



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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

Meeting Minutes: November 7, 2016

ATTENDEES

Present: Patrick Sheehan (Chair), Denise Rush (1st Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva (2nd Vice-Chair), Dr. Tapan Banerjee, Carolyn Bellamy, Darnise Bush, Charlie Crawford; Larry Haile; Suzanne Kamel, Maria Laios, Phillippa Mezile, Edward McEntee, Mary Kay McMahon, Randall Pope, Dr. Phil Posner, Doris Ray, and Paul Semelfort.

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 as amended.

The October 3, 2016 meeting minutes were approved.

The Chair's Report to the Board, dated November 7, 2016, was approved as amended.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A comment was made about the extended deadline for the Abilities-Ride Request for Proposal (RFP) to November 29, 2016 and whether any information was amended in the solicitation. Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that Metro received over 140 questions related to a Abilities-Ride RFP, which prompted the extension of the submission deadline. He stated that a change to each price sheet was made to correct a typo, but no aspect of the scope of work was changed.

Mr. Sheehan expressed an interest in whether the clarification affects the information in the Abilities-Ride solicitation. Mr. Blake stated Metro used the questions to clarify the information. Some businesses incorrectly viewed the RFP as a bid for a mini-paratransit contract. He stated that Metro is interested in leveraging existing services in the region to give MetroAccess customers another alternative. In response to a question about locating this information on the website, Mr. Blake stated that his office would send members a link to the webpage.

A comment was made about poor service on MetroAccess. The customer stated that for over 3 years she has been a faithful MetroAccess rider. In the last 3 to 4 months, service has declined, and trips have been excessively late, causing appointments to be missed. Paul Semelfort, Chair, MetroAccess Subcommittee, acknowledged the challenges and stated that the MetroAccess team will follow up with the customer before the end of the meeting.

Another comment was made about poor service on MetroAccess. The customer stated that he, too, has experienced excessively late trips on MetroAccess causing appointments to be missed. The customer stated that because of the late trips, he always requests the location of the driver but is often told that the information cannot be provided. The customer stated that Metro should be more transparent in providing this information. After a trip has been late, the customer service representative should be more responsive to customers. Allison Anderson, Operations Manager, Office of MetroAccess Service, stated that the reason customers are not provided the driver location is because the information could change. For an example, when the trip is late, MetroAccess dispatch is trying to locate a vehicle in the system nearest to the customer's location and dispatch that vehicle as quickly as possible to complete the pick-up. The closest vehicle for the pickup can change several times before the dispatcher can identify the best option. To ensure customers are given the most up-to-date and accurate information, we refrain from providing that information.

Mr. Sheehan stated that for many years, the AAC has advocated for real-time information on vehicles and will continue to do so until there is some movement on the issue. Staff stated that this technology is still under development and not yet available for paratransit.

In a follow up comment about poor service on MetroAccess, the customer stated that she is fearful to ride the service after an incident at St. Paul's Church. The customer stated that she approached the vehicle and found the MetroAccess driver and a church member in a heated discussion over accessible parking. Over the course of the conversation, the MetroAccess driver became offensive and belligerent to everyone involved. The customer stated that she was frightened and overwhelmed by the situation, so she contacted MetroAccess Customer Service for assistance. A Customer Service offered to send a road supervisor but had no idea when one would be available to address the issue. Several hours later, a road supervisor finally arrived at the church. The road supervisor requested statements, but did not take dictation. The customer explained that she was visually impaired and unable to document the information in writing but was happy to provide a statement verbally. The road supervisor declined to take a verbal statement, stating that doing so was not part of MetroAccess policy. The customer stated this was unacceptable and after more time wasted, she improvised and provided a written statement; however, to date and despite filing a complaint, there has been no response on the situation. Christian Kent, AGM, Department of Access Services (ACCS), apologized for the issues the customer had to witness and endure. Mr. Kent stated when an incident like this occurs and a customer seeks assistance from the MetroAccess Call Center, the urgency and empathy from MetroAccess Customer Service should also have been there. He stated that the issue will be investigated immediately and feedback provided to the customer.

Doris Ray made a comment about the brick pavers from the Jackson Graham Building to Judiciary Square Metro Station. She stated that on 5th Street across from the Building Museum, there is a huge hole at the edge of the curb and several bricks are

missing along the path. This is dangerous for people using mobility devices and white canes, and for regular walkers because someone could get injured. Ms. Ray stated that she recognizes that the area is not Metro property; however, Metro should bring it to the attention of the District of Columbia or the Building Museum to repair.

Another comment was made about MetroAccess service. The customer stated that she has been a subscriber of MetroAccess service for over 20 years, and the service has declined exponentially in the last 3 months. The customer stated that when she files a complaint through MetroAccess Customer Service or "Where's My Ride", the response always boils down to "it's the customer's fault." Mr. Kent apologized while stating that it appears that the MetroAccess Customer Service representatives exacerbated the situation by not showing an appropriate empathy for a customer having a bad experience with the service. The customer added that she has some kind of issue with at least 75% of her trips on MetroAccess, and she does not have the time to call and complain for every trip. The customer requested a review of her trip history. Mr. Kent stated that the customer's trips will be investigated immediately and feedback will be provided to the customer.

METROACCESS ID CARD CONVERSION

Frank Roth, Director, Office of Eligibility Certification and Outreach, discussed the MetroAccess ID card conversion program for conditionally eligible customers. In April 2015, Metro launched a pilot program to address fare evasion on the fixed route system. During the pilot (June 1 – November 30, 2015) data demonstrated that 2,376 contacts were made where customers had committed fare evasion. A total of 1,950 were on Metrorail and 426 were on Metrobus. From that number, many customers were written citations that led to 50 arrests. To address the issue of lost revenue through fare evasion, Metro plans to implement a full-scale fare evasion program to prevent unauthorized access to the system.

The AAC and the disability community expressed concerns about the impact of a fare evasion program that would lock station equipment gates and what impact that will have on conditionally eligible customers with disabilities who utilize Metrorail. Mr. Roth stated that to address these concerns and provide autonomous entry into the system, ACCS has partnered with Metro's Office of the Treasury to develop a new MetroAccess ID card for conditionally eligible customers and their personal care attendants (PCA) to provide the Free Ride benefit on a SmarTrip platform.

Darnise Bush expressed an interest in the date when the equipment gates will be locked. Mr. Blake stated that Metro has not announced an official date to lock the equipment gates.

Edward McEntee expressed an interest in traveling through the gates independently. He stated that because of his disability, he needs assistance to swipe when using the system. A locked gate would limit his independence when traveling in the system. Mr. Blake stated that Metro understands that a reasonable accommodation will have to be made for some customers. In these types of situations, the station manager will assist

customer with at the fare gate. Mr. Roth added that prior to the implementation of the new MetroAccess ID cards, extensive testing was performed to ensure the cards will operate in all conditions.

Ms. Bush expressed an interest in the equipment gate near the elevators at certain stations like Judiciary Square. She stated that she uses a scooter and elevators to travel in the system and has found it difficult to connect with a station manager. The current Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) is not efficient, so customers may be at the station before they know that the elevator is out-of-service. Additionally, Ms. Bush expressed an interest in whether the anticipated lay-offs at Metro could impact the ability to receive service when traveling in the system.

Mr. Roth stated that the new ID card will allow conditionally eligible customers and their PCA's to utilize Metrobus and Metrorail at no charge. For example, customers who currently flash their MetroAccess ID card to access the system can now utilize the new ID card to tap the target on Metrobus or Metrorail to access the system. The card can be used throughout the system, and when customers are riding the bus with jurisdictional partners, the same benefits currently provided by the jurisdiction will be maintained with this ID card. Conditionally eligible customers who currently receive a reduced rate or no discount when riding with jurisdictional partners can add value to the new ID card for fares that are not free. In response to a question about parking, Mr. Roth stated that the card will be available to use for parking. However, there will be no discount for parking when utilizing this card.

The corresponding PCA card has been issued in conjunction with the conditionally eligible MetroAccess ID card. The PCA card will allow whoever is traveling with the eligible customer to access the system for the same fare as the ID card holder. When traveling with the card holder, and the PCA card is used more than 90 seconds or taps the target at a different fare gate, the PCA card will function as a full fare SmarTrip card. Mr. Roth stated that it is highly recommended that conditionally eligible customers retain their PCA card, so it is available to use for the customer's needs only. The cards do not come with pre-loaded value.

Mr. Roth stated that the new ID cards will be distributed to customers by the end of 2016. The new ID cards will be registered and will deactivate at the time of recertification if the customer has not renewed. Information on how to use the new card will be available in multiple languages and accessible formats upon request.

The AAC expressed an interest in how to replace a lost or stolen card. Mr. Roth stated that Metro will charge a \$10 for the first replacement and \$25 for all other replacements of the ID card. Damaged cards will be replaced at no charge as well as stolen cards (with a copy of a police report). Mr. Roth stated that any balance on the new ID card will be transferred upon replacement, and Metro will charge \$2 to replace the accompanying PCA card.

Ms. Ray stated that the price for the replacement of the new MetroAccess ID card was expensive. She stated that many members of the disability community are on fixed income and may go without transportation because of the cost to replace the card.

Mr. Haile expressed an interest in whether the PCA had to go through the same fare gate as the card holder. Mr. Roth stated that the PCA must travel through the same fare gate within 90 seconds of the card holder to receive the benefit. If a PCA card is used after the 90 seconds or taps a target at a different fare gate, the PCA card will function as a full fare card.

Mr. Semelfort expressed an interest in when the old MetroAccess ID cards will expire. Mr. Roth stated that January 1st the old cards will no longer be valid to use in the system.

Ms. Ray suggests that Metro extend the deactivation date of the old cards to allow customers ample time to address any issues with damaged cards.

Suzzane Kamel stated that she likes the new MetroAccess ID card and the autonomous entry it provides customers using the system.

Elver Ariza-Silva echoed Ms. Kamel's comments, stating that the new MetroAccess ID cards give customers with disabilities independence.

Phillippa Mezile expressed an interest in whether the new cards would have the ability to track a customer's travel throughout the system. Mr. Roth stated that the cards are designed to provide data on a customer's usage in the fixed route system. With the old cards, the data was inconsistent because customers would show the station manager the card and sometimes use the equipment gates. The new MetroAccess ID card allows customers to use the fare gate each time when traveling through the system, thus giving Metro solid data on how well the program is working for customers with disabilities.

Carolyn Bellamy expressed an interest in the type of data being collected with the use of the new cards. She stated that she not in favor of the data being collected on customers. Mr. Roth stated the new cards operate in the same manner as a standard SmarTrip card. The new cards have a chip that indicates when the card is used, type of card, and fare.

In a follow up, Dr. Posner stated that registered SmarTrip cards are trackable. The cards have serial numbers that can be registered with Metro. If a card is lost, stolen or damaged, Metro restores the funds of registered cards and transfers the balance to the new SmarTrip card.

If the system must track the number of customers with disabilities who use the fixed route system, Ms. Bush suggests that Metro uses the MetroAccess ID number instead of

a customer's name. This will allow Metro to collect the data and maintain a level of privacy for the customer.

Mr. Haile also commended Metro for improving independence and enhancing the customer experience. He stated in his research, he has found that transit agencies nationwide are using data to determine patterns in customer usage of public transportation. Mr. Haile stated that he sees this as a positive because it shows the benefit of an accessible fixed route system in the disability community.

COLOR OF METRORAIL PLATFORM LIGHTS

The AAC discussed the change in color of platform edge lights throughout the system. Mr. Blake stated that at some stations, the color of the platform edge lights are red while at other stations the lights are white. Metro plans to change all the platform edge lighting in the system to one uniform color - white. Mr. Blake stated that white replacement bulbs are more widely available than red, leading to this decision.

Dr. Posner stated that the BRS approved the item to be moved the item to the AAC. Ms. Rays stated that the white lights provide greater contrast and applauded Metro for moving in this direction. Upon motion, the AAC recommended that Metro should move the color platform edge lighting to white.

FARE POLICY DISCUSSION

The AAC discussed Metro's upcoming budget for FY2018. Dr. Posner stated that this year, Metro is considering an increase in fares or a reduction in service. The initial budget was presented with comments from the Board. The GM presented a revised budget and the Board will review the budget again. Any fare increase or reduction in service will require a Title VI analysis and public hearings.

Dr. Posner stated that public hearings are where the disability community can make its voice heard. The AAC is not in favor of a fare increase. To have equitable, safe, accessible, and sustainable public transportation for all, the AAC recommends a fare of twice the bus fare for paratransit services. Dr. Posner stressed the importance of the disability community's attendance at the subcommittee meeting and members discussing the budget with jurisdictional Board members.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

The nominees for the 2016 Richard W. Hedding Accessible Transportation Award were announced: Elver Ariza-Silva, The ARC of Northern Virginia, and Antonio Stephens. Dr. B. Moore Gwynn announced the winner of the 2016 Richard W. Hedding Accessible Transportation Award. The AAC voted to honor Antonio Stephens, former ADA Ombudsman. The honoree will be recognized at Metro's Accessibility Excellence Awards on November 16, 2016. In response to a question about the location of the event, Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that the awards ceremony will be held at Metro's Headquarters, lobby-level meeting room.

Many members expressed an interest in the winner of the Dr. Rosalyn Simon Award. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth of Illinois will be this year's honoree.

BUS/RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) received a demonstration of the annunciator equipment to determine the appropriate volume level of external stop announcements on Metrobus. The annunciator system automatically calibrates to the appropriate level for the environment, and can go higher than 77 decibels, if necessary. All buses have an ambient sensor that will allow the volume to go higher or lower depending on the surrounding environment. Some members believed that some of the announcements on Metrobus are disruptive, while others view the announcements as a service enhancement. All agreed that getting a tone that is loud enough for customers to hear without disturbing the general public is challenging. Upon motion, the BRS recommended that BMNT maintain the same volume on all buses as demonstrated to the subcommittee and investigate the recommendations of the Subcommittee to add to the volume; add on audible tone prior to the announcement; and modify the fare announcement.

The BRS also discussed lighting in the Metrorail station. Metro plans to change all the platform edge lighting in the system to white. Upon motion, the BRS agreed that Metro should move the color platform edge lights to white because white lighting is more visible.

Additionally, the BRS discussed candidates for BRS leadership positions - Vice-Chair and Second Vice-Chair positions. The nominees are Brianne Burger and Charlie Crawford for the Vice-Chair position and Edward McEntee 2nd Vice-Chair. The elections will be held electronically and announced at the November 2016 BRS meeting and approved at the December 2016 meeting.

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The MetroAccess Subcommittee discussed the new MetroAccess ID card for conditionally eligible customers. The new cards work like all other SmarTrip® cards and will allow customers and their PCAs to continue to use Metrobus and Metrorail at no charge. The cards can be used when customers ride with participating jurisdictional bus services. The accompanying PCA card will allow anyone traveling with the customer to access the system for the same fare as the ID card holder. When not traveling with the customer, the PCA card acts like a regular card. Customers will be able to add value to the cards, and the cards can be used for parking as well. There are no discounts for parking, nor is there a pre-loaded value when issued. The MetroAccess ID card will deactivate if the customer is not recertified within the necessary timelines set by policy. The initial card will be provided at no charge to the customer. Lost cards will be \$10 for the first replacement and \$25 for subsequent replacements. A brochure with information about the new card will be included when the new card is mailed. Accessible formats will be available and provided upon request.

The Subcommittee also discussed Abilities-Ride, and the questions related to the RFP and applauded Carol Tyson for attending the pre-proposal conference and raising questions that represented concerns of the disability community.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Rush expressed an interest in the accessibility of the interactive voice response system for MetroAccess. She stated that the current system is not voice enabled. For customers who have difficulty using a touch-tone system, the lack of this kind of option makes using the service impossible to use independently.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

STATUS OF FY 2016 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info/Action Item Number	Description	Date Initiated	Originating Group	Status	Completion Date
Info – 21	Metro's FY2018 Budget Presentation	12/5/16	AAC	Presenter: Dennis Anosike	
Info – 06	Age-Friendly DC Task Force (Update)	12/5/16	AAC	Update (Follow-up discussion after event - November 2013).	
Info – 19	A discussion with Metro's GM	1/3/17	AAC	Presenter: Paul J. Wiedefeld	
Info – 22	Wayfinding (Demonstration and Tour)	3/6/17	BRS	Presenter: Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind and Click-and-Go	
Info – 20	A discussion with Metro's GM	5/1/17	AAC	Presenter: Paul J. Wiedefeld	

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

COMPLETED - FY 2016 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

COMPLETED - FY 2016 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info – 08	Momentum and Long Range Plan (update)	12/7/15	AAC	Presenter: Jennifer Weeks	12/7/15
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

COMPLETED - FY 2016 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

Info – 16	A discussion with Metro's GM	9/6/16	AAC	Presenter: Paul J. Wiedefeld	9/6/16
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

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