



Accessibility Advisory Committee

300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

January 2, 2024

Dear Chair Smedberg, and Members of the Board,
On behalf of the AAC, I would like to wish the Board, a very Happy New Year!

It is my pleasure to present you with the AAC report for the month of December 2023. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) Hedding Award 2023, 2) Fares and Service Changes FY2025, and 3) MetroAccess Service Area and Fares FY2025.

Issues of the Month

Hedding Award 2023:

The 12th Annual Richard Hedding Award 2023 was held virtually on December 4th, hosted by the Office of ADA Policy and Planning, Systemwide Accessibility, Safety and Readiness. The award honors Richard Hedding for his lifelong commitment for providing accessible public transportation to all citizens of this area. Tino Calabia, Chair, Bus and Rail Subcommittee, was honored by the AAC, for advocating for safer rail vehicles and bus service improvements of Metro system. Mr. Calabia has the tenacity and the persistent nature in helping improve this system further. His unwavering commitment plays a pivotal role in driving positive change. His advocacy on the open gangway rail cars has been stellar. Mr. Calabia is a strong advocate for bus, rail, and other aspects of the fixed route service. Mr. Calabia's integrity has always been impressive as he has taken strong positions for gangway cars and for bus stops. Mr. Calabia's persistent nature, capability to research and share information with the AAC is appreciated by the members.

Fares and Service Changes FY2025:

Alexander Block, Manager; and Mark Irvine, Director, Strategic Initiatives, provided an update about Metro's Financial Planning for the fiscal year 2025 (FY2025) along with the possible scenarios for service and fares. Mr. Block provided a summary of current ridership, FY25 operating funds, and capital outlook. He provided information about strategically aligned fare and service policy. Describing fare and service optimization, Mr. Block informed about the different ways Metro is adapting to customers' travel and the adapted bus service to grow ridership and gain efficiency. Mr. Block discussed the modernizing fare technology and policy from FY21 through FY24. Discussing the FY25 service and fare concepts, Mr. Block stated a severe budget cut reduces Metro's capacity to operate and maintain a quality system. He stated the severe cuts could trigger the transit spiral death. He also shared service optimization concepts for FY2025, as well as the considerations for service delivery and potential targeted service cut concepts.

Mr. Block also discussed MetroAccess ridership, Metro fares and inflation, potential fare increase scenarios, parking utilization, and parking concepts. Mr. Block provided information about the five potential scenarios for FY2025, and customer impacts of those scenarios. Mr. Block provided the FY2025 budget timeline starting from December 2023, when the General Manager proposes budget scenarios to the Board, through July 1st, 2024 – when the budget and service plan gets implemented.

MetroAccess Service Areas and Fares FY2025:

Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services, provided a follow up on the FY2025 presentation the Committee received at the AAC meeting. Mr. Blake clarified the impacts on MetroAccess service, along with the current and future situations effective July 1st, 2024. Mr. Blake stated without a fully funded WMATA, if Metro's fixed-route service is impacted, it will also impact the MetroAccess service. Mr. Blake stated with fully funded Metro, we have been able to build the finest paratransit and the most customer friendly service in the nation. Mr. Blake stated giving away thousands of free trips using Abilities-Ride, an accessible alternate, helped in maintaining the current service as it has been financially beneficial for both, WMATA and MetroAccess customers. He clarified that there is no MetroAccess budget, it is Metro's budget. Four years ago, Mr. Blake had introduced the static MetroAccess service area, and with Board's approval, the paratransit service did not get reduced when fixed route was impacted adversely.

Mr. Blake stated that going forward, any reduction in fixed route, will be met with equal and corresponding reduction on MetroAccess. He recommended the Committee to advocate for the fully funded Metro, which may also help sustain the flat fare of \$4. He also recommended to emphasize on the service area and hours, to eliminate some of the disruptions that MetroAccess customers could experience if the current WMATA Budget proposal becomes final and goes into effect on July 1st, 2024.

The AAC appreciates all the efforts put forth by Mr. Blake and his team, to provide the current service for MetroAccess customers. The AAC understands that WMATA is not a private entity and needs dedicated funding for its operations and capital projects. The AAC also looks forward on advocating for fully funded Metro going forward and hopes that WMATA would not have to implement any service cuts and/or fare increases.

Sincerely,

Patrick Sheehan
Chair