



**AAC**

## Accessibility Advisory Committee

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### **BUS AND RAIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: September 11, 2017**

In attendance: Edward McEntee (2nd Vice-Chair), Elver Ariza-Silva, Tino Calabria, Charlie Crawford, Phillippa Mezile, Mary Kay McMahan, Phil Posner, Doris Ray, Denise Rush, Patrick Sheehan, Herbert Treger and Franklin Torres.

#### **Call to Order**

Second Vice-Chair McEntee called the September 11, 2017 Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

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

The BRS approved the September 11, 2017 meeting agenda.

The BRS approved the July 17, 2017 meeting minutes as written.

#### **Ombudsman's Report**

David Shaffer, ADA Ombudsman, provided an update on Metro's Wayfinding project. He stated that Metro completed the installation of the beacons at Gallery Place station. It is anticipated that the testing of the beacons will begin at the end of September 2017. Additional stations are being mapped and the Wayfinding project is on schedule to be completed by Spring 2018.

Phil Posner stated that over the last two weeks, during single tracking on the Orange/Blue/Silver line and Red line trains, the Passenger Information Display Systems (PIDS) have been displaying blank screens with no information. Dr. Posner requested that the issue be investigated.

Dr. Posner also stated that the wall signs on the lower level at the Rosslyn Metro station are completely covered in dust making them difficult to view.

Additionally, Dr. Posner stated that Metro should consider repositioning the "no bicycle" sign on the 7000 series railcars. The way the signage is position many people do not see the sign, and cyclists take up the space designated for mobility device users.

Mr. Shaffer stated that he would investigate all the issues and provide feedback.

#### **Public Comment**

A request was made for a bus stop at the intersection of MD Route 198 and New Hampshire Avenue near the Woodland Horse Center. The customer stated that his daughter, who has an intellectual disability, currently uses MetroAccess because she is unable to navigate the busy roadway to access the bus stop. The customer stated that Metro operates the Z2 bus line (Colesville-Ashton Line) in the area, and adding another

stop on an existing bus line would be helpful. The customer requested that the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) take up the issue on behalf of his daughter and others with disabilities living in that area. Jim Hamre, Director of Bus Planning (BPLN), stated that the Maryland State Highway Administration (MDSHA) and Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) own the right-of-way for the roads in that area, not Metro, and they have concluded that only one stop in that area was feasible. He stated that Metro was open to servicing any accessible bus stop that MCDOT added in that area.

Doris Ray stated that accessing and navigating a busy road like New Hampshire Avenue is difficult.

In follow up, Herbert Treger expressed an interest in a solution to ease the customer's frustration regarding this issue. Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of ADA Policy and Planning (ADAP), stated that Mr. Hamre's comments summed up the solution; Metro does not own bus stop, but if MCDOT places an accessible bus stop in that area, Metro will service that bus stop. Both Mr. Blake and Mr. Hamre suggested that the customer discuss the issue with MCDOT.

Charlie Crawford expressed an interest in the cost of a bus stop at the location. Mr. Hamre stated that an accessible bus stop at the intersection of MD Route 198 and New Hampshire Avenue near the Woodland Horse Center would cost MCDOT somewhere in the neighborhood of \$25,000 to \$40,000. Currently, there are no sidewalks, and that would be part of making the bus stop accessible.

To obtain funding for this issue, Mr. Crawford suggested that the customer contact the Montgomery County Office of Aging and Disability Services. He stated that County has a transportation fund that may be able to support the placement of a bus stop at the location.

In follow up, Tino Calabria stated that Montgomery County's Disability Advisory Group will meet on Wednesday, September 13, 2017, at the Holiday Park Senior Center at 1:30PM. He suggested that the customer attend the meeting.

Ms. Ray suggested that the customer also requests that the Woodland Horse Center gets involved with advocating for a bus stop at the location.

Elver Ariza-Silva requested that the upcoming presentation on Elevator and Escalator performance and maintenance includes information on how the escalators work. He

stated that on two different occasions the escalators stopped in the middle of the ride. Although he was not injured, Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that it was a safety issue, and customers should be educated on these types of issues.

Mr. Ariza-Silva also expressed an interest in Metro's Back-to-Good Initiative and the improvements as they relate to accessibility of the system.

Dr. Posner stated that the elevators and escalators are out-of-service on the Glenmont side of Judiciary Square station. Metro used to have an announcement to remind customers to hold the handrails while traveling on the escalator. He suggested that Metro begin to offer those announcements again for customers traveling in the system.

Doris Ray agreed with Mr. Ariza-Silva stating that this is a safety issue that requires further discussion and education of the public.

### **Metrobus – State of Good Operations (Update)**

Mr. Hamre provided an update on Metro's process to provide efficient bus service throughout the region. He stated that the process is separate from Metro's budget process because it focuses on FY2018 service and adjustments. Metro conducts regular evaluations of the bus service to ensure it is meeting the demand. In addition to monitoring performance, Metro also conducts pop-up outreaches in each jurisdiction where service adjustments are proposed. In response to a question about the proposed routes in the public hearings, Mr. Hamre stated that he would highlight a few of the bus lines in the proposal, however the full list is included in the public hearing packet. The highlights are:

#### District of Columbia

- Add new bus service along 14th Street NW
- Introduce a new MetroExtra Limited stop service
- U8 Benning Heights - extend the line up from Minnesota Avenue to Congress Heights connecting Ward 8 and Ward 7

#### Maryland

- Re-route B30 Greenbelt – BWI (Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport) to stop at Arundel Mills Mall

## Virginia

- Restructure bus service along Columbia Pike

Mr. Hamre stated that Metro's goal is to maximize the number of customers who benefit from the changes. Metro will conduct an open house and a public hearing on September 26, 2017. The open house begins 5:30 pm with the public hearing starting at 6PM. Mr. Hamre introduced Al Himes, Manager of Service Planning, BPLN, to answer any additional questions about the proposed service adjustments and/or the public hearing.

Dr. Posner stated that the National Science Foundation (NSF) is moving its 20,000 member workforce from Arlington to Alexandria. Currently, the only way to travel to the new location is by multiple trains and transfers. He suggested that Metro add an express bus to travel between those areas to transport NSF's massive workforce. Mr. Hamre stated that the City of Alexandria operates DASH AT7 bus line from King Street to the Carlyle and then over to Eisenhower Avenue. Additionally, there is a proposal to extend the 29 bus line down to Eisenhower Avenue while the King Street station is under construction, offering a travel alternative to NSF employees.

Ms. Ray expressed an interest in the proposed changes for the 4A/B (Pershing Drive-Arlington Boulevard) bus lines. Mr. Hamre stated that the 4A/B operates on the same route from Park Avenue to Seven Corners. The midday ridership on 4A bus line is low along Arlington Boulevard. Therefore, Metro is proposing that section of the 4A route along Arlington Boulevard be eliminated and picked up by the 4B as the main bus service in that corridor. In follow up, Ms. Ray requested information about the frequency of the service, Mr. Himes stated that the 4B will operate every 30 minutes.

Additionally, Ms. Ray expressed an interest in the proposed changes on the 7A/F (Lincolnia-North Fairlington Line) bus lines. Mr. Himes stated that the 7A/F operates in the off-peak period in the opposite direction of regular service of the 7W/Y bus lines (Lincolnia - North Fairlington – Pentagon). The proposal reroutes the bus lines on the weekends to service Pentagon City to give customers more options.

Mr. McEntee expressed an interest in whether any of the proposed FY2018 service adjustments impacted MetroAccess service. Mr. Hamre stated that there are no service changes that will affect MetroAccess service.

Ms. Ray expressed concern about the number of public hearings. She stated that holding a hearing during rush hour will make it difficult for customers who work or those who live on the outskirts of Virginia or Maryland to arrive at the hearings before they end. Mr. Hamre stated that the number of public hearings is in compliance with Metro's Public Participation Plan. Prior to the hearing, Metro conducts several outreaches and surveys to obtain customer input in addition to the public hearing. He invited all the members to attend the public hearings.

B. Moore Gwynn, AAC Coordinator, reminded members that information about the public hearings is available on the resource table.

The BRS thanked Mr. Hamre and Mr. Himes for the update on the proposed service changes for FY2018.

### **Trip Planner Voice Application**

Barbara Moulton, Senior Director, Department of Customer Service, Communication & Marketing, discussed Metro's Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. Metro's IVR system answers approximately two million calls a year. Ms. Moulton stated the remaining calls not handle by the IVR system are answered by 30 Customer Service Representatives (CSR). The calls into the Office of Customer Service fall into three categories: Metrobus information, trip planning, and Metrorail information. Ms. Moulton introduced Scott Raccina, Director, Office of Customer Service, who handles the day-to-day operation of the office.

Metro's IVR system is approximately seven years old. Ms. Mouton stated that Metro recognized the dependency on the system and is interested in improving the system. Metro is seeking feedback from the disability community on the types of changes that would make the system user-friendly for all customers, including those with disabilities.

Dr. Posner stated that the IVR system has lots of prompts in the beginning that cannot be stopped or forwarded, so a customer cannot advance to the section to request information or search. Additionally, when noise is present either from the system or traffic, it's difficult to hear the response from the IVR system. Mr. Raccina stated that the current system does have lots of prompts, and Metro is interested in adjusting the number of prompts and implement additional navigating tools that will allow information to be repeated.

Ms. Ray stated that the IVR system is important to her quality of life because she depends on the system in her personal and professional life. She praised Metro's CSRs for the number of calls they handle, personal touch, and information provided. She suggested that additional CSRs be included in the budget because they address issues far beyond the automated system.

Ms. Ray also stated that IVR system has been inoperable on weekends and during some holidays. These are times when no CSR is available, and specific questions need to be answered. The IVR system, on the other hand, begins with the prompts and then fails to recognize voice commands or requests for information. Additionally, she stated that the current IVR system does not have the ability to advance the program to the section or information that would be most helpful to the customer. Ms. Moulton stated that the comments are useful and will assist her team in developing the Request for Information (RFI) for new service.

Franklin Torres expressed an interest in auditory options for the hard-of-hearing and the Deaf community. Mr. Raccina stated that Metro does not produce any software applications, but makes trip information available to developers who produce software applications for customers to access information about the Metro system. Ms. Moulton stated that integrating the IVR with software applications will be explored.

Patrick Sheehan expressed an interest in the RFI and deadlines for the information. Ms. Moulton stated that Metro was in the beginning stages of the RFI process for a new IVR system. Any feedback from the AAC and disability community would assist Metro in the process. Although some accessibility language has been included in the RFI document, Metro welcomes the disability community's input on additional information.

In follow up, Mr. Raccina encouraged the disability community to provide specific information it believes needs to be included in the Request For Proposal. At the appropriate time, Metro plans to test the new IVR system with a focus group of customers that will include the disability community.

The BRS thanked Ms. Moulton and Mr. Raccina for including the disability community early in the process to develop a new and more customer-friendly IVR system.

### **Administrative Process**

Dr. Moore Gwynn gave a brief updates on leadership vacancies with the AAC, BRS appointments, Metro's Accessibility Excellence Awards ceremony, and the work plan.

The AAC is seeking nominations for the AAC leadership. Nominations for the AAC leadership will take place through the September MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting. Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that the job descriptions are in each the member's packet. The nominations thus far are as follows: Mr. Sheehan (AAC Chair), Dr. Posner (AAC Chair), Denise Rush (AAC Vice-Chair), and Mr. Sheehan (AAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair). Elections for the AAC will take place electronically, and the new leadership will be seated by the October 2017 AAC meeting.

Nominations are also being accepted for the BRS leadership. The appointments to the BRS leadership will be made at the October 2017 AAC meeting. The nominations thus far are as follows: Tino Calabia (BRS Vice-Chair) and Herbert Treger (BRS 2nd Vice-Chair).

Dr. Moore Gwynn reminded members of the nomination period for the 2017 Richard W. Hedding Accessible Transportation Award. The nomination period will be open until September 25, 2017. The Accessible Transportation Award is in honor of the AAC's first Chairperson, who led the cause of Metrorail accessibility. The award honoree will be recognized at Metro's Accessibility Excellence Awards on November 2, 2017. Self-nominations are not permitted.

The BRS made the following recommendations for the work plan: priority seating on the 7000 series railcars (ends of cars); station lighting; whiteboards; traffic flow and the new section of the Silver Line system; color contrast and the visibility of information (line colors) on the 7000 series railcars; automated announcements (cutting off); train announcements of the number of railcars (six or eight car train); accessible information for deaf; platform signage (station ahead list); directional elevator/escalator; bus wraps and displaying information; and eligibility requirements for Reduced Fare Program (existing disabilities).

### **Old Business**

Mr. Ariza-Silva gave an update for the 2017 AAC Travel Initiative. He stated that the AAC embarked on this initiative to highlight the experience of disability community members traveling in the system. The event will take place in October. In response to a question about which Board members confirmed, Dr. Moore Gwynn stated that Christian Dorsey (Arlington), Catherine Hudgins (Fairfax), and Kathryn Porter (Montgomery County) have responded.

Ms. Ray stated that more outreach should be conducted, so that the AAC, the Board, and executive staff can have a full experience. Mr. Blake stated that outreach is ongoing.

Dr. Posner expressed an interest in the matching for the travel initiative. Did the Initiative want new riders or experienced riders of the system? An experience rider may make the system appear easy. Mr. Ariza-Silva stated that the idea is to focus on the outcomes, not necessarily whether the person is experienced or not because even the most experienced rider still has challenges with using the system.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:23 p.m.