



# 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 January 2017. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Metro's FY2018 Budget; 2) Liability Waiver Requirement for Emergency Exercises; 3) Communication with Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing Customers; and 4) Metro's Signage Program. The AAC is also receiving presentations from MetroAccess service delivery providers.

### **Issue of the Month**

#### Metro's FY2018 Budget:

The AAC has reviewed Metro's plan for the FY2018 budget. The AAC recognizes, and shares the Board's concerns about the fiscal challenges Metro is facing. Nevertheless, the AAC opposes raising fares while Metro makes significant service cuts which include shortening the hours of operation on Metrorail, and eliminating or reducing hours of operation on numerous bus routes.

On numerous occasions, the AAC has stressed the negative impact that the combination of significant service reductions and fare increases would have on the lives and livelihoods of all customers including those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals who are from low income communities. This negative impact will be further magnified for MetroAccess customers because their fares are aligned with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In light of these potentially adverse impacts, the AAC strongly believe that the following modifications should be made to the service curtailment and fare increases:

1. Modify the calculation of MetroAccess fares to any of the three options:
  - a flat rate of twice the Metro bus base fare;
  - less than twice the fastest route; or
  - reduce the maximum fare per trip to \$6.00.
2. Preserve the current policies for bus-to-bus and rail-to-bus transfers
3. Maintain the current policies for Senior/Disability SmarTrip fares
4. Establish whether the Metrorail operating hours are expected to affect MetroAccess operating hours and advise the public immediately
5. Determine whether the elimination or reduction of Metrobus service will adversely affect MetroAccess customers and advise the public immediately

6. Provide the public an opportunity to review and comment on a Title VI Analysis prior to implementation.
7. Develop a MetroAccess pass similar to the ones that exist for bus and rail so that subscription users for dialysis and work can have the same advantage as frequent bus and rail users.

Additionally, assure that the MetroAccess fare calculator accurately calculates rail slowdowns during SafeTrack. Without these modifications, any implementation of change in the service is likely to have a profound impact on the lives and lifestyles of customers with disabilities older adults, and individuals who are from low income communities who ride both fixed route and MetroAccess service.

#### Liability Waiver Requirement for Emergency Exercises

The purpose of the planned emergency exercise training is to provide an opportunity for first responders and Metro staff to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to aid customers in real emergency situation in the system. It is the experience of the AAC, that first responders are ill-trained and completely unaware of standard procedures and protocols for assisting people with a variety of disabilities in a real emergency situation. For example, first responders' experience with equipment such as mobility devices once an individual is temporarily separated from the device without causing irreparable damage is inadequate. Many of these devices are quite expensive to repair or replace, and medical insurance (Medicaid or Medicare in the case of low-income individuals), may not pay for a replacement device. Other cost might also involve loss of time at work or significant inconveniences in daily routine.

The AAC believe that it is very unfortunate that Metro would not cover the disability community for even minor injuries or damages to a mobility equipment, while fully covering all of the employees participating in planned emergency exercise. The AAC views this decision as unwise, and represents a failure on Metro's part to invest in the resources that would provide a training experience that will be beneficial to Metro staff, first responders, and Metro customers alike. The AAC requests a review of this issue by Metro's Board of Directors.

#### Communications with Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing Customers

The Office of Rail Transportation provided the AAC with an update on the recommendation for Metro to use whiteboards to communicate with the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing customers traveling in the system. To improve communication between Deaf and Hard-of-hearing customers and station managers, RTRA has developed two tools: standard pre-printed alert messages that station managers can post during an emergency; and an enhanced version of the "Get Around Town" tear-off. Additionally, station managers will have access to an 8" x 11" white board to communicate one-on-one with the customers. Although Metro will continue to share information via eAlerts, the Passenger Information Display System, and the Kiosk Information Display System,

these new tools will enable customers who are Deaf and Hard-of-hearing to communicate more freely with staff. Both communication tools were implemented in time for Inauguration day.

The AAC is pleased that Metro has taken steps to ensure full access to all customers in the Metrorail system and looks forward to the implementation of a new communication tools on Metrobus.

#### Metro Signage Program (Update)

The AAC received an update on Metro's Signage program for the Metrorail system. Signage in the Metrorail system has one function, to connect people to places. Metro is embracing a new signage standard that is designed to improve the wayfinding experience for all customers and address some signage accessibility issues throughout the system. Metro's new signage program adheres to a strict signage review process that includes guidelines from the Metro's Rail System Signage Design Manual and requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In the new signage program, the "station name" and "station ahead list" signs will increase in dimension and font sizes to allow customers to view information at a distance. The signage will also include accessibility symbols for elevators and escalators, and directional arrows and exit wayfinding information. The new signs will have a dark brown background with white lettering to make information more visible. On center platforms, "station ahead list" signs will be replaced with digital signs located on the pylons, and will include touch and audio features. Metro has already improved wayfinding in the following stations: Gallery Place, Ronald Reagan-Washington National Airport, McPherson Square, and Smithsonian, and plans to have signage upgrades at all 91 stations completed by 2020.

The AAC is enthusiastic about the new signage program and recommends that Metro use Blind members of the AAC in the development and placement of tactile signs in the system.

#### MetroAccess Contractors

In an effort to better engage the community it serves, the AAC has planned a series of presentations by MetroAccess contractors. The presentations are designed to: 1) cultivate relationships between the disability community, stakeholders, and providers by allowing all involved to discuss challenges and opportunities openly and more clearly; and 2) provide a safe forum for new ideas and solutions to issues that challenge the service.

The AAC views this approach as an opportunity for the contractors to interact with the disability community early and often, as well as stay flexible, and get ahead of changes in business service delivery performance. To date, the AAC has met with Transdev and

Diamond Transportation and has plans to meet with other providers throughout the year.

Lastly, the AAC would like to thank Metro's GM for fostering an open dialogue with the disability community. The AAC recognizes that this type of engagement by the leadership is unprecedented, and it is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Patrick Sheehan  
Chair