



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

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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 November 2016. The primary subjects we reviewed were: (1) MetroAccess ID Conversion Program; and (2) the AAC Meeting with the Council of Governments on Metro Emergency Exercises. The AAC also approved the appointment of Bus and Rail Subcommittee officers.

### **Issues of the Month**

#### MetroAccess ID Conversion Program

Metro has developed a new ID card for MetroAccess customers certified as conditionally eligible. These new cards will bring the Free Ride Benefit (FRB) to the SmarTrip platform. The cards will allow independent access to Metrobus and Metrorail for the customers and their personal care attendants (PCA); PCAs must travel through the same fare gate within 90 seconds of the card-holding customers. If a PCA card is used after the 90 seconds or taps a target at a different fare gate, the PCA card will function as a full fare card.

The AAC views the new MetroAccess ID card as a gigantic step forward in independent and autonomous entry for customers with disabilities taking advantage of the FRB. Although there are some concerns about Metro's ability to track the usage of customers, most members applauded the new cards because they enhance access to the fixed route system.

#### AAC Emergency Meeting with the Council of Governments

For over a year, the AAC has been expressing concerns about aspects of Metro's planned emergency exercises. The primary concerns are first responders not receiving adequate training on how to assist people with disabilities during an evacuation without possibly injuring the customers and the requirement of signed waivers for participants.

Last month, at the request of Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), Fire Department Passenger Rail Safety Subcommittee (FDPRSS), the AAC discussed these concerns along with its recommendations during a special meeting at COG:

1. To increase awareness, the AAC advised that pre-brief meetings should be held prior to each exercise to explain the scope of the exercise and for information sharing about evacuations. These meetings should be regional to minimize redundancy.

2. Appointment of a central liaison to handle all the debriefing feedback from each exercise, and to distribute all feedback and lessons learned to each of the jurisdictions.
3. Broaden the volunteer process to obtain a cross section of people with disabilities; those who use service animals, those who are blind/low vision, and those with intellectual disabilities, thus giving first responders an opportunity to be better prepared to address incidents involving more types of disabilities.
4. Enhance communication with customers who are deaf or hard of hearing during emergencies by including accessible signage with raised lettering in all E-Kits to communicate basic instructions.
5. Develop in-person comprehensive training that includes people with disabilities to inform first responders on how to assist people with disabilities and develop a video for seniors, people with disabilities, and the general public on emergency preparedness in the system.
6. Improve the emergency evacuation posters to make the information more uniform and all the core information the same.
7. Revisit the requirements for the liability waivers, so that first responders can get the necessary training to be skilled in working with the disability community during an emergency.

The AAC also recommended that Metro work with hospitals and organizations, such as Council for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Office of Disability Integration and Coordination, with professionally trained individuals who work with people with disabilities on a regular basis and/or have developed guidelines for evacuating people with disabilities in a disaster or emergency.

The AAC views these exercises as a critical safety issue for all customers, including those with disabilities traveling in the system. The AAC thanked FDPRSS for an informative and productive meeting, and looks forward to further discussions on the recommendations.

#### AAC Subcommittee Appointments

The AAC elected Brianne Burger as Vice-Chair and Edward McEntee as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair of the Bus/Rail Subcommittee. These members will begin serving in their respective roles immediately.

Sincerely,



Patrick Sheehan  
Chair