



Accessibility Advisory Committee

300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

November 6, 2023

Dear Chair Smedberg, and Members of the Board,

It is my pleasure to present you with the AAC report for the month of October 2023. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Executive Vice President and Chief Officer of Customer Experience and Engagement, 2) Better Bus Network Redesign, and 3) MetroAccess Mini-Van Update.

Issues of the Month

Executive Vice President and Chief Officer of Customer Experience and Engagement:

Sarah Meyer, Executive Vice President and Chief Officer of Customer Experience and Engagement, discussed the digital wayfinding signs in Metro. Ms. Meyer stated the goal is to easily inform our customers when a train or bus is coming while they wait for vehicles. She further stated that we need to rethink how service changes are shown on the digital screens. Ms. Meyer stated we do not have enough screens, thus there is a need to install more real-time arrival screens at transfer stations and bus stops. Ms. Meyer shared some current challenges: digital screens are not fed with real-time-data, fragmented technology systems, high installation costs, and limited user design experience. Ms. Meyer stated new real-time station-ahead-list (SAL) digital signs will arrive this fall. More screens are coming to stations around the network and a larger technology framework will be built over the next year to allow us to pivot content more nimbly. Ms. Meyer also described functionality of the draft screen.

Ms. Meyer stated while customers are riding the system, our goal is to keep them informed as to where they are going, when it is time to exit, and what is happening if there is a delay. Ms. Meyer shared the digital screens from 7K railcars and Metrobus fleet, and stated that currently, the fonts are too small, the all-caps styling is not highly readable, the stop name formatting convention makes stop names unnecessarily long and takes up too much space, the ordinals are included in street names in stops (e.g. 18th, 17th), and not all colors fulfill the maximum contrast required by the ADA. Ms. Meyer shared information about the new bus signs that are currently being installed. She stated we are redesigning the interface to be a little clearer by cleaning up the data. There are 150 screens currently in the region, and 100 additional screens are coming next year. Ms. Meyer stated the technology system will be integrated in Fall 2024.

Ms. Meyer stated we are also focused on post-Travel, on building a more responsive Customer Service team to respond 24/7. We are focused to strengthen our outreach teams and learn more about our customers to fix issues before they are reported. This would help create a safer and more reliable system for all. The AAC appreciated Ms. Meyer sharing the information and receiving feedback from the AAC, ensuring accessibility is at the forefront of all messaging, which will eventually help all of Metro ridership. The AAC was impressed by the research that Ms. Meyer and her team has done, and the Committee looks forward to the screens and providing feedback as it relates to accessibility.

Better Bus Network Redesign:

Melissa Kim, Program Manager, Capital and System Planning, stated the bus network is being redesigned to better connect people to where they need to go; to keep up with our evolving region and the people that live here; to promote equity, inclusiveness, and access to opportunity; and to create an easy-to-use network no matter where you are. Ms. Kim provided a road map from 2020 through beyond 2023 to implementation. In Winter 2024, the plan is to share the revised visionary network along with the draft of Year One Network. Ms. Kim stated they performed tremendous outreach and received enormous feedback from bus operations, riding public, elected officials, advocacy groups, CBOs, and Committees. The outreach was done via multiple modes with people speaking various languages. Ms. Kim also shared the key takeaways of Phase 2 and stated between 88% and 97% respondents found various engagement efforts helpful. She also shared the breakdown of how respondents received information via the eight different modes.

The AAC looks forward to an update about the BBNR as it becomes available with next phase of public engagement.

MetroAccess Mini-Van Update:

Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services, stated currently we have approximately 23 minivans in service. Mr. Blake stated the older vans were uncomfortable for our customers, hence, the sedans were introduced, which represent a small percentage of MetroAccess fleet. Mr. Blake stated the minivans can accommodate all MetroAccess customers while providing the comfort of a consumer passenger vehicle. Mr. Blake stated he anticipates the minivans would be the bulk of MetroAccess fleet. This is the first round of vans in the MetroAccess fleet. Mr. Blake stated we are trying to provide minivans for AAC members' trips for feedback.

Some of the AAC members have received rides in the minivans. The experiences have been positive as the rides have been comfortable and the doors on both sides of the vehicle, provide additional safety for customers while boarding and/or exiting the vehicle, on a one-way street.

Sincerely,

Patrick Sheehan
Chair