

## **Meeting Minutes for Accessibility Advisory Committee**

September 8, 2020

Approved by the committee on October 13, 2020

Via Zoom

### **Attendees**

Heidi Case, Interim Chair

Janet Parker

Judy Heumann

Curtis Richards

Anjanette Daigle

Sarah Anderson

Dennis Butler

Ben McCabe, Via

Masipula Sithole

Trevor Theunissen, Uber

Wendy Klancher, DFHV

Ty Stover, DFHV

Mahtot Gebresselassie, Guest

- Interim Chair Heidi Case started the meeting and asked people to introduce themselves

### **Meeting Minutes Approval**

- A motion was made and seconded to discuss the minutes from the Aug 18 meeting, corrections were made, and the committee approved the minutes.
- Members asked if the Zoom recordings can be posted to the website and the DC YouTube channel and live streamed. Wendy Klancher replied that she will check and said that under COVID-19, the Mayor's office has a Comms review process for distributing some things, and that the For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Committee had trouble livestreaming meetings in the past.
- Members asked if the minutes will be posted to the website; the response was yes.
- Sarah Anderson asked why DFHV does not have AAC meeting dates posted on the calendar.
- Heidi Case stated that DFHV support should cover the posting of AAC meetings given open government laws and that the MAAC posts meetings on open-dc.gov.
- Wendy Klancher replied that only Mayoral appointed committees like the MAAC can post meetings at opec-dc.gov; the AAC is not Mayoral appointed.
- Heidi Case asked if the committee had ideas for posting AAC meetings to other calendars, to let the group know.

## **Discussion on Election of AAC Chair and Vice Chair**

- The committee discussed whether the election for Chair and Vice Chair should be held this meeting or in October.
- Heidi Case said that she had received one nomination for Chair and one for Vice Chair; one member nominated themselves and another person nominated someone else for Chair. The person nominated for Chair has not been informed yet.
- The Committee discussed if they had a quorum and who can vote for Chair (there was no quorum of disability members at the time of this discussion which is 6 given 11 disability community members). Only disability community members can vote on chair; the DC code is silent on who can vote for vice chair.

## **Questions from Committee Members**

- Sarah Anderson and Heidi Case asked what the role of DFHV staff was in the AAC
  - Wendy Klancher replied it's a dual role, the DFHV is a member as outlined in the DC Code, and staffs and supports the committee.
- Curtis Richards asked how AAC feedback gets to DFHV leadership? Briefings? Minutes?
  - Wendy Klancher replied that the Director is briefed and receives the minutes.
- Curtis Richards asked what the For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council is and if the AAC should report to them?
  - Wendy described the For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council and said she would find out about the AAC giving a report to them at their quarterly meetings.
- Sarah Anderson asked about the AAC operating budget given it's written in the DC Code.
  - Wendy Klancher responded that DFHV does not have funding for an AAC operating budget but that staff support for the meetings and the website is provided and is in essence an operating budget.
- Masi Sithole said that synergy important, compartmentalization of health care, specializations, a challenge to synergize, many advisory committees and different departments compartmentalization and operate in silos and that there needs to be more synergy.
- The committee asked about the TNC reports on WAV requests.
  - Wendy Klancher stated that the TNCs would have to agree to share that data and that it's confidential; she has asked Legal if a summary could be shared with the committee.
- Curtis asked what data is used for if it can't be shared and if the Mayor or Council get the data.

- Wendy Klancher stated that the data is used to track WAV requests internally and that the DC law handcuffs what DFHV can do with the data.
- Heidi Case said that the data is highly confidential and that the companies protect the data.

### **DFHV programs**

- Wendy Klancher gave an overview of DFHV programs including:
  - Transport DC,
  - Taxi 2 Rail and the Hospital Workers Program (both will be sun-setted September 30),
  - DC Neighborhood Connect program, a Microtransit service that is shared-ride which is suspended right now due to the Public Health Emergency; DFHV plans to bring back online next FY when the Mayor allows ridesharing back in full.
  - Senior MedExpress, a taxi program that is free to those that are 60 and over to get to life-sustaining medical appointments
    - Heidi Case asked if medical appointments are also included – no only life-sustaining medical appointments; Wendy Klancher clarified that all medical appointments are eligible.
  - VetRides, Non-Emergency Medical Transportation, which provides limited rides to medical care when authorized by a nurse at “Fire Emergency Medical Services” or FEMS and Education First, for school age children in care of Family Services, (Child and Family Services Agency) (Suspended due to schools operating virtually).
  - Wendy stated that a handout with the information on these programs would be provided to the committee.
  - Sarah Anderson asked if DC considers that we are not in a pandemic anymore given that several programs are ended which were created or expanded because of the pandemic.
  - Wendy Klancher stated that DC is still under a public health emergency and the two programs are ending due to budget concerns.
  - Judy Heumann asked about the Senior Med Express and Transport DC fare, the number to call for that program and if the \$10 wheelchair trip incentive under Transport DC was passed on to the consumers.
  - Wendy Klancher responded that the Senior Med Express fare is free, and that there is a different number from Transport DC to call for that program and eligibility is overseen by the Department of Aging and Community Living (DACL). And that the \$10 wheelchair trip incentive is paid by DFHV not the consumer. The \$5 Transport DC fare may be raised to \$7 – but not until 2021.
  - Judy Heumann asked who decides the policies for Senior Med Express and is there an overlap in service with Transport DC.

- Wendy Klancher replied that DACL determines the policies for Senior MedExpress and that there is an overlap, as Yellow is the Senior MedExpress provider.
- Judy Heumann asked what role the committee has in impacting how these program polies are derived?
  - Wendy responded with Senior Med Express not much as those are set by DACL. For DFHV programs, the committee can make recommendations, but the focus of the committee is on overall accessibility in the for-hire industry not on programs. There is another committee for Transport DC – and the AAC can discuss combining the two groups.
  - Curtis Richards asked how the fare for Transport DC is set and who makes that decision and who has input into it?
  - Wendy replied that the \$5 fare was set at the beginning of the program in 2014 and has not been raised since. The City Administrator the Mayor will make the decision about the fare. Because of budget concerns, an increase in the fare from \$5 to \$7 is being proposed and the Transport DC user group has been asked to comment on that 3 times.
  - Heidi Case said that the fare increase is because there was a drop in the Transport DC reimbursement rate to providers.
  - Heidi Case asked about the Centralized Dispatch project for WAV under Transport DC and said this would be a big change. Heidi said that drivers may no longer be able to drive for the company they prefer and whoever gets the grant has to have enough WAVs. Heidi asked Wendy to make the announcement about Centralize Dispatch and who can apply to the be the centralized dispatcher.
    - Wendy said DFHV issued a request for applications for Centralized Dispatch in August, and that to the user, it should be seamless, the user calls one number, makes the request, the centralized dispatcher finds the user a trip. The thinking is drivers are pooled under the centralized dispatcher and should reduce response times.
    - Wendy said that taxi companies can apply; technology companies can partner with the taxi companies.
    - Heidi asked if a taxi company with Uber as a partner gets the grant, could an Uber WAV be sent to the customer instead of a taxi?
    - Wendy said she will double check – but her understanding was that for Transport DC, only one of the three taxi companies can fulfill the trip.

**Presentation from Mahtot Gebresselassie, Virginia Tech PhD student working on accessibility of TNC's**

- Mahtot described her PhD research on the wheelchair accessibility of TNCs in the Washington DC areas and the survey she is doing to find out perceptions and use of TNC accessibility.
- 
- Mahtot wants a few more wheelchair to take the survey.
- Heidi asked how results of the research will be used.
- Mahtot said that there isn't a lot of research with a large participant survey; there are media reports and some lawsuits by disability advocates. The results will be used for knowledge creation, supporting expanding wheelchair accessibility and inform policy making
- Heidi -do you have ways to get Uber and Lyft drivers to participate?
- Mahtot is on the online platforms for drivers and been in contact. It's been hard to recruit, and I am interested in your suggestions to better recruit Uber and Lyft drivers
- Curtis asked if Mahtot has been in contact with TNC members on the committee – good conversations with Uber, no response from Lyft.
- Heidi asked if the wheelchair users on the committee have done Mahtot' s survey.
- Masi said he'd love to see a copy of the research once Mahtot is done. Masi asked to share the results globally and that would help bring additional insights.
- Mahtot is looking at the issues in relation to the US Americans with Disabilities Act and she wanted to focus the research on the DC area so she could be more thorough and detailed; she had to expand it to greater DC area.
- Masi encouraged Mahtot to work with Veterans hospitals and Gallaudet and to reach out to communities within communities.
- Heidi said that she'd like Mahtot to come back to the AAC and present the results.

**No public comments.**

- Heidi asked to talk about the Oct 13 agenda – she is focused on getting through that meeting, open to taking nominations for Chair and Vice Chair by email or phone. What else are people interested in having on the agenda?
- Sarah said she'd like to get the group focused on our next annual report, maybe we can have a subcommittee.
- Heidi asked Wendy to send out links to the previous annual reports.
- Masi asked when the Fiscal Year ends – which annual report are we talking about working on?

- Heidi asked Wendy about what legislation says on this. Wendy said that she believes the legislation follows DC government fiscal year, the annual report would be for FY2021 (too late to do a FY20 annual report).
- Heidi- would like us to talk further about how to unite three different accessibility advisory committees whether informally or more formally (the MAAC, the WMATA Accessibility Advisory Committee and the DFHV AAC).
- Heidi said that the MAAC is holding a meeting on autonomous vehicles and the issue of accessibility; there will be six different presenters.
- Sarah asked if it would be possible to create a listserve for AAC members. Others liked the idea. Sarah said that she can create a google group. Sarah said that a google group can be used by those without a gmail address. Sarah said she will set it up to test it.
- Sarah asked that someone share at the next meeting what happened at the MAAC and WMATA Accessibility Advisory Committee and/or share minutes.
- The Director will be presenting at the Oct 13 meeting
- Masi suggested that the three groups have a semi-annual or annual joint meeting.
- Anjanette asked if it would be useful to have a few sentences with background and why a person wants to be Chair or Vice Chair
- Heidi said for accessibility we'd have to have them ahead of time or read them at the meeting.
- Masi said that it makes sense, for folks who are interested, put together a paragraph or two on why they are a good candidate, make it short and sweet.
- Heidi said people would receive that before the next meeting; Anjanette said yes, that was her intention.
- Heidi said that was a great idea.
- Wendy asked about the due date for nominations – should we move this up so written statements can be shared with the committee ahead of the meeting. Heidi said yes, we could make it due the Tuesday before.
- The group agreed candidate statements would be due Oct 6.

**Meeting Adjourned.**