



Accessibility Advisory Committee

300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: July 21, 2025

In attendance: Paul Semelfort (Chair), Tajuan Farmer (Second Vice Chair), Vanessa Coles, Rico Dancy, Debby Fisher, Marcie Goldstein, Steve Kaffen, Phillippa Mezile, Sandy Neuzil, Sarah Radt, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Anu Sharma, AAC Coordinator, started the meeting with announcements, took the rollcall, read the agenda, thereafter, Chair Semelfort moved the meeting forward.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The MAS approved the July 21, 2025; Meeting Agenda as presented.

The MAS approved the June 16, 2025; Meeting Minutes as written.

Reports: Customer Service, Commendation, Outreach

Customer Service Report: There was an outstanding public comment from the June 2nd AAC meeting stating a customer was dropped off 45 minutes after their appointment time. Upon review, it was determined the trip was a subscription ride and not booked by appointment time. The customer arrived at their destination 90 minutes earlier than the comparable fixed route equivalent time. There was an outstanding public comment from June 16th MAS meeting. The customer had trouble using her power mobility device while boarding the next generation van ramp. In response, MetroAccess conducted an on-site visit to the customer's location to gather additional details and better understand the concern.

Commendation Report: In June 2025, 417 commendations were received as follows: Central Avenue 60, Challenger 51, Transdev OCC 163, Industrial Road 16, Hubbard Road 82, MTM 2, and Abilities-Rides 43.

Outreach Report: Christiaan Blake, Vice President, Access Services, stated on Saturday, June 28th, 2025, he participated in a DC Project Action meeting.

Awards: Michael Wilson, AAC MetroAccess Safety

Michael Wilson Award: presented to Dominique Harris, Dispatcher, Transdev. Ms. Harris joined MetroAccess as a dispatcher in October 2017. She is one of the most effective trip movers and re-schedulers. She cares about our customers, MetroAccess, and the job she does. Ms. Harris thanked everyone for being recognized for her hard work and dedication.

AAC MetroAccess Safety Award: presented to Vernon Reed, We Drive You. Mr. Reed is about to complete a year with We Drive You. His safety record, professionalism, and compassion speak for themselves. His job is a way to give back to the community. Mr.

Reed is glad to assist people with their transportation and thanked everyone for the award.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 35th Anniversary:

The Americans with Disabilities Act, the civil rights law prohibits discrimination based on disability, became a law on July 26th, 1990. The ADA ensures equal opportunities for people with disabilities. WMATA has significantly improved accessibility over the years through various initiatives for rail, bus, and paratransit services. The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) plays a crucial role in addressing accessibility issues and recommending service upgrades. Celebrating the 35th anniversary, a note of thanks was offered to the AAC for their advocacy in helping WMATA in enhancing accessibility.

Ms. Radt asked if WMATA would consider placing the Disability Pride flag on vehicles in the future. Mr. Blake asked her to share a sample for us to undertake the approval process. Maggie Butler, Vice President, Systemwide Accessibility, stated we will consider that idea.

MetroAccess Service Updates:

Mr. Blake stated we will soon have TiM, digital assistant, available for dispatchers to book, rebook, or move trips to Uber. With TiM, reported situations will get faster responses. Once TiM has matured and is in place, any qualifying Uber trips will be handled without the involvement of human agents, making a better situation for everyone involved.

Chair Semelfort asked if customers would directly interact with TiM, and about the process of confirming customer's correct cell phone number. Mr. Blake stated the interaction will be between TiM and dispatchers. Terrian Williams-Hall, Director, MetroAccess, explained the process that customers will call Where's My Ride (WMR) for vehicle status. Dispatchers will enter trip and customer information into a chat-box (also integrated with Uber) for vehicle real-time status. If a trip is late or projected to be late and if the customer is eligible for Uber, then dispatcher will offer it. If customer agrees for Uber, dispatcher will ask for their cell phone number to add in the chat box. That information will be sent to Uber through the chat-box and customer will receive a link. Dispatchers will inform customers to click on links when they are ready to take their trip. The option of customers getting the links and dispatchers starting the trips, eventually, will no longer exist.

Chair Semelfort stated sometimes he does not get Uber links, as a result, he calls WMR to request the link. Mr. Blake stated if a trip is two hours away and the customer wants it on Uber, TiM will handle that. If the customer did not get the link or if the link is not

working, then dispatchers will be able to assist. Dispatchers will not have the power to move trips, only TiM will have that capability, and Uber-Chat will work with WMR.

Mr. Blake further stated that the updated Interactive Voice Response (IVR) will serve MetroAccess customers by recognizing their phone number to provide ride status. For this, the order of information may be modified on the IVR with more immediate information about customer trip status. Ms. Williams-Hall stated the ability to recognize customers by their phone number is a year away as that requires a new project with a new IVR. However, other IVR services are forthcoming. Chair Semelfort asked if the IVR will be able to assist and provide the link if needed for trips scheduled after midnight. Mr. Blake stated customers would have to speak with a supervisor to get a new link, and Ms. Williams-Hall is working with the team to develop digital agents that can be trained to recognize trips after midnight and be able to rebook them, as needed.

Mr. Sheehan asked when TiM is ready, will there be some training for customers. Mr. Blake stated as the use of TiM by customers is about a year from now, that gives us time to inform customers about it. Chair Semelfort asked if customers can use my transit app. Mr. Blake stated we encourage customers to use the MyTransit app as part of our messaging, with other options i.e., use TiM, the IVR system, or speak with agents.

Ms. Coles asked if Uber drivers will leave her while she hears "calls are being recorded" on call-upon-arrival. Kevin Hackshaw, Senior Customer Success Manager, Uber, stated that message is heard by customer and driver simultaneously. The driver, at their arrival, will not leave a customer for not getting the customer on phone during that message.

Ms. Mezile asked when TiM is ready for use, how would cancel Uber trips be handled if driver could not find the customer. Mr. Blake state the current process will not change, i.e., if driver cancels a customer's trip, either the customer receives a new link, or Uber Central coordinators receive it and re-book the customer's trip. If the customer does not get a link right away and do not see a vehicle, they can call WMR, and all dispatchers will be able to communicate with TiM to get it rebooked quickly. In response to Ms. Mezile's question about the Uber lottery system, Mr. Blake stated we will keep that process easy.

Chair Semelfort asked about the web-booking option to indicate Abilities Ride preference. Ms. Williams-Hall stated we reviewed it and that required a sacrifice of some information therefore, we are not moving in that direction at this time. However, customers can and should add Uber/Abilities Ride in the pickup/drop-off comments if that is their preference.

Ms. Fisher recommended to create lead time for everybody who helps people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She recommended working with high-school students as they use more technology and can adapt, whereas all caregivers may not be able to use technology. Mr. Blake stated that is partly the reason we have been deliberate in pushing new tools, and ways of doing things towards the entire population. We want to have a gentle approach over the course of the time, providing education and encouragement. The gentle nudging targets a group who talk to dispatchers, resulting in a smaller reduction of their calls. We are trying to improve every customer's experience by reducing the wait time and get WMR update quickly by using the digital assistant.

Mr. Dancy stated WMR sometimes does not move a trip to Uber even when it is only a minute away from the end of the pickup window. Mr. Blake stated it may be because the trip was not projected to be late until that time, however dispatchers must pay better attention at anticipating and watching the trips.

Ms. Radt asked how customers are notified about changes and if there was a change in the text message number for WMR as lately she has not received responses. Chair Semelfort stated he has used the text message number a couple of times and did not get a response either. Mr. Blake stated the phone number is still valid and vigorous enforcement on responding to customers is needed by the contractor. About notifications to customers, we use the IVR messaging, text messages/campaigns, and some robocalls.

Uber Updates:

Chair Semelfort stated Uber drivers arrive in the vicinity of the specified address. One location has been fixed as he was able to move the pin however not every customer can do that. Some drivers are sent to alley instead of an address. With certain addresses, Uber directs drivers to the main intersection within three-fourths of a mile from the address. A way around it is to call WMR and ask dispatchers to resend the trip as driver's location shows on the map that they are not at the correct location. Chair Semelfort stated for preselected Uber trips, on the day of the trip, he receives three text messages from different numbers - for one trip, rather one message from one number. Mr. Hackshaw stated Uber works off Google Maps and asked the AAC to report any incidents to get those reviewed by Uber. He asked the AAC to report driver's arrival at incorrect location immediately so that they can be directed to the correct address. Regarding the text messages, Mr. Hackshaw asked Chair Semelfort to send screenshots of those messages for Uber IT's review. Chair Semelfort asked if the reminder link can be grouped with the ride link. Mr. Hackshaw stated he will ask the team to review it.

Ms. Mezile stated 90% of her rides are directed to the alley and trashcan, instead of her home address. Sometimes drivers cancel as they are scared to go in the alley. At times, she is afraid to get in the Uber because the driver gets frustrated, and she does not know how to course correct for them. Ms. Mezile stated she uses Siri and Google maps, and both take her to the proper address and Siri even helps her get the driver to the proper door. Mr. Hackshaw stated with the help of the specifics of the concerns shared, Uber can investigate how drivers are being routed and address it accordingly. Mr. Blake stated all the information received, had been shared with Uber. Mr. Hackshaw stated that Uber is working on reviewing the reported incidents.

Mr. Sheehan shared a concern about Uber drivers refusing customers with service animals, and the correct term is service animals or guide dogs, not UberPet. Mr. Hackshaw thanked him for informing him about the correct term and stated Uber provides education for drivers about how to deal with service animals. He encouraged customers to report any incidents where drivers refuse trips due to service animals. Their team will investigate, and that driver will be removed from MetroAccess trips until the complaint gets investigated. If the driver is removed from Uber platform, that information will not be shared. Mr. Sheehan invited him to an event to discuss their policy on service animals.

Ms. Neuzil shared her experience of drivers going to the vicinity of the specified address and how she guides them for drop-offs. Mr. Henshaw stated Uber will work on it and explained that sometimes working through issues may require more time than desired.

Public Comments:

A member of the public wrote an email about being left due to wheelchair brakes not working properly. Mr. Blake stated MetroAccess does not deny service. Lack of wheelchair brakes are a safety and liability concern for WMATA. As per the Customer Guide, customers need to ensure brakes of their mobility devices are in working condition. If an operator identifies a situation where they feel the brake is not in working condition and is a safety issue, the protocol is to contact the call center, call their base, and a road supervisor will come out with a second opinion. Although the protocol of contacting the base followed by a road supervisor's visit to the site did not occur this time, it has occurred in one case involving the same customer. Approval or denial process of wheelchair brakes inspection should be followed consistently by all operators. The operator has been identified, and protocols/consequences will be re-emphasized. Allison Anderson, Operations Manager, MetroAccess, informed that at least 4 or 5 attempts were made to contact the complainant, with no success. After persistent attempts, MetroAccess finally contacted her on July 11th and shared the investigation findings.

The first member of the public stated on Saturdays when she books trips for Sunday mornings, she does not get requested time. Mr. Blake stated demand for Sunday morning trips has increased. Thus, customers may get a pickup 45 minutes or after the requested time. He asked her to try next weekend and inform him if she encounters the same issue.

The second member of the public shared her Uber experiences: drivers sent to incorrect locations and drivers not picking up customers with service animals. Mr. Blake stated if drivers leave her due to a service animal, she should immediately report it as a complaint. Regarding drivers going to wrong locations, she should contact WMR to get the trip rebooked.

The third member of the public was a parent of a MetroAccess customer who lives outside of the service area, although he was determined eligible for MetroAccess, he could not be picked up by MetroAccess. Mr. Blake explained that being eligible for MetroAccess is not based upon the residence area. He also explained the service area guidelines, resulting in her son not being picked up by MetroAccess.

The fourth member of the public complained about getting a MetroAccess van for the first time in three years. She stated she was in pain and MetroAccess should not send her anything but an Uber. Mr. Blake spent a substantial amount of time on the phone with her during the weekend, explaining there was no Uber available at the time of her ride. He also explained that if an Uber is not available, a MetroAccess vehicle would have to be sent, not only to her, but to all customers.

The fifth member of the public stated she had a long trip, and she was not even provided with a refund. Mr. Blake explained that credits are provided for late trips, and that her trip will be reviewed to determine the scheduling, as she described.

Public Comments: phone 202-962-1100, or email MetroAACChair@wmata.com

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 p.m.