

## Approved Meeting Minutes for Accessibility Advisory Committee August 18, 2020

Via Zoom

### Attendees

Heidi Case, Interim Chair  
Janet Parker  
Judy Heumann  
Carol Tyson, Guest  
Curtis Richards  
Anjanette Daigle  
Sarah Anderson  
Dennis Butler  
Susie McFadden-Resper, ODR  
Nana Bailey-Thomas, DDOT  
Funsho Owolabi, Lyft  
Ben McCabe, Via  
Christopher Grayton, Yellow Cab  
Christopher Blake, WMATA  
Wendy Klancher, DFHV  
Ty Stover, DFHV

- Interim Chair Heidi Case started the meeting and asked people to introduce themselves and share what mode of transportation they used in the last few trips.
- Heidi Case said that DFHV Director David Do would present at the next AAC meeting on the results of the WAV testing
- Carol Tyson provided an overview of the history of the AAC and advocacy efforts to mandate accessibility of taxis and TNCs (eg Uber and Lyft).
- Other accessibility committees were brought up – the MAAC and WMATA’s AAC
- Judy Heumann asked about the possibly of combining groups
- Sarah Anderson suggested that having a standing member of each committee attend and report back to the DFHV AAC would be useful.
- Members stated that the MAAC reports to DDOT and was created by the Mayor; MAAC members are appointed by the Mayor.
- Curtis Richards asked someone to describe what the Transport DC User Group is.
- Heidi Case replied that the Transport DC user group was created after concern with cutting back the service and was intended as a way to force the Director of DFHV to work with users.

- Judy Heumann asked if there are any groups in DC looking at transportation overall in DC?
- Heidi Case replied no.
- Heidi Case said that the MAAC was successful in getting DFHV's T2R program to provide trips to essential workers during the pandemic, such as providing transportation for home health aids in getting to and from client's houses or doing errands for them using T2R.
- Sarah Anderson described her experience with a Lyft driver in which he said "I am not the driver for you" even though she can transfer herself to the back of a sedan. Lyft gave her \$10 credit/refund but not makes her use accessible Lyft services with a ramped vehicle even though she prefers to transfer so she doesn't have to wait an extra 30-40 minutes. Sarah said she likes to use Yellow or Metro.
- Funsho Owolabi from Lyft asked when the experience was, and Sarah replied a few years ago.
- Heidi Case said that the issue of power wheelchairs and manual wheelchairs and customers preference to transfer or not infuriates her in dealing with DFHV. Heidi Case said that there is a woman doing research on TNC accessibility. Lyft is telling people that they won't assist customers in a power chairs.
- Heidi Case said that David Do told her that DFHV did testing of multiple companies on WAV service and the results were bad if not worse than she thought, particularly with certain companies. Heidi Case said that Director Do said DFHV is looking across the country at ways to improve the service and are trying to get one number to call for WAVs and asked Wendy Klancher to describe.
- Wendy Klancher described the concept of centralized dispatch, Transport DC customer requests for WAVs would go to a centralized dispatch entity who would be responsible for dispatching and completing the trip. DFHV is waiting for approval on moving forward, but a solicitation could come out as early as this week.
- Christopher Grayton said that Yellow is against this effort as they already do dispatching of WAVs. Ms Case said "when they show up" and stated that Yellow WAV drivers are doing Senior Food Delivery and got the work without having to respond to an RFP
- Christopher Grayton described the emergency situation that Yellow was asked to respond to by DACL after senior centers were shut down due to COVID.
- A participant suggested that DC share info with those in the District on how to get food
- Sarah Anderson said that volunteer organizations should be made aware of the issues with WAVs and trade offs. and asked to do meal delivery instead of filling up vehicles for the handicapped
- Judy Heumann state that volunteers aren't always reliable

- Christopher Grayton said that city had to step in given the pandemic to make sure needy seniors got food.
- Janet Parker described a recent experience with trying to get an accessible ride home from the hospital. The hospital tried to get her a ride at 12:30am but she would have had to transfer to the back seat (vehicles were not accessible). She ended up calling Transport DC and got a ride home about 3am; she stressed that transportation is critical for disabled customers who are more exposed to COVID-19. She's had on-going problems. Heidi said that she has had to yell about ambulances who won't take a patient's clients power chair with them. Janet said thanks to the wonderful DFHV drivers that have gotten her home.
- Heidi Case said that a Georgetown Center for Development Disabilities is interested in transportation issues for people leaving the ER.
- Heidi Case stated she would like to write an Op-Ed on WAVs and transportation.
- Wendy Klancher gave a short overview of accessible for hire transportation in DC. She said that DC law requires that taxi companies with 20 or more vehicles have 12% of their fleet accessible. DFHV issued an administrative issuance holding that to 12% rather than 20% due to the economic burden on taxi companies. Of the 269 WAVs, 152 are with companies and 117 with independents. Pre-pandemic about 1/3 of the WAV taxis are operating and picking up passengers in wheelchairs, 1/3 are operating but not picking up passengers in wheelchairs and 1/3 are sitting on lots.
- Wendy said that the COVID 19 pandemic has had an impact on the number of taxis operating overall – Judy Heumann said she heard 300 taxis are operating right now when usually it's 3000.
  - Wendy Klancher said that under Transport DC there are about 30 WAV taxis providing service and before the pandemic there were about 100.
  - Judy Heumann asked if there was a legal requirement for WAVs to be operating on the street. Wendy replied no. The group asked what could be done about that. Wendy said a best practice is to use incentives for drivers so that WAVs aren't parked on lots.
  - Heidi Case said that they've recommended incentives and feel the drivers need more, and that not all the companies pay the drivers fairly. She said that she'd like to see the Union Station incentive back, that gave front of line privileges to WAV taxis who took 50 wheelchair trips a month, but with the lack of taxi business, that program ended.
- Wendy Klancher put into the chat box in Zoom info on wheelchair accessibility from Via, Lyft and Uber in the interest of time and then described it given concerns that not everyone could access it, and reported that Uber, provided this:
  - Uber WAV has a Partnership with [MV Transit](#), which is used to supply most of the driver hours in DC.
  - UberWAV is available throughout the District (and also the nearby parts of VA and MD)
  - It's available on-demand in the rider-app, priced in-line with UberX
  - Service is 24/7

- Experimenting with partnering with Independent operators and Traditional Taxi dispatches

Wendy said that Lyft reported that:

- Lyft operates an “Access Mode” in DC that sends a push notification to riders who request an accessible ride.
- The notification provides riders with a link to resources the rider can use to access wheelchair accessible vehicle (“WAV”) services.

And that Via reported:

- Via contracts with a Taxi provider to ensure we have the 24-7 WAV Vehicle support, and those vehicles are used for both Abilities Ride rides and any other Consumer rides for riders who need a WAV vehicle.
  - Via participates in WMATA's Abilities Ride program, providing wheelchair accessible transportation for medical appointments to MetroAccess participants
- Carol Tyson said in looking through the history of the AAC, DFHV used to be under Mary Cheh’s committee, the advocates were trying to hold on to have a say on taxis; she said that DFHV is now under Councilmember McDuffie and that Charles Allen is also on the committee, so there are good people to work with.
  - Heidi Case said that the MAAC members are appointed by the Mayor, and the AAC only an application is required, membership is more open and the AAC has struggled to be recognized.
  - Carol Tyson spoke of the AAC in the past, that they were effective at building relationships with each other (advocates, industry and government) and tried to understand what each other needed. The Teamsters were involved for awhile since they tried to organize the drivers.
  - Carol Tyson said the advocates testified at all the DFHV hearings – the Oversight and Budget hearings, and brought to the Council’s attention how much Lyft and Uber weren’t doing on accessibility.
  - Heidi Case asked if the committee had ideas of what they’d like to work on.
  - One member said that communication among the different committees is important.
  - Susie McFadden-Resper said that the MAAC reports to DDOT and looks at public right of way accessibility issues like bike share/scooter and streaterieis.
  - Heidi Case said that wasn’t true.
  - Heidi Case announced that an election for Chair and Vice Chair would be held at the next meeting and that she wasn’t interested. The next meeting is scheduled for October.

- Curtis Richards asked about the committee meeting every month. Heidi Case said that bi-monthly was decided in conversations with Wendy and Susie. Anjanette and other members agreed monthly is preferred. Susie said that attendance has dropped off when meetings were monthly.
- Curtis suggested that the committee meet monthly until the end of the calendar year and then re-asses. The group agreed.
- The next meeting will be Sept 8.
- A motion was made and seconded to adjourn, and passed. The meeting ended at approximately 6:12pm.