



Transit Accessibility Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, March 11, 2025
MEETING LOCATION: Online via Microsoft Teams
MEETING TIME: 5:00pm – 6:00pm
ATTENDEES: RoseAnn Ashby - Chairwoman, Kent Keyser, Cynthia Johnson-Oliver, Judy Dixon, Daniel Leslie
STAFF ATTENDEES: Clinton Edwards, Rocco Visconti
OTHER ATTENDEES: Shelia Hill, Ashley Fernandez

Link to meeting recording:

[Transit Advisory Committee \(TAC\) Accessibility Subcommittee Meeting | March 11, 2025](#)

- **Call to Order & Introductions**
 - o The meeting was called to order, introductions were held.
- **Public Comment**
 - o A member of the public thanked STAR for responding to her regarding her complaint and expressed her concern over the future of federal funding with the STAR program.
 - o Kent Keyser expressed a need for all Transit Accessibility Subcommittee meetings to be posted on the website, and a link to the video to be attached to the meeting notes. County staff agreed to attach meeting recordings to future meeting minutes.
 - o The January 14, 2025 meeting minutes were approved.
- **Issues with STAR Service**
 - o James Mountain reported a service failure that occurred on the preceding Saturday night. He had scheduled a STAR pickup in Washington, D.C. at 7:30 PM. By 7:40 PM, no vehicle had arrived and said that STAR's main phone line was closed for the weekend. The message provided no alternative contact information or instructions for riders experiencing urgent issues after hours.
 - o To resolve the situation, James called WeDriveU but received no response. With no assistance available, and temperatures in the 30s Fahrenheit, he rolled himself ten blocks in his wheelchair to the nearest Metro station. At that time, he was unsure how he would travel from the Metro station to his home later that evening, but decided it was a better option than waiting indefinitely.
 - o At 8:30 PM—one hour after the scheduled pickup—James received a call from WeDriveU stating that a driver was at the original pickup location. When he requested that the driver meet him at his new location, Diamond refused, citing their inability to reach a manager to authorize the change. James then rolled ten blocks back to the original pickup point.
 - o According to James, the driver operated the vehicle recklessly, making sudden stops and speeding, which created a dangerous situation for James as a wheelchair user.
 - o James emphasized that the STAR service currently lacks a functioning after-hours support system. There is no backup contact, no escalation pathway, and



no emergency procedure for riders who are stranded outside regular business hours.

- Daniel Leslie stated that James' experience was not an isolated incident. He shared that he typically uses STAR for two or three rides per day and stated that approximately half of his rides result in negative experiences. These include delays of one to two hours and unsafe or poorly trained drivers.
- Daniel Leslie highlighted a significant decline in service quality after Diamond Transportation transitioned to WeDriveU.
- Daniel Leslie raised concerns that WeDriveU is not monitoring its drivers adequately. While some drivers provide excellent service, others consistently show up late, drive unsafely, or behave unprofessionally. He suggested that if WeDriveU were actively listening to rider feedback or conducting periodic ride-alongs, they would quickly identify problematic employees and reward exceptional ones.
- Kent Keyser echoed the frustrations of Mr. Leslie and shared his feelings that the service has seen regression in the months following the new contract. He urged Arlington County to address the various concerns outlined in the testimonies heard today.
- Daniel Leslie reiterated the need for STAR to adequately communicate the new WeDriveU operator number, allowing riders to call when the STAR call center is closed.
- Cynthia Johnson-Oliver relayed her recent experience with STAR, stating that the driver ultimately came and picked her up after only a few minutes, but agreed it would have been helpful to have access to the WeDriveU phone number to check-in on the status of the trip. She stated it would be an easy fix and would provide a large benefit to the riders.
- A member of the public shared her experience, stating that the quality of the drivers has varied greatly, with some experiences with drivers being poor.
- County staff responded that the goal of STAR was always to communicate with the passenger when rides would arrive or depart. The county staff would work with WeDriveU to ensure that communication protocols were being followed and that passengers were being adequately notified of any changes to their trip. County staff also stated that they would refresh operator training to ensure that drivers were adequately meeting all requirements outlined for operations with STAR, and to address any claims made of unsafe operations.
- Various members of the subcommittee added that they would like to see an update to the phone calling system for STAR, allowing for calls to be made to WeDriveU in the time that the STAR Call Center cannot be reached.
- County staff agreed with this idea and promised to implement a forwarding system to allow calls for the STAR Call Center after hours to be redirected to WeDriveU dispatch.
- RoseAnn Ashby asked County staff to address any potential safety issues with STAR. County staff reiterated their commitment to safety while using STAR and would follow up on re-iterating safety-related training measures in the spring operator training. Additionally, County staff encouraged all members of the subcommittee and the public to log all complaints through the STAR Call Center, to allow for complaints to be tracked in an official capacity by the County.
- County staff followed-up and confirmed that they have received complaints against specific operators, and that operators have been disciplined and ultimately terminated as a result of complaints provided from riders.



- **Updates to STAR Service**

- County staff addressed concerns regarding federal funding, stating that federal funds for public transportation in Arlington County are directly sent to WMATA as part of the interstate compact agreement. Thus, STAR does not directly utilize federal funding as part of its resources.
- County staff shared that UZURV driver count has increased to 44 for STAR. As a result, more rides would be scheduled on UZURV, and more riders would experience UZURV as part of their riding experience.
- Roseann Ashby questioned about the use of UZURV for overflow trip capacity. County staff stated that it would be dependent on the availability of UZURV drivers to preform trips on short notice, and that the schedules of UZURV drivers is more variable than the dedicated WeDriveU operators. If a trip became delayed, STAR would attempt to use any available vehicle to complete the trip.
- County staff reported that with the implementation of UZURV, more drivers are now available, which should improve on-time performance. Staff also shared progress on mobile app development, noting that both WeDriveU and the STAR Call Center have apps that could provide trip updates to passengers. The County is working to determine which single solution to implement, with a decision expected by the end of March.
- RoseAnn Ashby, subcommittee chair, raised concerns about accommodating individuals who cannot safely use standard WeDriveU vans due to mobility issues. County staff explained that UZURV vehicles could be an option for these riders but acknowledged this needed further discussion with the STAR Call Center and WeDriveU to confirm implementation status.
- Kent Keyser asked about penalties for contractors not fulfilling their contractual obligations. County staff indicated that while no penalties had been levied to date, discussions with WeDriveU regarding invoicing were ongoing. He mentioned a proposal to compensate riders who experienced excessively late trips, though budget implications need consideration.
- Daniel Leslie suggested that service performance metrics should be publicly available on the county website. County staff confirmed these metrics are already published on the Arlington Transit website and shared the link:
 - <https://www.arlingtontransit.com/about/monthly-service-ridership-reports/>
- County staff presented the STAR performance metrics for December 2024 and January 2025. The data showed 3,875 trips scheduled in December with 3,114 completed, and 4,358 scheduled in January with 2,907 completed. On-time performance had fallen to 83-84%, with January experiencing higher cancellations partly due to snow events.
- Committee members suggested several communication improvements:
 - Creating a monthly email newsletter for STAR users
 - Informing users about the Arlington Transit website and how to access STAR metrics
 - Including the WeDriveU after-hours phone number (301-888-4154) in communications
- The committee also reinforced the need for:
 - Better notification when vehicles will be more than 10 minutes late
 - Enforcing contract penalties for poor performance



- Implementing appropriate accommodations for riders with mobility limitations
- County staff agreed to compile the committee's suggestions and communicate with WeDriveU and the call center about implementation. The meeting concluded with the understanding that County staff would email the committee to confirm their requests, and that a decision on the mobile app would be made by the next meeting.