

# **National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board**

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

December 7, 2009

Honorable Jim Graham  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
Board of Directors  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Access for All  
Advisory Committee Concerns about Proposals to Reduce the Use of  
MetroAccess

Dear Councilmember Graham:

I am writing as Chair of the TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee regarding concerns committee members have about FY2011 WMATA budget discussions to reduce the use and subsidy of MetroAccess. While the Access for All Advisory Committee recognizes the critical budget shortfalls that WMATA is facing, the Committee urges WMATA management and Board Members to put the cost MetroAccess in context with the benefits, and consider ways to reduce MetroAccess costs that mitigate the impact on customers.

## **MetroAccess is Not the Primary Cause of the WMATA Budget Shortfalls**

The AFA members believe WMATA presentations and news articles have often given the impression that MetroAccess costs are the primary cause of the budget shortfalls. In reality, MetroAccess is 6.3 percent of the total operating and maintenance budget and there are other expenses that have even greater impacts on WMATA's budget such as employee overtime, pension and healthcare costs. Furthermore, while the per passenger subsidy for MetroAccess is higher than bus and rail, the fact is all transit trips are subsidized. The committee believes that this subsidization of MetroAccess is warranted for three reasons: 1) the median income of MetroAccess customers is below the official poverty line; 2) the diminishing number door-to-door transportation services available to the community as both paratransit and human services providers experience similar budgetary challenges; and 3) the significant value and benefits of MetroAccess service.

## **The Value and Benefits of MetroAccess Must Be Recognized**

The value and benefits of MetroAccess service, which provides critical service to some of the most vulnerable population groups in the region, should be better recognized. Easter Seals Project ACTION, an organization funded by the Federal Transit Administration to help the disability and transit community work together on accessible transportation, conducted

a study to examine the benefits of services like MetroAccess<sup>1</sup>. A fact sheet from that study is attached.

The AFA committee believes that WMATA management and the Board of Directors should have a greater awareness about the benefits of MetroAccess. The Easter Seals Project ACTION report states services like MetroAccess:

- Promote employment-related benefits by enabling workers to contribute to the tax base, expanding the labor pool, increasing employee reliability and reducing absenteeism and turnover;
- Save money, potentially, by reducing dependency on government support, reducing some healthcare costs and preventing costly institutionalization;
- Provide access to social and other community activities, avoidance of institutionalization, and possible reduction in medical and social service expenses;
- Challenge disability stereotypes by promoting visibility of people with disabilities; and
- Relieve caregivers and family members.

The AFA emphasized that another benefit of ADA paratransit services, such as MetroAccess, is that it provides comparable service to the bus and rail system, and therefore is available for any trip purpose, for the same locations and times as bus and rail service. Other human service transportation in the region does not offer customers the same level of flexibility and mobility.

### **Recommendations to Reduce Costs that Should Be Considered Now**

In 2008, the AFA participated in the TPB's Independent Review of MetroAccess<sup>2</sup> conducted by TranSystems Corporation. The report was transmitted to the WMATA Board in December 2008. The AFA would like to emphasize the following recommendations from the report which will help WMATA reduce costs and mitigate service reductions.

In the near term WMATA should:

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<sup>1</sup> *The Changing Paradigm for Paratransit*. Prepared for Easter Seals Project ACTION by the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund. August 2007.

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1. Simplify the recertification process for individuals found unconditionally eligible for MetroAccess and whose functional ability is not expected to improve over time. These unnecessary certifications are using critical resources and funding;
2. Utilize more taxicab service for MetroAccess trips. The average cost of a MetroAccess trip is \$37.00 whereas the average taxicab fare can be much less. The utilization of accessible taxicabs throughout the region can be a win-win for customers, WMATA and taxi operators; and
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In the future WMATA should:

4. Change the contract structure to lessen the concentration of responsibilities and operating functions in any one company and to provide for a more stable, experienced workforce.
5. Continue to improve the accessibility of bus and rail services to provide an alternative to MetroAccess. Consumers with disabilities still face barriers in using fixed route services such as Metrorail elevator outages, the lack of bus stop announcements, and inaccessible pedestrian infrastructure and bus shelters.

Thank you for your consideration of these AFA concerns. The AFA is requesting a presentation from WMATA staff on proposals regarding MetroAccess service for the FY2011 WMATA Budget before the proposals are finalized. The AFA looks forward to continued discussions about the challenges of providing safe and accessible transportation to traditionally-disadvantaged population groups.

Sincerely,



Supervisor Catherine Hudgins  
Chair, TPB Access for All Advisory Committee

cc: Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services

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777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

December 7, 2009

Mr. Peter Benjamin  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
Board of Directors  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Access for All  
Advisory Committee Concerns about Proposals to Reduce the Use of  
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Supervisor Catherine Hudgins  
Chair, TPB Access for All Advisory Committee

cc: Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services

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777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

December 7, 2009

Mr. Neil Albert  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
Board of Directors  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Access for All  
Advisory Committee Concerns about Proposals to Reduce the Use of  
MetroAccess

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cc: Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services

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777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

December 7, 2009

Ms. Elizabeth Hewlett  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
Board of Directors  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Access for All  
Advisory Committee Concerns about Proposals to Reduce the Use of  
MetroAccess

Dear Ms. Hewlett:

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777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

December 7, 2009

Honorable Christopher Zimmerman  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
Board of Directors  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Access for All  
Advisory Committee Concerns about Proposals to Reduce the Use of  
MetroAccess

Dear Mr. Zimmerman:

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Honorable Michael Brown  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
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600 5th Street, NW  
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5. Continue to improve the accessibility of bus and rail services to provide an alternative to MetroAccess. Consumers with disabilities still face barriers in using fixed route services such as Metrorail elevator outages, the lack of bus stop announcements, and inaccessible pedestrian infrastructure and bus shelters.

Thank you for your consideration of these AFA concerns. The AFA is requesting a presentation from WMATA staff on proposals regarding MetroAccess service for the FY2011 WMATA Budget before the proposals are finalized. The AFA looks forward to continued discussions about the challenges of providing safe and accessible transportation to traditionally-disadvantaged population groups.

Sincerely,



Supervisor Catherine Hudgins  
Chair, TPB Access for All Advisory Committee

cc: Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services

# **National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board**

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

December 7, 2009

Mr. Gordon Linton  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
Board of Directors  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Access for All  
Advisory Committee Concerns about Proposals to Reduce the Use of  
MetroAccess

Dear Mr. Linton:

I am writing as Chair of the TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee regarding concerns committee members have about FY2011 WMATA budget discussions to reduce the use and subsidy of MetroAccess. While the Access for All Advisory Committee recognizes the critical budget shortfalls that WMATA is facing, the Committee urges WMATA management and Board Members to put the cost MetroAccess in context with the benefits, and consider ways to reduce MetroAccess costs that mitigate the impact on customers.

## **MetroAccess is Not the Primary Cause of the WMATA Budget Shortfalls**

The AFA members believe WMATA presentations and news articles have often given the impression that MetroAccess costs are the primary cause of the budget shortfalls. In reality, MetroAccess is 6.3 percent of the total operating and maintenance budget and there are other expenses that have even greater impacts on WMATA's budget such as employee overtime, pension and healthcare costs. Furthermore, while the per passenger subsidy for MetroAccess is higher than bus and rail, the fact is all transit trips are subsidized. The committee believes that this subsidization of MetroAccess is warranted for three reasons: 1) the median income of MetroAccess customers is below the official poverty line; 2) the diminishing number door-to-door transportation services available to the community as both paratransit and human services providers experience similar budgetary challenges; and 3) the significant value and benefits of MetroAccess service.

## **The Value and Benefits of MetroAccess Must Be Recognized**

The value and benefits of MetroAccess service, which provides critical service to some of the most vulnerable population groups in the region, should be better recognized. Easter Seals Project ACTION, an organization funded by the Federal Transit Administration to help the disability and transit community work together on accessible transportation, conducted

a study to examine the benefits of services like MetroAccess<sup>13</sup>. A fact sheet from that study is attached.

The AFA committee believes that WMATA management and the Board of Directors should have a greater awareness about the benefits of MetroAccess. The Easter Seals Project ACTION report states services like MetroAccess:

- Promote employment-related benefits by enabling workers to contribute to the tax base, expanding the labor pool, increasing employee reliability and reducing absenteeism and turnover;
- Save money, potentially, by reducing dependency on government support, reducing some healthcare costs and preventing costly institutionalization;
- Provide access to social and other community activities, avoidance of institutionalization, and possible reduction in medical and social service expenses;
- Challenge disability stereotypes by promoting visibility of people with disabilities; and
- Relieve caregivers and family members.

The AFA emphasized that another benefit of ADA paratransit services, such as MetroAccess, is that it provides comparable service to the bus and rail system, and therefore is available for any trip purpose, for the same locations and times as bus and rail service. Other human service transportation in the region does not offer customers the same level of flexibility and mobility.

### **Recommendations to Reduce Costs that Should Be Considered Now**

In 2008, the AFA participated in the TPB's Independent Review of MetroAccess<sup>14</sup> conducted by TranSystems Corporation. The report was transmitted to the WMATA Board in December 2008. The AFA would like to emphasize the following recommendations from the report which will help WMATA reduce costs and mitigate service reductions.

In the near term WMATA should:

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<sup>14</sup> *Independent Review of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) MetroAccess Service*. Final Report. Prepared for the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board by TranSystems Corporation and KFH Group. November 25, 2008.

1. Simplify the recertification process for individuals found unconditionally eligible for MetroAccess and whose functional ability is not expected to improve over time. These unnecessary certifications are using critical resources and funding;
2. Utilize more taxicab service for MetroAccess trips. The average cost of a MetroAccess trip is \$37.00 whereas the average taxicab fare can be much less. The utilization of accessible taxicabs throughout the region can be a win-win for customers, WMATA and taxi operators; and
3. Reduce MetroAccess driver turnover. MetroAccess has a 111 percent driver turnover rate which is over four times higher than the national average of 27 percent. The current MetroAccess contractor estimated it costs \$7,500 to recruit and train each new driver. In addition, experienced MetroAccess drivers can complete more trips per hour, which can reduce costs.

In the future WMATA should:

4. Change the contract structure to lessen the concentration of responsibilities and operating functions in any one company and to provide for a more stable, experienced workforce.
5. Continue to improve the accessibility of bus and rail services to provide an alternative to MetroAccess. Consumers with disabilities still face barriers in using fixed route services such as Metrorail elevator outages, the lack of bus stop announcements, and inaccessible pedestrian infrastructure and bus shelters.

Thank you for your consideration of these AFA concerns. The AFA is requesting a presentation from WMATA staff on proposals regarding MetroAccess service for the FY2011 WMATA Budget before the proposals are finalized. The AFA looks forward to continued discussions about the challenges of providing safe and accessible transportation to traditionally-disadvantaged population groups.

Sincerely,



Supervisor Catherine Hudgins  
Chair, TPB Access for All Advisory Committee

cc: Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services

# **National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board**

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

December 7, 2009

Honorable Jeffrey C. McKay  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
Board of Directors  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Access for All  
Advisory Committee Concerns about Proposals to Reduce the Use of  
MetroAccess

Dear Supervisor McKay:

I am writing as Chair of the TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee regarding concerns committee members have about FY2011 WMATA budget discussions to reduce the use and subsidy of MetroAccess. While the Access for All Advisory Committee recognizes the critical budget shortfalls that WMATA is facing, the Committee urges WMATA management and Board Members to put the cost MetroAccess in context with the benefits, and consider ways to reduce MetroAccess costs that mitigate the impact on customers.

## **MetroAccess is Not the Primary Cause of the WMATA Budget Shortfalls**

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a study to examine the benefits of services like MetroAccess<sup>15</sup>. A fact sheet from that study is attached.

The AFA committee believes that WMATA management and the Board of Directors should have a greater awareness about the benefits of MetroAccess. The Easter Seals Project ACTION report states services like MetroAccess:

- Promote employment-related benefits by enabling workers to contribute to the tax base, expanding the labor pool, increasing employee reliability and reducing absenteeism and turnover;
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The AFA emphasized that another benefit of ADA paratransit services, such as MetroAccess, is that it provides comparable service to the bus and rail system, and therefore is available for any trip purpose, for the same locations and times as bus and rail service. Other human service transportation in the region does not offer customers the same level of flexibility and mobility.

### **Recommendations to Reduce Costs that Should Be Considered Now**

In 2008, the AFA participated in the TPB's Independent Review of MetroAccess<sup>16</sup> conducted by TranSystems Corporation. The report was transmitted to the WMATA Board in December 2008. The AFA would like to emphasize the following recommendations from the report which will help WMATA reduce costs and mitigate service reductions.

In the near term WMATA should:

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1. Simplify the recertification process for individuals found unconditionally eligible for MetroAccess and whose functional ability is not expected to improve over time. These unnecessary certifications are using critical resources and funding;
2. Utilize more taxicab service for MetroAccess trips. The average cost of a MetroAccess trip is \$37.00 whereas the average taxicab fare can be much less. The utilization of accessible taxicabs throughout the region can be a win-win for customers, WMATA and taxi operators; and
3. Reduce MetroAccess driver turnover. MetroAccess has a 111 percent driver turnover rate which is over four times higher than the national average of 27 percent. The current MetroAccess contractor estimated it costs \$7,500 to recruit and train each new driver. In addition, experienced MetroAccess drivers can complete more trips per hour, which can reduce costs.

In the future WMATA should:

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Thank you for your consideration of these AFA concerns. The AFA is requesting a presentation from WMATA staff on proposals regarding MetroAccess service for the FY2011 WMATA Budget before the proposals are finalized. The AFA looks forward to continued discussions about the challenges of providing safe and accessible transportation to traditionally-disadvantaged population groups.

Sincerely,



Supervisor Catherine Hudgins  
Chair, TPB Access for All Advisory Committee

cc: Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services

# **National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board**

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

December 7, 2009

Mr. Anthony R. Giancola, P.E.  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
Board of Directors  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Access for All  
Advisory Committee Concerns about Proposals to Reduce the Use of  
MetroAccess

Dear Mr. Giancola:

I am writing as Chair of the TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee regarding concerns committee members have about FY2011 WMATA budget discussions to reduce the use and subsidy of MetroAccess. While the Access for All Advisory Committee recognizes the critical budget shortfalls that WMATA is facing, the Committee urges WMATA management and Board Members to put the cost MetroAccess in context with the benefits, and consider ways to reduce MetroAccess costs that mitigate the impact on customers.

## **MetroAccess is Not the Primary Cause of the WMATA Budget Shortfalls**

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The AFA committee believes that WMATA management and the Board of Directors should have a greater awareness about the benefits of MetroAccess. The Easter Seals Project ACTION report states services like MetroAccess:

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### **Recommendations to Reduce Costs that Should Be Considered Now**

In 2008, the AFA participated in the TPB's Independent Review of MetroAccess<sup>18</sup> conducted by TranSystems Corporation. The report was transmitted to the WMATA Board in December 2008. The AFA would like to emphasize the following recommendations from the report which will help WMATA reduce costs and mitigate service reductions.

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Sincerely,



Supervisor Catherine Hudgins  
Chair, TPB Access for All Advisory Committee

cc: Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services

# **National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board**

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

December 7, 2009

Mr. Marcell Solomon  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
Board of Directors  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Access for All  
Advisory Committee Concerns about Proposals to Reduce the Use of  
MetroAccess

Dear Mr. Solomon:

I am writing as Chair of the TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee regarding concerns committee members have about FY2011 WMATA budget discussions to reduce the use and subsidy of MetroAccess. While the Access for All Advisory Committee recognizes the critical budget shortfalls that WMATA is facing, the Committee urges WMATA management and Board Members to put the cost MetroAccess in context with the benefits, and consider ways to reduce MetroAccess costs that mitigate the impact on customers.

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### **Recommendations to Reduce Costs that Should Be Considered Now**

In 2008, the AFA participated in the TPB's Independent Review of MetroAccess<sup>20</sup> conducted by TranSystems Corporation. The report was transmitted to the WMATA Board in December 2008. The AFA would like to emphasize the following recommendations from the report which will help WMATA reduce costs and mitigate service reductions.

In the near term WMATA should:

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Sincerely,



Supervisor Catherine Hudgins  
Chair, TPB Access for All Advisory Committee

cc: Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services

# **National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board**

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

December 7, 2009

Honorable William D. Euille  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
Board of Directors  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Access for All  
Advisory Committee Concerns about Proposals to Reduce the Use of  
MetroAccess

Dear Mayor D. Euille:

I am writing as Chair of the TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee regarding concerns committee members have about FY2011 WMATA budget discussions to reduce the use and subsidy of MetroAccess. While the Access for All Advisory Committee recognizes the critical budget shortfalls that WMATA is facing, the Committee urges WMATA management and Board Members to put the cost MetroAccess in context with the benefits, and consider ways to reduce MetroAccess costs that mitigate the impact on customers.

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In 2008, the AFA participated in the TPB's Independent Review of MetroAccess<sup>22</sup> conducted by TranSystems Corporation. The report was transmitted to the WMATA Board in December 2008. The AFA would like to emphasize the following recommendations from the report which will help WMATA reduce costs and mitigate service reductions.

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Sincerely,



Supervisor Catherine Hudgins  
Chair, TPB Access for All Advisory Committee

cc: Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services

# **National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board**

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

December 7, 2009

Mr. John Catoe, Jr.  
General Manager  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Access for All  
Advisory Committee Concerns about Proposals to Reduce the Use of  
MetroAccess

Dear Mr. Catoe:

I am writing as Chair of the TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee regarding concerns committee members have about FY2011 WMATA budget discussions to reduce the use and subsidy of MetroAccess. While the Access for All Advisory Committee recognizes the critical budget shortfalls that WMATA is facing, the Committee urges WMATA management and Board Members to put the cost MetroAccess in context with the benefits, and consider ways to reduce MetroAccess costs that mitigate the impact on customers.

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<sup>23</sup> *The Changing Paradigm for Paratransit*. Prepared for Easter Seals Project ACTION by the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund. August 2007.

<sup>24</sup> *Independent Review of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) MetroAccess Service*. Final Report. Prepared for the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board by TranSystems Corporation and KFH Group. November 25, 2008.

1. Simplify the recertification process for individuals found unconditionally eligible for MetroAccess and whose functional ability is not expected to improve over time. These unnecessary certifications are using critical resources and funding;
2. Utilize more taxicab service for MetroAccess trips. The average cost of a MetroAccess trip is \$37.00 whereas the average taxicab fare can be much less. The utilization of accessible taxicabs throughout the region can be a win-win for customers, WMATA and taxi operators; and
3. Reduce MetroAccess driver turnover. MetroAccess has a 111 percent driver turnover rate which is over four times higher than the national average of 27 percent. The current MetroAccess contractor estimated it costs \$7,500 to recruit and train each new driver. In addition, experienced MetroAccess drivers can complete more trips per hour, which can reduce costs.

In the future WMATA should:

4. Change the contract structure to lessen the concentration of responsibilities and operating functions in any one company and to provide for a more stable, experienced workforce.
5. Continue to improve the accessibility of bus and rail services to provide an alternative to MetroAccess. Consumers with disabilities still face barriers in using fixed route services such as Metrorail elevator outages, the lack of bus stop announcements, and inaccessible pedestrian infrastructure and bus shelters.

Thank you for your consideration of these AFA concerns. The AFA is requesting a presentation from WMATA staff on proposals regarding MetroAccess service for the FY2011 WMATA Budget before the proposals are finalized. The AFA looks forward to continued discussions about the challenges of providing safe and accessible transportation to traditionally-disadvantaged population groups.

Sincerely,



Supervisor Catherine Hudgins  
Chair, TPB Access for All Advisory Committee

cc: Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services

**National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board**

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