



AAC

Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-962-6060

Meeting Minutes: April 3, 2017

ATTENDEES

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Denise Rush (1st Vice Chair), Tappan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Darnise Henry-Bush, Charlie Crawford, Phillippa Mezile, Brian Miller, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahan, Randall Pope, and Doris Ray.

Call to Order

Chair Sheehan called the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA, BOARD REPORT, AND PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

The meeting agenda was approved.

The March 6, 2017, meeting minutes were approved as amended.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated April 3, 2017, was approved as amended.

A DISCUSSION WITH A BOARD MEMBER

Kathryn Porter, Member, Metro's Board of Directors, greeted members of the AAC and the public. She stated that she joined the Board in 2011 as an alternate representing the State of Maryland – Montgomery County. Prior to her tenure on Metro's Board she was a member of the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) for over 15 years. During that time she had the opportunity to serve as Chair of the Access For All Committee (AFA) and she participated in TPB's first transportation human services program. Ms. Porter stated that these roles have given her some background with some of the issues raised by members of the AAC and disability community.

Ms. Porter stated that the AAC's invitation for members of the Board to travel with a member of the disability community is an excellent idea. She suggested that AAC plan an official event. This will allow Board members an opportunity to include the event on their calendars.

Ms. Porter discussed the fact that Metro's Board approved the FY2018 budget. The budget has been characterized as shared sacrifices because everyone had to forgo something in an effort to balance the budget and preserve as much service as possible. Ms. Porter stated one of the challenges that Metro has experienced has been a decline in ridership, which has impacted revenue. Given that costs have risen, with Metro's revenue having remained flat, there is a wider financial gap. To close the gap, Metro's Board raised fares, requested additional funds for the jurisdictions, and trimmed some cost. The General Manager (GM) will reduce Metro's workforce by 1000, curtail the

frequency of track service, and make reductions in bus service. Although MetroAccess was not directly cut, Ms. Porter stated that the AAC demonstrated the correlation between any reductions in fixed route services and the impact on the paratransit service. Essentially, with the changes in fixed route service, MetroAccess will be affected by the reductions in the budget. Ms. Porter stated that these are just a few examples of the shared sacrifices in the FY2018 budget. Metro's FY2018 budget will take effect in July 2017.

Metro has some long-term financial issues that must be addressed. The GM has exhausted his ability to cut personnel and administration. The jurisdictions are resistant to any additional increases in the subsidy. Everyone recognizes that raising fares or further cutting service is not the answer. To address these issues the Board is looking ahead to other ways to increase funding, and is considering all options.

With the ending of SafeTrack in June 2017, it is anticipated that Metro should return to a higher level of service. Ms. Porter stated that one option under consideration is to request additional resources from the Federal government for Metro's operating expenses. Another alternative would be a dedicated funding source in the form of a regional sales tax. She stated that the Maryland General Assembly has discussed a sales tax for the regions where Metro operates. The District of Columbia and Virginia have discussed similar options.

Metro's Board recognizes that obtaining another revenue source will be challenging. Ms. Porter stated that the AAC can assist the Board by acting as an experienced expert on the subject of why a dedicated funding source is necessary. The AAC can be the voice in the general public that helps Metro change the conversation on funding. Mr. Sheehan stated that talking points on the issue would be helpful to the AAC.

Mr. Sheehan opened the floor to members for questions. Charlie Crawford expressed an interest in Metro's long-range planning and the funding associated with the plan. Ms. Porter stated that Metro's Board has discussed long range planning. The political environment in the three jurisdictions are different, which means that the decision for dedicated funding will occur at the State levels. She encouraged AAC members to act as the liaison for Metro on this issue in their respective jurisdictions.

Mr. Sheehan expressed an interest in whether Metro's Board uses a multi-year budget. Ms. Porter stated that for planning purposes, a multi-year budget is an excellent planning tool. Metro uses multi-year budgets for Capital projects. However, for the operating budgets, a multi-year planning tool is only binding for the first year. She stated that it is difficult to be binding on spending in a budget for more than a year.

Phillippa Mezile expressed concern about the loss of meeting refreshments at AAC meeting. Although Metro is experiencing financial stagnation, the elimination of meeting refreshments is a noteworthy issue that should be discussed. The AAC meetings occur during the dinner hour and many come from work to help Metro better understand and resolve issues in the system. This should have been taken into consideration before the elimination of refreshments.

In a follow-up on the point about Metro's financial woes, Doris Ray stated that a local radio program reported that Metro was spending funds to paint the stations. She stated that spending funds on beautification projects when there are other critical projects to maintain the system needed is not her idea of shared sacrifice. Painting the Metrorail stations to a color that would reduce the contrast in the system will make it more difficult for customers with low vision to navigate the system.

Ms. Mezile also stated that it appears that the jurisdictions are not cooperating on the issue of funding. A recent news article stated that the District of Columbia (D.C.) was interested in funding the system while Maryland and Virginia are focused on funding a study. Ms. Porter stated that Maryland, Virginia, and D.C. have been making their respective jurisdictional payments. However, the article may have been referring to a study on revenue sources. The governing body in Virginia is in recess and therefore cannot act on the issue until next year. The Maryland General Assembly is about to wrap up in one week. By contrast, the D.C. Council meets all year long and may choose to act on the issue while the other jurisdictions are in recess.

Ms. Mezile expressed an interest in whether Metro considered advertising as an option to secure more revenue. Ms. Porter stated that Metro has expanded advertising across the system. There are billboards all across the Metrorail system and some Metrobuses have become mobile billboards by using bus wraps. She stated that the Board has discussed businesses sponsoring stations; however, the idea did not get a lot of traction. The Board is always interested in ideas where the system can generate more revenue and welcomed any ideas from the AAC.

Denise Rush expressed an interest in whether Metro considered requiring businesses and venues, such as the Verizon Center, to pay an additional tax to help fund the system. Ms. Porter stated that the Board has discussed the option. The ideas would be to have businesses within a certain distance of a Metro station pay an additional business tax.

Ms. Rush stated that she likes the idea of being a voice in the community to discuss dedicated funding for the Metro system. However, in southern Prince George's County where bus service has been severely diminished while other areas in and outside of the County have flourished, the conversation is more than difficult. Additionally, Metrorail

service in the southern part of the County is also limited, which means bus service is critical in that area. Ms. Porter agreed that the conversation with customers who feel they are not getting service will be arduous. She stated that in the original budget there were more proposed cuts in bus service to the County. It was Malcolm Augustine, Metro Board member from Prince George's County, who advocated hard to minimize the cuts in service to the County.

Mr. Sheehan stated that two-thirds of the MetroAccess customers are from Prince George's County. The reduction in transportation services is an additional strike on top of reductions in the budget for customers that use Metro in the County. Ms. Porter stated that Maryland has a disproportionate number of MetroAccess customers. The Board has lobbied for better transportation service in Prince George's County.

Darnise Bush stated that she agrees with the sentiment of residents in Prince George's County regarding the lack of service because her Ward, which is East of the river, has nowhere near the transportation luxuries that are afforded to other Wards in D.C. Many in Ward 8 use Metrobus as the family car to get to the Metrorail system.

Ms. Bush also stated that D.C. residents pay disproportionately higher fares on MetroAccess than customers in Maryland and Virginia. A D.C. to D.C. fare on MetroAccess is always the maximum. This is also true for customers traveling from D.C. to Maryland or to Virginia. She requested further explanation on how customers traveling across regions can pay the same fare as those traveling locally on MetroAccess.

In a follow-up on the discussion of advocating for dedicated funding for the system, Ms. Bush suggested that Metro partner with the community generating exposure and capital for Metro. When people have a more vested interest in the public transportation system, they tend to recognize the challenges and are willing to take the appropriate action to resolve the issue. Ms. Porter stated that Metro makes an effort to coordinate with the business through the Business Improvement Network to adopt stations.

Ms. Ray stated that the sustainability of all three modes of transportation is her utmost concern. For many people, the fixed route system represents the family car. She stated that she uses the system for all of her transportation needs. The FY2018 budget reduces services across the board impacting customers who solely rely on the system. She suggested that Metro increase Metrobus service in areas where Metrorail will be reduced. This would benefit all customers including those with disabilities.

Ms. Ray also expressed an interest in whether Metro considered getting money from tourists and/or other local jurisdictions, such as Loudoun County residents, who use the

fixed route system, but are not part of the subsidy calculation. Ms. Porter stated that Loudoun County will pay the subsidy when the Silver Line is completed.

Brian Miller stressed the impact the reductions in the FY2018 budget will have on all customers that use the system. He stated that early closures on the Metrorail disproportionately impacts customers with disabilities and workers in the service industry. Additionally, services such as Uber and Lyft are not always an option for customers with disabilities because of economics and accessibility issues.

In another inquiry about funding, Edward McEntee expressed an interest in whether Metro was charging a user fee to all customers who access wi-fi throughout the system. Ms. Porter stated that Metro is working on providing cellular access throughout the Metrorail system. She stated that Metro receives a payment from cellular providers that give customers access and pay for the installation.

Mr. McEntee also expressed an interest in whether finance issues were a challenge for other transportation properties. Ms. Porter stated that Metro is experiencing more challenges than most other transportation properties because of the lack of ongoing maintenance. She stated that the issue is directly related to dedicated funding. However, as with Metro, other transit properties are also seeing declines in ridership. Many believe that this decline in ridership is attributed to the changing way customers use public transportation. Ms. Porter stated that the role of public transportation is changing and Metro is adapting to the changes.

Randall Pope stated that he is a deaf-blind customer who uses the Metro system every day. Although the deaf-blind community is in the minority of customers using the system, Metro can do more to communicate with these customers and ensure the system is accessible for this group. Mr. Pope encouraged Metro to enhance communication through the development of electronic applications for smartphones. He also suggested that Metro increase training for frontline staff, so they can provide better assistance when necessary. For example, Mr. Pope stated that a low-vision customer was having trouble communicating with a MetroAccess driver. The MetroAccess driver was writing with a fine tip pen when they should have been using a board brush pen, which would have made it easier for the customer to view the information. This error resulted in frustration for all involved. Metro staff needs more training with different types of disabilities to ensure service is being provided at the highest level of customer service to all customers. Ms. Porter thanked Mr. Pope for his comments and requested to know whether the visual displays in the 7000 series railcars were more visible. Mr. Pope stated that the visual displays on the new trains are much better.

In a follow-up, Ms. Ray stated that Passenger Information Display Systems on station platforms are difficult for her to see because of the distance and the lack of contrast with the information.

Ms. Mezile agreed with Ms. Ray stating that that signage in the system is difficult to view because of poor lighting.

With a round of applause, the AAC thanked Ms. Porter for the candid discussion on public transportation. Mr. Sheehan stressed the importance of transportation and the role it plays in the quality of life. He stated that everyone should be an advocate for dedicated funding. The AAC is committed to working with the Board on the issue.

SILVER LINE DULLES PHASE II PROJECT

James VanZee, Deputy Director, Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA), provided an update on Metro's new Silver Line Metrorail stations. Metro's Silver Line is a seamless integration with the 106-mile system. It is a 23-mile extension that branches off the existing Orange line after the East-Fall Church Station. In July 2014 Metro opened the first phase of the Silver Line with five new stations: McLean, Tyson Corner, Greensboro, Spring Hill and Wiehle–Reston East.

Mr. VanZee stated that in the second phase of the Silver Line, Metro will add six new rail stations carrying the rail system into Loudoun County. Those stations will be Reston Town Center, Herndon, Innovation Center, Dulles Airport, Loudoun Gateway, and Ashburn. Some of the features at the new station include covered pedestrian bridges, dual elevators and escalators, and easy access to public restrooms. The second phase of the project will connect Metrorail to Washington Dulles International Airport. Additionally, the second phase will include a Metro rail yard and maintenance facility. The new facility will be the largest rail yard and maintenance facility in the Metro system. It is anticipated that construction on the second phase of the Dulles Metrorail project will be completed in 2020.

Dr. Miller expressed an interest in the proximity of the Dulles Metrorail Station to the entrance of the airport. Mr. VanZee stated that customers will be able to go from the Metrorail system to the terminal at the airport. Several years ago, the MWAA upgraded its automated airport train system to ensure access. MWAA also operates shuttle buses from the parking lots or garages to the terminal. The new rail lines and the upgrades with MWAA make traveling to the airport a lot easier.

Tapan Banerjee expressed an interest in parking at the stations. He stated that many of the stations in the first phase do not have adequate public parking for customers. Mr. VanZee stated that decision to limit the number of parking spaces at the Metrorail

stations and in the Park and Rides lots was made by Fairfax County. The Greensboro and Spring Hill stations do not have any parking; however, there is ample public parking at the McLean station.

In a follow-up, Ms. Bush expressed an interest in the number of accessible parking spaces at the Dulles Airport station. Mr. VanZee stated that he will investigate and provide follow up.

Ms. Ray stated that she is excited about the Silver line and expects that new stations will make life easier for all customers including those with disabilities.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in the bus service to the terminus station in Ashburn. Mr. VanZee stated that Loudoun County intends to operate a bus system, but the plans have not been finalized.

In a follow-up, Ms. Ray stated that wayfinding is difficult in the Silver Line stations. The natural light shines on the silver background of the stations creating blind spots. She expressed an interest in whether the second phase of the project will be the same overall color as the first phase. Mr. VanZee stated that stations will be the same color.

Ms. Bush expressed an interest in whether the airport entrance will be ADA compliant. Mr. VanZee stated that the system has been built to be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Mr. Sheehan expressed an interest in whether the new rail extension will also extend MetroAccess service to those areas. Christian Kent, AGM, Department of Access Services, stated paratransit service will be extended to the areas within three-quarters of a mile of the rail stations in Loudoun County. He stated that, in addition Loudoun County has its own intra-county paratransit service. Metro has had discussions regarding the two paratransit systems.

The AAC thanked Mr. VanZee for an update on the Silver Line extension. Mr. Sheehan stated that the new lines will enhance the quality of life for all customers using the system.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Sheehan stated that due to the meeting running past time, and the need to retain interpreters, the AAC will postpone the reports from the subcommittees until the next AAC meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Barbara Millville, President, National Capital Citizens with Low Vision (NCCLV), inquired about Metro painting the stations. If the reason Metro is painting to brighten up the stations, she suggested that Metro spend the money to upgrade the lighting. Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, stated that the painting in the Metrorail system is a pilot project, one side of one station thus far, and that this is a maintenance issue, whereas the lighting improvements come under capital.

In follow-up, Mr. Kent stated that the lighting is still incorporated into the renovation projection in the Metrorail system. The painting project is an opportunity for Metro to experiment with ways to improve the visibility in the system. He stated that staff would be happy to schedule a presentation for a subcommittee meeting.

A comment was made about poor service on MetroAccess. The customer stated that an inaccessible vehicle arrived to pick-up her and a friend up, who are both mobility devices users. Although the issue was resolved quickly for the pick-up trip, there was still an issue for the return trip, which took another hour before it was resolved. Mr. Kent stated that Metro has been working to improve the on-time performance of the paratransit service. The central issue is manpower. He stated that Metro has addressed the issue with all of the contractors and has assisted them with recruitment efforts.

Another comment was made about poor service on MetroAccess. The customer stated that over the last few months his service has declined significantly. Sometimes, the MetroAccess vehicle would not show despite him having reserved a trip.

In a follow-up, the parent agreed that MetroAccess service has declined. In the last few months, there has been a high number of add-on trips that are making her daughter late for medical and social appointments. Additionally, there have been times her daughter's name has been dropped from the passenger log. This is upsetting for her daughter who has limited speaking abilities as well as for the family who has to wonder whether she will make it to her destination and home safely. Mr. Kent apologized for the issue. He stated that MetroAccess is able to track all reservation made in the system. The issue will be investigated thoroughly and feedback provided.

A comment was made about the new MetroAccess ID cards. The customer stated that some bus operators are not accepting the card or providing different instructions on how the card works. Mr. Blake stated that the new MetroAccess ID cards and the corresponding PCA cards replace the white MetroAccess card. To use the new MetroAccess ID cards customers must tap the target on the farebox or faregate to access the system. If the PCA is present, they must use their card immediately after the cardholder on the same target to access the system at no charge.

A comment was made about process and procedures for complaints and claims. The customer stated that she has been seeking assistance for damages to her wheelchair stemming from a lack of proper securement incident on MetroAccess in October 2016. Mr. Kent stated that Metro takes its securement procedures seriously and provides a great deal of training to MetroAccess drivers on proper securement. As a practice, drivers who improperly secure a customer and the result is an injury are terminated. He stated that David Shaffer, ADA Ombudsman, will provide assistance with the complaint and navigating Metro's claims department.

A comment was made about the lack of fixed route services and the impact on MetroAccess service. The customer stated that she is unable to use MetroAccess service from her home in Prince George's County because she does not live within a range of a bus stop. The customer requested assistance from the AAC to correct this issue. Mr. Kent stated that Metro's decision change the service area to three-quarters of a mile of a bus stop was about finances. The discussion on dedicated funding could help widen the service area and make MetroAccess available to more customers.

Another comment was made about poor service on MetroAccess. The customer stated that in February 2017 her dad was scheduled for a pick-up to attend a show at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. MetroAccess arrived at the end of the pick-up window and the driver had difficulty parallel parking. This issue made us late for the show and the Center did not allow entry after the show after had begun. The customer stated that she and her elderly parent had to watch the show in the lobby. The customer stated that she wanted to speak to someone about a refund for the tickets. Mr. Kent stated that a great deal of training is provided to MetroAccess drivers. Customers should not have to assist drivers with the operation of the vehicles. The issue will be investigated and feedback provided.

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. B. Moore Gwynn, ADA Coordinator, announced that the 2017 AAC recruitment period is open from April 3rd through April 30th, 2017. There are a total of nine openings. The openings will be filled from a pool of qualified applications received during the current recruitment as well as from previous applications on file. Applications are available in the vestibule and online. Members should contact Dr. Moore-Gwynn directly for any information regarding specifics of their terms.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.



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STATUS OF COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info – 20	A discussion with Metro’s GM	5/1/17	AAC	Presenter: Paul J. Wiedefeld	
Info – 06	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	6/5/17	AAC	Update (Follow-up discussion after event - November 2013).	

Note: Quarterly Meeting Recommendations are marked with an asterisk symbol.

COMPLETED - COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info - 01	Proposed 2016 Bus Route Changes	7/6/15	AAC	Presenter: Julie Hershorn	7/6/15
Info – 02	25 th Anniversary of the ADA	7/6/15	AAC	Open Forum	7/6/15
Info - 03	Proposed 2016 Bus Route Changes	7/6/15	AAC	Presenter: Julie Hershorn	7/6/15
Info - 05	Establishing A Customer Community	9/14/15		Presenter: Jason Minser	9/14/15
Info - 07	Metro's Diversity and Recruitment Initiatives	10/5/15		Presenter: Ikemia Arrington	10/5/15
Info – 08	Momentum and Long Range Plan (update)	12/7/15	AAC	Presenter: Jennifer Weeks	12/7/15

COMPLETED - COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info - 09	Maryland – Abilities Ride Proposed MetroAccess Alternatives	2/1/16		Presenter: Christian Kent/Christiaan Blake	2/1/16
Info - 04	AAC Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Committee	2/1/16	AAC	New approach: Joint AAC/RAC meeting	2/1/16
Info - 10	Announcements 7000 Series	3/7/16	AAC	Presenter: Debo Ogunrinde	3/7/16
Info - 04	AAC Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Committee	3/7/16	AAC	Feedback	3/7/16
Info - 11	A discussion with Metro's GM	4/4/16	AAC	Presenter: Paul Wiedefeld	4/4/16
Info – 12	Customer safety	5/2/16	AAC	Presenter: Chief Ronald Pavlik	5/2/16
Info – 16	A discussion with Metro's GM	9/6/16	AAC	Presenter: Paul J. Wiedefeld	9/6/16

COMPLETED - COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info – 17	A discussion with Metro’s Board Chair	10/3/16	AAC	Presenter: Jack Evans	10/3/16
Info – 18	Communication with Customers who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing	10/3/16	AAC	Presenter: Jim Hughes	10/3/16
Info – 21	Metro’s FY2018 Budget Presentation	12/5/16	AAC	Presenter: Dennis Anosike	12/5/16
Info – 19	A discussion with Metro’s GM	1/3/17	AAC	Presenter: Paul J. Wiedefeld	1/3/17
Info – 22	Wayfinding (Demonstration and Tour)	3/6/17	BRS	Presenter: Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind and ClickAndGo	3/6/17
Info – 23	Dulles Phase II	4/3/17	AAC	Presenter: James Van Zee Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority	4/3/17

Note: Quarterly Meeting Recommendations are marked with an asterisk symbol.