



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-962-6060

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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 June 2015. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Metro's Fare Media Program (Elimination of Paper Farecards), 2) an update on Bus Stop Accessibility, and 3) the AAC's FY2015 accomplishments.

Issues of the Month

Metro's Fare Media Program (Elimination of Paper Farecards)

The SmarTrip Manager, from the Office of the Treasurer (TRES), gave a presentation on Metro's initiative to eliminate paper farecards in the Metrorail system by July 1, 2016. Eliminating the paper farecards is one of the goals of Metro's New Electronic Payment Program. Currently, a SmarTrip card costs \$10. However, after the elimination of the paper farecards the price of a SmarTrip card will be \$2 and carry \$8 of stored value. This will give customers an immediate savings in the cost of the card after their first round trip because with the SmarTrip card they will avoid the \$1 paper farecard surcharge. The SmarTrip card will also give customers the option to add Metro passes, such as the 7-day pass or the short-trip pass, and reload them at local retailers, such as CVS and Giant food stores.

Metro will conduct a two-phase pilot program for this transition. The first phase will involve internal testing of the machinery, and the second phase will be a live test of the vending machines at three Metrorail stations: King Street, Ronald Reagan National Airport, and Union Station. To ensure the public is aware of this initiative, the CFO is conducting extensive outreach, and is collaborating with the Department of Customer Service, Communication, and Marketing (CSCM), the Department of Access Services (ACCS), and the Office of External Relations (EREL) to assure all stakeholders are informed and that the message to customers is consistent and accessible.

The AAC views this initiative as one aimed at making the Metro system more efficient, thus enhancing the travel experience for a wide range of customers. The AAC reiterated its recommendation about opportunities to test the functionality of new equipment for accessibility and providing feedback on the user experience prior to full installation and operation in the system. The AAC also recommends that Metro make a strong and timely outreach to the disability community about the elimination of farecards. These recommendations were delivered to TRES, and the AAC is looking forward to further engagement related to the outreach and communication plans.

Bus Stop Accessibility (Update)

The AAC received an update on bus stop accessibility in the region. Metro is effectively spending down grant funds it received to improve bus stops in the region. Three bus stops were recently improved, and an additional 20 bus stops are being reviewed for improvement. The AAC commends Metro on its success in this area and looks forward to the improvement of additional bus stops.

AAC's 2015 Accomplishments

The AAC advised Metro on a variety of issue related to serving customers with disabilities in FY2015. Highlighted below are some of the topics and recommendations aimed at enhancing the riding experience of all customers:

1. Emergency Exercise - The AAC views safety as a critical issue for all customers including those with disabilities in traveling in the system and therefore regularly participated in full-scale emergency exercises. The AAC recommended that future first responder training include working with customers who are deaf or hard of hearing and customers that use service animals.
2. Silver Line Tour - The AAC participated in a pre-opening accessibility tour of the Greensboro and Spring Hill stations on the Silver Line. The AAC recommended adjustments to the elevator doors closing speed allowing all customers including those with mobility devices enough time to enter and exit the elevators; and that the tension be adjusted in the bathroom doors to make them easier for customers with limited strength to pull open the doors from the inside.
3. 7000 Series Debut - The new railcars offer more safety and accessibility features than any previous railcar series. The AAC recommended that Metro install arm rests on the first forward facing seats (near the priority seating) to allow customers with limited capacity something to hold onto or push upon when rising from the seat.
4. Accessible Meeting Locations - The AAC advised on standards and criteria for accessible public hearing/meeting locations and developed a checklist to be used to review locations, which is being used to develop a list of approved locations.
5. Universal Securement Policy - By request of Metro's Executive Committee, the AAC held an open discussion about a possible policy of mandatory securement for Metrobus and Metrorail. Findings from the discussion indicate that the majority of the AAC agreed with Metro's current securement policy, which emphasizes safety while providing customer choice. Additionally, the AAC recommends that Metro consider developing an accessible securement system that offers multiple ways for customers using mobility devices to be secured.
6. Accessible Fixed Route Services - The AAC views sustainability as one of its chief objectives for Metrobus, Metrorail and MetroAccess service. The AAC participated

in a discussion about their personal experiences on bus and rail and developed a list of recommendations aimed at eliminating barriers that prevent MetroAccess customers from using the fixed route services, and increasing ridership among people who are MetroAccess eligible. The recommendations will be incorporated into the Board-directed study on the sustainability of MetroAccess.

7. Lighting - The AAC has established a lighting work group and is working diligently with Metro on improving lighting in the rail system. Lighting enhancements have resulted in improved mezzanine lighting at 35 stations and in additional stations slated for lighting improvements.
8. Wayfinding - The Station Wayfinding system improves access to the rail system by enabling customers who are blind or have low vision to navigate a Metro station by way of an audio map. The first station for which this tool is available is the Gallery Place/Chinatown. This collaboration with Metro, Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind, Click-and-Go Maps, and the Council of Governments on this first of its kind in the nation.
9. Bus Stop Accessibility on Trip Planner - To enhance the use of Metrobus service to all customers, accessibility information has been added to Metro's Trip Planner. All customers now have access to accessibility-related information about individual bus stops, such as the presence of a shelter, bench, bike rack, and other features; if the stop has a landing surface and if it is connected to the curb; if the stop is connected to a sidewalk, crosswalk or curb cut; and, if the stop has a streetlight nearby. The information is another leap in access for Metro because customers will know what to expect before arriving to a destination, thus maximizing the number of people who can use fixed route services.
10. MetroAccess Bus Stops on Non-Metro Property - In an effort to reduce confusion at properties with multiple pick-up locations, designated MetroAccess stops at high-density locations such as hospitals and malls were established. The first MetroAccess stop on non-Metro property will be at the Montgomery County Courthouse building at 101 Monroe St. Rockville, Md.

For FY2016 the AAC is developing a robust work plan that will be shared during our next quarterly meeting with the Board's Executive Committee.

Sincerely,

Patrick Sheehan
Chairman