



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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October 5, 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 September 2020. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Safety Updates, volunteer waivers 2) Metrobus Operating Control Center, and 3) Budget Impact on MetroAccess.

### **Issues of the Month**

#### Safety Updates:

Teresa Impastato, Chief of Safety Officer, provided an update about the safety measures that have been underway during the time of this pandemic. Ms. Impastato assured the committee that safety for customers and employees is the top priority. Ms. Impastato also shared information about service levels and stated that Metro has begun the managed re-entry phase of the recovery plan and the number of operating buses and trains has increased. The workforce is returning, and September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020 was the first day since March that all Metro stations were opened to serve customers.

Ms. Impastato further informed us that Metro has continued to extend and expand their cleaning practices. Nearly every touch point in the Metro system is cleaned and disinfected with hospital spray disinfectant, approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), on a daily basis at a bare minimum. Most of the touch points are disinfected during the course of the day. To supplement, a third party has been added for deep cleaning on an interval basis. In case of a report of individuals who were symptomatic in the Metro system or a report of a confirmed positive test whether that be amongst Metro's workforce or customers, a third party cleans and disinfects any equipment that individual came in contact with.

The AAC appreciates all that WMATA has done and is continuing to do in this time of the pandemic to ensure safety and service procedures are maintained and that accessibility is not compromised.

Ms. Impastato addressed our continued request to eliminate the need for AAC members to sign a waiver in order to participate in safety exercises. She explained that the waivers were necessary to control WMATA's cost for insurance coverage. The AAC would like to point out how valuable participation by our members is for training for incidents that might involve blind, deaf, mobility device dependent passengers as well as those with cognitive issues. The AAC requests that WMATA implement self-insurance to cover injuries or equipment damage suffered by AAC volunteers and not require a waiver. The combination of Sovereign Immunity and WMATA's insurance deductible fund should remove the need for these waivers. AAC participants should be covered for injuries to themselves as well as their equipment and service animals that might occur during emergency exercises.

Metrobus Operating Control Center:

Gregory Edwards, Director Bus Operating Control Center (BOCC), provided information about several types of shuttles used when an elevator is out of service. The practice for short-term elevator outages has been to have the Rail Operating Control Center (ROCC) contact BOCC to transport customers to the next station. First, strategic buses are utilized by implementing those to assist in urgent/right away manner. As an outage extends, BOCC would keep a shuttle(s) stationed at the impacted Metro station(s), for example, a recent outage at the Huntington Station. Mr. Edwards informed us that BOCC utilizes only lift or ramp equipped buses for shuttle services. Shuttle service is also used for capital projects that are long term where they are set up directly through bus divisions and positioned at the stations for the duration of the project. The AAC was also informed that contractor services have been utilized in the past, as during the summer shutdown projects. The Committee was advised that when needed and if available, MetroAccess vehicles can also be utilized for shuttle service.

As a result of public comment concerning denial of shuttle service by station managers recently, the AAC Ombudsman and staff are following up on these complaints and the need for enhanced training of station managers regarding shuttles.

Budget Impacts on MetroAccess:

Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services, provided an update on the impact budget cuts may have to the MetroAccess service. Mr. Blake stated that none of the four current MetroAccess contractors will be replaced or removed due to the current budget situation, nor would the MetroAccess service area change until July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, at the earliest. He added that if the budget situation continues to be challenging going into the next fiscal year, then reducing the service area and/or hours to exactly match the availability of fixed route transit are very likely.

Mr. Blake added that during this period of low demand for MetroAccess service, the availability of Abilities-Ride alternative services is being scaled back tremendously, and customers are being asked to utilize MetroAccess.

The AAC understands financial constraints WMATA faces at this time of the pandemic and appreciates a continuous partnership on the accessibility front and requests that budget issues not negatively impact the current level of MetroAccess service.

Sincerely,

Philip Posner  
Chair