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Accessibility Advisory Committee

May 7, 2012

Chair Hudgins and Members of the Board,

It is my pleasure to present you with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) report for the month of April 2012.

Bus/Rail Subcommittee (BRS)

BRS received an update on the 7000-series railcar procurement from Chief Engineer Joseph Reynolds, who noted that all AAC recommendations were incorporated into the design. Accessibility features will include automated announcements, improved signage, and more hand holds. BRS recommended that priority seats be equipped with an accessibility symbol. A prototype of the 7000-series railcars will be made available in February 2014 for inspection by the AAC.

BRS discussed a recently publicized ergonomics study (originally released in September 2011) that cited accessibility deficiencies in Metrorail lighting, signage, fare vending machines, and gaps between trains and platforms. BRS acknowledges that Metro meets all requirements set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on all of these items but remains committed to continuous improvement of the accessibility of our transit system. Upon motion, the BRS forwarded its review of the research study to the full AAC for further discussion. In the meantime, a BRS working group is reviewing community input on accessible signage and lighting issues.

In response to a BRS request, Rita Davis, RAIL and Ruth Solomon, BTRA briefed the BRS on improved ADA training for Metro personnel, including training videos featuring customers with disabilities. The BRS commended the training improvements and inclusion of people with disabilities in the training videos.

MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS)

MAS reviewed the proposed MetroAccess fare in the General Manager's revised budget. Upon motion, MAS recommended that, consistent with the Board's fare policy principles, the proposed increase of 40 cents be eliminated; the maximum MetroAccess fare should remain at \$7; and fares be reduced to the lowest fare for any trip in a 30-minute window. Upon motion, MAS recommended that the AAC Chair send these recommendations to the Board.

Staff provided an update on the MetroAccess Fare Calculator which will enable customers to check for the lowest MetroAccess fare prior to taking a trip. The Fare Calculator will be demonstrated at the May 2012 AAC meeting.

Assistant General Manager of Access Services, Christian Kent, provided an update on the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the next paratransit contract and confirmed that all AAC recommendations have been incorporated into the RFP. Further discussions of the paratransit RFP will be held at our May meetings.

Fare Policy Recommendations

As you know, the AAC has submitted recommendations on the MetroAccess fare policy as well as on the planned surcharge for the use of cash and paper fare cards. AAC opposes the surcharge on the use of cash on the grounds that it unfairly increases the economic burden on those with the greatest need for public transportation and with the least ability to afford it. In addition, the rationale that the use of cash rather than SmarTrip slows the boarding process is inaccurate. As long as there are limited places available to load SmarTrip cards, loading them on the bus is even slower than direct use of cash and also may be a safety violation for older and disabled riders having to be in front of the yellow line and load while the bus is in motion.

On the MetroAccess fare policy, we have submitted several recommendations that range from reinstating the flat fare to charging a smaller factor of (less than two times) the fixed-route equivalent fare. In our April 17 letter, we reiterated the importance of applying the Board's fare policy principles of simplicity and equity to MetroAccess and to consider all available funding options. We appreciated your thoughtful deliberation of these issues at your April 26 meeting when we were joined by more than 50 members of the disability community who expressed the impact that the MetroAccess fare policy has on their lives. Considering that for the current fiscal year, MetroAccess fares are \$1.2M above budget; average fare YTD is \$3.77 and ridership is decreased by 13%, we hope you will give further consideration to fare policy alternatives for MetroAccess that will bring it in line with the Board's principles.

We look forward to a continued dialogue and a rapid implementation of a solution by the Board to this inequity. We note Metro's Board expressed interest in beginning a review of alternatives to the MetroAccess Fare Policy directly upon conclusion of this year's fare deliberations and budget approval. We look forward to working with the Board and WMATA staff on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Sheehan". To the right of the signature, there is a small, stylized mark or initial that looks like a lowercase 'p' or a similar character.

Patrick Sheehan, Chairman