300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) (Virtual) Summarized Meeting Minutes
July 6, 2026

Attendance

AAC Members Present

Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Tino Calabia, Rico Dancy, Tajuan Farmer, Debbie Fisher, Marcie Goldstein, Steve Kaffen, Philippa Mezile, Sandy Neuzil, Sarah Radt, Paul Semelfort, Phil Weinthrop, Susan Bowmaster, and other AAC members and participants.

WMATA Staff and Presenters

Dr. Maggie Butler, Vice President of System-Wide Accessibility; Anthony Thomas, Director of Customer Experience Programs; additional WMATA staff; support personnel; and ASL interpreters.

Meeting Overview

The Accessibility Advisory Committee approved the meeting agenda, prior meeting minutes, and Board Report. Discussion centered on website and mobile application accessibility improvements, emergency preparedness planning, AAC membership and participation, and updates from both the Bus and Rail and MetroAccess Subcommittees. Members provided recommendations regarding communications accessibility, emergency preparedness, digital accessibility, and customer experience improvements.

Approval of Agenda, Minutes, and Board Report

The Committee approved the meeting agenda and prior meeting minutes without amendment.

During discussion of the Board Report, Rico Dancy raised questions regarding accommodations for deaf-blind participants, specifically procedures for obtaining Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) services when needed. Chair Patrick Sheehan and Dr. Maggie Butler agreed to review current processes and requirements. The Board Report was approved with a friendly amendment allowing incorporation of relevant discussion items from the meeting prior to submission.

WMATA.com and MetroPulse 2.0 Post-Launch Update

Presenter: Anthony Thomas, Director of Customer Experience Programs

Mr. Thomas provided a post-launch update on WMATA.com and MetroPulse 2.0, both launched in May 2026. WMATA.com has recorded more than 3.4 million user sessions and approximately 15 million page views. The most frequently accessed features include trip planning, nearby service information, routes and lines information, and Rider Tools.

Accessibility Improvements

WMATA implemented several accessibility enhancements following customer feedback, including:

- Creation of a centralized elevator and escalator information page.
- Planned inclusion of future elevator outage information.

- Improvements to AAC webpages to improve accessibility and reduce dependence on PDF documents.
- Continued compliance with WCAG 2.2 Level AA standards.
- Resolution of numerous accessibility issues identified through testing.
- Enhanced keyboard navigation and screen reader support.

Future Enhancements

Planned improvements include:

- An "All" filter option for bus and rail searches.
- Conversion of PDF forms to accessible online forms.
- Expanded elevator and escalator information.
- Additional accessibility enhancements within MetroPulse.
- Improved trip planning and customer feedback tools.

AAC Discussion

Committee members highlighted several issues:

- Sarah Radt emphasized the importance of real-time elevator outage information and encouraged testing of dark mode features with users representing a variety of low-vision needs.
- Paul Semelfort praised improvements that make MetroAccess resources easier to locate.
- Steve Kappen raised concerns regarding reduced visibility of walking times in Trip Planner results, loss of print-friendly features, and inaccurate bus information during detours.
- Chair Sheehan encouraged ongoing involvement of AAC members in accessibility and usability testing activities.

WMATA welcomed continued collaboration with the AAC on future testing and development efforts.

Emergency Preparedness Site Visit Discussion

The Committee discussed a recent Emergency Preparedness site visit that provided AAC members with a firsthand view of evacuation equipment, procedures, and emergency response operations.

Key Feedback and Recommendations

Members recommended:

- Greater inclusion of wheelchair users during future evacuation demonstrations.
- Additional review of accessibility of emergency controls and communication devices.
- Simplification of emergency signage and instructions through the use of plain language, symbols, and pictorial information.
- Broader participation by individuals who are deaf, deaf-blind, autistic, use service animals, or have mobility disabilities.
- Scheduling future exercises at varied times to maximize participation.

The Committee expressed appreciation for WMATA's willingness to engage directly with AAC members and encouraged continued collaboration with Emergency Preparedness staff.

System-Wide Accessibility Update
Presenter: Dr. Maggie Butler

Dr. Butler provided updates regarding AAC membership recruitment, organizational accessibility initiatives, staffing, and future engagement opportunities.

AAC Membership

WMATA received eleven new applications and three reapplications during the most recent recruitment cycle. Open seats are available from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Board consideration of recommendations was expected later in July, with new members anticipated to begin service in September following onboarding activities.

Tino Calabia asked whether outreach efforts successfully reached members of the Latino disability community. Dr. Butler confirmed that outreach occurred and applications were received from members of that community.

Committee Participation

Chair Sheehan emphasized the importance of attendance and active participation, noting that AAC leadership intends to more closely monitor compliance with participation requirements outlined in committee bylaws.

Early AAC Engagement

Dr. Butler reported that WMATA leadership has expressed a desire to involve AAC earlier in major projects and modernization efforts so that accessibility considerations can be addressed early in planning and design processes.

She announced that Rail Modernization staff will provide a future presentation regarding platform screen doors.

Tino Calabia requested that previously developed platform-edge design materials be shared with project staff before that presentation. Dr. Butler agreed to facilitate that request.

General Manager Engagement

Dr. Butler reported that the General Manager has been invited to attend a future AAC meeting during September or October. The goal is to provide AAC members with an opportunity to discuss accessibility priorities directly with agency leadership.

Staffing and Future Activities

Dr. Butler reviewed plans for:

- An accessibility-focused 8000-Series railcar tour.
- Continued engagement on Station Ahead Maps.
- Future attendance by the General Manager at an AAC meeting.
- Planned expansion of System-Wide Accessibility staffing and AAC support functions once hiring activities resume.

She noted that hiring activities are temporarily paused because of organizational system upgrades but are expected to resume.

The expanded AAC support role will include tracking AAC recommendations, participating in relevant internal task forces, and helping ensure accessibility recommendations receive formal consideration.

Public Comment

Phil Weinthrop

Phil Weinthrop raised concerns regarding unauthorized vehicles entering designated shuttle bus lanes during Red Line shutdown operations. He requested stronger enforcement measures to help maintain shuttle reliability.

Dr. Butler agreed to elevate the concern to appropriate operations staff.

Marcie Goldstein
Marcie Goldstein expressed concern regarding continued representation and participation associated with Doris Ray's absence from recent meetings.
Dr. Butler indicated that WMATA would follow up with the represented organization to better understand the situation and determine whether alternative representation may be necessary.

Bus and Rail Subcommittee Report
Presenter: Tino Calabia
Tino Calabia summarized key discussions from the June Bus and Rail Subcommittee meeting, including:

- Wayfinding signage testing.
- Station restroom accessibility initiatives.
- Customer service concerns.
- Construction-related accessibility impacts.
- Rail modernization activities.

Sandy Neuzil additionally highlighted discussion regarding Prince George's County's Transit Vision Plan, including local transit accessibility improvements and mobility initiatives.

MetroAccess Subcommittee Report
Presenter: Paul Semelfort
Paul Semelfort reported on MetroAccess ridership growth and continued expansion of Abilities Ride participation.
He noted that customer satisfaction remains generally positive while acknowledging that members continue monitoring service reliability and communication concerns related to provider transitions.
Paul also discussed:

- The concept of a future digital MetroAccess card.
- Vendor transition activities.
- Customer communication improvements.
- My Transit Manager (TIM).
- Abilities Ride administrative fees.
- Eligibility communications.
- Development of a MetroAccess Subcommittee work plan.

Key Accessibility Recommendations
The Committee emphasized the following priorities:

- Improve access to elevator and escalator outage information.
- Continue accessibility testing with people with disabilities.
- Improve Trip Planner usability, including visibility of walking times.
- Improve Next Bus accuracy during detours and temporary stop relocations.
- Expand accessible online services and reduce reliance on PDF forms.
- Include broader disability representation in emergency preparedness activities.
- Ensure accessibility considerations are incorporated early in major WMATA initiatives.

Action Items

- **Research Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) procedures and requirements**
  - Responsible Party: AAC Leadership / System-Wide Accessibility
- **Review Trip Planner walking-time visibility and printing concerns**
  - Responsible Party: Customer Experience
- **Investigate Next Bus accuracy during detours and temporary stop relocations**
  - Responsible Party: Customer Experience
- **Continue development and testing of dark mode features**
  - Responsible Party: Customer Experience
- **Expand elevator outage information within MetroPulse**
  - Responsible Party: Customer Experience
- **Explore AAC participation in accessibility and usability testing**
  - Responsible Party: Customer Experience / System-Wide Accessibility
- **Obtain responses to Emergency Preparedness questions regarding accessibility and emergency communications**
  - Responsible Party: Emergency Preparedness Staff
- **Expand disability representation in emergency exercises**
  - Responsible Party: Emergency Preparedness Staff
- **Review shuttle-lane enforcement concerns raised during public comment**
  - Responsible Party: Operations Staff
- **Continue AAC recruitment and onboarding activities**
  - Responsible Party: System-Wide Accessibility
- **Resume accessibility staffing initiatives when hiring resumes**
  - Responsible Party: System-Wide Accessibility

Adjournment

Chair Sheehan thanked AAC members, WMATA staff, interpreters, presenters, and members of the public for their participation. Members were reminded that no AAC meeting would be held in August and that the next full AAC meeting is scheduled for September 2026.
The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:30 PM.