



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

April 6, 2020

Dear Chair Smedberg and Members of the Board,

It is my pleasure to present you with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) report for the month of March 2020. The primary issues we reviewed were the (1) WMATA Proposed 2021 Budget - Public Hearings and (2) WMATA Budget.

Introduction

We realize that this is a difficult time and that a budget had to be passed for WMATA to move forward and apply for Federal grants. We realize that the budget passed on April 2 was the best that could be put in place and was responsive to the huge public input at hearings and online surveys as well as staff financial analysis. We also appreciate the need for the addendum to the budget approval that requires review and appropriate changes before full implementation in July. We are heartened by the proposed Billion dollar plus of funds authorized in the most recent Federal legislation for WMATA. Even though all the AAC input was not implemented for MetroAccess fares, we hope that the final budget can still include a flat fare pilot for MAC (2X \$2) based upon the already approved flat fare on weekends.

There was discussion by the AAC leadership of the possibility of increasing the efficiency for carrying out the Blue/Orange/Silver work proposed for the summer considering the reduced rail service and ridership (3 Arlington stations are currently out of service). The Virginia state legislature has approved a potential budget increase above 3% for work that would increase service. If a safe way to do the work while protecting workers could be designed, taking advantage of the increased available station and track time and state funds might be a positive for WMATA.

Issues of the Month (Prior to April 2)

WMATA Budget - Public Hearings:

The AAC discussed the budget hearings. The rooms were packed with people who advocated for no bus service cuts, rather than the fare increase. The AAC appreciates and thanks Mr. Blake for providing the Abilities-Ride for MetroAccess customers who attended the public hearings. The AAC Officials were allotted five minutes to speak at the public hearing that was held at WMATA Headquarters. As a result, the general public did not get enough time to speak and some people had to leave without making their comments as rides had been arranged in advance. The AAC hopes WMATA would take this as a lesson learned regarding the high number of people and be better prepared for future hearings.

If Metrobus/Metrorail fares increase, it will adversely impact MetroAccess fares even though there will not be any change in the way MetroAccess fare will be calculated. The AAC recommends a pilot of flat fare for MetroAccess. There was a change in the Board's

budget process. The Board questions and answers and the amount of discussion at Finance committee meetings was reduced. There used to be three sessions however, this year, there was only one public session following the GM's original proposal. The questions from the Board were presented to the General Manager in writing and were not made public. We hope this process would return to its original course of action.

WMATA Budget:

The Subcommittee discussed the high cost of adding bike racks in Virginia. The possibility of rail service extension by an hour and bus routes being cut at the same time, it does not provide adequate transportation to people who need the service at night. The 25 cents surcharge on cash payment for bus fares will have adverse effect on customers with low income.

We thank the Board, General Manager and WMATA staff as well as the front-line bus and MetroAccess drivers, station personnel, maintenance workers and WMATA teams for all their work to keep our transportation system safe and viable. We are aware of the national shortage of PPE, but we hope that every effort will be made to keep everyone involved in running, maintaining and using WMATA safe.

Sincerely,

Philip Posner
Chair