

July 11, 2016

Dear Chair Evans and Members of the Board,

It is my pleasure to present you with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) report for the month of June 2016. The primary issues we reviewed were SafeTrack and the AAC's FY2016 accomplishments.

Issues of the Month

SafeTrack

The AAC discussed Metro's SafeTrack Plan and its recommendations regarding accessibility in the letter to the General Manager. The SafeTrack plan is designed to improve Metrorail safety and restore service reliability in an accelerated timeframe. The AAC recommendations were focused on enhancing the customer experience during this year-long maintenance initiative that will have a direct impact on all three modes of service and all customers.

Metro's decision to implement SafeTrack was an unprecedented safety measure aimed at rehabilitating the system to improve reliability and service. To inform the community, Metro has conducted a full outreach campaign that includes every local news and radio outlet; station announcements in multiple languages; information on Metro's main webpage; printed brochures that are available at the stations; and approximately 100 Transit Ambassadors staged throughout the system to assist customers with navigating the system. Additionally, Metro partnered with car and bike share programs and linked its website about SafeTrack to other regional transportation providers. These measures will assist customers with alternative transportation options while providing the most up-to-date information about each maintenance cycle and the changes in service.

Metro has also updated the Trip Planner to include each maintenance cycle and those changes are automatically incorporated into the Fare Calculator results for MetroAccess trips. To assist customers with navigating the system during the maintenance cycle, Metro is providing shuttle service around the impacted stations. All Metrobuses serving stations during SafeTrack are of the low-floor variety that can accommodate two mobility devices. In stations where platforms are crowded, shuttle services will also provide an immediate alternative to the rail system.

Metro's Office of Quality and Assurance, along with Federal Transportation Administration inspectors, are monitoring the repair work. Metro is also documenting lessons learned to ensure that the insights gained are not forgotten and can be used for future projects.

The AAC supports the SafeTrack Plan and thanks Metro for the bold step to rebuild the system in an accelerated time frame. The AAC also commends Metro for the well-planned outreach campaign and looks forward to regular updates throughout the year-long maintenance cycle.

AAC's 2016 Accomplishments

The AAC advised Metro on a variety of issues related to serving customers with disabilities in FY2016. Highlighted below are some of the topics and recommendations aimed at enhancing the riding experience of all customers:

1. SafeTrack Plan - The AAC represents all customers, including those with disabilities, and views the plan as a critical effort to ensure future rail services are safe and reliable. The AAC recommended that the following be implemented during the year-long maintenance plan: the use of paratransit vehicles to complement the shuttle bus service to address any overflow of customers with mobility devices; the use of travel ambassadors (staff and travel trainers) to help customers navigate the system and implement the use of whiteboards to ensure two-way discussion is occurring with all customers including those from the deaf community; and that all customer-facing employees at Metro enhance their professionalism to improve the customer experience.
2. Metro Select Pass - The AAC is the champion of accessible choice in transportation options and payments. The AAC recognizes that many people with disabilities use Metro (and other public transportation alternatives) as the family car. The AAC recommended that Metro include an option for customers with disabilities using MetroAccess (or reduced fare) to the new SelectPass program to allow customers with disabilities the same options as riders who value the opportunity to budget funds for travel.
3. Emergency Exercise - The AAC views safety as important to all customers, including those with disabilities, traveling in the system and ensuring unintended injuries is critical in an emergency. In a candid discussion on Metro-sponsored emergency exercises, the AAC advised that first responders, the on-scene commander, Metro staff, and others were not listening to the needs of individuals with disabilities during these exercises. To increase awareness, the AAC advised that pre-brief meetings prior to each exercise should be held to explain the scope of the exercise and for information sharing about an evacuation. These meetings should also be regional to minimize redundancy. The AAC also recommended that a central liaison be appointed to handle all the debriefing feedback from each exercise and the distribution of feedback and lessons learned to each of the jurisdictions. Additionally, the AAC recommended that the process be broadened to obtain a cross section of disabled and non-disabled participants, thus giving first responders an opportunity to work with more types of disabilities.

4. Bus Stop Improvements – The AAC participated in the review of bus stops around the region and identified several that were inaccessible. The AAC recommended improvements to seven bus stops.
5. Elevator Outages – To enhance staff professionalism and improve the customer experience during planned elevator outages, the AAC recommended that a new mystery rider campaign be implemented aimed at testing the effectiveness of shuttle service and staff during planned elevator outages.
6. Alternative Transportation Programs – Effective and accessible transportation options are crucial to the quality of life for people with disabilities. The AAC has advised on standards and criteria for use in partnering with a transportation network company (TNC), such as Uber, to offer an alternative to paratransit service.
7. MetroAccess Securement Policy – The AAC views safety as one of its chief objectives on all three modes service. For the safety of MetroAccess customers, fellow passengers, and operators the AAC recommended that all passengers wear both a lap belt and shoulder harness at all times while riding MetroAccess. The AAC also recommended that more be done to make other safety options available, such as seatbelt extenders, which can make wearing the shoulder harness more comfortable.
8. Platform Crowding – To address crowding and congestion near and around certain areas on the platform in Metrorail stations, the AAC endorsed the pilot to change the color of the number of cars displayed on the Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) to green only when an eight-car train is inbound to the station; and the placement of accessible floor signs that indicate the exact spot of the last car of a six or eight-car train. The AAC believes that that floor signs and color change on the PIDS will make a difference in the flow of passengers.
9. Wayfinding - The AAC supported the establishment of a Station Wayfinding system improves access to the rail system by enabling customers who are blind or have low vision to navigate a Metro station by way of an audio map. A virtual tour to the entrances of 10 stations to include L'Enfant Plaza, Silver Spring, Metro Center, Rosslyn, Gallery Place, Fort Totten, and Navy Yard (to name a few) are available along with 110 routes into and out of the Gallery Place/Chinatown station. This work represents Phase 1 of the project, and is a cross-collaboration with Metro, Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind, Click-and-Go Maps, and the Council of Governments.
10. Metro Trip Planner – The AAC advised that to ensure the most accurate fare and travel information during SafeTrack, the schedules supporting the Trip Planner and MetroAccess Fare Calculator must be updated before a new maintenance cycle begins. All customers will then have access to the most current information and MetroAccess fares for comparable trips will be calculated based the schedule in effect.

11. Metrorail Elevator Cleanliness - To address the frequency of individuals using Metro's elevators as restrooms and how this behavior adversely affects customers with disabilities who use mobility devices, the AAC recommended that Metro enhance its photographic equipment to include a camera with a monitor in the elevators and post the bathroom policy in all elevators.

Calendar

The AAC wishes to extend an open invitation to Metro's Board of Directors to attend any of the AAC's monthly meetings. All meetings take place at Metro's headquarters in the Lobby Level Meeting Room. The remaining meetings in 2016 and those scheduled for 2017 are listed below. The AAC does not meet in the month of August. Meetings are held on Mondays except when Monday is a holiday, then the meeting will be on the following day (Tuesday); and those dates are marked with an asterisk.

2016

August – No Meeting	September 6, 2016 - 5:30-7:30 PM*
October 3, 2016 - 5:30-7:30 PM	November 7, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 PM
December 5, 2016 - 5:30-7:30 PM	

2017

January 3, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 PM*	February 6, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 PM
March 6, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 PM	April 3, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 PM
May 1, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 PM	June 5, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 PM
July 3, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 PM	August – No Meeting
September 5, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 PM*	October 2, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 PM
November 6, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 PM	December 4, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 PM

Sincerely,



Patrick Sheehan
Chair