



Access Paratransit Advisory Committee 2022 Report

August 2022

This annual report has been developed by the Access Paratransit Advisory Committee (APAC) for submittal to the King County Council. APAC is a King County commission created by King County [Ordinance 18838](#) in November of 2018.

The Access Paratransit Advisory Committee (APAC) enhances Metro's Access paratransit program by advising the agency on priorities and areas of mutual concern while developing a vision for ongoing improvements.

The committee is appointed by the King County Executive and approved by the King County Council for two-year appointments. Membership is comprised of Access riders, including those living with disabilities from across the spectrum, as well as family members of Access riders, representatives of organizations that provide services to Access riders, and representatives of organizations that support Access riders who have limited English proficiency.

Background and Context

The slate of eleven candidates were appointed as full voting members on November 16, 2020. APAC's inaugural membership held its first meeting on December 14, 2020. APAC meetings are held the second Monday of every month and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all APAC meetings, subcommittees, and trainings are being held virtually.

APAC has met ten times prior to this report being drafted.

APAC is specifically charged with:

- Providing advice and counsel on Access paratransit service and identifying opportunities for continued improvement
- Aiding in the development of long-range planning efforts
- Providing advice and counsel on Access paratransit service and identifying opportunities for continued improvement
- Developing and delivering an annual report each August, beginning in August 2021

APAC 2022 Responses and Recommendations

In accordance with King County [Ordinance 18838](#), we as APAC members are responding to the following areas as outlined in the ordinance:

(a) A review of and comment on the Metro transit department's annual performance metrics and trends relevant to Access paratransit.

APAC Response

- It would be useful to have data about what percentage of rides are booked by phone vs online.
- It would be useful to see KPI data pre Covid to allow for a more well-rounded picture of actual data.
- Commenting on performance metrics for this year is difficult because paratransit services during the pandemic are so different from years without the pandemic
 - There is a whole category of serviced related to transportation for COVID tests and vaccinations that operates under different rules than usual.
 - Cost per ride has been dropping since February because of increased ridership due to lower Covid rate. On time performance has suffered greatly because of the great difficulty of hiring Access drivers. Access is experiencing the same labor issues of other transportation agencies nationwide.
 - Year over year comparisons is still not possible because of shifting public health requirements, customer demands and continued labor shortages. The APAC has reviewed data related to penalties MV is facing due to the drop in performance criteria. A concern was raised regarding the fairness and the possible need to renegotiate the contract.
- The APAC has spent considerable time hearing presentations on different topics and should consider whether going forward we want to ask specifically for more time to consider various data and to make specific data requests, for example, about language access and barriers at the qualification stage or for people using the new online booking. Switching from Zoom to Teams is under consideration.
 - This should be done every quarter.
- APAC would like to make additional data requests to understand what Access practices might drive customer satisfaction and to consider additional questions in the Access customer survey to understand the rider's experience.
- There is STRONG interest in options for same day booking. As a result, Access has made movement toward starting a pilot program for same day booking. There was a small pilot before COVID hit.
- APAC has been advised that one taxi company is no longer contracted with Access.
- Rider recertification processes were discussed and will be reviewed. The current process is not customer friendly and needs to be streamlined.
- Concern has been expressed about possible service cutbacks due to budget and MV performance penalties.

(b) One (1) review of and comment on information from customer surveys distributed by the Metro transit department relevant to Access paratransit.

APAC Response

Recommendations:

- Continue to include questions about satisfaction with online booking and breakdowns of how many people responded to the survey online vs phone vs on paper.
- Increase data collection on languages spoken by Access riders including data on the language the rider booked their trip in.
- Include the percentage of caregivers who responded to the survey
- For future surveys, provide disaggregated data for riders:
 - With intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities and/or their caregivers
 - Riders with limited English proficiency

(c) A summary of areas of strength, deficiency, or priorities for improvement in the provision of Access paratransit services.

APAC Response

Recommendations in the following areas for improvement:

- Marketing and information about Orca Next Gen and use on Access as payment for rides.
- There is STRONG customer interest in uniform payment options and recommend that Next Gen ORCA consider technology options usable for different categories of customers, including Access riders, and to make those available when rolling out a new product or technology.
- Increase marketing of Access and support for students, youth, and young adults, in order to help increase independence.
- Provide current count of accessible vehicles available to Access riders including Access vans, contracted taxis, and other Metro flexible services.
- As Access is partnering with taxis, there needs to be an increase in accessible taxi vehicles across King County.
- To monitor and review that disabled riders have the same level of service with respect to service hours and areas covered.
- Increase Access service hours so that schedules for those who work traditional and non-traditional hours including early morning, late night, and overnight shifts.
- Increase comfort of Access bus seats – uncomfortable, can be jarring, and seats feel worn out.

- Provide information for transportation patterns that include Access and that happen outside metro areas.
- Add more accessible data visually that is screen reader ready and less reliant on tables. Make sure that information provided to the public works well with assistive devices prior to launching.
- Convene a subcommittee with APAC members to identify options and recommendations for Access Paratransit continuous improvement and program optimization.
- Consider partnering with agencies serving different communities to recruit more participants in the Mystery Rider program.

Recommendations for Metro Customer Information and Access Paratransit Comment Process:

- Provide the online comment form in different languages – at least the top 8 languages represented in King County.
- Improve comment forms access for smart phones/tablets.
- Vet all online forms with screen readers and publicly note which screen reader platforms and speech-to-text software were used to vet the forms.
- Provide context on why Access customer comment forms are separated out from fixed route service.
- Provide an opportunity for a caregiver to provide contact information for follow-up (if needed) if they are making the customer comment on behalf of the Access rider.

APAC members received a presentation on policy updates for Metro’s strategic plan, Metro Connects, and Service Guidelines and were provided an opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations.

Recommendations for Metro policy updates for the Metro’s Strategic Plan, Metro Connects, and Service Guidelines”

- Increase efforts in low-income areas for priority transit opportunities including Access.
- Increase transparency on how equity is determined/defined.
- Identify how is Metro working with jurisdictions to address areas that are not walkable/rollable, such as on a busy street.

(d) An overall assessment of Access paratransit service for the prior year.

APAC Response

- It has been difficult to make any assessment of Access paratransit service for 2021 and 2022 because of the Covid-19 closures and labor shortages. Based on survey results, Access was providing a valuable service to customers and KPI

information showed that a quality service was being provided until ridership started to increase and the labor shortage became obvious.

- APAC did not have time to adequately make an assessment and report on it.

Summary of APAC activities October 2021 – August 2022

October 2021

- The APAC recruitment application was finalized. The application opened at the end of October and is expected to close on December 3rd. Members were asked to let the staff know of any organizations Metro should reach out to regarding the APAC member recruitment effort.
- APAC members are needed for the application review.
- The APAC team went through the recommendations and response that were documented in the 2021 APAC report. Metro will look into options for providing surveys via an app that is compatible with a smartphone instead of a computer. Metro to follow up with information about the number of available rideshare accessible vehicles.
- APAC annual report planning: The Secretary will summarize the monthly meeting minutes for key topics. This will be added to a tracking document. Members can comment at any time. A review will happen at a meeting each quarter.
- APAC Members attended an Equity and Social Justice Fundamentals workshop Saturday, October 16, 12 – 4pm

November 2021

- Metro staff to work with APAC to identify additional equity and accessibility measures to include in ongoing tracking.
- APAC Executive committee members to discuss the format of the monthly Access dashboard metrics and any potential adjustments.
- Metro staff to track potential timing for a future update to APAC from Metro's Government Relations team.
- Ashish to follow up with Deborah regarding concerns about the recertification process.
- Metro staff to follow up with the APAC about the mandatory recertification process for Access including the policy, reason, and available metrics.
- Access Same Day Service Pilot project team to provide APAC an update at the January 2022 meeting.
- APAC members that are interested in participating in the Access Same Day Service Pilot project should reach out to Casey Gifford by November 12.

December 2021

- Metro Fares Collection Systems meeting was held
- Metro developed a tool to follow up on APAC recommendations

January 2022

- Metro Access Same Day Service Pilot presentation was given
- Access Optimization recommendations were shared, and APAC provided guidance

August 2022

- APAC recruitment status update was given
- Proposed to adjust monthly meeting start time

February 2022

- Metro Access Same Day Service Pilot presentation update was given
- 2021 Annual KPI review was given
- APAC recruitment update on application scoresheets was given

March 2022

- 2022 work plan review was shared
- The following updates were shared:
 - Mystery Rider program survey results
 - Access future fleet/electrification plans
 - MV safety training topics
 - Same Day Service pilot program
 - Next Access Optimization update
 - Future APAC member recruitment process

April 2022

- Mystery rider program was presented and volunteers from APAC were identified.
- 2022 work plan update was given
- 2022 Financial disclosure forms were due

May 2022

- APAC did not meet on this month

June 2022

- Metro Access KPI 2020 overview was given
- Labor Shortage presentation was given, and APAC asked questions and gave feedback
- Discussion about future hybrid meetings was discussed
- APAC request to have accessible documents template

July 2022

- Metro Access KPI 2019-2022 review was given
- OESJ's Community Compensation Project was shared with APAC
- Metro shared the annual report timeline and gave a walkthrough
- Update on recruitment and in person meetings was shared

August 2022

- Submitted 2022 Annual report
- Notified of upcoming Access Paratransit Service Update Report

Materials Reviewed by APAC

- Monthly Key Performance Indicators dashboards
- Access Paratransit Service Update Report 2021 Crosswalk to APAC Recommendations
- Review King County Paratransit Access Survey Biannual Report, January 2021

Closing

It is important to note that APAC includes members who have a number of different disabilities and part of the commission's work has been about continuing to develop meeting practices and work processes that meet a variety of accessibility needs such as use of Zoom vs Teams automated captioning, live CART/captioning, making documents to be screen shared available to screen reader users for whom Zoom or Teams screen share is inaccessible and measures to support collaborative editing of this document and required use of the King County email system and the commission' info portal among other measures. APAC is looking forward to in person meetings

This report is being respectfully submitted by the APAC 2021–2022 members:

Executive Committee Members

- Kristina Sawyckyj, Chair, District 1
- Deborah Artis, Vice-Chair, District 4
- Joe Welinske, Secretary, District 8

At-Large Members

- Dorene Cornwell, District 2
- Christina Schaefer, District 9

The following members contributed, in part, to the recommendations, but resigned prior to the report being drafted: Clark Matthews, District 2; Ginger Kwan, District 7; Jamilah Ibrahim, District 6; Joe Welinske, Secretary, District 8.