



Accessibility Advisory Committee

300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Virtual Meeting Minutes

January 5, 2026

Time: 5:35 PM to approximately 7:05 PM Eastern Time

Attendance

The Accessibility Advisory Committee convened virtually on January 5, 2026. AAC members present included Patrick Sheehan, Chair; Denise Rush; Tino Calabia; Philip Weintraub; Vanessa Coles; Paul Semelfort; Darnise Bush; Rico Dancy; Tajuan Farmer; Steve Kaffen; Sarah Radt, Sandy Neuzil, and Phillippa Mezile. Deborah M. Fisher and Doris Ray participated as at-large members, and Phil Posner participated as an Emeritus Member. WMATA staff present included Dr. Maggie K. Butler, Vice President of System-Wide Accessibility; Adrienne Queen, Office of Safety Investigations; Christiaan Blake, Vice President of Access Services; and additional staff as noted during the meeting.

Opening Remarks and Call to Order

Maggie K. Butler opened the meeting by welcoming AAC members and WMATA staff Chair Patrick Sheehan then formally called the meeting to order and proceeded with the agenda.

Approval of Agenda

Chair Sheehan requested any additions or objections to the agenda and called for a motion. A motion to approve the agenda as presented was made and seconded by AAC members whose names were not stated in the record. With no objections, the agenda was approved.

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

Chair Sheehan requested a motion to approve the prior meeting minutes as distributed. A motion and second were made by AAC members whose names were not stated in the record. With no additions, corrections, or objections, the minutes were approved.

Board Report

Chair Sheehan requested Committee action on the Board Report. Paul Semelfort moved to accept the Board Report with a friendly amendment that outcomes and recommendations from the current meeting be incorporated as appropriate. Sarah Radt seconded the motion. Committee members expressed support for ensuring that the Board Report reflects both formal actions and substantive themes raised during Committee discussion. With no objections, the Board Report was approved.

System-Wide Accessibility Update

Maggie K. Butler, PhD, CRC provided an update on System-Wide Accessibility priorities with an emphasis on coordination, sequencing, and early engagement. She announced that EVP of Customer Experience Sarah Myers will participate directly in the Bus and Rail Subcommittee to engage on restroom accessibility and wayfinding, reflecting senior leadership attention to topics raised by the Committee. Dr. Butler also outlined plans to strengthen engagement with AAC members beyond standing meetings through voluntary station visits, focus groups, and headquarters-based working sessions. She noted that these engagements are intended to be structured and purpose-driven to support earlier input into planning and implementation processes, and she welcomed participation by AAC members and members of the public with lived disability experience.

During discussion, Sarah Radt asked clarifying questions regarding how these engagements would align with existing workstreams, including sequencing, timelines, and anticipated outputs. Sandra Neuzil raised questions related to participation expectations and time commitments. Patrick Sheehan expressed support for the approach and its alignment with the Committee's advisory function. Tino Calabria emphasized the importance of ensuring that engagement results in practical improvements in wayfinding and customer experience. Dr. Butler indicated that WMATA would follow up with scheduling options and participation details.

Safety Update Smoke Event and Emergency Offloading October 31, 2025

Adrienne Queen of the Office of Safety Investigations presented a safety update regarding a smoke event that occurred on October 31, 2025, which resulted in emergency offloading at Farragut North following conditions at Dupont Circle. Ms. Queen explained that during the offloading process, a customer using a mobility device experienced difficulty exiting the train when a single door panel was opened using a crew door switch. She stated that the subsequent review focused on operational procedures, decision-making, and customer response handling and identified areas where procedures were not applied as intended. Actions taken following the review

included retraining for the station manager and rail vehicle operator involved, reinforcement of expectations regarding door reopening to support customer egress when conditions warrant, and additional guidance related to customer service routing processes. Ms. Queen also noted that a customer service flagging issue categorizing the matter as not requiring response was addressed through coaching and training.

Committee members engaged in discussion. Sarah Radt asked questions regarding door operation during emergency offloads, including door sequencing, clear width considerations, and available operational mechanisms. Ms. Queen confirmed that procedures allow for doors to be fully reopened when appropriate and described available options. Tino Calabia emphasized the value of addressing the issue at a programmatic level, including engagement with training functions responsible for station managers and operators. Sandra Neuzil raised questions regarding participation and engagement in preparedness-related discussions, including the potential inclusion of AAC members and regular public participants. Phil Posner provided technical context regarding railcar door design and existing capabilities and suggested that the event could be used as an instructional example in training contexts. Steve Kaffen noted considerations related to the clarity and placement of emergency instruction signage inside railcars. Deborah M. Fisher emphasized the importance of preparedness and practice, consistent with expectations associated with federally funded programs. Patrick Sheehan emphasized the importance of communication with customers who raise concerns as part of effective customer engagement and accountability. Dr. Butler noted that System-Wide Accessibility would coordinate with relevant safety, training, and emergency preparedness teams to explore appropriate opportunities for AAC engagement, consistent with applicable requirements.

MetroAccess Eligibility Recertification Streamlining Proposal

Sarah Radt presented a proposal to streamline MetroAccess eligibility recertification for riders with permanent disabilities. She explained that the proposal would extend the recertification interval from three to five years and eliminate redundant medical documentation unless a condition changes, aligning with peer agency practices and recent state models. Sarah Radt moved approval of the proposal, and Paul Semelfort seconded the motion. The Committee approved the proposal unanimously. Paul Semelfort expressed support for the proposal, noting that it supports administrative efficiency while maintaining program integrity. Patrick Sheehan emphasized the importance of clearly communicating the recommendation to the Board. Dr. Butler provided clarification on process steps, timelines, and how the recommendation would be incorporated into the Chair's report to the Board, with submission requested by January 23 and verbal acknowledgment at the next Board meeting.

Subcommittee Leadership Announcements

The Committee addressed subcommittee leadership updates. For the Bus and Rail Subcommittee, Sandra Neuzil was named First Vice Chair and Steve Kaffen was named Second Vice Chair. For the MetroAccess Subcommittee, Vice Chair appointments remained pending, and Paul Semelfort noted that outreach was underway.

Subcommittee Reports

Paul Semelfort provided the MetroAccess Subcommittee report, which included updates on Uber accessibility features, call center guidance during adverse weather, and progress on the digital assistant. Christian Blake provided operational context during discussion. Tino Calabia then provided the Bus and Rail Subcommittee report, covering Better Bus Network updates, printed schedules, station maps and signage, and a structured approach to signage engagement. Sandra Neuzil discussed the signage working group and ongoing coordination with AAC members.

Public Comment

During public comment, Vivian Martin raised concerns regarding reduced fare card replacement fees and potential equity implications. Dr. Butler indicated that WMATA staff would review the concern and follow up, and Ms. Martin was invited to provide contact information following the meeting. Deborah Dunaway raised concerns regarding MetroAccess service and Uber trip handling. Chair Sheehan noted the comments for the record, and Christian Blake provided clarification regarding program eligibility parameters.

Additional Business

Under additional business, Tino Calabia requested advance scheduling for in-person meetings. Dr. Butler indicated that calendar invitations would be updated to clearly identify in-person dates. The Committee also recognized a milestone birthday for Tino Calabia.

Adjournment

Chair Patrick Sheehan called for a motion to adjourn. Paul Semelfort moved to adjourn, the motion was seconded, and with no objections, the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:05 PM Eastern Time.