



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

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Dear Chair Downs and Members of the Board,

It is my pleasure to present you with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) report for the month of April 2013. The primary issues reviewed by the AAC, its subcommittees, and workgroups during the month were: Accessible Wayfinding Systems; Metro Opens Doors to People with Disabilities employment program; Emergency Evacuation of Metrorail customers with Disabilities; MetroAccess Contract Transition; and a Subcommittee appointment.

Issues of the Month

Accessible Wayfinding Systems

The Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind (CLB) has collaborated with Metro in using Click-and-Go Wayfinding Maps to develop an accessible wayfinding system for Metrorail stations. The idea of developing audio maps of stations in order to provide blind, low-vision, and deaf-blind customers more independence and flexibility while traveling in the system is the brainchild of Brigid Doherty from the Department of Access Services (ACCS). Ms. Doherty believes that if this population of customers were able to form a "mental picture" of a Metrorail station, they would be able to travel more safely and confidently on public transportation.

The audio maps would seamlessly bridge indoor and outdoor environments by providing a voiced description of the physical features of a rail station. During the first phase of the project, CLB will develop a database for the Gallery Place station (which will serve as the model) and ten additional stations, and a website will also be launched that will provide details on how the service will work. The new technology will be available for smart phones and other multi-media applications. Upon motion, the AAC supported CLB and Metro's development of an accessible wayfinding system for the Metrorail system.

Metro Opens Doors to People with Disabilities

The MetroAccess Call Center has increased the number of employees with disabilities through a collaboration with MV Transportation and CLB. Through CLB's "Bridge to Work" program, Metro has filled 11 call center positions. The "Bridge to Work" Program provides training and employment opportunities for blind, visually impaired, and returning disabled veterans.

Metro is committed to a diverse workforce and aims to recruit and hire a labor force that reflects the community it serves. Enhancing diversity at Metro was a point expressed by Second Vice-Chair Alvin Nichols during the AAC quarterly meeting with the Board's Executive Committee. Access will continue to work closely with the Department of Human Resources and the Office of Civil Rights to ensure Metro attracts and retains diversity in hiring the best and brightest.

AAC Officers and Metro Board Leadership Meeting Follow-up

The AAC discussed recommendations and action items developed during the first quarterly meeting with Metro's Board of Directors. The AAC accepted all recommendations from the Board. ACCS will coordinate with the appropriate staff to facilitate the review of these topics by the AAC.

One recommended item was to review Metrorail evacuation procedures. This review took place during the April 15th meeting of the Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS), with members of Metro's MTPD Office of Emergency Management (OEM) serving as the lead presenters on the subject. OEM provides support for a variety of emergencies in the Metrorail system such as train door malfunctions, loss of power on the tracks, and collisions. They use a unified approach for response and recovery, which is a national standard that ensures clear expectations, responsibility, and chain of command. When there is an incident and evacuation is necessary, Metro's first priority is to evacuate customers to the platform. Using a triage system, OEM will assess customers according to severity of their injuries. Customers with disabilities who use mobility devices may be initially evacuated without the device. Metro does not encourage self-evacuation and has never left anyone behind. Metro conducts exercises on preparedness to improve response in emergency situations. Track walking exercises have been conducted with low-vision and blind customers at Metro's track simulator facility to demonstrate best practices in a emergency situations.

The BRS praised the work of Metro's MTPD Emergency Management team, and upon motion, recommended that Metro include an accessible signage with raised lettering in all E-Kits to communicate basic instructions to customers who are blind, deaf or hard of hearing, and also recommended that first responders retrieve oxygen tanks from mobility devices when rescuing a customer from an emergency on the train.

MetroAccess Contract Transition

The AAC met with the project managers from each of the new paratransit companies and had the opportunity to ask questions. The AAC looks forward to a fruitful partnership with the new paratransit providers.

Appointment

The AAC appointed Brian Miller as Vice-Chair of the BRS and he will serve in the position until 2013 AAC election this summer.

Sincerely,



Patrick Sheehan, Chairman