to her mother's house located at 1400 Carlin Springs Road

there is a box that pops up saying the address is not found. She stated she never has this problem when she calls reservations to schedule the same trip. Mr. Blake stated he will have his staff examine her trips and determine what happened to the March 5<sup>th</sup> trip. Mr. Blake added that he will also have staff to determine what went wrong with her web booking. Ms. Ray asked if the customer was a Star Transportation user. The customer stated no, she just uses MetroAccess.

A member of the public commented that her trips are labeled curb to curb instead of door to door. The customer also stated March 15<sup>th</sup> she missed an appointment with her neurologist due to MetroAccess being extremely late. She stated the driver was apologetic however, she had waited months for this appointment. The customer also, stated on March 28<sup>th</sup> while traveling on the MetroAccess vehicle she overheard a dispatcher yelling at the operator. She added when the operator tried calling dispatch, but no one answered. The customer stated MetroAccess is a good service, but the customer service at the Call Center must change. Mr. Blake stated ELIG will make sure door to door is listed in her file. He also added his staff will look into what happened on each day.

For detailed descriptions and resolutions of public comments made during the meeting, please refer to the March 2018 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 6:01pm.**