



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

July 6, 2021

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 June 2021. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Board Member Visit to the AAC, 2) Rail Announcements, 3) Escalator Lighting, and 4) MetroAccess Services Update.

Issues of the Month

Board Member's Visit to the AAC:

Lucinda Babers, the newly elected WMATA Board Member, representing the District of Columbia, visited the AAC Meeting on June 7th, 2021. It was wonderful to hear the views of Ms. Babers. The AAC was impressed hearing the background of Ms. Babers: former Director of the Department of Motor Vehicles, in the District of Columbia, and that she made some brilliant changes for which she also received national recognition on safety inspections and safety of motor vehicles. The AAC feels with her tremendous background on engineering organization motor vehicles, and her experience with Amtrak before joining WMATA's Board of Directors, Ms. Babers is a wonderful asset, especially with focus on safety issues. Now, she is the associate Mayor of the District of Columbia, and a member of the Finance Committee of WMATA Board. The AAC welcomes Ms. Babers to the Board as the First Vice-Chair, and looks forward to working with her in the future.

The AAC also wishes to thank Michael Goldman and Stephanie Gidigbi for their service as they return to private life and their careers and family. During their time on the Board they were both strong supporters of rider equity, safety, accessibility and sustainability. Their contributions to the disability community as well as all other riders will be missed.

Rail Announcements:

Donald Goings, Superintendent, Rail, David Sauter, Senior Program Manager, and Indika Somaweera, Senior Vehicle Engineer, provided an update on the rail announcements. The AAC had recommended rail announcements in a specific order. The AAC was pleased to hear that the new set of announcements are as per the recommendations. The recommendations are as follows: door chime, doors opening, this is a (Line Name) train to Destination (station name), when boarding move to the center of the car, the next stop is Station Name. The team has done exactly what the AAC had requested. The new set of announcements is brilliant and the AAC thanks the team for providing exactly what we had asked for.

Escalator Lighting:

The high intensity lighting on escalator sidewalls and certain locations has been an issue for many in the low vision community, since it bleaches their retinal cones and makes it

difficult to impossible to visualize the escalator steps and use the equipment safely. Staff is working to modulate this issue and work with volunteers from the low vision community.

MetroAccess Services Update:

Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services, informed that the Eligibility Office would open for public when Metro Headquarters (JGB) opens for public. Mr. Blake also informed about installation of sneeze guards in 15 of the MetroAccess sedans, while remaining focused on the scientifically sound practices of mask wearing and increased ventilation in the vehicles as the means of preventing the transmission of the airborne virus. The sneeze guards were installed in response to concerns received from a few drivers about some customers coughing and sneezing, and the possibility of droplet transfer from one person to another if they are in close proximity.

In reference to re-starting shared-rides on MetroAccess, Mr. Blake stated our plan is to provide customers at least one-month notice. We are waiting for the federal guidelines and announcements. MetroAccess customers should have the notice via a message on the Interactive Voice Recording (IVR), an official statement to the AAC via email, and a statement at the meeting discussion providing details.

Concerning the capacity with increased ridership and direct trips, Mr. Blake stated it is being monitored and more routes are being added, along with using the flexible trip concept on the Abilities-Ride program. The AAC appreciates all the efforts made by the Department of Access Services, for continuous safety of MetroAccess customers and employees along with a good service level.

Our profound thanks to WMATA staff and their cooperation to work to improve issues.

Sincerely,

Philip Posner
Chair