



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
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February 1, 2016

Dear Chair Evans and Members of the Board,

It is my pleasure to present you with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) report for the month of January 2016. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Accessibility requirements for any proposed MetroAccess alternative service; and 2) Metro's emergency exercises.

Issues of the Month

The Transportation Network Proposal

The AAC held a discussion at the request of Metro staff, and in response to speculation that Metro is considering the possibility of partnering with a transportation network company (TNC), such as Uber, to offer an alternative to MetroAccess in Maryland or region-wide.

Currently, MetroAccess transports 2.2 million customers with various types of disabilities a year. On the surface, TNC service appears to be a suitable option because it would connect customers with drivers for convenient, flexible, and affordable alternative service. However, AAC members expressed strong concerns over the history of TNCs in general, and Uber in particular, which exhibit an interest in serving only customers not in need of mobility devices or service animals, along with a blatant disregard for the Americans with Disabilities Act. The AAC believes that partnering with a TNC would lead to a two-tiered paratransit system, which may result in an unequal class of service.

The AAC recommends that Metro conduct listening sessions to provide all customers, including those with disabilities, an opportunity to register their comments on any proposal to partner with a TNC. The AAC also recommends that Metro perform a SWOT analysis to ensure all the factors and points are fully examined. The AAC further recommends that Metro use its influence to engage in discussions with TNCs about the need for accessible transportation for all customers; and, that Metro open up its process to attract TNCs to qualified small independent contractors.

The AAC views this as a critical issue, and will continue to discuss it and provide recommendations. The AAC will also express concern and object if it appears that the process is moving forward, but the AAC's input is not being taken into consideration.

Metro's Emergency Exercises

At the request of the AAC, Metro's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and first responders from around the region had a candid discussion about Metro-sponsored emergency exercises.

The AAC's position is that first responders, the on-scene commander, Metro staff, and others are not listening to the needs of individuals with disabilities during these exercises, and therefore are unlikely to know how best to handle a person's body or service animal during a real emergency. In the most recent exercise, communication was significantly delayed. In a real emergency, the time taken to communicate this and other issues could have resulted in a catastrophe for everyone involved.

The AAC recognizes that each emergency exercise scenario is different; however, the Committee wants to stress the importance of providing full information and giving a person the option to choose based on the instructions given is crucial. Although waivers are an industry standard, the AAC believes the way they were introduced and the lack of protection should something occur during the exercise is enough to make some members feel it is not in their best interest to participate in the exercises if a disclaimer is required.

OEM acknowledged that communication is one of the keys to making the exercises successful and member experiences can be different because first responders on the scene assess a situation and make the decisions. The top priority of every first responder, the on-scene commander, and Metro personnel is to evacuate all passengers to a safe area.

The AAC shares this same goal of showing customers how to evacuate the system safely in an emergency. To that end, the AAC recommends the following:

- Hold pre-brief meetings prior to each exercise. These meetings would be used for explaining details, and for information sharing about an evacuation. These meetings should also be regional to minimize redundancy.
- Appoint a central liaison to handle all the debriefing feedback from each exercise and the distribution of feedback and lessons learned to each of the jurisdictions
- Broaden the process by using the new customer community Amplify to obtain a cross section of disabled and non-disabled participants, thus giving first responders an opportunity to work with more types of disabilities.

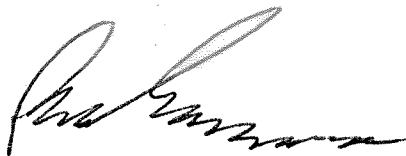
The AAC is pleased with this first step to build a more inclusive evacuation program and thanked OEM and the jurisdictions for their input in this process.

Appreciation

The AAC would like to congratulate Mr. Evans on his new position as chair of Metro's Board of Directors. The committee wishes him much success in his new role.

The AAC would also like to thank former Board Chair, Mortimer Downey for his enlightened leadership and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Sheehan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "S".

Patrick Sheehan
Chair