



**Montgomery County, MD
Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
May 14th, 2014**

Welcome and Approval of April, 2014 Meeting Summary Minutes:

Trish Gallalee, Chair, convened the meeting. Jonathan Pfeffer, Commissioner, made a motion to approve the April, 2014 Meeting Summary Minutes as written. Charlie Crawford, Vice Chair, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the April, 2014 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit authority (WMATA) Update – What You Need To Know About Fixed Route and MetroAccess – Christiaan Blake, Director, Office of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy and Planning, WMATA

MetroAccess is a safety net transportation service provided to people who are unable to use fixed-route public transit due to disability. MetroAccess provides approximately 2,000,000 trips per year to over 30,000 people that are eligible for the service. MetroAccess operates a 600 vehicle fleet with service provided through three service contractors 24 hours per day with a service area covering approximately 1,800 square miles. WMATA provides 45% of the specialized transportation trips in this entire region.

WMATA has separate contractors for the call center as well as for quality assurance. This ensures that the individuals handling any complaints are not the same as those providing the service.

Christiaan Blake reported that last year WMATA made available a MetroAccess fare calculator

http://www.wmata.com/rider_tools/tripplanner/tripplanner_form_solo.cfm

so riders can choose the lowest fare within a 30 minute window of their requested pick-up time. Christiaan noted a few items that WMATA will be unveiling in the near future to increase accessibility of its services:

- Mobile applications that will allow MetroAccess riders to track where their driver is.
- Designated pick-up and drop-off points at major locations such as hospitals, County buildings, and malls. Many locations have multiple entrances which have caused confusion in the past and this initiative will help to create a streamlined process. WMATA has already designated MetroAccess stops at 46 of their Metro stations. Montgomery County plans to work with WMATA to install designated pick-up locations at various sites to include the County Council Office Building and libraries. WMATA will be looking to expand this initiative to other jurisdictions as well.
- WMATA has contracted with a company to create audio maps at every Metro rail station to assist riders with navigating from the entrance of the rail station down to the platform.

Due to the shared ride service MetroAccess cannot promise the same driver every day, a dedicated seat or routine pick up and travels times. WMATA recognizes that MetroAccess may be a challenge for some individuals with disabilities. As such, WMATA has been working with the State of Maryland and Community Support Services (CSS) to develop an even more specialized transportation service that would enhance the quality of the customer's life. CSS received a grant from the state of Maryland to hire a transportation company to serve individuals with intellectual disabilities that had previously been using MetroAccess. WMATA provided vehicle inspection as well as monitoring of trip performance. The new more specialized transportation service allows for same drivers as well as the same route every day. This makes the service more comfortable for the rider as they can develop a relationship of familiarity with the driver and the route. Surveys have indicated that the customers are greatly appreciative of the service. It was noted that the individuals using this

more specialized service are not prohibited from using MetroAccess. The State is ready to expand the opportunity for more similar specialized transportation services.

Christiaan noted that all fixed route service facilities are accessible. In regards to the Silver Line currently under construction all plans and designs have been made in accordance to the ADA, although several WMATA standards go above and beyond the ADA. Christiaan and his staff of seven are responsible for reviewing the accessibility of all aspects of any equipment, signage prior to being purchased. Once approved staff will inspect. All facilities and stations are inspected on a yearly basis for ADA quality assurance. Anything that is not found in compliance is immediately addressed with the appropriate department. Christiaan and his staff continue to follow up until the issue is resolved. Christiaan encouraged customers to notify him directly if they encounter anything that it is not accessible at 202-962-1100 (V), cblake@wmata.com.

WMATA has been working with local jurisdictions to increase the accessibility of bus stops. This includes stops that are not served by Metrobus as the availability of accessible fixed route service impacts MetroAccess service. There are approximately 7,000 inaccessible bus stops throughout the entire region that impacts the MetroAccess service area. Montgomery County has altered nearly 3,000 bus stops and made them more accessible. (Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities – Ride On Bus Stop Press Event with County Executive Ike Leggett - www6.montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/News/press/PR_details.asp?PrID=13769). The goal of this project is to increase the availability of bus stops for persons with disabilities and encourage them to use fixed route service instead of MetroAccess. Due to the higher number of inaccessible bus stops WMATA is researching which customers could be served by fixed route instead of MetroAccess if only the bus stop was made accessible. This information is being shared with local jurisdictions to help them prioritize bus stops based on the number of customers that are conditionally eligible for MetroAccess. Making improvements and encouraging ridership will increase independence of those riders as well as increase use of those stops. Currently it costs a jurisdiction \$54.00 to pay MetroAccess for one ride versus \$4.00 on fixed route.

In terms of bus stop accessibility, last month WMATA adopted a bus stop accessibility standard which includes an accessible pathway in addition to what is already included in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To ensure that an accessible bus stop is also fully functional for the customer, Metro has added a fourth criterion to its accessible bus stop standard - a curb cut at the corner nearest the bus stop with a matching curb cut at (at least) one adjacent corner. Metro encourages regional adoption of this standard. Christiaan noted that Montgomery County has already been constructing bus stops in this manner.

Mark Maxin, Commissioner, asked about the complaint process. Christiaan explained that customers who would like to file a complaint should do so through the WMATA's Call Center at 202-637-0128 (V), 202-962-2565 (TTY) or by filing their complaint online at www.wmata.com/about_metro/contact_us/ridercoment.cfm. Complaints filed are handled by the quality assurance contractor and are followed up by Metro staff. If an individual has a disability Christiaan recommended that after filing the complaint the individual also call the ADA Ombudsman which will launch an independent investigation along with the initial complaint filing. The Metro Ombudsman Program for Customers with Disabilities can lend the following assistance: listen to an individual's concerns and complaints; help individuals understand their rights and responsibilities as well as their options; refer an individual to others within or outside of Metro who might be able to lend assistance; make inquiries on an individual's behalf and obtain responses to his/her questions; help present an individual's complaint to the parties responsible for resolution; mediate between an individual and other parties to a conflict to bring about a mutually agreeable outcome; and recommend changes in policies, procedures, and practices to prevent similar problems from occurring.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, asked for information regarding WMATA's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). The AAC is comprised of 20 members and it advises WMATA on the needs of people with disabilities and senior citizens. Two members represent the Access for All Committee with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Transportation Planning Board. The other 18 members are from other jurisdictions from the region, including Montgomery, Prince George's, Fairfax and Arlington Counties, and the City of Alexandria. Montgomery County members are Patrick Sheehan, Channel Houston and Denise Thomas. The Full AAC meets the 1st Monday of the month, the Bus and Rail Subcommittee meets the 2nd Monday of the

month, and the MetroAccess Subcommittee meets the 3rd Monday of the month. All members must attend the Full AAC meeting and at least one subcommittee, although many members attend both subcommittee meetings. Christiaan presents design plans, equipment changes, etc. in front of the AAC to gain feedback on those ideas. AAC members also provide ideas as well. It was suggested that WMATA improve the lighting in Metro stations. AAC provided feedback on how best to proceed. WMATA has improved the lighting in the mezzanine area of 32 stations so far and will be working on another 25 stations over the course of the next year and a half. WMATA is also going to be making improvements to the lighting on the track bed and the walls behind the platforms.

Kathy Mann Koepke, Commissioner, asked about WMATA's policy for allowing Segways on MetroAccess and Metrobus. [Christiaan was able to confirm that the Metrobus limitation on the use of Segways is for safety reasons. Metro staff engaged in thorough testing of Segways and found that Segways were unsafe for use on Metrobus. As part of the recommendation that allowed Segway use on Metrorail, was the recommendation to not allow them on bus. That remains Metro policy.]

Seth Morgan, Commissioner, noted that at the Friendship Heights Metro Station the escalator to go down into the station has not been working for some time now. Those who can walk down the stairs must walk down a very long flight of stairs. [The escalators at Friendship Heights are undergoing required rehab, one escalator at a time. The current escalator that is out of service is scheduled to return to service on June 20th. Once that escalator returns to service another of the station's escalators will go out of service. Eventually all six will undergo rehabilitation. During these escalator rehab projects, Metro cannot always guarantee a downward escalator when one or more escalators are out of service. Our first priority is to have escalators moving in the upward direction when one or more escalator is out of service.]

Charlie Crawford, Vice Chair, voiced his concern about a mobile application and if it would be useable for users who are blind or visually impaired. Mobile map applications he has used before have a picture, but no screen-readable text or audible option.

Hilary Kaplan, Commissioner, asked about additional accessible parking at the Silver Spring Metro Station. She also asked why the Silver Spring Metro Station parking garage does not charge a fee when the Prince George's County Metro Station parking garage charges \$5.00. [The garage at the Silver Spring station is owned, operated, and maintained by Montgomery County. Questions regarding any plans to expand the garage, add elevators or other modifications should be directed to County staff. The cost difference relates directly to the County's management of the garage versus Metro's management of the Metro parking facility in Prince George's County that the Commissioner stated she uses on occasion. The County chooses not to charge for disability accessible parking, whereas Metro does charge a daily fee for parking.]

Trish Gallalee, Commissioner, complimented WMATA for the new tiles that were installed at the Twinbrook Metro Station. The new tiles provide a lot more traction. Trish also noted that sometimes the gap between the platform and the Metro car is very wide and is hard for wheelchairs to enter and exit the car. Christiaan responded that WMATA is working on gap reducers, but the project is taking a long time due to the age of the Metro system.

Update on Targeted Case Management – Jay Kenney, Chief, Aging and Disability Services

Since Jay Kenney last spoke to the Commission at the April Commission Meeting the County Council has met three times to discuss the issue of Resource Coordination (RC) – twice with the Health and Human Services Committee and once with at a full Council session. The situation has not changed substantially.

County Council President Craig Rice sent a letter to Lt. Governor Anthony Brown asking for him to investigate this issue and advise whether Montgomery County could provide services to the transitioning youth population only. The County currently serves approximately 115 clients every year that are transitioning from their senior year of high school.

The County has had multiple communications with the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene (DHMH) and the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) to try and resolve this issue. The County is also working with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid to obtain their position on the matter as well as working to obtain a legal opinion from the Maryland Attorney Generals Office.

At the full County Council session on Monday the Council approved the County Executive's recommended operating budget for RC. The budget allows for the County to finish the transition of RC services to other private providers by the end of March 2015. If the State decides that the County can provide services to transitioning youth only then a supplemental funding request would be drafted to provide those services through FY15.

The floor was opened to questions.

Susan Hartung, Commissioner, stated that it would be ideal for the County to serve transitioning youth, but given the State's previous decision that it would violate Medicaid waiver regulations it most likely will not happen. She asked if the County has considered continuing to be a provider of RC services, but capping the number of clients it can accept to lower the expenses. Susan noted that recent cost analysis of funding RC is not as dismal as it once appeared. Susan also noted that Total Care Services, one of the providers that the State has selected to provide RC to Montgomery County, recently reached a \$187,000 settlement agreement regarding Medicaid fraud in the District of Columbia.

Jay commented that one scenario that had been discussed was for the County to continue to provide RC to one third of the current client base, but the County was notified that they could not put a cap on the number of clients they could serve. He noted that the cost differentials were lower than expected, but that if the County were to continue to provide RC merit staff would need to be hired which would raise the cost analysis. The program is currently operating with 60 contract employees, which is not a long term solution. The cost projections for serving 1,000 clients with County merit staff would be a funding shortfall of \$60,000 that the County would need to supplement.

The County has briefly discussed creating a 5013(c), like the Collaboration Council, to provide RC services, but this option has not been followed up on as the County is still waiting on a response from the State of Maryland regarding RC services.

Jay noted that it is his understanding that the new providers have not set a cap, but are only able to take a limited number of clients from the beginning as they are just starting to provide services in Montgomery County. The two newest providers, Total Care and MMARS, must also provide services to the Southern Region of Maryland as per regulations.

It was asked what would make the transition successful this year as opposed to last year. Jay stated that the State has repeatedly assured the County that the new providers will be able to accept and transition clients. Susan asked if the County could monitor the new providers. Jay said that since the new providers are under a State contract and not a County one, the County would have to discuss with the State as the County does not have supervision authority.

Susan made a motion that Montgomery County Government remain as an on going fifth provider for resource coordination services for people with developmental disabilities with trained merit staff. Dana Cohen, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously passed.

Dana made a motion for a Resource Coordination Workgroup be established by the County with the Commission taking the lead in this effort as advisory to the County. Susan seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously passed.

Jay spoke of another Maryland waiver program that the County provides services for. The Older Adults Waiver and Living at Home Waiver have been combined and are now called the Community First Choice, has a funding

shortfall of \$600,000 that the County must be supplement. The County Executive had tried to stop providing the service, but was notified that the public sector is the only provider for that service. If the service was contracted out the County could be liable to lose funding received from the Older Americans Act. He was not able to speak about supplements the County provides for other targeted population subsidy programs.

Chair and Vice Chair Report:

Charlie Crawford, Vice-Chair, reported that his second term is expiring in September and a new Chair for the Transportation Workgroup will need to be selected. Charlie also reported that he and Shawn Brennan, Mobility and Transportation Manager, have been attending Council of Government meetings together and recently attended the County Council meeting on the assessment of transportation in the County.

Workgroup Updates:

Francie Gilman, Ex-Officio Member, Montgomery County Public Libraries, reported that on Wednesday, June 4th a seminar on Diabetes and Visual Impairment to be held at the Marilyn Praisner Community Center, 14906 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville, MD, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The seminar is sponsored by the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland, Sligo Creek Chapter, in collaboration with the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). To register, go to www.BrownPaperTickets.com and enter event number 578914 into the search box.

Charlie Butler, Ex-Officio Member, Department of Recreation, handed out the summer brochure for the County's SOAR (Senior Outdoor Adventures in Recreation) program. He also asked for information on how to make publications more accessible and easier to read. Recommendations can be e-mailed to him at Charles.Butler@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Roundtable: None.

Community Speaks: None.

Next Full Commission Meeting: Wednesday, June 11th, 2014 – Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Lobby Auditorium, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 – 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. **Please try to arrive by 5:15 pm to reconvene workgroups.**

Steering Committee Meeting: Wednesday, June 18th, 2014 - 401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor Tan Conference Room, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 – 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I
Betsy Luecking, Program Manager II