

## AAC Report July 8 2010

Several issues have been in the forefront of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) including automated announcements of upcoming stations on the train, the 7000 Rail Car series and signage issues. For years the AAC has been on record that it prefers having automated announcements of upcoming stations on the Metrorail trains rather than having the train operator take time to make these announcements. The AAC feels that with the drivers now needing to manually drive the trains that having to make these announcements takes their attention away from insuring that the train arrives safely into the station. It is our view that especially for blind and visually impaired as well as cognitively impaired passengers not being able to hear accurately what station the train is approaching or what line and direction the train is for those on the platform, renders the system inaccessible thereby making the use of MetroAccess necessary for this population of riders. We believe that at \$32 per MetroAccess trip with around 9,000 trips per day that automating the train announcements would help save the system money in the long run. We also think that automating the announcements would be a real boon to the many tourists that visit the Washington DC area that are unfamiliar with our system. The AAC would like to ask the RAC to join them in advocating for the use of automated announcements on the train. The 7000 Rail Car series supports this technology as do the other series of rail cars. Deciding whether to automate these announcements is strictly in the purview of the Board and we ask that AAC and RAC work together to make this happen.

Regarding the 7000 Rail Car Series the AAC is recommending that the proposed configuration of wheelchair seating by the middle doors of the cars of the train be altered to incorporate wheelchair seating at either end of the train. This recommendation was made after consulting several members of our Committee who use wheelchairs and scooters who have noticed that getting into the designated wheelchair area is not easy (the first row of front facing seats) and would find it difficult to maneuver to exit the train from this area since the middle doors of the cars are always the most congested. Removing the first row of seats in the 7000 Rail Car Series to provide this service is going to mean that more people will be standing and it will not increase accessibility for wheelchair passengers.

In addition individuals in wheelchairs in emergencies are asked to wait until all other passengers have been evacuated. Having wheelchairs by the doors in the middle portion of the cars would not help with steady evacuation of other passengers. The AAC is proposing that designated wheelchair seating be at the end of the 7000 cars at either end. This would be convenient for both wheelchair passengers and other patrons while trying to move on and off the trains in an orderly fashion.

We also looked at signage issues in Metrorail stations for consistency in height and location for disabled passengers. It is felt that WMATA could do a better job with signage especially in making sure that the location of signs is consistent throughout the system.