



Accessibility Advisory Committee

300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

March 4, 2024

Dear Chair Smedberg, and Members of the Board,

It is my pleasure to present you with the AAC report for the month of February 2024. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) WMATA Budget FY2025 Update, 2) DC Floating Bus Stops Update, and 3) MetroAccess Next Generation Van Update.

Issues of the Month

WMATA Budget FY2025 - Update:

Matthew Tingstrom, Senior Director, Management Analysis and Planning, Management and Budget; Alexander Block, Manager Strategic Initiatives, Strategy and Policy; Marc Bowman, Strategic Communications Manager; and Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services; provided an update and the Communications Plan for the FY2025 WMATA Budget. Mr. Tingstrom provided an overview of the budget and stated there is a lot of late breaking news and encouraged the Committee to listen to the upcoming Finance and Capital (F & C) Committee meeting on Thursday as revisions to the FY2025 budget may be presented. Mr. Tingstrom stated our priorities in developing the proposed budget is to minimize the customer impacts. Mr. Block provided a high-level view of the proposed budget that was also presented to the AAC in December 2023. Mr. Block further stated that currently a portion of MetroAccess service area is expanded beyond the ADA, thus the proposal is to limit the service per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Mr. Bowman provided information about WMATA's Communications Plan to inform customer/community/members/stakeholders concerning the key budget proposals. Mr. Bowman shared some reference points which will be multilingual and accessible in various formats. Mr. Blake stated the flyers will be placed in vehicles and we plan to send a Ro-Bo call to all MetroAccess eligible customers, informing about the budget and the hearings.

The AAC is concerned about the impacts that may be faced by 20% of MetroAccess customers not within the ADA guided service zone. The AAC hopes the Board will be able to maintain the current MetroAccess service area and hours.

DC Floating Bus Stops - Update:

Megan Kanagy, Mass Transit Branch Manager; Yohannes Bennehoff, James Carrington, and Kevin Harrison, District Department of Transportation, provided an update about the floating bus stops. Mr. Carrington stated there are two accessibility bus priorities in DC: (1) Maximize access to opportunity via transit as people with disabilities are twice as likely to live in a zero-car household; and slow, unreliable buses deprive people of access to basic needs and opportunities. (2) Ensuring access to quality transit by safe sidewalks and crossings; minimizing conflicts with other modes; and accessible, comfortable bus stops. He highlighted some bus stop accessibility issues and discussed actions for improvement. Mr. Carrington shared information about bus stops and bike infrastructure and stated protected bike lanes have proven safety benefits for all roadway users, not

just people riding bicycles. He discussed designing for safety and accessibility at bus stops and shared accessibility features of Island Stops and Shared Stops. Mr. Carrington also discussed Education and Outreach for these bus stops.

The AAC was pleased to learn the improvements the DDOT has considered and implemented to increase accessibility and safety for persons with disabilities.

MetroAccess Next Generation Van - Update:

Glenn Millis, Senior Policy and Planning Manager, Access Services, provided an update about the low floor ramp-equipped Next Generation Paratransit Vehicle. Mr. Millis provided an overview of the vehicle and stated the concept was presented to the AAC and the recommendations received, were incorporated. Mr. Millis stated the pilot vehicle would arrive in September 2024. The delivery of five vehicles per month would start in December 2024. The initial order would be for 50 vans with an option for additional 50 vehicles. He shared vehicle safety features, provided information about the entry door and ramp, and discussed the floor and seating plan.

Mr. Millis stated the AAC had provided feedback, which was considered, and as a result, the vehicle would have the following features: easy entry and ample headroom; handholds and non-slip flooring; ability to maneuver in vehicle for passengers and operators; comfortable air bag ride and thickly padded comfortable seats; seat height 18 inches; handholds on seats; USB charging stations at seats; lighting at door and uniform interior; large windows and emergency egress, and the features were incorporated in the new vehicle. Although the AAC had not asked for it, Mr. Millis informed that there will be even heating and cooling throughout the vehicle through ducted ports. Mr. Millis also informed the AAC that Mr. Blake ensured the next generation paratransit van would provide a comfortable ride for all MetroAccess customers.

The AAC was really pleased to learn that all of the recommendations of the Committee were considered for the next generation van, and we look forward to testing the pilot van.

Sincerely,

Patrick Sheehan
Chair