



Accessibility Advisory Committee

300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: June 16, 2025

In attendance: Paul Semelfort (Chair), Tajuan Farmer (Second Vice Chair), Susan Bowmaster, Vanessa Coles, Rico Dancy, Debby Fisher, Marcie Goldstein, Steve Kaffen, Sandy Neuzil, Sarah Radt, and Patrick Sheehan.

Call to Order

Anu Sharma, AAC Coordinator, started the meeting with announcements, took the rollcall, read the agenda, thereafter, Chair Semelfort moved the meeting forward.

Review and Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The MAS approved the June 16, 2025; Meeting Agenda as presented.

The MAS approved the May 19, 2025; Meeting Minutes as written.

Reports: Customer Service, Commendation -

Customer Service Report: Wanda Muhammad, MTM, stated there were no outstanding public comments to be addressed from either the AAC meeting on May 5th, or the MetroAccess Subcommittee meeting on May 19th, 2025.

Commendation Report: In May 2025, 389 accommodations were received as follows: Transdev OCC 151, Industrial Road 18, Central Avenue 48, Hubbard Road 78, Challenger 42, Eligibility 1, and Abilities Rides 51.

Motions Made, Motions Passed:

A motion to eliminate the MetroAccess Eligibility process for people who have permanent disability, was made and passed, to be brought up to the AAC in July 2025 meeting.

MetroAccess Service Updates:

Christiaan Blake, Vice President, Access Services, stated we have been working with the service providers, particularly We Drive You and their national level management team has been engaged in the day-to-day operations. As a result, in May, our on-time-performance (OTP) improved to 90%. There may be some adjustments over the next several months. In May, 27% of trips were shared rides. That is extremely low and is a very customer-friendly effort being done on the scheduling side as we continue to improve the OTP when we have to share rides. Mr. Blake emphasized upon the low percentage of shared rides, particularly in the area served. Mr. Blake stated we are working on the scheduling side to mitigate challenges and experiences our customers face, as we continue to work to improve the system and get it back to the way things used to be.

KTS Solutions:

Mr. Blake stated KTS Solutions is one of our 13 companies participating in the Abilities Ride Program. KTS provides wheelchair-accessible vehicle (WAV) service in our Zone 4 covering Southern Prince George's County: Upper Marlboro, Fort Washington, Oxon Hill, Temple Hills, Suitland, and Capitol Heights. KTS provides service and receives trips within 10 miles or less. Kelvin Smith, CEO, KTS Solutions, shared a brief background and stated he retired from Navy after 21 years of service from logistics and transportation. Afterwards, he worked in Defense Intelligence Agency in D.C. 8 years, and 8 years later, launched KTS. He has been in the transportation sector since 2007. Currently, they support the Veterans Administration (VA) during the Wheelchair Festival, Access for Veterans throughout the country, the East Coast, part of West Coast, in the Mid-Atlantic area. In the DC Metro area, KTS is pleased to provide similar services to MetroAccess with their experienced leverage from VA.

Melissa Wills, Operations Manager, Maryland Office, KTS, stated their goal is to provide safe, dependable, and high-quality services to customers. They are striving to ensure MetroAccess customers arrive at their destinations on time. Regular wheelchair safety training is conducted for proper passenger securing. KTS ensures their drivers are CPR certified. Drivers are required to dress professionally and always have respectful interaction with customers. Routine vehicle inspections are performed to ensure safety and sanitary conditions. For drivers, no-phone-use, a strict policy is enforced while transporting customers. Ms. Wills stated KTS is working on resolving issues that MetroAccess customers have experienced and reported.

Chair Semelfort shared positive feedback about the service provided by KTS drivers. He stated a concern about contacting KTS, which has improved since he reported it. Chair Semelfort shared an incident when the driver was lost, and he had to get his trip moved to another provider. Ms. Willis apologized and provided the reasons. Mr. Smith informed of instructions provided to dispatchers to help with future scenarios with direction issues. Chair Semelfort commended on nicely pairing the shared rides, making it productive. Mr. Blake stated one of the goals is to build sustainable premium service with local companies. Chair Semelfort stated KTS helps customers to the door and can have a customer using a wheelchair. Mr. Smith stated that drivers are instructed to proactively assist customers.

Mr. Dancy asked if KTS has training on dealing with deaf customers via video relay. Mr. Smith stated we have used relay services and can set it up on the phone calls as needed.

Chair Semelfort stated we want to partner with KTS and make their business work for MetroAccess customers, especially for Prince George's County.

MetroAccess Abilities-Ride Updates:

Mr. Blake stated we are working closely with the primary service provider. As a result, in May, the service improved to 90%. Only 27% trips that were shared rides in May. Mr. Blake stated we are working with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and their rules and guidance about MetroAccess partnering with third-party providers. Mr. Blake stated there may be some changes coming up for the providers. To be compliant, the biggest change customers may experience could be hearing a few more names of the providers during the reservation process. Mr. Blake stated whatever the outcome of the rules and guidelines may be, we will inform the AAC. Chair Semelfort clarified that the customer who may ask for Abilities-Ride may be asked for their preference, i.e. taxi, Uber, or another alternative provider, depending on the trip pickup and drop-off address. Mr. Blake confirmed and stated we have several providers in a vast region covering small sections.

Chair Semelfort shared his positive experience of contacting the call center as most of the requests can be handled without transferring to a supervisor. Mr. Blake stated certain scenarios would still require specific treatment as we must enforce the rules. Mr. Blake stated Terrian Williams-Hall, Director, MetroAccess, has spearheaded with Transdev team to create knowledge base training that reduces the transfer of calls. Mr. Blake stated we still encourage customers to try TiM for some of their bookings. Ms. Radt stated there is no option to indicate preference for Abilities-Ride on web booking. Ms. Williams-Hall stated we can take it back to Trapeze and have that option included.

Ms. Coles asked about a list of Abilities Ride providers for new customers and informed about a recording on Uber's calls upon arrival, that the call is being recorded. Mr. Blake stated he will follow up about the Uber call recording. Concerning the providers list, it is available online and Eligibility Office goes over the information with new customers.

Ms. Fisher asked if upcoming changes to fixed route service will impact MetroAccess. Mr. Blake stated MetroAccess service area will remain the same except for area with expanded fixed route service, which will expand MetroAccess service as well.

Chair Semelfort shared his observation about Uber trips, and stated usually it is consolidated in one text, however, lately the information has been coming in two or three texts. Mr. Blake asked Chair Semelfort if he could forward some examples. Chair Semelfort stated people who are selected for Uber through the lottery, receive text messages for next day's trip, the night before. He asked if those text messages could be sent early morning of the trip date. Mr. Blake stated he will follow up with Uber representative.

Eligibility Process:

Chair Semelfort discussed the proposal of removing the recertification process for people with permanent disabilities, as per a jurisdictional bill in Maryland. Mr. Blake stated the legislation applies to MTAs version of WMATA's Reduced Fare Program. It explicitly clarifies that bill does not reference the paratransit service. Mr. Blake stated there is a recertification process for Metro's Reduced Fare Program as well. If the AAC wishes to recommend that Metro follows that law for the Reduced Fare Program, it may be received in a positive way. Chair Semelfort asked Mr. Blake to explain why this does not refer to paratransit. Mr. Blake stated the overall spirit of the ADA is that agencies are to continue to invest in the accessibility of their fixed route services, as Paratransit is a complementary service. The goal is to have everybody, with or without disabilities, riding the ever-expanding, ever-growing rail system that is far more flexible than the paratransit service.

Ms. Radt stated eliminating recertification process for people with permanent disability is a win-win situation for all. Mr. Blake stated he appreciates the advocacy and stated although not practiced by MetroAccess even though there is a card for it, eligibility process is also used for conditional eligibility. When a person with permanent disability comes for certification, we are aware of environmental and infrastructure changes to the fixed route service. Some trips could be conditioned if the agency makes that decision. Seattle, Washington, engages in conditional eligibility where some trips on paratransit are denied based on the customer's disability, the environment and fixed route accessibility. Ms. Radt stated she was unaware about it until joining the AAC, however, there is an incentive to ride free on fixed route, if customer felt safe. Mr. Blake stated it is not so much recovery, but more about technology changes, investment in infrastructure, and the application of rules that are allowed by the ADA that we have not implemented at this stage.

Second Vice-Chair (SVC) Farmer stated he has heard about administrative renewal, and he believes WMATA can be the innovator to make that change. Mr. Blake clarified that we are not saying disability is conditional. We are saying the eligibility to use paratransit can be conditional. The presumptive eligibility process for new customers was a form of the administrative recertification. Philosophically, permanent eligibility is not a way to go if we are really encouraging equality.

Ms. Fisher stated she appreciates Mr. Blake's perspective and inquired if a group may be considered for permanent designation, based on their needs within our public transit. Mr. Blake stated with presumptive eligibility and administrative recertifications, at this point, more than half of our customers are basically granted permanent eligibility, but we still request that application. Soon, we may get platform gates eliminating risk for people with disabilities. Mr. Blake stated the AAC can advocate and let us see how things move forward. Mr. Blake stated customers do not have to come to our office anymore for

certifications/recertifications. There may be an inconvenience about the part of the doctor's note. Our team is trying to see if we can figure out ways to electronically transfer that without the customer having to visit the doctor, but can make the phone call, like getting a prescription refilled and that information can be transmitted to us.

Public Comments:

The first member of the public stated some customers have issues as their physicians do not repeatedly complete the paperwork needed for recertification. She asked the process on how to continue to advocate for the elimination of the recertification for people with permanent disability. Mr. Blake stated the AAC needs to make a motion, take a vote, if the answer is yes, the AAC could mention this in their report to the Board. There was a discussion about this process and a motion was made to bring this topic to the AAC meeting. The motion was made and approved by the MAS.

The second member of the public shared an incident about another rider's behavior. Mr. Blake asked her to report the specifics so that MetroAccess could review it further.

A third member of the public wrote a chat message inquiring about a program in Maryland, that is like Transport DC from the District of Columbia. Mr. Blake gave some helpful information about Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

The fourth member of the public discussed different transportation apps she uses and made some recommendations. She also stated that she is not receiving many of the Uber links, as a result, she is being no showed. Mr. Blake provided information about the Find My Ride app which provides accurate information about MetroAccess vehicles. Mr. Blake stated about the Uber links, we will continue to work on it to resolve the issue.

The fifth member of the public provided her feedback about difficulty using the ramp of MetroAccess Next Generation van with her large power wheelchair. She stated the foot rail digs into the middle part of the van ramp, hence, needs vans with lift only. Mr. Blake informed the customer that her eligibility profile has been updated, however, the wheelchair lift vehicles will probably be out of service by the end of this year, hence, we will work with the customer, and also offered her travel training that may help in getting accustomed to the ramp of MetroAccess vehicles.

Ms. Radt asked about the eligibility process for some students from out of state, who will be in this region for college/university studies. Mr. Blake stated the students would go through the application process and enter their home stated address and when found

eligible, make reservations as per the usual method to utilize the service within the service area.

Ms. Coles stated she has received discount offers from Uber and if she can use it for her MetroAccess trips. Mr. Blake reminded that currently, Uber trips are under promotion, i.e. free of charge to customers. Therefore, if Ms. Coles wants to use the discount, she may end up paying a fare whereas Uber trips booked by MetroAccess are free of charge for customers. Chair Semelfort stated the MetroAccess trips on Uber appear on his personal Uber app, thus Uber trips by MetroAccess are most likely contributing towards the offered discounts.

Public Comments: phone 202-962-1100, or email MetroAACChair@wmata.com

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 5:56 p.m.