



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

### **Meeting Minutes: February 1, 2016**

#### **ATTENDEES**

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Denise Rush (1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair), Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Brianna Burger, Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford, Steven Kaffen; Edward McEntee, Dr. Brian Miller, Randall Pope, Paul Semelfort, Anthony Stephens, Dr. William Staderman, and Roger Stanley.

#### **Call to Order**

Chairman 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 January 2016 meeting minutes were approved.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated February 1, 2016, was approved.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

A comment was made about snow removal after the recent snowstorm. The customer stated that access to sidewalks and bus stops was hampered by the slow removal of snow. At some bus stops, mountains of snow are so high that bus operators cannot pick up customers from the designated stops. The customer expressed an interest in Metro's policy on snow removal and whether Metro conducts outreach about the issue. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that the overwhelming majority of bus stops in the region are not located on Metro property. Metro is responsible for snow removal at the stops that are located on Metro property, which are primarily at rail stations. He added that snow removal at all other bus stops in the region are the responsibility of the respective property owners, be they private or public. Mr. Blake stated that in cases where snow is a barrier, customers can call ADAP at 202-962-1100 with information about the location, and his office will attempt to contact the appropriate personnel in the respective jurisdictions.

Steve Kaffen made a comment about U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) guidelines for flexibility in accommodations. He expressed an interest in whether Metro was following the new rules as it relates to bus stop access and the snow. Mr. Blake stated that in July 2015 USDOT issued its Final Rule on Reasonable Modifications, and Metro has updated its own policies to reflect adherence to the rule.

Brianna Burger made a comment about snow removal in parking garages at Metrorail stations. She stated that a colleague, who uses a wheelchair, was unable to access the accessible parking spaces at the New Carrollton Metrorail station because the spaces

were filled with snow. She added that it appeared that Metro removed the snow from other areas and placed it in the accessible parking area preventing customers with disabilities from accessing those parking spaces. Mr. Blake stated that his office is aware of similar concerns at the Shady Grove station, and he has followed up with the responsible office and personnel. He will add the New Carrollton station to the list of stations in need of immediate review, and will have a broader conversation on the issue once this snow event has concluded.

Mr. Sheehan stated that he was not impressed with Montgomery County's responsiveness to snow removal. Many bus stops and sidewalks were not shoveled making it difficult for all customers, but especially those with disabilities, to navigate. Mr. Sheehan stated that the snow removal topic was included in his presentation to the Board.

A customer offered kudos to MetroAccess for providing impeccable service to customers with disabilities during the blizzard. Great job MetroAccess!

A customer requested feedback on a comment made at a previous meeting regarding stop announcements on the 7000 Series railcars. The customer stated that he suggested that Metro switch its announcements to allow critical instructions, such as line and destination information, be given first when a train is on the platform. This will allow customers, including those with disabilities, to understand whether they are on the correct train. Mr. Blake stated that he is still working on the issue with Office of Rail Transportation (RTRA), and will notify all stakeholders as soon as information is available. Mr. Sheehan moved the topic to the Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting for further discussion.

Mr. Blake provided feedback on a comment made at the January 2016 AAC meeting regarding announcements of elevator outages in the rail system. Mr. Blake confirmed that Metro does have a policy requiring train operators to announce elevator outages at least two stations in advance of the impacted station. He added that RTRA is reported to have distributed a bulletin to all train operators to remind and reinforce the policy. In response to a question from Mr. Blake, a customer stated that he has still not heard such announcements ahead of trains arriving at the Fort Totten station.

Carolyn Bellamy made a comment about accessible pathways at a construction site at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Randolph Road. She stated that a new firehouse is being erected in that area, and access to the bus stop had been obstructed. She expressed an interested in whether Metro or Montgomery County was responsible for the bus stop. Mr. Blake stated that the bus stop was the responsibility of the jurisdiction. He encouraged her to contact the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) to temporarily relocate the bus stop, and he will reach out to County staff as well.

### **MARYLAND – ABILITIES RIDE**

Due to overwhelming interest on Metro's proposal for alternatives to MetroAccess, the AAC continued its discussion on the subject. Mr. Sheehan stated that in addition to his verbal and written remarks on the subject at the Board meeting, there were several comments from the public.

Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services (ACCS), stated that in April 2015, Metro's Board received a presentation on the MetroAccess Long-term Sustainability Study conducted by George Mason Center for Regional Analysis. The study pointed out that current statistics demonstrate the trend for MetroAccess will be one of continued growth as people live longer and tend toward disabilities.

Mr. Kent stated that over the years, Metro has supported MetroAccess by providing the resources it needed to be successful. MetroAccess has added vehicles with enhanced safety features and increased technology and other amenities, while providing 92% on time service or better. This has allowed MetroAccess to grow along with the ridership. In order for Metro to continue to operate in this manner, the Board has requested that staff look for ways to stretch resources so Metro can continue to serve the greatest number of people. In 2005, MetroAccess transported 1.2 million customers; today that number has doubled. In the next 10 years, it is estimated that service will grow to 2.5 or 3 million customers. Mr. Kent stated that for these reasons, Metro is interested in more ways to provide reliable and sustainable public transportation services.

Mr. Kent stated that services such as the Free Ride Benefit, Travel Training Program, and the Reduced Fare Program have assisted with demand-management of paratransit service. To further stretch its paratransit resources, Metro partnered with the District of Columbia on a taxicab program, *TransportDC*, to offer an additional transportation option. Additionally, Metro's Board hired a consultant to identify efficiency opportunities across the agency, including MetroAccess. Mr. Kent stated that collectively, all of these efforts are designed to enable Metro to better serve the growing population of customers with disabilities.

Another idea Metro is exploring is the possible use of a transportation network company (TNC), or other transportation broker, to provide an alternative to MetroAccess. Mr. Kent stated that Metro understands the disability community's concerns about the number of accessible taxi vehicles. The TransportDC program is successful because it invested in accessible taxis to accommodate all customers. Recognizing that the MetroAccess service area includes the entire region, the same concern related to accessible taxi vehicles exists in Maryland and Virginia. In response to a question about why Maryland was chosen for the next pilot over Virginia, Mr. Kent stated that two-thirds of the MetroAccess service operates in Maryland.

At the January 2015 MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting, the discussion focused on recommendations to the prospect of Metro seeking other providers to administer paratransit services. Mr. Kent stated that Metro is interested in the AAC's and the disability community's input related to different providers, the qualifications and resources of such providers, and training before any changes are made to services. Information from our stakeholders will be added to the scope of services Metro has been developing and issued to prospective companies by way of a Request for Information (RFI). He stated that Metro subscribes to the disability community's motto of "*Nothing About Us Without Us.*"

Mr. Sheehan expressed an interest in whether the timeline had been amended. Mr. Kent stated that he initially requested to complete the issue until July 2016. However, with the depth of the discussion that schedule has changed. Metro is interested in getting this right.

Ms. Rush stated that the MetroAccess service area in Maryland is vast. She expressed an interest in whether the alternative transportation would be provided within Montgomery County or Prince George's County or cross-county. Mr. Kent stated that taxicabs are regulated by jurisdiction commissions; however, TNCs are not bound by the same regulations on where to operate and therefore can travel cross-county. Mr. Blake stated the current plan is to have a service that covers the entire MetroAccess service area within Maryland.

Ms. Bellamy then questioned whether cross-county was the most cost-effective way to administer the alternative service. She urged members to consider the impact on low-income customers and whether the alternative service would be unattainable in a service area as vast as Maryland. Mr. Kaffen stated that the low-income aspect is important because it may influence whether the alternative service will be a flat fee for services like TransportDC (\$5 taxi ride within city limits) or a similar fare structure like MetroAccess. Paul Semelfort expressed an interest in whether the alternative service in Maryland will be a shared ride and how trips would be scheduled. Mr. Blake stated that the plan does not include a flat fare. Instead, Metro will pay up to a maximum amount, and the customer will pay the remaining fare. This will give customers the opportunity to determine the most convenient and affordable trip. He also added that the proposed alternative service in Maryland is not designed as a shared ride experience. Mr. Semelfort suggested that Metro use the TransportDC as a model setting up the alternative service in Maryland. TransportDC does not require a 24 hour in advance reservation, thereby offering participants more flexibility. A comment from the public agreed stating that the TransportDC model can offer answers to most of the AAC's questions.

Ms. Rush also expressed an interest whether the alternative service would eliminate the MetroAccess grandfathering policy. Mr. Blake stated Metro is still discussing the issue and has not determined a position on that issue. Ms. Rush stated that with the alternative program, the policy should be moot.

Ms. Bellamy expressed an interest in insurance for the vehicles. She stated that MetroAccess vehicles operate under the highest amount of insurance, while Uber and Lyft operate at the minimum. Ms. Bellamy stated that it should be required that any alternative service operates with the highest amount of insurance. In response to a question about whether the Jurisdictional Coordinating Committee (JCC) has been briefed on the issue, Mr. Kent responded that they had not at this time.

Mr. Kaffen suggested that Metro should measure the impact of the alternative service by demonstrating how the service strengthens the capabilities of MetroAccess. He added that the information could be represented in the financial impact and efficiencies of the service. Additionally, Mr. Kaffen suggested that Metro should informally gather the views of companies being considered before a request for bid is issued.

Tappan Banerjee stated that the Fairfax Area Disability Services Board has invited Uber and Lyft to make a presentation about their services. He suggested that the AAC invite the same groups for a presentation. Some members expressed an interest in the date and time of the meeting and suggested that Metro should attend as well. Dr. Banerjee stated that he would obtain the information and share it with the committee. In a follow up, Mr. Kent cautioned AAC members about inviting two companies for a presentation. He stated that neither Metro, nor the AAC, should be viewed as giving any company an advantage in any contract opportunities.

Mr. Crawford stated that there are a lot of groups interested in influencing the contract. He cautioned members that any alternative service should follow the principles and standards of the ADA.

Based on the discussion about alternative programs to MetroAccess service in Maryland, the AAC has recommended the following be included in a proposal:

1. Insurance at the same level as the current program operated by Metro.
2. Eliminate the grandfathering policy for the alternative program in Maryland.
3. Alternative service should be cost-effective that includes low-income customers.
4. A review of the legal responsibility on selections.
5. Metro should maintain internal controls over training, drivers, and vehicles.
6. Awardee must also employ people with disabilities.
7. Customer tracking of reservations and vehicles.

Mr. Sheehan stated that the discussion has attracted so much attention that it will be continued at the upcoming MAS meeting. Opening up the discussion to larger audience can ensure all the factors and points are being considered.

### **AAC FARE POLICY WORK GROUP**

The AAC Fare Policy Work Group provided a brief update from their first meeting. Mr. Sheehan stated that the work group discussion focused on Metro's FY2017 budget and other issues that may impact the disability community.

Denise Rush made a comment on-behalf of former BRS chair, Debbie Brown. Ms. Brown has expressed an interest in Metro's proposal to eliminate SmarTrip loading aboard Metrobus. She stated that although the proposed FY2017 budget includes no fare increases or service changes, it does list the elimination of SmarTrip loading on Metrobus as a key initiative. Metro is soliciting feedback on this issue until the end of this month. Ms. Brown requested that the AAC discuss the issue, the impacts on the disability community, and provide feedback to the Board.

Mr. Sheehan stated that the work group reviewed the issue and stated that the Metrobus is the only place many people with disabilities and others can load their SmarTrip cards. Removing this option will force them to pay cash for boarding, which would eliminate their access to the free transfer afforded those boarding with SmarTrip cards. The work group suggested that Metro develop a mechanism to provide cash customers with a system for "free" transfers from bus to bus or rail that is equivalent to what is afforded SmarTrip users. Alternatively, Metro should implement their plan to have the ability to load cards before boarding at all bus stops prior to eliminating the loading on buses.

Metro has no plans to increase fares for the upcoming fiscal year. However, Metro is discussing reducing the maximum fare on Metrorail. If this occurs, the work group suggested that the policy be amended so that the equivalent reduction in the MetroAccess maximum fare can also be reduced. As an example, a reduction of 50 cents for rail should be matched by a reduction of 25 cents for MetroAccess. Additionally, Metro's track work often slows rail performance. Therefore, Metrorail may not always be the "fastest" route to use for calculating MetroAccess fares. Because the Trip Planner and MetroAccess Fare Calculator do not have a mechanism to adjust fares for major delays like track work, the calculations are not always accurate for "fastest" fare. The work group suggested that MetroAccess fares be calculated at twice the boarding fare on bus. This will provide a stable and predictable fare calculation during the next few years while major infrastructure work is going on in the rail system.

Lastly, Metro is considering developing several types of passes to reduce trip charges for multiple trips. Since multiple trip fare reduction passes are a consideration for students, convention attendees, and rail riders, the work group suggested that a similar "pass" (day passes and/or weekly/monthly passes) should be developed and implemented for MetroAccess customers.

Mr. Sheehan stated that the AAC Fare Policy Work Group will hold its next meeting on Tuesday, February 16, 2016 immediately following the MAS meeting.

#### **QUARTERLY MEETING WITH METRO'S EXECUTIVE BOARD**

The AAC discussed the upcoming Quarterly Meeting with the Executive Committee of Metro's Board of Directors, scheduled for February 25, 2016 immediately following Metro's Board meeting.

In addition to Metro's FY17 budget and transportation alternatives to MetroAccess, the AAC recommended the following topics for discussion with the Board: (1) Update on the proposed locking of emergency fare gates; (2) Emergency evacuation exercises and waivers; (3) 7000 series announcements; and (4) Snow removal (lessons learned).

The meeting will be held jointly with Metro's Rider's Advisory Council and the meeting is open to the public.

### **BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

The BRS discussed Metro's emergency "volunteer" exercises. In 2015, Metro was able to train over 6000 first responders because the exercises are the most suitable learning experience for first responders. In 2016, more evacuation exercises are planned and Metro plans to conduct the events in real-time.

Some members reported attending one or more of the exercises over the years. They recounted their experiences of how first responders appeared not to be interested in the directions offered by members of the disability community on how best to handle a person's body or service animal during the evacuation. Some stated that the emergency exercises were too dangerous for people with disabilities and felt they would be in more danger of not being evacuated safely or being injured during an evacuation should an actual emergency occur in the system.

At the heart of the matter is that first responders, on-scene commanders, Metro staff, and others are not listening to the needs of individuals with disabilities during these exercises and therefore are unlikely to know how best to handle a person's body or service animal during a real emergency. The AAC recognizes that each emergency exercise scenario is different; however, the BRS wants to stress the importance of providing full information and that giving a person the option to choose based on the instructions given is crucial.

Although the use of waivers is an industry standard, the AAC believes the way they were introduced and the lack of protection (should something occur during the exercise) is enough to make some members feel it is not in their best interest to participate in future exercises if a signed waiver is required.

The BRS shares this same goal of showing customers how to evacuate the system safely in an emergency and recommends the following: 1) OEM hold pre-brief meetings prior to each exercise. These meetings would be used for explaining details, and for information sharing about an evacuation. These meetings should also be regional to minimize redundancy; 2) Appoint a central liaison to handle the debriefing feedback from each exercise and the distribution of feedback and lessons learned to each of the jurisdictions; and 3) Broaden the process by using the new customer community Amplify to obtain a cross section of disabled and non-disabled participants, thus giving first responders an opportunity to work with more types of disabilities.

The AAC is pleased with this first step to build a more inclusive evacuation program and thanked OEM and the jurisdictions for their input in this process.

### **METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

The MAS had a full discussion on the proposed MetroAccess alternative in Maryland. The discussions focused on alternatives that will aid in sustainability of the Metro's paratransit service. Some members' concerns focused on maintaining stringent standards, noting that when Access-A-Ride in New York City changed its service, many of the Access-A-Ride drivers abandoned the standards and rules of the program. The program was further compromised when drivers were no longer paid by the number of customers they served. This resulted in an issue where timeliness was not important. Other members were open to the use of sedans because they are more cost effective to buy and operate. Additionally, some customers in the disability community prefer to utilize sedans. All agreed that contractors should be required to have accessible vehicles, provide door-to-door service, train their drivers to assist disabled customers, and have a policy for the inclusion of service animals.

MAS agreed that compliance with the ADA is a must for any provider or vendor for paratransit service.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

The AAC was notified that longtime disability advocate Dave Burds passed away over the weekend. Mr. Burds was retired but previously served the disability community as Executive Director of the EnDependence Center of Northern Virginia; Vice President, Board of Directors of DC Action; and was also engaged in DC ADAPT. Mr. Sheehan stated that the AAC would appreciate more information on funeral services when it is available.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.



**Accessibility Advisory Committee**

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**STATUS OF FY 2016 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info - 10	Automated Announcements 7000 Series	3/7/16	AAC	Presenter: Debo Ogunrinde	
Info - 11	Maryland Abilities Ride	3/7/16	AAC		
Info - 04	AAC Quarterly Meeting with Board Executive Committee	4/4/16	AAC	Feedback	
Info - 06	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	12/5/16	AAC	Update (Follow-up discussion after event - November 2013).	

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

**COMPLETED - FY 2016 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS**

<b>Info/Action Item Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date Initiated</b>	<b>Originating Group</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
Info - 01	Proposed 2016 Bus Route Changes	7/6/15	AAC	Presenter: Julie Hershorn	7/6/15
Info - 02	25 <sup>th</sup> 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 - FY 2016 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 Leadership Meeting	2/1/16	AAC	New approach: Joint AAC/RAC meeting	2/1/16

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