



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001

February 7, 2022

Dear Chair Smedberg, and Members of the Board,

It is my pleasure to present you with the AAC report for the month of January 2022. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Impact of Increased COVID Cases, 2) 8K Rail Car, and 3) COVID - Positive Drivers and Contact Tracing.

### Issues of the Month

#### Impact of Increased COVID Cases:

Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Service, stated with the vaccines and boosters, masks, and ventilation, MetroAccess has returned to modified shared rides. Mr. Blake stated we have, however, changed our scheduling strategy since Christmas. As a result, customers would most likely have direct trips for their rides unless there is an urgent need of insertion of a customer trip. Sharing some data, Mr. Blake stated between Christmas and New Year's Eve, only 44 of the 14,463 trips performed by MetroAccess, were shared rides; meaning that 0.003% or 3/10 trips were shared rides. Mr. Blake stated this strategy will continue until the beginning of February, while monitoring the environment and the CDC guidelines, ensuring the safety of our drivers and customers.

The AAC appreciates all the efforts of Access Services for following the science and for ensuring the safety of staff and customers is a high priority.

#### 8K Rail Car:

Nahom Debessay, 8K Series Rail Car Project Manager, stated due to the pandemic, the meetings with Hitachi have been virtual. Mr. Debessay stated we are currently in the conceptually design phase. This is where WMATA and Hitachi come to an understanding of the requirements. Based on those requirements, the concept of the 8000 series railcars would be formulated. Many of the requirements would mirror the 7k series, as those are the most improved and latest railcars WMATA has. The railcars will be built with improvement of the 7k series, along with lessons learned of all the other railcars that WMATA has acquired. Mr. Debessay stated at this time, Hitachi is onboarding their sub-suppliers and is expected to accomplish that in spring of 2022. At that time the interior and exterior appearance of the cars will be provided. Mr. Debessay stated some of the things such as the inter-car barriers and gap reducers are going to be addressed in the design review process.

Mr. Debessay stated the AAC's handbook has been instrumental in making the program understand what is at stake as far as the accessibility is concerned. Many items were captured already for the initial design phase. If any recommendations were not used already for the design review, those will be re-reviewed, the possibilities will be identified and reasonings would be provided. Mr. Debessay also explained some challenges,

particularly for open gangways. The AAC applauds Mr. Debessay as he does wonderful work with the Committee.

COVID - Positive Drivers and Contact Tracing:

Mr. Blake provided information about COVID positive tested drivers and contact tracing. There were 62 MetroAccess drivers who were tested COVID positive from January 2021 through December 2021.

Explaining the process of contact tracing, Mr. Blake stated a COVID positive tested driver was held out of service for 10 days, as per the guidelines of the Federal Government. Every customer who was picked up by that driver in the prior 14 days was contacted. The customer was provided with the basic facts: date and time of the trip along with the gender of the driver. The customer was provided with the fact that there is no proof that the driver had COVID at the time of the trip, however, under the guidelines of the Federal Government, MetroAccess was conducted the contact tracing. The customer was informed that if they feel any symptoms of COVID or if they have underlying health conditions, they needed to be precautious, they could call their doctor for whether to be tested or not. Mr. Blake stated there were dozens of trips per driver, and we contacted everybody as best as we could. If we did not talk to customers directly, we left a message for them. If the customers called back, we provided the information to them. Mr. Blake stated recently, the Center of Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) reduced the quarantine duration to five days.

Mr. Blake further stated from early spring to December 2021, and even comparing to the Delta variant with the Omicron variant, there was a tremendous increase in numbers of positive testing. However, with planning and preparation, most customers did not experience any negative impact to their service. The only impact was due to the recent snow in this region. Mr. Blake stated there has been another impact where customer(s) informed that they had tested positive for COVID. In those instances, the driver would be held out for the required number of days to ensure they were not infected by the customer(s). The AAC knows the virus and the variants are taken very seriously by WMATA and appreciates the staff for taking all the preventive measures as well as corrective actions as needed.

Sincerely,

Philip Posner  
Chair