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April 4, 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) Abilities-Ride Proposed MetroAccess alternative; 2) Automated announcements; 3) Inclement Weather Policy for Metrobus; and 4) Kudos to Bus Planning.

### **Issues of the Month**

#### Abilities-Ride Proposed MetroAccess Alternative

The AAC held its final discussion on Metro's Abilities-Ride. The discussion focused on the scope of work for the alternative service. To offer the AAC and disability community at large the opportunity to examine and comment on the service proposal, Metro issued a request for information (RFI) that closed for comment on March 18, 2016.

Member concerns ranged from service area; resolving complaints with the service; accessing the service by telephone; the proposed limited number of daily trips; and standards for driver's training. The AAC recognizes that unconstrained growth in demand for MetroAccess is unsustainable. The AAC is fully committed to helping Metro develop ways to provide reliable and sustainable public transportation services but also wants to ensure that the alternatives are equally accessible.

#### Automated Announcements – 7000 Series

At the request of the AAC, Metro's Office of Transit Infrastructure Engineering Services (TIES) discussed announcements on the new 7000 series railcars. The AAC contends that with manual announcements, train operators provide the color, line, and destination information prior to the closing of the doors. In the new 7000 series railcars, the automated information about the color, line and destination are at the end. At the heart of the issue is that the 7000 series doors close before customers can hear the pertinent information; by the time the line and destination information is provided, the chime sounds and the doors close before the entire announcement is completed. Additionally, the automated announcements need to announce which side the doors are opening.

Metro has a complex rail system. Although TIES indicates that arranging automated announcements to address each station is impossible, the AAC wants the option pursued nevertheless. Specifically, AAC recommends that Metro switch the announcements to allow critical instructions, such as line and destination information, be given first when a train is on the platform. Additionally, AAC recommends that Metro reinforce its policy for all trains to come to a complete stop on the platform and take 5 seconds before opening the doors. This will allow customers, including those with

disabilities, to understand whether they are on the correct train and an opportunity to safely transition from their seat to the door.

The AAC views this issue as a safety concern and will continue to monitor.

### **Metro's Inclement Weather Policy for Metrobus**

With all the system closures due to the snow, the AAC discussed Metrobus policy for inclement weather with Metro's Office of Bus Planning (BPLN) and Metro's Office of Customer Service.

Metro has approximately 175 bus lines operating different schedules across the region. Metro's goal is to ensure that Metrobus can operate safely and reliably in all weather conditions. During winter months, weather conditions throughout the region can be inconsistent. To resolve some of these issues, an operations plan for Metrobus was developed. The operations plan consists of four service levels for inclement weather: light; moderate; severe; and total shutdown of the system. Metro collaborates with transportation departments in each region for information on snow removal; and, as the weather changes, Metro can reduce or increase demand for services based on the weather conditions.

To keep the public informed, Metro uses e-Alerts, press releases, and local media to keep riders informed of the service plan. Additionally, at each service level, route maps for each Metrobus line detailing where the bus will be on the detour are updated on Metro's website. Metro's Office of Customer Service is informed at each level and information is shared with customers and local jurisdictions alike.

The AAC encourages Metro to remember that not only do streets need to be cleared, but also, sidewalks need to remain accessible as well. Because no matter how great the service is (and Metro service is great), if customers cannot access a bus stops or get to stations via the sidewalks, then it is not accessible.

The AAC appreciates the informative presentation on Metro's inclement weather policy. The AAC better understand the process and the importance of knowing alternate routes to get home if something occurs in the system.

### **Kudos to Metro's Office of Bus Planning**

The AAC received an update on Metro's new generation of electronic display system for bus shelters. The purpose of the electronic display system is to keep customers informed of transit events while they are in route to their destinations. The electronic bus shelter signs will be installed inside of bus shelters and display three types of information: (1) estimated bus arrival; (2) transit alerts; and (3) route information to include a jurisdiction designation. Metro can also display targeted real-time emergency messages or public service messages on the signs. When there is no bus scheduled to

arrive, the signs will also display the next arrival time for each of the buses using that stop.

Metro has installed approximately 169 electronic bus shelter messaging signs across the region to date, with another 17 signs on order to be installed at the Franconia Springfield Metrorail station and the Takoma Langley Crossroad Transit Center. Metro is also replacing the electronic signs at Friendship Heights Metrorail station. Additionally, using New Freedom Grant funds, approximately 87 bus stops will receive electronic display signs in Prince George's County and around the region.

With the inclement weather and the recent incident at McPherson Square, the electronic signs have proven very useful because information could be displayed quickly. The AAC congratulated BPLN for the improvements to the shelters. Knowing when a bus is going to arrive will be a big help to all customers.

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