



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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### **BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: December 9, 2020**

In attendance: Tino Calabia (Chair), Anthony Oberg (Vice-Chair), Rico Dancy, Melanie Jackson, Mary Kay McMahon, Philippa Mezile, Denise Rush, and Patrick Sheehan.

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Calabia called the Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

#### **Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

The Meeting Agenda was approved as amended.

The topic of Inter-Car Barriers was added to the Meeting Agenda.

The December 9, 2019 Meeting Minutes were approved as written.

#### **Inter-Car Barriers**

Robin Hahn, Project Manager, Car Maintenance, provided an update about the inter-car barriers. A prototype of the inter-car barriers was built earlier this year. The Procurement Department is required to have a competitive bidding process from more than one supplier. As a result, a request for information (RFI) was issued, it was made public, and responses from four new suppliers were received. The next step is the request for proposal (RFP), where the suppliers will be required to build a prototype for WMATA. Ms. Hahn was here to seek feedback from the Committee for specific requirements for the forthcoming prototypes. After the prototypes have been received, they will be tested on rail-cars for 30 days, and the AAC members would be invited to view them to provide their feedback. Ms. Hahn was aware of the previous AAC recommendation concerning the length of the previous prototype that was tested and invited the Committee's additional feedback and/or recommendations.

Ms. Mezile recommended to have a strong color contrast for blind or low-vision community and provided an example: black and yellow, as these colors are easily visible. Chair Calabia stated when Ms. Rush and he viewed the previous prototype, it had stripes which were supposed to be reflective. Ms. Hahn stated those stripes would be more visible inside the station with lights versus in an outside station with sunlight. Chair Calabia stated the prototype viewed was approved by the Committee with a modification to bring the bar down for better detectability. Ms. Hahn stated at this time, they must go through the procurement requirements and may have more prototypes for the AAC to view. The prototype demonstrated previously, would have be modified as well. Ms. Mezile asked about the dimensions. Ms. Hahn stated as per the AAC recommendation the middle bar would be longer for better detectability, whereas the overall height will not be lowered.

Carol Peredo-Lopez, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning, stated one of the concerns in the previous prototype was that the trains curve away from the platform and narrowing that gap from the platform edge needs to be decreased as a preventive measure. Ms. Hahn stated she would certainly put that as a recommendation as well. Mr. Dancy asked about advertising the information for public awareness. Ms. Hahn clarified it was already shared with the public. Now we are in the RFP process and aim to have it out by next week, and to have some proposals by the end of the month. Afterwards, the suppliers will inform of the time duration needed for the prototype. Chair Calabia stated his concern about the timing of the inter-car barriers being premature as the procurement process of the 8000-series rail-cars is still underway. Ms. Hahn clarified she is strictly working on the 7000-series rail cars and had no information about the 8000-series due to the procurement process.

Ms. Peredo-Lopez asked Ms. Hahn if she could explain why the process had to be repeated. Ms. Hahn stated the bidding process must be an open and fair process. Ms. Peredo-Lopez stated the AAC was involved in the currently used inter-car barriers however, these are being replaced and inquired about the reason for the change. Ms. Hahn stated it is for safety reasons, particularly the safety of the train operators. Chair Calabia thanked Ms. Hahn for clarifying that she is working specifically on the 7000-series. He asked Ms. Rush to provide her feedback on the previously demonstrated inter-car barriers. Ms. Rush stated her concern was to make the inter-car barriers level with the platform to help blind or low-vision customers. Ms. Hahn stated they had already placed that in the proposal. Vice-Chair Oberg clarified that process of procuring safer inter-car barriers for all, is currently underway. Ms. Hahn stated it is the safety for customers with disabilities, seniors, young children, adults, and WMATA employees.

Ms. Peredo Lopez mentioned the car barriers connecting the doors between cars. She sees teenagers walking through one car to the other, even though it is prohibited to use the end doors and asked if something will be done about the inter-car-barriers adjacent to those doors. Ms. Hahn stated technically no one should be walking through those doors except the train operators, and it needs to be safe for them as well. Chair Calabia mentioned an incident that took place today and the safety announcement that he heard afterwards. Chair Calabia asked if Ms. Hahn could review several other topics related to safety. Ms. Hahn stated she will communicate the issues to the Engineering Department. Chair Calabia stated he will present the "handbook" to WMATA Board on December 12<sup>th</sup>. Chair Calabia thanked Ms. Hahn for coming. Ms. Hahn thanked the Committee for their feedback.

### **Metrorail Car Video Panels**

Ms. Peredo-Lopez provided information about the 7000-series Metrorail Car Video Panels. The video panels are small screens approximately 24 inches wide and 18 inches tall. They are divided in three sections. The top section shows the station ahead list and the panel on the left-hand side shows information about the upcoming station, for example, if the next station is Bethesda, the screen will show the bus facility at that station, bus connections, along with other static information at that station. On the right side of the screen is the commercial area. This is the part of the screen where the AAC had concerns of small lettering. Ms. Peredo-Lopez spoke with Brian Anderson, Director, Innovation and Digital Communication, as he controls the video screens. None of those elements on this screen are the real-time elements, they are pre-programmed elements. Therefore, the elevator outage information cannot be displayed at this time. Ms. Peredo-Lopez has recommended that Mr. Anderson contact the engineering department to request possible changes on future procurements.

Vice-Chair Oberg asked to confirm that the information placed on the video panels is not changeable at this time however, it will be shared with the engineering department to determine if that could be a capability in the future. Ms. Peredo-Lopez replied with confirmation. Chair Calabia asked about meeting with the rail car engineers for the 8000-series. Ms. Peredo-Lopez stated that she had an opportunity to share the recommendations of the AAC with the engineering team, however they are not permitted to share any information at this point. Chair Calabia asked about the size of the fonts used for messages on the video panels. Ms. Peredo Lopez stated she will bring this matter of small lettering to the team for further review and determine how to improve upon the size of the fonts.

### **Floating Bus Stops**

Ms. Peredo-Lopez provided information about the floating bus stop located at Wayne Avenue and Georgia Avenue. Ms. Peredo-Lopez and David Shaffer, Ombudsman, ADAP reviewed this floating bus stop, as it was mentioned by Charlie Crawford in a previous meeting. Ms. Peredo-Lopez shared the findings by displaying pictures of the location and provided some recommendations for the aforementioned bus stop. There was a discussion about the floating bus stops and the Committee members shared their experiences and feedback. Chair Calabia asked whether the stop on Wayne Avenue and Georgia Avenue is a Ride-On bus stop and whether Metro has control over this location. Ms. Peredo-Lopez clarified that this location is a Metro bus stop. Metro does not have control over the location however, we may have some influence. Vice-Chair Oberg asked about the purpose of the tactile on the ground as shown in one of the pictures displayed. Ms. Peredo-Lopez clarified that they are examples of tactile guide strips used at the Gallery Place Station, which could be used to guide customers to the floating bus stop.

Ms. McMahon asked if the stop is called a floating bus stop because it is a traffic island. Ms. Peredo-Lopez clarified the islands were created. Ms. Mezile asked if it was done in consultation with Metro or was it the sole decision of the jurisdictions. Ms. Mezile then shared an experience of the floating bus stop in the District of Columbia. Ms. Peredo-Lopez clarified it was the decision of the jurisdictions and stated the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) called Metro after the handrail was placed and that she had recommended for it to be bowed out to deploy bus ramp. Ms. Jackson stated the floating bus stops seem to be hinderance. Ms. Peredo-Lopez stated there are different concepts of the floating bus stops as per the jurisdictions. There may have been items that needed to be fixed, but did not get fixed, thus causing issues for customers. The idea may have been to make it safer for bicyclists. She shared an observation of a family riding bikes.

Chair Calabia stated the idea of floating bus stops is to make it safe for bike riders, however how do we make it safe for the seniors and persons with disabilities. The bicyclists are doing a good job of protecting themselves and we need to have a dialogue sharing information with them. Ms. Peredo-Lopez stated there could have been alternates to make it safer for all. Vice-Chair Oberg asked if there is a general rule for the width of the island bus stops. Ms. Peredo-Lopez stated to deploy a bus ramp, the ADA requires to have five-foot (wide) by eight-foot (deep) surface, and an accessible path of travel from there. Mr. Shaffer stated he found the floating bus stops extremely difficult to use and dangerous. He provided his feedback and recommendations of adding handrails, but convincing Montgomery County to adopt the changes may be challenging. Mr. Sheehan stated it is very frightening, as people may not realize a bike is coming until it passes by in high speed. He shared a recommendation that has been requested by the blind community.

Mr. Sheehan inquired if there is uniformity about the floating bus stops. If not, Metro is going to lose the battle, as floating bus stops are not universal. Mr. Sheehan also asked what kind of jurisdiction does WMATA have over these stops. Ms. Peredo-Lopez stated all the jurisdictions are adopting different kinds of floating bus stops and WMATA can only make the recommendations. Chair Calabia recommended for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to be contacted. Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services, stated since there is no ADA violation, going to the Federal Government may not be victorious. The Maryland members, with the backing of the entire Committee may start a lobby which may have more positive results. Mr. Sheehan stated Mr. Blake is right on target and shared information about an upcoming event on Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, in the Montgomery County. Chair Calabia stated all the AAC members, resident of

Montgomery County, should plan on attending this event and asked Mr. Sheehan to share information of the upcoming event.

### **The Ombudsman Report**

David Shaffer, Ombudsman, ADAP, provided his report. Today he attended the Transportation Review Board dock-less scooters workshop. The dock-less scooter programs from various jurisdictions of this area were presented with different ideas on how to regulate them. Baltimore has the best ideas as they involved the disability community early in the program and received substantial feedback. They charge \$70,000 from companies to run the dock-less scooters, and the funds are utilized for regulations. The dock-less scooters are not allowed on the side-walks, with a \$20 fine for the violator. The disability community does not want to see the dock-less scooters on the side-walk, neither does the Montgomery County. The District of Columbia will not change its position outside the central business district as they are prohibited within the central business district, however, outside of the central business district, there is no prohibition. Thus, there is no enforcement and there is no penalty.

WMATA had submitted feedback which was partially not adopted by the District of Columbia. Arlington County is putting corrals on the streets, whereas Montgomery County has refused to do that as that would mean giving up the parking spaces. The City of Alexandria has also put corrals on the streets. The City of Alexandria is working with WMATA in geo-fencing the stations, as well. The City of Alexandria and Arlington County are taking vigorous steps to work with the disability community. The geofencing cannot be done in the District due to the space needed for it and the GPS is not as accurate. The Office of ADA Policy and Planning is in the process of writing the policies. Mr. Shaffer will share the first draft with the Committee before it is submitted. Mr. Sheehan asked about the Beacon contract. Mr. Shaffer stated it may be awarded at the end of the month and the Pilot is for one year. If Arlington County's efforts are positive, we can emphasize to the District that the program works.

Mr. Shaffer shared pictures of the pediatric wheelchairs, as the stroller policy is going to pilot at the beginning of next year. The frequently-asked-questions (FAQs) will be provided to the operators along with training on how to handle the situations. A description of the pediatric wheelchairs was verbalized by Ms. Peredo-Lopez. Vice-Chair Oberg asked if there is a mechanism for a real time issue. Mr. Shaffer stated he hopes the bus operator would follow the procedure of calling the Bus Operating Control Center. Chair Calabia stated if literature was available on buses, operators could use that as a reference and would not have to get in a disagreement with riders. Mr. Shaffer stated he could communicate with Bus Transportation and discuss having signs on buses. Chair

Calabia asked an update about the lighting issue at the Friendship Heights Station. Mr. Shaffer stated there is a work order for that. This concluded the Ombudsman Report for this month.

### **“Handbook” for Rail-Car Design**

The Committee had a final discussion about the “handbook” for rail-car design of the 8000-series. Chair Calabia stated the handbook was shared with the Riders Advisory Council (RAC) meeting and important feedback was received. The RAC was pleased to see the handbook. Chair Calabia will be presenting the “handbook” to the Board of Directors and the General Manager/Chief Executive Officer during the Board of Directors meeting on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Mr. Sheehan stated the work that has been done by the Bus/Rail Subcommittee was well received by the RAC, and it is going to be an excellent product. Chair Calabia asked if the RAC has done any work on the dock-less scooters. Mr. Sheehan stated that based on the information received from Mr. Shaffer, the RAC would follow the recommendations of the AAC moving forward. It might be a good time to share information with the RAC, once the Beacon system has been defined.

### **Public Comment**

There were no public comments for this meeting.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.