



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

January 6, 2020

Dear Chair Smedberg and Members of the Board,

On behalf of the AAC, we wish you a very Happy New Year and we look forward to continuing to advise the WMATA Board and the General Manager on various matters in aimed at improving the accessibility, safety, sustainability and reliability of Metro's bus, rail, and paratransit services.

It is my pleasure to present you with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) report for the month of December 2019. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Meet & Greet with Chief of Safety, 2) Inter-Car Barriers, 3) Abilities-Ride Providers Update, and 4) Impact of the GM's proposed 2020 budget on the senior and disability community.

Issues of the Month

Meet & Greet with Chief of Safety

The AAC had an opportunity to meet with Theresa Impastato, Chief of Safety, and learn about her work experience, as well as her future plans at WMATA. Chief Impastato received some of the concerns from the AAC members as well as customers. The AAC was pleased to hear her views on the concerns shared by the members and the customers. She seemed receptive on reviewing the existing policies and procedures for enhancements of safety and customer experience. The AAC looks forward to receiving an update on MetroAccess and Metrobus safety policies and procedures, particularly the availability of simple safety supplies for first aid on MetroAccess vehicles.

The elimination of the waiver required for the emergency exercise was brought to the attention of Chief Impastato. One of the main components of the emergency exercise is the evacuation of a train on the roadway. AAC members have not been able to participate in the most recent emergency exercises due to the waiver requirement. The AAC hopes its recommendation to eliminate the waiver will be implemented in 2020.

Inter-Car Barriers

Robin Hahn, Project Manager, Car Maintenance, attended the Bus/Rail Subcommittee Meeting and informed about the current status of the inter-car barriers. Earlier this year, some of the AAC members were present for the demonstration of the pantograph style inter-car barriers and had provided recommendations. Ms. Hahn informed, as per the Procurement Department, the requirement is to have a competitive bidding process from more than one supplier. As a result, a request for information (RFI) was issued, it was made public, and responses from four new suppliers were received. The next step is the request for proposal (RFP), where the suppliers will be required to build a prototype for WMATA. Ms. Hahn received feedback from the Committee for specific requirements for the forthcoming prototypes. After the prototypes have been received, they will be tested on rail-cars, and the AAC would be invited to view them and to provide feedback. The AAC looks forward to a demonstration of the new prototypes.

Abilities-Ride Providers Update

The Abilities-Ride program continues to add new providers. One of the new providers, Ride with Via, was introduced to the AAC this month. Via is a transportation network company (TNC) that provides zone-based curb-to-curb, ride-sharing service. When the service is open to all MetroAccess customers, the customers will be afforded the opportunity to request trips without the use of a smart-phone or downloading an application (app). Via can send the customer a text message with a link that would enable them in booking the ride. The customers will be able to track the scheduled route and driver's location. Currently, Via's operating zone includes the District of Columbia, Arlington, and Alexandria. Therefore, both, the pick-up and drop-off locations would need to be in the zone. For the base fare of \$5, a customer can travel 5.5 miles on Via. The AAC appreciated the efforts of Via in ensuring that wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) remain available, by paying the drivers hourly as an incentive to remain on the road. The AAC looks forward to monitoring the performance of the Via service.

2020 Budget Impact on Seniors and People with Disabilities:

The AAC requests that their motions concerning flat fares for MetroAccess be considered as they would improve operational efficiency, reduce operating costs for WMATA and provide certainty in planning for customers. We applaud the concept of maintaining MetroAccess service following any proposed reduction in bus service and recommend following pilots in New York, Seattle, and the District of Columbia providing aid to those that are economically challenged, many of whom are elderly and/or disabled. We recommend this philosophy be extended to cash payments on buses for those economically challenged, by waiving fares for that group rather than penalizing them. Plans for the 2020 budget hearings were presented. The AAC applauds the plan for fully accessible hearings in all 3 jurisdictions with translators being provided. Further, proximities to bus and rail will be prioritized along with shuttles to the site if necessary. The AAC also recommends that surveys done at rail locations be done at elevators as well as escalators and platforms to fully include the disability community.

Sincerely,

Philip Posner
Chair