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Accessibility Advisory Committee

February 2, 2015

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 January 2015. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Metro's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2016; 2) Operations Updates on lighting, detectable warning signals, and shuttle bus service; 3) Signage Concerns; and 4) Appreciation to Metro's new Board Chair, and to the Board's former Chair and 2nd Vice-Chair.

Issues of the Month

Financial Briefing

Dennis Anosike, Chief Financial Officer, and Mark Schofield, Senior Economic and Financial Advisor, discussed Metro's FY2016 proposed budget. The FY2016 budget has to bridge a funding gap while still advancing Metro's strategic goals of safety (including close call reporting and fatigue risk management); customer care; compliance; and efficiency (including revenue collection and upgrades to fare vending machines).

The AAC was informed that, given the funding gap, Metro's Board is considering all of its options, including deferring some initiatives, eliminating others, and raising fares in an effort to conserve resources. In addition, the Board is studying sustainable service models that would include the regional-based services such as the two current pilot projects providing alternatives to MetroAccess. Both pilots have shown promise in offering better service for customers while at the same time helped the sponsoring jurisdictions realize cost-avoidance savings over the per trip expense of MetroAccess. Other initiatives being evaluated in the FY2016 budget include the recalibration of Metrobus service with locally operated service; investments for Metro to go to all 8-car trains during peak periods; the purchase of new Metrobus and MetroAccess vehicles; the installation of bumpy domes at remaining stations; elevator replacement; and station lighting.

The AAC is encouraged by Metro's commitment to move toward sustainability by continuing to fund vital projects that are important to all customers including the community of people with disabilities. If raising fares must be considered, the AAC recommends that Metro attempt to minimize the impact of an increase to MetroAccess customers by considering a surcharge as oppose to a fare increase.

The AAC thanked the CFO for the candid and comprehensive discussion on Metro's FY2016 proposed budget and will continue to be attentive to these budgetary issues as they unfold.

Operations Updates

The AAC received an update on Metro's progress toward installing detectable warning signals (bumpy domes) in all Metrorail stations. Metro has installed detectable warning signals at 84 stations, and is expected to complete installations in the remaining seven stations by June 30, 2015.

The AAC received an update on Metro's Lighting Improvement initiative that, so far, has resulted in mezzanine lighting improvements at 35 stations, with 13 more stations slated for improvements in 2015. Going forward, Metro has plans for trackbed, passageway, and elevator and escalator lighting improvements throughout the system. The AAC and our stakeholder partners are greatly impressed and appreciative of Metro's success on improved station lighting.

Finally, the AAC received a performance update on Metro's shuttle bus service that is provided during elevator outages in the Metrorail system. Many members agreed that the service has been greatly improved over the past year, and that the option to call ahead for a shuttle is a great benefit to the customer. The AAC thanks Metro for improving the service and recommends continued efforts to further reduce wait times. The AAC also recommends that Metro incorporates text messaging as an option for requesting shuttle service.

New Signage

The Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) had an intense discussion about the new evacuation signage. The new "Evacuation Signs" on rail cars near the center doors no longer mention wheelchairs or disabilities or how they will be evacuated. The AAC believes that these are serious omissions and recommends replacement evacuation signage that would specifically mention customers with disabilities.

The BRS also had a discussion about the new Priority Seating signs. Those signs use unreadable type and color patterns and avatars that are difficult to decipher. While we are certain that there was good intent in their designs, we believe that these signs could have been more efficacious if the AAC had been shown the "final" version of the signage for suggestions before they were implemented. The AAC did give initial conceptual input on the priority seating project, but expected to have at least one more session before the final signs were deployed in order to comment on accessibility of the visual design and sensitivity of the content.

Given the importance of accurate and accessible signage to all Metro customers, but especially those with disabilities, in the future the AAC would like to ensure that staff has sufficient input from the committee by requesting the opportunity to advise in the development of new signage, and be assured of an opportunity to review signage prior to system installation.

Appreciation

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

The AAC would also like to thank former Board Chair, Tom Downs and former 2nd Vice-Chair, Alvin Nichols, for their visionary leadership and support.

Sincerely,



Patrick Sheehan
Chairman