



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting (Virtual) Minutes: November 3, 2025

Attendees

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Denise Rush (Vice Chair), Susan Bowmaster, Tino Calabia, Vanessa Coles, Rico Dancy, Tajuan Farmer, Debby Fisher, Marcie Goldstein, Steve Kaffen, Phillippa Mezile, Sandy Neuzil, Phil Posner, Sarah Radt, Paul Semelfort, and Philip Weintraub.

Call to Order

Anupama Sharma, AAC Coordinator, welcomed everyone, shared helpful tips, read the agenda, thereafter, Chair Sheehan moved the meeting forward.

Approval of Agenda, Board Report, and Prior Meeting Minutes

The November 3, 2025, meeting agenda approved as presented.

The October 6, 2025, Meeting Minutes were tabled to approved at the next meeting.

The Board Report was approved as written.

System-Wide Accessibility (SWACC) Update:

Maggie Butler, Vice President, System-Wide Accessibility, stated the system-wide accessibility department is in the process of creating an accessibility roadmap that will guide our key priorities moving forward and strengthening our reach as the enterprise-wide resource for accessibility. Our goal is to help Metro staff integrate accessibility into their daily work and decision-making across the organization. In preparation for the AAC's in-person December 1st meeting, we are developing a comprehensive accessibility event toolkit to help staff plan and host inclusive events that reflect the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities and older adults. And before the end of the year 2025. We'll also provide another update on the bathroom accessibility initiative to share progress and next steps. And finally, Metro is still accepting AAC applications for open positions representing the District of Columbia and Virginia and the submission deadline has been extended to Friday, November 28th, 2025.

Ms. Neuzil asked if the AAC is still going to have the in-person meeting at headquarters for the December AAC meeting, which could be a test case for making an accessible meeting. Dr. Butler stated that is correct, and that is what we thought. We would utilize this preparation for this meeting and feedback from you all after that meeting to help strengthen our toolkit.

Richard W. Hedding Award 2025, Nomination and Voting Process:

Chair Sheehan and Ms. Neuzil nominated David Shaffer, former WMATA employee, for the Richard W. Hedding Award 2025. Some of the AAC members remembered the contributions of Mr. Shaffer, in enhancing accessibility, and helping the disability community while employed with WMATA and beyond, along with his outstanding background involving education, work experience, and the law cases that he won.

Dr. Posner stated while he was the AAC Chair, with the help of Mr. Shaffer, many things were accomplished. Despite his disabilities, Mr. Shaffer continued to work as an advocate for the disability community. He was instrumental along with Christiaan Blake, Vice President, Access Services, in getting changed the default location of street elevators from mezzanine to street level, and direction of the platform escalators changed making it convenient for customers from mezzanine getting to the platform level. Ms. Neuzil stated she met Mr. Shaffer when he was presenting as an Ombudsman for Metro explaining how MetroAccess and Metro Bus and Metro Rail worked. Despite him being legally blind, Mr. Shaffer could get around independently, ride Metro, do his legal work, do his Ombudsman work, and he just really impressed her. Mr. Calabria stated he saw Mr. Shaffer before he retired and found him to be always kind. He was a gentle person and always responded to whatever was brought to his table.

Chair Sheehan shared information about the wayfinding project that Mr. Shaffer worked with Waymap over a three-year period and supported the project after he left WMATA. He worked on MetroAccess to ensure grandfathering of the system. He was in front of the Supreme Court a couple of times and won some high-profile cases. Chair Sheehan stated Mr. Shaffer graduated second in law school at Stanford. Vice Chair Rush recommended the AAC to attend services and send cards for occasions. Mr. Semelfort stated it was a pleasure to work with Mr. Shaffer on many cases over the years that we had for appeals and making sure people got their due process in the appeals, whether their MetroAccess was ultimately approved or denied. He was the one who made sure MetroAccess web booking was equitable for all users to access the one that we use today. Ms. Mezile stated she worked with Mr. Shaffer on a couple of appeals boards and found him to be very kind, sensitive, compassionate, independent, and knowledgeable.

Mr. Weintraub stated he met Mr. Shaffer once before he knew about the AAC and remembered how well he described the MetroAccess service and the alternatives. Mr. Kaffen served on the appeals hearings a few times with Mr. Shaffer and found that to be the real training. Because of Mr. Shaffer's lawyer brilliance, he asked questions which brought out the applicant's abilities to explain their need for having MetroAccess. Mr. Shaffer worked to making sure that the applicants truly express their cases in a way that they would fairly be adjudicated. He was an extraordinary man. The nomination was moved to accept the nomination by Mr. Semelfort and seconded by Mr. Weintraub. The committee unanimously accepted the nomination for the Hedding Award 2025. There was a brief discussion by Chair Sheehan and Dr. Posner about inviting Mr. Shaffer's family (adult children) to the award ceremony to accept the award to honor their father, and to a few words as well.

AAC Elections:

Ms. Neuzil stated for AAC Elections; we received three nominations for three positions: Patrick Sheehan for the AAC Chair, Denise Rush for the first vice chair, AAC; and Sarah

Radt, second vice chair, AAC. If there is just one person for each slot, it is possible to do this election by what Robert's Rules calls Acclimation, each position is uncontested.

Mr. Calabia said that today's November slate for new AAC officers is the same as was offered in October for AAC officers. And today, again, Mr. Calabia said, he objected to the nomination of Patrick Sheehan who has insisted on becoming the AAC Chair for yet another term. Four days ago, Mr. Calabia said he circulated news about how institutions such as the 1,400-year-old Church of England finally installed a woman to head the Church and how a woman became the first to become Prime Minister among Japan's other 104 Prime Ministers. The world is changing, Mr. Calabia went on to say, so shouldn't the AAC also change? he asked. Last month, said Mr. Calabia, he proposed Ms. Sarah Radt to help make the change by standing for election as AAC Chair. However, relatively new compared to most members, Ms. Radt modestly declined, reported Mr. Calabia. Then what happened? asked Mr. Calabia. A few days later, Ms. Radt surprised everyone with a proposal for changing how people with disabilities might re-certify their eligibility. Ms. Radt's proposal noted how some other jurisdictions have or are already modifying their requirements. Doing so can save both the money costs and the time not just that of some people with irreversible disabilities, wrote Ms. Radt, but also the time of medical professionals and staffs of transit agencies who carry out the recertification work.

Mr. Calabia pointed out that Ms. Radt's draft may undergo a few modifications, but her draft seemed so impressive it quickly won the praise of the head of D.C.'s Counterpart to the AAC, Dr. Karthik Balasubramanian, who voiced his appreciation of Ms. Radt's draft work. He even offered to gain the support of D.C. Government's counterpart for the final form. Even prior to Ms. Radt's recent work, said Mr. Calabia, she often voiced informed observations during meetings and shared thoughts in e-mails between meetings. For such reasons, Mr. Calabia said he had proposed her as Chair in October. Noting that Ms. Radt may respectfully decline again this month, Mr. Calabia said that if such were to become the case today, he hoped all the AAC members won't turn their backs on another woman member whom Mr. Calabia would nominate for Chair, the veteran D.C. representative to the AAC, Phillippa Mezile.

Discussing how it was time for a change at the top of the AAC, Mr. Calabia had earlier written to AAC Member Doris Ray of NoVirginia about the elections, and Ms. Ray heartily recommended Ms. Mezile, writing "that Phillippa would make a great Chair. . . ." Mr. Calabia said that Ms. Ray went on to say that not only would a woman head up the AAC, Ms. Ray further noted that a resident of Montgomery County (Mr. Sheehan again) has for many years headed the AAC at the expense of all other jurisdictions supposedly represented on the AAC. Because Ms. Mezile represents D.C., the change in the AAC Chairmanship, which Mr. Calabia proposed, was way overdue for another important reason besides overcoming the stubbornly persistent male domination long affecting the AAC.

Ms. Neuzil asked Ms. Mezile if she would like to be nominated for one of the AAC positions. Ms. Mezile stated she is honored however, she respectfully declined the nomination. Dr. Posner encouraged her to run for future elections and learn about leadership role. Ms. Neuzil asked Ms. Radt if she would like to run for the AAC Chair position. Ms. Radt stated is accepting nomination for the second vice chair and again declined nomination for Chair.

Ms. Neuzil stated Mr. Sheehan is willing to serve again for the Chair of the AAC. Per the bylaws, anybody can have three consecutive two-year terms, thus, Mr. Sheehan is eligible. The slate is Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Rush, and Ms. Radt, thus, there are two women who will be working with the Chair. Mr. Dancy asked if there some kind of training for that? Ms. Neuzil stated attending the meetings, reaching out to the Chair and Vice Chairs of a committee and learning the workload would help. Mr. Calabria stated at the last meeting it was suggested that the Chair could be assisted by the Vice Chair and the second Vice Chair. Thus, Ms. Radt could easily serve as the Chair backed up by Ms. Rush and Mr. Sheehan, who could be first vice chair or second vice chair. To be dominated by a male, times have changed and the AAC deserves better than that.

Mr. Farmer stated multiple people have declined and he proposed to move for a vote. Ms. Neuzil stated three people have stepped up to do the work. Since each one of these positions is unopposed, we can elect by acclamation. Going one position at a time starting with the Chair, Ms. Neuzil asked for vote for Mr. Sheehan. There was one nay, thus, Mr. Sheehan was elected to be the AAC Chair. Ms. Rush and Ms. Radt were unanimously elected to be the AAC Vice Chair and the AAC Second Vice Chair, respectively. Ms. Bowmaster stated there were opportunities for people who wanted to be considered. Ms. Neuzil stated she was being generous to allow people to express their opinions. Vice Chair Rush stated she attended meetings for many years before applying in 2007. There is a lot to learn for Second Vice Chair Radt and that she will be a good chairperson. Ms. Radt agreed with Ms. Rush and stated she is glad to be learning and helping support the AAC.

Chair Sheehan thanked everyone and stated this committee is very important to him. He wants to make sure that after two years when his term completes, there will a good succession plan for the committee to move forward. There is good work being done at the subcommittee level, on a task force level, and work done in conjunction with the Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) and DMV Moves. It is about working together as a team. Transportation is extremely important to the disability community that we serve. Chair Sheehan stated the committee is well respected by the Board and WMATA Leadership.

DMV Moves Update:

Chair Sheehan stated the task force met on October 29th, to confirm the resolutions that they had been working on. The discussions included \$460 million being given every year by the jurisdictions, how that money will be calculated from jurisdictions. That money is going to be indexed for inflation. WMATA may experience financial constraints in FY29. That brings up a critical concern of keeping up with the state of good repair, which is going to be prioritized with projects being worked over time. Track signaling needs to be

replaced over a 10, 20-year period, which will cost billions of dollars. Bus prioritization will involve working with the jurisdictions so that buses do not have to sit in traffic and move along improving the bus system, increasing most of the core capacity in the system. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is another area where they have six or eight routes planned out to see how that works for moving people from point A to point B. These are multi-year projects. Some work groups have worked on signage, fare simplification, wayfinding, etc.

Chair Sheehan stated the Committee has been discussing how to improve bus efficiency in Prince George's County, similarly, Fairfax County in Virginia also needs to be reviewed. Better Bus Network will be a key element in moving some of the things we want to move forward. Chair Sheehan stated he appreciates Dr. Butler and the work that they are doing. They are helping us make get a more of a voice in the larger systems within WMATA. The final set of DMV recommendations will be on November 17th, when WMATA Board and the COG Board will meet, and Chair Sheehan will present an update afterwards.

Public Comments:

Ms. Radt shared a Metro Rail incident that was experienced by one of her adult children. She asked about emergency practices on assistance for people using wheelchairs. There was a discussion about emergency drills and AAC participation. Vice Chair Rush stated WMATA requires a waiver which the Committee does not agree with as that removes responsibility from WMATA, in case mobility aids get damaged or a person gets injured. Chair Sheehan stated that can a future discussion to determine if there is any change.

Ms. Bowmaster asked about nominations for Subcommittee elections by November 28th or if nominations will be accepted from the floor. Chair Sheehan stated we have not accepted nominations from the floor in past, however, he does not have a problem with that. He will probably conduct those elections and recommended to check with the person being nominated to learn about their interest, and self-nominations are welcome.

Related to an earlier discussion about the emergency practices, Mr. Calabria stated the Federal Aviation Administration recently came to some conclusion about what to do with broken wheelchairs or other damages. He recommended the members to check on that. He shared Ms. Radt's recertification draft with Dr. Balasubramaniam, who offered to bring it to his counterpart AAC for review and approval also. Chair Sheehan stated the proposal should stay inside the AAC until it has been approved by the subcommittee and through the AAC. It should not be released for public comment before we have even discussed it.

Mr. Dancy asked about the emergency training on dealing with people with wheelchairs. Chair Sheehan stated the training exercises were attended by the AAC in 2017. It was complex, took a lot of time, was very thorough and educational, not only for members of AAC and RAC, but for the firefighters, emergency personnel at WMATA as well. It was a regional exercise. The AAC did not really agree to sign the waiver and since then, there has been no participation. forward. He recommended to add it as a future agenda item. Ms. Coles asked to include white cane training as well.

Public Comments can be received via phone at 202-962-1100, or via email at MetroAACChair@wmata.com

Bus and Rail Subcommittee Report:

Mr. Calabia stated the following topics were discussed at last month's BRS meeting:

- Metro Rail Restrooms Update
- Metro Rail-Lines Order
- BRS Work Plan
- Additional Discussions
 - Excessive lighting at U Street Station escalators
 - Public confusion regarding the electronic bus signs at stations, and over the revised bus stop locations under the Better Bus Network
 - New wheelchair securement system piloted in Alexandria buses
 - Explore emergency call buttons and diaper-changing stations in restrooms
 - The single digit rail color discs
- Bus Rapid Transit

MetroAccess Subcommittee Report:

Mr. Semelfort stated the following topics were discussed at last month's MAS meeting:

- Abilities – Ride Program and Providers Update
- MetroAccess Reservations Update
- Ability to Text, Phone, Email, Digital Assistant

Ad-Hoc Discussions:

Vice Chair Rush asked Mr. Calabia about the practice of Ride Along with the Board Member. Mr. Calabia informed he was asked to do it and they we visited several stations.

There was a brief discussion about the restroom update. Ms. Bowmaster asked for an update to be shared with the AAC, just as it is available now. Chair Sheehan explained that the timeline given was by the end of November. Dr. Butler informed that we plan to have an update for the Committee in December.

There was a discussion about the agenda topics to be discussed at the November 17th, MAS meeting, followed by the next steps for the proposal of removing the recertification process for people with permanent disabilities. Chair Sheehan stated it helps that California has moved forward with such a matter.

There was a brief discussion about mentoring the Vice Chairs and Second Vice Chairs for the AAC and the Subcommittee leadership. Chair Sheehan stated we need to have Chairs for both the Subcommittees and the AAC will be voting on those Chairs next month. He discussed nominations and the deadline was set to November 28th.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:33p.m.