300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Bus and Rail Subcommittee Summarized 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.

KEY DISCUSSIONS AND OUTCOMES

Item 1: Call to Order, Accessibility Instructions, Roll Call, and Agenda

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.

Item 2: Summer Rail-Shuttle Operations Lessons Learned

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.

Item 3: 8000-Series Wheelchair Space and Center Stanchion

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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.

Item 4: Platform Cameras, Door Safety, and Gap Reduction

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.

Item 5: Additional Boarding-Time Signal

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.

Item 6: Passenger Information and Communication Equity

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.

Item 7: Emergency Equipment and Simplified Instructions

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.

Item 8: Functional Areas, Door Width, and Open Gangways

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.

Item 9: Public Comment, New Business, and Closing

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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.

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.

Responsible Party: Systemwide Accessibility

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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.