300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Bus and Rail Subcommittee Detailed Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2026 | Virtual Meeting | 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Attendees

AAC Members Present: Sarah Radt (Acting Chair), Patrick Sheehan, Tino Calabia (joined later), Vanessa Coles, Rico Dancy, Marcie Goldstein, Steve Kaffen, Philippa Mezile, Phil Posner, and additional AAC members. Sandy Neuzil had an excused absence.

WMATA Staff and Presenters: Dr. Maggie K. Butler, Systemwide Accessibility; Philip Lee, Jun Deng, Anthony Johnson, and members of the 8000-Series Program Team; Jewel Bell, Bobby Gilchrist, Juwhan Lee, and Bus Transportation staff; and additional WMATA staff.

Meeting Support: ASL interpreters and virtual meeting support personnel.

MEETING SUMMARY

The Bus and Rail Subcommittee met without a quorum and therefore deferred approval of prior minutes. The committee received a lessons-learned briefing on summer rail-shuttle accessibility and a detailed response to AAC recommendations for the 8000-Series railcar. Major issues included coach-bus lift operation, operator training, low-floor buses, wheelchair circulation around the center stanchion, platform camera testing, gap reduction, door safety, information equity, emergency-equipment reach, emergency signage, functional-area colors, and door width. Staff committed to further evaluations and future coordination.

AGENDA ITEM 1: Call to Order, Accessibility Instructions, Roll Call, and Agenda
Detailed Discussion

The meeting began at 4:00 PM with Sarah Radt serving as Acting Chair because the chair and vice chairs were unavailable at the start. Dr. Butler provided accessibility instructions and conducted roll call.

A quorum was not established. The agenda was accepted without objection, but approval of prior minutes was deferred.

AGENDA ITEM 2: Summer Rail-Shuttle Operations Lessons Learned
Detailed Discussion

Bus Transportation staff explained that the summer project was the first extended shutdown relying solely on contractor buses rather than staged ADA vans. All contracted vehicles were required to be ADA accessible, but coach-style buses

presented operational challenges because they use steps at the front and a wheelchair lift near the right rear of the vehicle.
Early problems included lift reliability, operator familiarity, boarding delays, and the difference between legal accessibility and customer usability. WMATA conducted daily audits, removed buses or operators from service when necessary, increased mechanic support, requested more low-floor transit-style buses, and used frequent service to reduce delays when a vehicle or operator was unavailable.
Committee members recommended clearer pre-shutdown communication about lift location and operation, stronger operator training, accessible staff assistance at shuttle stops, documentation of minimum accessibility requirements, and earlier consultation with wheelchair users. Staff agreed to incorporate these lessons into future shutdown planning and briefings.

AGENDA ITEM 3: 8000-Series Wheelchair Space and Center Stanchion
Detailed Discussion
The program team stated that the center stanchion configuration provides a minimum clear width of approximately 32.5 inches and meets minimum ADA requirements. Members responded that minimum clearance in an empty car does not account for passengers, bags, knees, and other obstructions around a handhold that invites standing.
Members emphasized that the dedicated wheelchair area should not become the most restricted circulation area in the car. Staff agreed to continue evaluating the stanchion configuration and ways to improve clearance.

AGENDA ITEM 4: Platform Cameras, Door Safety, and Gap Reduction
Detailed Discussion
The 8000-Series design now includes two platform-view cameras per married pair. Cameras are mounted high on the vehicle to improve the operator's view. The team agreed that qualification testing could include wheelchairs and other mobility devices under realistic platform conditions.
Members requested testing that confirms visibility of the full mobility device and trailing objects, including luggage and strollers. Staff explained the door-obstruction system, the operator's inability to take power without all doors closed and locked, and the ability to reopen an individual door. The 8000-Series gap reducer will be optimized to minimize the platform-to-car gap and is intended to be flush with the platform.

AGENDA ITEM 5: Additional Boarding-Time Signal
Detailed Discussion

300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Accessibility Advisory Committee

The committee proposed a button, cord, or similar device that would let passengers request additional boarding or exiting time. Staff said the concept requires further safety, operational, vandalism, and maintenance evaluation and may be better considered as a fleet-wide enhancement or during a future procurement.
The AAC agreed to provide examples of other systems using comparable features and noted that platform screen doors may create another opportunity for such a control.

AGENDA ITEM 6: Passenger Information and Communication Equity
Detailed Discussion
The program team stated that the passenger information system remains under development with Customer Experience and Hitachi. Members requested early engagement before displays are finalized.
Discussion addressed display height and visibility in crowded cars, readable visual information, clear audible announcements, equivalent visual display of audible emergency information, captioning for deaf and hard-of-hearing customers, and terminology that avoids the outdated phrase 'hearing impaired.' Staff agreed to coordinate future review sessions.

AGENDA ITEM 7: Emergency Equipment and Simplified Instructions
Detailed Discussion
The passenger emergency intercom is located about 46 inches above the floor. The emergency door-release handle is about 68 inches above the floor, consistent with legacy fleets but outside the reach range members expected for wheelchair users. Staff agreed to review the height.
Members also requested simpler emergency instructions using graphics and diagrams for people with cognitive disabilities and people who do not read English. The vehicle team agreed to refer signage concerns to the appropriate safety and signage teams.

AGENDA ITEM 8: Functional Areas, Door Width, and Open Gangways
Detailed Discussion
The wheelchair and multipurpose areas are identified with exterior signage and floor icons. Members praised the large integrated symbols but recommended a color other than blue for bicycles, strollers, and luggage so the universal accessibility color remains associated with wheelchair spaces. Staff noted production constraints but agreed to evaluate the recommendation.
The team explained that increasing the 50-inch door width would affect structural integrity, testing, windows, seating, platform-screen-door compatibility, and maintenance facilities. The 8000-Series will provide open gangways within each married

pair rather than through the full train because maintenance facilities are configured to lift and service two-car pairs.

AGENDA ITEM 9: Public Comment, New Business, and Closing
Detailed Discussion
No member of the public requested time during the scheduled public-comment check.
Rico Dancy requested an update on VRI at stations; Systemwide Accessibility had no current update but committed to arrange a future discussion.
The meeting experienced significant technical disruptions, including audio, screen-sharing, and unauthorized-image issues. Systemwide Accessibility apologized and the meeting closed after motions to adjourn.

ACTION ITEMS
• Document summer shuttle accessibility lessons and minimum requirements for future shutdowns.
Responsible Party: Bus and Rail Subcommittee / Bus Transportation / Systemwide Accessibility
• Include lift location, boarding method, stop assistance, and operator-readiness information in future shutdown briefings.
Responsible Party: Bus Transportation
• Continue evaluation of the 8000-Series center stanchion and wheelchair circulation clearance.
Responsible Party: 8000-Series Program Team
• Test platform cameras under realistic conditions with wheelchairs, mobility devices, luggage, strollers, and crowds.
Responsible Party: 8000-Series Program Team
• Provide examples of systems offering an additional boarding-time signal.
Responsible Party: AAC / Bus and Rail Subcommittee
• Schedule AAC review of passenger-information displays before finalization.
Responsible Party: Customer Experience / 8000-Series Program Team / Systemwide Accessibility
• Review emergency door-release handle reach range.
Responsible Party: 8000-Series Program Team
• Refer simplified emergency-signage recommendations to safety and signage teams.
Responsible Party: 8000-Series Program Team
• Evaluate use of a distinct color for multipurpose areas.
Responsible Party: 8000-Series Program Team
• Schedule a future VRI-at-stations update.

300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Responsible Party: Systemwide Accessibility

ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Operational accessibility of rail-shuttle vehicles and lifts.
- Operator training and accessible boarding assistance.
- Wheelchair circulation and realistic clear-width testing.
- Camera visibility of seated customers and mobility devices.
- Equivalent audible and visual emergency information.
- Reachable emergency controls.
- Plain-language and pictographic emergency instructions.
- Distinct, understandable markings for wheelchair and multipurpose spaces.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:58 PM. Because a quorum was not established, approval of prior meeting minutes was deferred.