



# AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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January 4, 2016

Dear Chair Downey and Members of the Board,

It is my pleasure to present you with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) report for the month of December 2015. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Metro's emergency exercises; 2) MetroAccess seatbelt securement; and 3) an update on Momentum.

### AAC Safety First

The AAC discussed Metro's door closing procedure on the train. It seems that some train operators close railcar doors before looking down the platform to see whether any customers are still attempting to board. Despite the installation of "left side" auxiliary microphones in its current fleet of railcars as well as incorporating this feature in the new 7000 series models, train operators appear to be deviating from procedures. This is a dangerous situation for all customers, including those with disabilities because customers can get caught in the doors and injured. The AAC recommends that Metro review the door closing procedures on its trains; institute new procedures where necessary; enhance training by adding a monitoring component for all new and refresher trainings; and install monitors in the lead cars that will give operators a view of the entire platform. These measures are similar to the types of actions other transit properties have implemented to allow train operators to see the entire platform before activating the door close buttons.

The AAC discussed stop announcements on the 7000 Series railcars. The automated announcements provide line and destination information after the exit announcement. The AAC recommends that Metro change the sequence of announcements in the 7000 Series railcars to make the line and destination information first because such critical information allows customers, including those with disabilities, to understand whether they are on the correct train.

The need for announcements when trains are "expressed" was raised as a safety issue. Although the practice is infrequent and no transfer or core stations are skipped when trains are "expressed", the AAC wants to reinforce the practice of announcing an "express train" at least two stations prior to the impacted station. This will ensure all customers can safely alight the train prior to the desired station being expressed and the customer getting lost in the system.

The AAC examined Metro's proposal to lock the emergency/equipment gates throughout the rail system. The proposal to lock the gates is part of pilot program launched in April 2015 to address fare evasion on the fixed route system. The AAC recommends that Metro reconsider its proposal to lock the gates and implement

initiatives like an audio cue to address the issue of customers using them without payment. At fare gates when there is no Station Manager present, such as on mini-mezzanines, or when the manager is occupied elsewhere, the AAC recommends that Metro provide all customers including those with paratransit service with a card to access the normal faregate independently and return the emergency gates to the unlocked position. The AAC further reminds the Board that emergency exits should be available at all times for all passengers to use during any emergency personal or group endangerment.

The AAC discussed the issue of WMATA Station Personnel's communication with ALL passengers including those with hearing, vision and cognitive issues. The motion was passed by the AAC to request that all WMATA station personnel be equipped with "white boards" and markers for communication with customers in the station. These will be helpful during emergencies and times of high noise levels as well as normal travel situations.

## **Issues of the Month**

### Metro's Emergency Exercises

AAC members discussed their experiences as volunteers in the emergency exercise at Forest Glen Station, and reflected on other similar emergency exercises. The AAC identified several areas of concern, beginning with the recently introduced waiver that participants were required to sign in order to participate in the Forest Glen exercise. The waiver, which places all risk of injury on the volunteer participant, was cited by at least one member as the reason they refused to participate, and by other members who expressed similar sentiments with regard to participating in any future exercises.

Members also expressed concerns about their experiences during the exercises including evacuation methods used and emergency personnel not taking into consideration recommendations of customers with disabilities. The AAC has requested the participation of Metro's Office of Emergency Management staff in a discussion during the next AAC Bus and Rail Subcommittee meeting scheduled for January 11. The AAC would like to discuss the following: (1) the waiver; (2) participants' experiences; (3) the possibility of classroom training for trainees; (4) the possibility of equipment changes; (5) a central liaison to handle all the debriefing feedback from each exercise; (6) the distribution of feedback and lessons learned to each the jurisdictions; and (7) the possibility of an emergency exercise focused only on customers with disabilities.

### MetroAccess Seatbelt Securement

AAC members were provided a demonstration of proper wheelchair securement on MetroAccess vehicles. MetroAccess staff addressed questions about the challenges of securing the ever-growing number of different mobility device designs, shapes, and sizes. The demonstration helped illustrate the time required and care provided by not

only MetroAccess operators, but also Metrobus operators, when completing the important task of safely securing customers in mobility devices.

Momentum and Long Range Planning

The AAC received an update on Metro's strategic plan, Momentum. Some of the priorities of the plan includes running eight car trains during peak periods; improving and expanding capacity at core stations; implementing priority corridor networks; restoring the frequency of Blue Line trains during peak periods; expanding the bus fleet; and investing in the next generation communication system.

Since the plan's adoption by the Board in 2013, Metro has charted its progress and milestones of each goal in Momentum. The AAC looks forward to additional improvement updates, specifically in the areas of lighting, elevator cleanliness, and MetroAccess trip scheduling software.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Sheehan', written in a cursive style.

Patrick Sheehan  
Chair