



## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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### **BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: May 8, 2017**

In attendance: Brian Miller (Chair), Brianne Burger (Vice-Chair), Edward McEntee (2nd Vice-Chair), Charlie Crawford, Phillippa Mezile, Mary Kay McMahon, Randall Pope, Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, and Patrick Sheehan.

#### **Call to Order**

Chair Miller called the May 8, 2017 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

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

The BRS approved the May 8, 2017 meeting agenda.

The BRS approved the April 10, 2017 meeting minutes as written.

#### **Public Comment**

Phil Posner expressed an interest in whether Metro, at its headquarters location, was considering changing its entrance to turnstile gates. Christiaan Blake, Director, ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that his office approved various designs for possible changes to the entry of the Jackson Graham Building. ADAP will ensure that any change will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Dr. Posner requested feedback on his comment to move the default position of elevators at the Virginia Square-George Mason University station, from the mezzanine to the street level. Mr. Blake stated that he has spoken with Elevator management about this subject, and confirmed that Dr. Posner was right about the current default location. The purpose of the mezzanine default is to not have customers wait on the platform, thereby clearing the platform quicker. Mr. Blake added that Elevator management is investigating the possibility of changing the default location to the street level and will provide feedback.

Dr. Posner made a comment about the signage on the intercoms. He stated that Metro amended the emergency posters, which read "push button once to talk." However, the intercom still reads "push the button to talk." Dr. Posner suggests that Metro adds the word "once" to the intercom signage to make it consistent with the posters. Upon motion, the BRS agreed to have the word "once" added to the signage including the tactile on the intercom. The emergency signage should also indicate where the intercom system is located in that particular railcar. This would provide consistency in the language on the emergency poster and the intercom.

A comment was made about the unevenness of the platforms to the train at the Rhode Island Avenue Metrorail station. The customer stated that train and the platform are not

level, making it difficult for mobility device users to cross the threshold of any railcars at that station. The customer stated that the issue is so egregious that he plans to report it to the Department of Justice. Mr. Blake stated that for most stations as an immediate solution, Metro attempts to address vertical gap complaints by ensuring that all reported railcars, along with the other cars on that particular train, are properly calibrated. ADAP has consistently encouraged customers to report railcars that are not level with the platform at any station to Metro's Customer Service (202)637-1328 and ADAP at (202)962-1100 for assistance in resolving this issue.

Dr. Miller acknowledged that in the short term, the calibration of the railcars has worked, but a long-term solution is still needed.

In follow-up, the customer stated that the unevenness of the platforms to the train has been a problem at the Rhode Island Avenue Metrorail station for years. He expressed an interest in whether Metro has allocated funds to fix the issue, and which platforms received improvements. Mr. Blake stated that Metro is working to find a feasible and meaningful long-term solution to this issue. He stated that he will provide that information to the customer and the subcommittee.

Dr. Posner suggested that the customer share his comment with Metro's Board of Directors. He stated that sharing this issue may further raise awareness, hence adding funds to the capital budget to fix the issue. Correcting the issue could potentially save Metro money because customers will not be using their mobility devices to ram the railcar to get into the train.

### **Ombudsman's Report**

David Shaffer, ADA Ombudsman, provided an update on comments made about the complaint system. The issue is that the online complaint system was not accessible with screen readers. Metro's Department of Information Technology (IT) has fixed the issues, including the attachment button, and the online complaint system is now fully accessible.

Mr. Shaffer stated that he also received complaints about the MetroAccess online booking system.

Dr. Posner expressed an interest in Metro's new website. He stated that some information has been moved, and added that the website appears to change regularly, making it difficult to find information. For example, the information related to the Trip Planner has changed. The screen used to have a visible option for arrival and

departure. It appears that the function is no longer available. In addition, previously, the information on elevators, escalators, and SafeTrack was prominently displayed, making it easy for customers to access information. Mr. Blake stated that the website is still undergoing recommended changes, including some received during the Federal Transit Administration's Triennial Review of Metro. This will not be an on-going work in progress, but in the immediate period of time, information is moving around.

In follow-up, Dr. Posner asked that since the website is having issues with the Trip Planner, does this also mean that there are problems with the MetroAccess Fare Calculator? The MetroAccess Fare Calculator is supposed to calculate the least expensive fare in a 30-minute window, and if the Planner only provides one fare, how does a customer know it is the least expensive fare? Mr. Blake stated that while there may be some design concerns, he is not aware of any problems with issues related to the Trip Planner creating an itinerary and an accurate fare. However, he stated that the MetroAccess team will be available during the meeting next week to discuss the accuracy of fares on the Trip Planner.

Ms. Ray requested a presentation on the Trip Planner automated voice system. She stated that accessing the system by phone is archaic. There is a range of commands the system does not recognize. Additionally, reaching trip planner on the weekends is complicated. Mr. Shaffer stated that he was following up on the issue and will provide feedback as soon as it is available.

Dr. Miller agreed, stating the Trip Planner by phone is limited. He suggested that the BRS develop a list of functions to provide the system more flexibility.

Dr. Miller made a comment about construction on between 6th and 7th Streets. He stated that there is no accessible path around the construction. Mr. Shaffer stated that due to construction, the sidewalk will be closed for a couple of months. Mr. Blake stated that the construction was not being managed by Metro; however, his office will follow up on the issue and provide feedback.

Dr. Posner stated that on the weekends, he noticed that Red Line train at Metro Center has been holding its position for customers on the Orange and Silver Line trains. He expressed an interest in whether Metro changed its dwell times during the weekend to accommodate passengers through SafeTrack. Mr. Blake stated that ADAP will follow up and provide feedback.

Dr. Miller stated that often the Bay Area Rapid Transit system (BART) will extend the dwell time to ensure customers are able to catch trains.

Denise Rush expressed an interest in whether the policy to provide customer's reminder phone calls has changed because she is no longer receiving calls. Mr. Blake acknowledged that customers may not have received reminder calls recently; there is a technical issue that Metro is working to correct. Ms. Rush stated that so many customers depend on that phone call that Metro should send an alert to notify customers of the issue.

### **Gallery Place – Metrorail Future Access Design**

Mr. Shaffer stated that it is well known that the Gallery Place Metrorail station has traffic flow issues on the platform. The issues of where to stand and moving a large amount of people safely are issues that Metro has been working to address.

The design of the Gallery Place station is different from other transfer stations. Mr. Shaffer stated that Gallery Place is in the shape of a letter T, which causes bottlenecks at certain points. Metro plans to address this issue in two ways: 1) reverse the escalators and add a guard rail between the elevators and the escalators on the Chinatown side; and 2) improve the floor signage for where the six-car trains stop. This will prevent customers from crossing over from either side to the other. With the barrier, customers will have to move around the elevator area to access the Shady Grove side of the platform.

Metro is surveying this crowd control proposal with customers via Metro's Amplify program. Metro is also researching whether to add an audio beacon to alert customers as to whether the incoming train is a six- or eight-car train. Mr. Shaffer stated that there is also some consideration of adding an audio beacon to the escalators to give customers directions. There is also a plan to have signage on the Yellow and Green Line platforms that give customers directions toward the elevators and escalators. It is anticipated that these measures will resolve some of the standing and traffic flow problems at the Gallery Place station.

Mr. Blake stated that there is a lot of interest in improving pedestrian flow, and all the efforts mentioned by Mr. Shaffer are still in the early stages of development. A professor at George Washington University has also been researching the issue of pedestrian flow in the rail stations. Metro is supporting these efforts to understand how to improve pedestrian flow at Gallery Place and throughout in the system. ADAP's recommendation is always to consider customers with disabilities in the research.

Ms. Ray stated that while she appreciates Metro coming to the AAC in the early stages, she wanted to stress the importance of the researchers working with people with disabilities, in particular the low-vision community, to ensure the proposed solutions will work for all customers.

Ms. Ray also stated that reversing the escalators can be scary for someone who is used to having the escalators in one direction. Additionally, the audio beacons must be more explicit in their message. Metro should remember the deaf-blind community when taking this step and the decibel level required so customers can hear it over the crowds and trains.

Mr. Blake stated that all the work being performed on this project is being done in-house. The AAC's initial feedback will be shared, and staff will invite the group working on this project to a future Committee meeting.

Dr. Posner stated that the floor decal for where the six-car train should stop at the platform is not clear. The decal does not provide enough information. Dr. Posner stated that he responded to the Amplify survey with this information.

Additionally, Dr. Posner stated that technology is great and has its place. However, it would be less expensive and more efficient to have personnel on the platform directing customers. This should be done for concerts and major sporting events because those are the times when the crowds are almost unbearable in the system. Mr. Blake stated that Metro has had personnel at stations during SafeTrack, and will continue to look at this practice for certain circumstances.

Charlie Crawford stated that it would be nice to have an announcement as to whether the incoming car was a six- or eight-car train. He stated that he hopes that Metro will implement such an announcement sooner rather than later.

Dr. Miller agreed with Mr. Crawford stating that the announcement of the number of incoming train cars is important. The BART system already offers this type of announcement.

Barbara Milleville, President, National Capital Citizen with Low-Vision, stated that the issues of where to stand and crowds are common complaints among the low-vision community. Customers exit the elevators and have to push through the standing crowds to catch the train. She stated that audio beacons would not be helpful in

announcing the number of train cars because it would just add to the noise already in the system.

Ms. Milleville also expressed an interest in whether trains could pull up to the same point on the platform as they did before the Fort Totten incident. Mr. Blake stated that ADAP would follow up and provide feedback.

Brianne Burger stated that she was under the impression that Metro stops trains at the top of the platform to combat the high number of jumpers. Because of this, trains may stop half way on the platform then move forward, and customers move to catch the doors.

### **Pentagon City Pedestrian Tunnel**

Mr. Blake stated that adjacent to the Pentagon City station, there is a tunnel that connects to the Metro station. Arlington County wanted to have the tunnel opened. He stated that Metro's position was that the work performed on the tunnel was substantial; therefore, the tunnel should be brought to full compliance with the ADA, which meant providing elevators at both ends. The developer and the County disagreed, citing that any work done was basic maintenance work and not substantial construction.

Mr. Blake stated that, after many years, Metro and Arlington County reached an agreement on the tunnel. The operation of the tunnel has been transferred to the County. The tunnel is open for customers to use. He stated that Metro has reserved the right to close the tunnel for access and emergency purposes.

The BRS expressed an interest in where the tunnel was located. Mr. Blake stated that the tunnel is at 12th & Hayes, on the opposite side of the Mall.

Ms. Ray stated that at the February Board meeting, she gave testimony against the opening of this tunnel without full access. Arlington County stated that they wanted to open up the tunnel for the safety of pedestrians. However, the most vulnerable residents and visitors cannot access the tunnel. The standards issued under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) apply to facilities designed, built, or altered, and therefore, Arlington County should have added elevators to the tunnel. She stated ABA was the same law former AAC Chair Dick Hedding used to move Metro to add elevators in all its stations. Although the tunnel is open, Ms. Ray suggested that the BRS review this agreement.

Mr. Blake stated that Metro has no objection to helping the BRS understand the issue better.

Mr. Crawford expressed an interest in the cost to add elevators in the tunnel. Mr. Blake stated that the estimate from the developer to make the tunnel fully accessible is in the mid-to-high seven figures.

Patrick Sheehan stated that at the February Board meeting, during public comment, there was a request to meet with Jack Evans regarding the tunnel. Since Metro has no ownership of the tunnel, he expressed an interest in whether the request still stands. Mr. Blake stated that Metro has no jurisdiction and any requests to meet on this issue should be sent to Arlington County.

Ms. Milleville stated that Metro should be concerned about this tunnel because of the evacuation of people with disabilities. For example, if a person in a mobility device uses the tunnel unknowingly as an exit in an emergency, the consequences could be devastating. She suggested that Metro add signage and information on the website to advise customers that the tunnel is not accessible for mobility devices.

### **Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport Access**

Mr. Blake stated that the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport is undergoing major construction to improve the security at the airport. The construction will impact access to the rail station. The shortest distance to the terminal is now being closed, making the route from the rail station to the airport longer. Metro suggested a temporary accessible path to shorten the distance; however, it was not initially accepted.

Dr. Posner expressed an interest in whether the distance was longer than the drop-off location at the Wiehle-Reston East station. Mr. Blake stated that the distance was not that long.

Dr. Miller expressed an interest in whether the construction was halting direct access from the rail station to both terminals at the airport.

Ms. Ray stated that the disability community in Northern Virginia was involved in the original redesign and accessible entrance to the airport. She expressed an interest in whether construction was under the purview of Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority. She stated that she recognizes the security concerns, but the public should

be notified of this construction. Mr. Blake stated that he will follow up and provide the Subcommittee a response in writing.

### **Old Business**

Brianne Burger requested a follow-up on the white boards. She stated that Metro should announce that this new tool is available to aid communication in the system via a press release or with a communication campaign. This would let all customers, including the deaf community, know that the tool is available to assist in communication.

Mr. Blake suggested that Metro could market the tool in its information brochures and through the Amplify program.

Ms. Burger stated that printed materials and website were limited. The deaf community does not always identify themselves as having a disability and therefore, may not receive or read the information brochures. Metro needs a big campaign to introduce this tool.

Dr. Posner suggested that Metro add a large sign to the station manager kiosks advising customers that the white boards are available for communication.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in how the deaf-blind community will avail themselves to this new tool. Randy Pope stated that the deaf-blind community was small and diverse. Many in the deaf-blind community have different degrees of vision level. Approximately 70% of the population can see writing when a brush marker is used. A white board could be accessible to the deaf-blind, but information via text is also a good option. Mr. Pope cautioned that with technology, the deaf-blind community can access information online; however, everyone in the community is not text savvy.

Ms. Ray suggested that Metro uses all means to ensure communication is targeted to the deaf and deaf-blind community.

Upon motion, the BRS agreed that Metro will conduct a broad public awareness campaign to market the white boards as a means of communication.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in the painting project at Union Station. Mr. Blake stated that Metro finished painting the rail station, and there are no plans in the immediate future to paint any other stations.



### **New Business**

Dr. Miller advised the BRS that he was resigning from his position as BRS Chair and AAC member effective July 1st. He stated that it has been his distinct honor and pleasure to serve on the AAC. Dr. Miller stated that he appreciated being part of an incredible group who together have accomplished a great deal, but the work goes on. Hopefully, all will continue to lend their time and talents towards ensuring Metro remains accessible for all those who work, live, and visit our great region. With a round of applause, the BRS thanked Dr. Miller for his advocacy work, leadership and time on the committee.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:02 p.m.