



Accessability Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
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METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: October 19, 2015

In attendance: Mr. Paul Semelfort (Chair), Ms. Denise Rush (Co-Chair), Ms. Darnise Bush, Mr. Edward McEntee, Mr. Charles Crawford, Ms. Marisa Laios, Mr. Patrick Sheehan, Mr. Elver Ariza-Silva, Ms. Caroline Bellamy, Ms. Doris Ray, Ms. Phillipa Mezile, Dr. Tapan Banerjee, and Dr. Philip Posner.

Call to Order

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

Review of October 2015 Agenda

The committee requested that the Free-Ride benefit be add to the agenda. The agenda was approved with the addition.

Review of September 2015 Meeting Minutes

The approval of the minutes was tabled as the committee had not had ample time to review the minutes.

Customer Service and Outreach Report

Ms. Jennifer Weber, Compliance Auditor, MTM, reported that all public comments from the previous meetings have been addressed.

Mr. David Shaffer, Access Policy Officer, ADAP, reported that the Month of October is National Disability Employment Month. Disability recruitment and travel training have been coupled with information on accessible bus and rail as well as MetroAccess. He reported attending the Transition Fair in Maryland where he provided information about MetroAccess and travel training. He also participated in the career fair at the District of Columbia National Federation of the Blind convention.

MetroAccess Employee Recognition

Ms. Stephanie Newsome, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, recognized Mr. Robert Gladney as the Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award winner. A detailed description of Mr. Gladney's accomplishments can be found in the accompanying document titled "Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award" located under the October 2015 heading at http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm

MetroAccess Ridership Projections for FY17, Cost and Initiatives

Mr. Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, stating that the model shows that ridership continues to increase. There are currently 30,000 registered customers. MetroAccess delivered over 2.3 million trips last year and more are projected for next year. Metro staff is attempting to create opportunities for

MetroAccess customers to travel utilizing other services where possible. One of the recommendations in the study was to consider changing the free ride benefit to reduced fare benefit, and eliminating the blue or white card to have one card. Customers using fixed route service would pay a reduced rate. The committee members took issue with this recommendation.

Dr. Posner stated that it was brought to his attention that the board believes the AAC approved the recommendation to eliminate the free ride program. He stated that this is false information, the AAC was not made aware that the recommendation was being considered nor did they agree to eliminate the program.

Ms. Bellamy voice her concern with the proposal of the reduced fare for all MetroAccess customers.

Ms. Ray asked if the discount fare was authorized by the Federal Transit Act and requires only that individuals have a disability and/or are at least 65 years of age. She asked if it was correct that WMATA offered an incentive of a free ride on bus and rail for MetroAccess customers. She asked what savings is the report indicating would be made by eliminating the free ride and offering reduced fare.

Mr. Blake affirmed her questions. He was unable to provide the cost savings for eliminating the free ride program, but stated he could get that information after the meeting.

Ms. Laios stated her disappointment with the proposal to eliminate the free ride program and the rumor that the AAC is in agreement.

Ms. Mezile stated that elimination of the free ride program is abusive. She said that another issue to consider is what about the cost of a trip for a customer's personal care attendant.

Dr. Posner brought forth a motion stating the AAC does not support any fare policy changes that would result in elimination of the Free Ride Benefit. He stated this benefit has been demonstrated to aid both riders with disabilities and WMATA's fiscal sustainability. It gives the riders a greater independence for travel and it saves WMATA more than \$40 per ride over the use of MetroAccess. He continued to say that the impact of losing the program on people with disabilities, seniors, and customers at lower income levels would have devastating effects on the quality of their lives. He requested that the approval be a part of the chairman's report to the board, part of the AAC minutes, and presented as a disapproval to the executive committee of the board by the executive committee of the AAC. The committee approved the motion.

Ms. Ray abstained awaiting direction from the AFA.

Ms. Ray suggested tabling the motion until next meeting due to lack of facts and not having all voices heard.

Dr. Posner rejected the suggestion to table the motion.

Mr. Christian Kent, Director, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, explained what the board and staff's intentions were. He stated that the board is entertaining a review of the fare policy. He stated that he does not anticipate any changes occurring to MetroAccess fare. There was mention of changing the free ride benefit to a half fare. It was not presented formally to the committee, nor was it presented in a manner that suggested the committee supported or agreed with it. It was a concept discussed and not ready to share with the committee. He stated that there is a rationale that by aligning the MetroAccess benefit on bus and rail with what individuals receive with the reduced fare card, there would be equity.

Dr. Posner commented on the safety issues on bus and rail. He stated that during off-peak hours there is rail work occurring. Dr. Posner proposed a motion stating that the increased hours of track work during off peak, nights, and weekend hours does not appear to be reflected accurately and consistently in the "trip planner" and thus MetroAccess fare calculation may be using rail fares rather than bus fares when rail is not the fastest mode during track work. He stated the AAC request that the accuracy of the fastest trip be monitored or as an easier fix, calculate MetroAccess fares based upon twice the bus fare during periods of heavy track work and rail delays. The committee approved the motion.

Mr. Sheehan asked if there is track work occurring and the schedule is cut back or single tracked will the fare calculator give an accurate representation of the actual routes.

Dr. Posner stated that during those times the trip planner is not correct which means the fare calculator would be inaccurate as well.

Mr. Kent commented that he understands the rationale for Dr. Posner's proposal and stated that the staff will lend its support as much as possible to evaluate the issue.

Public Comments

Comments received were with regard to: Grandfathering, eligibility and the conditional eligibility cards, rude and disrespectful dispatchers, fear of riding bus and/or rail due to incidents that have occurred on these modes of transportation, and a commendation of the work the operators do.

Comments from the MAS

Ms. Bellamy commented about information that was presented to the bus and rail committee and not to the MAS, regarding charging customers with full eligibility (white

card) a discounted rate for their transportation on bus and/or rail. She urged committee members to have customers sign a petition voting against this change.

Dr. Posner stated that he was made aware at the Board meeting that the changes had been approved. Dr. Posner stated that the subject will be discussed at the Board meeting scheduled for October 22, 2015. A motion was made to have the MAS formally oppose to any change in the Free Ride benefit. The motion was passed.

Ms. Laios asked if the committee could request that the Board put in writing that the AAC did not and does not approve of this change. A motion was made to include the MAS opposition in the AAC Board Report. The motion was passed.

Mr. Blake asked if the committee received a copy of the GMU study, and if not he would provide a copy to those who did not receive it. He stated that a Metro colleague was under the impression that all the members of the committee had received, reviewed and approved recommendations in the study. He understands that this is not the case.

Ms. Bush stated operators had difficulty locating her address. She stated she leaves very early in the morning, and she did not feel comfortable giving her fare to operators in the dark.

Ms. Mezile commented that she only rode with MetroAccess on two occasions, but her experiences were not positive. The AAC member stated her operator received a call while she was on board the vehicle and immediately turned the vehicle around. The customer stated they were headed in the opposite direction of her destination, and she chose to get off the vehicle at a Metro Station instead. The customer stated another time, the operator requested the fare before she was permitted to board the vehicle. The customer stated the routing for this trip was not appropriate.

Ms. Rush stated that frequently the phone service seemed to be experiencing problems.

New Business

Dr. B. Moore-Gwynn, Accessibility Advisory Committee Coordinator, reported the winner of the Hedding Award is Diamond Transportation. She stated that the presentation will be take place at the Accessibility Excellence Awards event on November 18, 2015 at 5:30 pm.

For detailed descriptions and resolutions of public comments made during the meeting, please refer to the October 2015 Complaint Resolution Report located at http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm.

Meeting adjourned at 6:03pm.