



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001

March 1, 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 February 2021. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) The Hedding Award; 2) Metro Improvement Project; 3) MetroAccess Van Update; and 4) Upgraded Global Positioning System (GPS) System.

### **Issues of the Month**

#### The Hedding Award 2020:

The eighth Richard W. Hedding Award ceremony for the year 2020 was held on Monday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. The award ceremony was hosted by the Department of Access Services and the recipient was Charlie Crawford, a former AAC member. The Committee did not want to postpone the 2020 award, thus held it virtually as part of the AAC meeting. The Committee honored Mr. Crawford with this prestigious and highest accessibility honor, awarded by WMATA. Mr. Crawford was honored for his lifelong commitment and tireless devotion to accessible public transportation. He served on the AAC for the past six years and his contributions through this committee and the world are innumerable. He was a wonderful person and an experienced advocate for accessibility for all on Metrorail, Metrobus, and MetroAccess. His achievements include the introduction of the truncated domes and accessible stations and trains for service animals. Mr. Crawford's contributions to accessibility and equity will remain forever.

#### Metro Improvement Project:

Tatiana Kortikova, Senior Program Manager, Platform Rehabilitation Program, provided information regarding the Metro Improvement Project, Spring 2021. Ms. Kortikova informed the committee that 20 outdoor stations are part of the improvement project and 11 stations have been completed thus far. This year, six stations will be rebuilt whereas the remaining five will be completed next year. Two of the five stations will exclude platform rehabilitation, and instead be upgraded on improvements of the information displays and customer experience. Ms. Kortikova stated the scope of work includes rebuilding the platform edge, new slip resistant tiles, bigger information displays, and an improved announcement system. She added that all of the facilities are ADA compliant. The areas of safe-dispersal are added to this year's project as that came from the Fire Marshall Department from Fire Safety.

The AAC appreciates that Metro will be providing Metrobus as shuttles. However, we were extremely disappointed that none of our suggestions for the platform shelters were implemented. We have presented motions to the Board and staff numerous times over the recent years asking that benches be adjusted to a useable height for both tall and short patrons. We have requested arm supports or hand grabs that could be used by elderly and clinically weak people to rise from the current low benches.

Most recently we requested this during last year's projects along the Blue/Yellow lines. There has been no explanation as to why these amenities for the elderly and disabled were not implemented. At the meeting, the need for more usable benches on platforms and at bus stops was highlighted by the current reduction in service with long waits between trains and buses. We hope that the new benches can be modified to make them useable for the senior and disabled community as well as all riders. The work that is being done to improve the safety of Metro and the customers, is appreciated.

MetroAccess Van Update:

Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services, provided an update regarding the MetroAccess van. Mr. Blake stated the procurement process continues and the recommendations of the AAC were considered as part of the specifications. Mr. Blake will inform the AAC as the solicitation documents are made public. If everything remains on schedule, the anticipation is to receive 17 of the high capacity transportation vehicles before July 2021, and 83 by June 2022. We discussed lessons learned from the problem with the previous vans and sedans. Since WMATA contracts with post market upgrade professionals to get the vehicles ready for effective use, we hoped that vehicles that could not be upgraded would not be purchased. These lessons were learned from the purchase of unibody constructed vans which could not be modified for wheelchair placement, seat height, leg room or head room and sedans which did not have rear doors that opened 90 degrees for wheelchair transfer.

Mr. Blake further stated 50 more sedans and a number of mini-vans will be added to the MetroAccess fleet over the next year as well. The AAC is pleased to know that when the vans are added in to the fleet, the customers will have choices of vehicles for their MetroAccess rides. The AAC looks forward to being part of the group of the customers to test the van prior to completion of the purchase.

#4: Upgraded GPS System:

We further received information about the proposed upgrade to real time GPS data. We discussed the possibility that future Capital budgets might include projects for implementing way-finding for Bus/Rail/MAC. This would be helpful for all customers as well as those with low vision in navigating rail stations/bus stops and MAC locations such as mall parking lots. It was further suggested that a limited program allowing customers to use Aira like the one available on federal properties and free access zones be investigated.

Sincerely,

Philip Posner  
Chair