

Arlington Transit Advisory Committee Accessibility Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

**October 21, 2021, 5:00 p.m.
and
November 9, 2021, 5:00 p.m.**

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees:

Members: Alexa Mavroidis, Herschel Kanter

County Staff: William Jones, Andy Wexler, Lynn Rivers, Paul Mounier, Cala Fils, Kirk Dand

Introductions

Attendees introduced themselves. The June and August meeting minutes were approved.

Public Comments

No members of the public attended either session of the meeting, and no written comments were received.

STAR FY 2022 Q1 Service Performance

County staff presented a summary of STAR's performance data for the first quarter of FY 2022. All of STAR's service metrics (ridership, revenue hours, revenue miles) have increased substantially compared to the first quarter of FY 2021. Costs have decreased substantially as a result, but revenue per passengers has also declined. The Subcommittee asked what factors could be causing this trend. County staff suggested that it may be related to a decrease in Zone 2 and 3 trips, and agreed to study the data more closely and report back.

Customer Service Report

County staff presented a report on customer comments received in August and September, regarding STAR and accessibility-related issues with ART. The report lists the number of complaints by issue type; and provides additional information on trends, investigations, resolutions, etc., and can be viewed online at <https://commissions.arlingtonva.us/transit-advisory-committee/>.

Notable complaints in August and September include the following:

- 60% of the 25 total STAR complaints were about late pickups and driver no-shows
- Three complaints from STAR drivers were about passenger conduct
- Four complaints pertained to the level of assistance provided by STAR drivers
- A STAR customer fell out of her wheelchair in a moving STAR vehicle and received minor injuries. The circumstances of her wheelchair securement are unclear.

The Subcommittee and County staff discussed some of the complaints in greater detail. Responding to a question about the securement/injury incident, County staff confirmed that STAR drivers are responsible for properly securing customers in vehicles. Ms. Mavroidis shared concerns about ART buses curbing properly based on personal experience; County staff will stress the importance of proper bus curbing and kneeling with ART operations management.

Red Top Cab Performance

In response to Subcommittee concerns and customer complaints over the last few months, County staff have conducted research on Red Top's scheduled and actual pickup times during the month of September. From August 31 to September 27, a total of 7.6% of Red Top pickups were at least 30 minutes late. Late pickups were significantly more common during AM and PM peak times, and many of them were in Zone 2, but no other patterns were apparent. The lack of available drivers is part of a national driver shortage.

In light of these findings, the following mitigation steps will be taken:

- Red Top will provide the STAR Call Center with capacity estimates by day and hour.
- Trips will be assigned based on these estimates to avoid exceeding Red Top's capacity at any given time.
- More weekday AM and PM peak trips will be assigned to Diamond whenever possible.
- Both Red Top and Diamond will continue to actively recruit and train new drivers.

The Subcommittee asked how many of the late pickups were for wheelchair trips; County staff explained that such trips accounted for only 21 of the 139 late pickups. The Subcommittee expressed support and appreciation for the mitigation measures.

STAR Policy Changes for Fiscal Year 2023

As part of the STAR policy review process, County staff are conducting an industry review of policies used by paratransit programs around the U.S. Three peer agencies have been selected from metro areas of similar size that supplement their regions' ADA-designated paratransit providers. MetroAccess is also being studied because of its role as the DC region's main paratransit provider. The County is compiling the research into a white paper, which will be shared with the Subcommittee in the near future. A brief overview of research findings by policy topic was shared during the meeting.

The Subcommittee expressed support for this approach, noting that being able to compare specific policies will help frame the discussion of how to improve them; and provided feedback on some of the research topics. County staff emphasized that the white paper will not contain policy recommendations; any changes to STAR policies will be developed separately.

