



Accessibility Advisory Committee

300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: December 15, 2025

In attendance: Paul Semelfort (Chair), Denise Rush (Vice Chair), Tajuan Farmer (Second Vice Chair), Susan Bowmaster, Vanessa Coles, Rico Dancy, Debby Fisher, Steve Kaffen, Swatha Nandhakumar, Sandy Neuzil, Sarah Radt, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Anu Sharma, AAC Coordinator, started the meeting with announcements, took the rollcall, read the agenda, thereafter, Chair Semelfort moved the meeting forward.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes:

The MAS approved the December 15, 2025; Meeting Agenda as presented.

The MAS approved the November 17, 2025; Meeting Minutes as written.

Reports: Customer Service, Commendation, Outreach:

Customer Service Report: There were three public comments to address from the November MAS meeting. Two of the three comments from members of the public whereas the third was from an AAC member. All the comments were reviewed and customers and AAC member were followed up.

Commendation Report: In November 2025, 376 commendations were received as follows: Central Avenue 51, Challenger 64, Transdev OCC 142, Hubbard Road 91, Industrial Road 19, Hubbard Road 68, MTM 5, Eligibility 2, and Abilities-Rides 25.

Outreach Report:

Christian Blake, Vice President, Access Services stated he and Terrian Williams-Hall, Director, MetroAccess, attended a meeting of the Conference Commission on Disability Concerns at the Emory Fellowship United Methodist Church on Saturday, December 6.

Motions Made Motions Passed:

AAC formally recommended to WMATA that it adopt a Streamlined Recertification Process for MetroAccess Riders with Permanent Disabilities as described in the detailed proposal document circulated on October 20th, 2025. The motion was unanimously passed.

MetroAccess Eligibility Recertification Process Advocacy:

Ms. Radt discussed AAC's streamlined recertification proposal and reminded of the background. MetroAccess riders requested WMATA considers changes to the recertification process to reduce unnecessary documentation and medical appointment burdens for riders with permanent disabilities. In response, the AAC explored options to address these concerns while ensuring WMATA can maintain full compliance with ADA and FTA requirements. The key objectives are to reduce unnecessary burdens on riders,

improve staff efficiency by eliminating redundant documentation, maintain rigorous eligibility standards, align with ADA and FTA regulations, and reflect customer-centered national best practices. Ms. Radt stated currently, MetroAccess riders with permanent disabilities recertify their eligibility every three years. This requires new medical documentation for already verified conditions, creating burden without added value to the process.

Ms. Radt shared legal basis and stated ADA §37.125(f) supports reasonable recertification intervals for stable conditions; FTA Circular 4710.1 encourages simplified, low-burden eligibility processes; DOT Appendix D to 49 C.F.R. Part 37 prohibits unreasonable or costly burdens, including fees. Ms. Radt shared national alignment and stated national trends for leading paratransit systems with streamlined recertification include New York MTA, Chicago RTA, Santa Rosa, Nashville, and others; whereas new laws reduce repeated documentation of permanent disabilities include California AB 1250 and Maryland HB 450. Ms. Radt stated streamlining proposal applies to riders with medically verified permanent disabilities. The key changes propose recertification every five years instead of the current three years, and no new medical forms unless condition changes. Ms. Radt stated requirements will verify personal information, update mobility and assistive device needs, and report functional changes.

Ms. Radt stated the safeguards include no change to original eligibility requirement, periodic reviews continue, medical condition already fully documented and evaluated, reevaluation triggered by changes in condition, WMATA may require full recertification if misuse is suspected, and ADA and FTA explicitly support eligibility criteria review if system accessibility changes. Ms. Radt stated a previously raised concern was about potential for increased fraud. Since eligibility criteria and verification remains unchanged, WMATA may require full recertification at any time, and ID misuse is unrelated to medical documentation. In case of fixed-route use & improvements, WMATA may reassess functional eligibility at any time. Conditional eligibility already incentivizes fixed-route use, riders prefer freedom and flexibility of fixed route when safe and feasible. The goal of 100% fixed-route accessibility remains long way off. Ms. Radt discussed customer sensitivity (permanent disability) includes determination made by medical provider; participation optional, and rider feedback does not indicate it being a concern.

Ms. Radt discussed recommendations and stated WMATA should adopt a streamlined five-year recertification process for riders with permanent or non-improving disabilities for several reasons. It reduces barriers and unnecessary burdens on riders, improves administrative efficiency for WMATA staff, ensures robust eligibility standards and safeguards. It aligns with ADA and FTA guidance and national best practices. Ms. Radt

stated MAS vote was that the AAC should formally recommend to WMATA that it adopt a Streamlined Recertification Process for MetroAccess Riders with Permanent Disabilities as described in the detailed proposal document circulated on October 20th, 2025.”

Chair Semelfort thanked Ms. Radt for a thorough proposal. He clarified that in the current eligibility process, customers are certified every three years for conditionally eligibility, and every five years for certain administrative recertification. However, Ms. Radt has clearly stated that the effort is to streamline for five years. Ms. Coles asked when a customer passes away, how does MetroAccess handle that. Chair Semelfort stated in that case, usually a family member or a friend would contact the Eligibility Office to follow that process. Ms. Coles asked about the process of personal care attendants (PCAs). Chair Semelfort stated anyone can be a PCA for a customer.

Mr. Blake stated the fraud issue mentioned in the proposal, was never the biggest concern of the Access Services. As Chair Semelfort stated that to report demise of a MetroAccess customer, a family member may contact us, may be due to getting a refund from their EZ-Pay account. In the event a person does not inform us, then the fraud is about customers who recertify every three years, i.e. conditional eligible as they have the card to enter and exit the Metro system. They would not be able to use MetroAccess, because the ID check would not match with the customer. Mr. Blake stated when the proposal started, it was for people with permanent disabilities, however, the proposal now has changed. The five-year recertification is up for discussion and debate. Mr. Blake stated the difference at this point is the requirement for medical documentation. With the administrative recertification, we review application, know customer’s history and grant them recertification automatically. That requires a trip to the doctor. Mr. Blake stated it would be surprising if a MetroAccess customer does not see a doctor for five years.

Mr. Blake recommended the AAC to vote and advocate as they wish. About the PCA, whoever a customer travels with, can be a PCA. A conditionally eligible customer gets a card for the PCA as well, which needs to be tapped within 30 seconds after the customer taps his/her card on Metrobus and/or Metrorail. Ms. Radt stated in terms of medical appointments; the issue is that the document must be signed within 60 days of the recertification process. Going to doctors takes time and costs money which can be a burden for some customers. If we can remove a barrier without a benefit, that could help the customers. Mr. Blake stated he understands the committee’s position.

Ms. Fisher stated people with intellectual and developmental disabilities across DMV who participate in the Medicaid waiver, have the medical documentation in the system to be

eligible for the waiver. She asked if that could be used in lieu of the doctor's appointments. The motion was made and passed unanimously to bring it to the AAC in January 2026.

MetroAccess Inclement Weather Policy:

Allison Anderson, Operations Manager, MetroAccess, stated MetroAccess may make service modifications during severe weather events or for any hazardous conditions. During such conditions, door-to-door service may revert to curb-to-curb service. We ask customers to ensure their path from the exterior door to their pickup location is clear for safe door-to-door service. If the pathway from the exterior door to their pickup location is not clear, service may revert to curb-to-curve service. MetroAccess primarily operates in neighborhoods and secondary streets. If conditions warrant, service may be curtailed to return trips only or suspended altogether. MetroAccess changes will be announced via a variety of communication mediums. Such as Metro alert messages, on local radio, television, the MetroAccess phone system, and Metro's website, WMATA.com.

Ms. Anderson stated we try to accommodate customer request as much as possible to their travel window if we see an impending weather event forthcoming. There are times when MetroAccess will reach out to customers via phone to request time window changes, in case of severe weather event. Thus, it is important that customers keep their contact information updated with the Eligibility Office. Chair Semelfort asked if MetroAccess will be lenient about late cancellations and/or earlier pick-ups on those days. Ms. Anderson stated we practice leniency on late cancellations and no-shows during severe weather events. If we can accommodate and get customers picked up earlier, we will certainly do that. Chair Semelfort recommended customers to call MetroAccess as soon as possible, with any changes to get rides. Ms. Neuzil asked if call center employees can work from home these days. Ms. Anderson stated we have the flexibility to adjust staff location whether at the office or working remotely.

Chair Semelfort asked Ms. Anderson to talk about a time when service must be suspended. Ms. Anderson stated MetroAccess will try to operate service as safely as possibly, keeping in mind the safety of our customers and our operators. She stated customers should always err on the side of safety, as does MetroAccess. Chair Semelfort stated customers need to understand that service may change in many ways during the inclement weather days and schedules may not be maintained due to road conditions. Also, Abilities Ride gets extremely limited during those times.

Uber Update:

Kevin Hackshaw, Uber, stated two issues with links are being experienced by customers. The first issue is where customers hit the link and it looks for a driver, however, there is

no car available, then customers get another link in five minutes to restart the process. The other issue is that customers are informed to call WMATA, and they call the call-center during peak times, causing longer hold times. Other issues are with addresses, vehicles going to the wrong places not quite to the address and we are working on it. Mr. Hackshaw stated everyone who has contacted Mr. Blake about the address issue, should notice an improvement by the end of the week. At the same time, if a customer continues to experience the same issue, they should inform Mr. Blake so that he can share that information for Uber to review further and correct it. He apologized for longer than anticipated time to resolve it as they were trying to review if it was a systemwide issue or a case-by-case situation. They are still trying to determine that situation.

Mr. Hackshaw gave an overview of how Uber works with WMATA, what we can or cannot do, how we work with drivers and make sure that they're doing their best to assist passengers. Mr. Hackshaw shared a video and a presentation on how Uber supports WMATA. There are several driver resources that Uber provides to assist drivers by educating and helping them being their best in assisting the disability community. There are many rider resources, and we want to ensure people are aware of them. Mr. Hackshaw stated we engage the disability community. Our agencies across the country correspond on a regular basis and have an in-house service-animal working-group. We have proactive engagement with the American Council for the Blind, and the National Federation for the Blind. We work with several training centers and spend a lot of time in our user experience tools and have more than 2000 feedback forms. We talk to many users with service animals to get feedback. It is reflected in some of tools, i.e. Uber app.

Mr. Hackshaw stated Uber drivers are not official employees. They are free contract labor; thus, we can provide the education and ask them to read it but cannot force a driver to review the education piece. However, if something comes up, for example, a service animal incident, the driver is responsible regardless of if they reviewed the material or not, that was provided to them by Uber. We provide a website for drivers to use. We have a lot of tips from the Open Doors organization. We try to get across the fact of how you talk to the disability community with empathy and make them feel welcomed into your vehicle. Drivers can ask questions to customers as long as done with respect and politely.

Mr. Hackshaw shared a video that showed Uber is a platform that welcomes everyone, including riders with service animals. It was an educational video for drivers to learn about service animals, riders with service animals, and the law that must be followed. If a driver is unsure whether a rider's dog is a service animal, they can always ask if the dog is a service animal required because of a disability, and what task is the animal

trained to perform. Drivers are advised that some customers may have hidden disabilities. It's best not to touch or distract a service dog unless a rider gives permission. Service animals will typically sit on the floor or a rider's lap. Mr. Hackshaw stated this is an example of one of the training pieces for all their drivers to make sure they understand what's expected of them.

Mr. Hackshaw stated for WMATA driver resources; they have the Global Safety Education Team. They have created a series of short educational modules for the drivers, designed to help them safely and respectfully assist riders with disabilities and older adults. The content covers from understanding disabilities, how those might impact a rider, and how to provide safe and respectful communication. They also do in-app messaging for drivers and have quarterly communications for reinforcement. There are times when a driver will opt out of a ride and may not know that is a service animal ride. When that happens, they get a pop-up on the app about our service animal policy, suggesting they do not want to opt out of that ride.

Mr. Hackshaw stated for riders' resources; we launched a self-ID rider experience that allows users to set their preferences. For instance, accessibility preferences, service animal information - giving a heads up to the drivers. Giving options to customers, that information can easily be deleted if customer does not want to share it. They also implemented simple mode, making it easier to use the app. The app is rolled out and WMATAs customers using Abilities Ride and Uber riders can utilize it. Mr. Hackshaw stated for blind riders and/or riders with low vision, Uber has iOS voiceover, Android TalkBack, and wireless Braille display capability. Riders can set up trusted contacts for assistance and/or emergency. There is assistive technology such as visible and vibrating alerts as well. Uber has enabled guest riders the ability to contact without the app via a text message. Customers can provide direct feedback to Uber webform and social media. Uber has a 14-member team who is trained on the ADA, they support users who experience a service denial that may be related to discrimination.

Chair Semelfort stated about geocoding, there are some locations that have one or two zip codes. As a result, one gets the customer right in front of the location and other may take them elsewhere. Mr. Hackshaw stated they are working on a few things that can be discussed in 2026. Chair Semelfort invited Mr. Hackshaw to present updates in 2026. Vice Chair Rush asked about the Next Generation Vans. Mr. Blake stated two of those vans are in operation, while others are being held for a recall of the manufacturer. Second Vice Chair Farmer asked if Uber has individuals to translate the service animals' message to drivers if needed. Mr. Hackshaw stated he can reach out to one of the specialists to get that information. Second Vice Chair Farmer stated because of HIPAA; you can't tell a

person about a disability. Similarly, if a driver has a medically identified issue regarding transporting a service animal, could there be behind the scenes an electronic notification so that a person with a service animal and that driver are never matched. Mr. Hackshaw stated we don't want to be in a position where somebody tries to manipulate the system.

Ms. Coles stated asked if drivers can tell if it is an Abilities-Ride trip. She stated a concern where drivers come in the vicinity but not to the specific address. She has given her ratings for drivers on Uber app. Mr. Hackshaw stated for unsatisfactory service give the driver a one-star rating and you will not be matched with that driver again. The drivers also rate the customers. Mr. Hackshaw stated drivers will not know if it is an Abilities Ride trip. If the customer self-identifies with a service animal, that will be seen by the driver as a part of the customer record. Mr. Sheehan shared some feedback with Mr. Blake and Mr. Hackshaw, that he received from a customer. Mr. Hackshaw will call the customer. Mr. Blake stated the team is working on resolving the issues. When it is a promotion, not required by the ADA, not part of your civil rights entitlement, and we're trying to incorporate accessibility amongst other challenges, he ask customers to please be patient. Mr. Blake stated MetroAccess, the safety net is always there to be utilized by customers.

Mr. Sheehan asked if Abilities Ride uses the same maps as used by other Uber trips. Mr. Blake stated in his testing, he found the personal Uber app tracks the person, whereas, for Abilities-Ride, Uber uses longitude and latitude. We hope Abilities-Ride customers will be able to use the Uber app without a credit card on file– which is still under consideration.

Public Comments:

The first member of the public raised a concern of space limitation in securing a wheelchair in the minivan. She stated the space is not sufficient to have one ambulator customer and one rider using a wheelchair. Mr. Blake stated the policy on the minivan is either two ambulatory passengers or one ambulatory passenger and one customer using a wheelchair. MetroAccess is a shared-ride paratransit service and that is not going to change.

The second member of the public commented about delayed Uber trips causing long wait times and stated she is going back to MetroAccess. She made comments about Uber drivers' illegal status and their ethnic background. Mr. Blake stated first, I don't accept the term illegal, I don't know what that's supposed to mean, and we're not getting into that. Every time this customer was taken you off Uber per her request, she complaints and asks to be back on Uber. To besmirch the drivers based on their nationality is wrong and unfair, and the customer should not do that.

The third member of the public stated concerns about the drivers dropping and picking her up in the alley with trash cans. When she has a MetroAccess ride scheduled, she still gets moved to Uber. She commented about not receiving responses from text message line. Uber drivers do not get correct address as listed in reservation. Mr. Blake provided his phone number and asked her to provide specifics of the trips for further review.

Ms. Neuzil raised a translation issue about the word ambulatory versus driver's impression of it being ambulance. Since then, she has been adding white cane rather ambulatory. Mr. Blake stated anything to help the driver, adding walk with a cane is fair, yes.

Ms. Radt asked if there is any specification for where the wheelchair should be placed in a MetroAccess van, to help drivers in securing the customer's wheelchair because of the way the straps go, or the way the wheelchair fits better. Mr. Blake stated that is why he is committed to watching the video to identify the cause. It has been difficult to ask passengers to move over, in a sedan. The first member of the public added that the driver did open the driver's side door, she is not trying to get the driver in trouble. Mr. Blake stated he is not going to get in trouble, it's about retraining, but he must look at the video.

Public Comments: phone 202-962-1100, or email MetroAACChair@wmata.com

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:03 p.m.