



# AAC

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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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 February 2016. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Proposed MetroAccess alternative service, and 2) Metro's FY 2017 Budget.

### **Issues of the Month**

#### MetroAccess Alternative Proposal

The AAC continued its discussion on Metro's proposal to partner with a transportation network company (TNC), general common carrier, or transportation brokerage to offer a new alternative to MetroAccess in Maryland, and then possibly extend it to the entire MetroAccess service area.

Metro has demonstrated its support of MetroAccess as the region's transportation safety net for people with disabilities by providing the resources needed to improve safety, reliability, fleet quality, and technology. In addition, Metro offers benefits such as the Free Ride Benefit and travel training to promote greater travel independence for customers who are able to use bus and rail for some of their trips. Metro has also partnered with jurisdictions to offer alternatives to MetroAccess, such as TransportDC in the District of Columbia. All of these efforts are designed, in part, to ensure the sustainability of the MetroAccess service.

Using the TransportDC service as a successful model of a general-purpose alternative to MetroAccess, staff presented details of its proposal to establish a similar alternative for all trips originating and ending in Maryland. The proposal relies heavily on technology, hence the TNC potential. The AAC feels that any proposal to use TNC as an alternative to MetroAccess in Maryland or region-wide must ensure that access is not compromised for any customer. To that end, the AAC recommends the following points be included in a proposal:

- alternative services should be cost effective for all customers including those with low-income;
- provide insurance coverage at the same level as the current programs operated by Metro;
- maintain a standard of service with Metro having oversight over the training and control over the service;
- utilize technology that is capable of handling everything from service requests by telephone to automated tracking of reservations and vehicles;
- ensure all disabilities are considered in the requirements including deaf/hard-of-hearing, and customers who use service animals.

The AAC will continue discuss the topic and provide recommendations, and would like to see our recommendations reflected in any final proposal that goes out to bid for service.

#### Metro's Fare Policy

The AAC is in support of Metro's proposal not to increase fare or eliminate service in Metro's FY2017 budget. The AAC is also advocating for continued funding of lighting and information improvements including low-tech tools such as white boards in station kiosks to allow employees to engage and interact with customers who are deaf/hard-of-hearing or have low vision.

In addition, the AAC is in opposition to some aspects of the budget. One is the proposal to eliminate adding value to SmarTrip cards on buses. For many, Metrobus is the first access point into the Metro system. The ability to add value to SmarTrip cards is critical, because many neighborhoods lack the retail amenities of a supermarket, drugstore, or rail station where such transactions can be completed. Eliminating the option to load SmarTrip cards on Metrobuses will be devastating for many customers, especially those who are unbanked and unwebbed, because it will deprive them of the transfer bonus.

Another issue of concern to the AAC related to the budget is the fare calculation for MetroAccess service during major track work. Because track work can slow the system, the AAC is proposing that Metro use twice the bus boarding fare for the MetroAccess Fare Calculator to determine MetroAccess fares when track work is being performed. This change will make fares more accurate.

With an eye on safety, the AAC recommends that the emergency gates be unlocked and restored to full access throughout the system.

It is the AAC's position that these cost-effective measures will go a long way in restoring customer confidence and maintaining ridership.

Sincerely,



Patrick Sheehan  
Chair