



# **Access Paratransit Advisory Committee 2021 Report**

*July 20, 2021*

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 seven 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
- Serving as a resource for transit promotion
- 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 2021 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.
- 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 is up because of reduced capacity due to social distancing.
  - Year over year comparisons are not possible because of shifting public health requirements and customer demands.
- 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.
  - 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. There was a small pilot before COVID hit. APAC would like to hear more about what was learned from the pilot and possible expansions of the pilot.
- APAC is interested in hearing more on what was learned from the taxi voucher pilot project.

**(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:

- 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 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 2020 because of the Covid-19 closures. Based on survey results, Access was providing a valuable service to customers and KPI information showed that a quality service was being provided.
- APAC did not have time to adequately make an assessment and report on it.

**Summary of APAC activities December 2020 – July 2021**

December 2020

- Bylaws were adopted by a majority vote of the APAC
- Completed orientation to King County Metro Access Program and Services
- Completed orientation to the 2021-2022 biennium Access Program budget

January 2021

- Received Access Dashboard and Key Performance Indicators Presentation
- Presentation of King County Metro ADA services and the role of the ADA coordinator
- Voted and approved APAC Executive Committee

July 20, 2021

- Presentation of and provided edits, comments, and recommendations on the proposed Accessible Communications & Engagement Guidelines for Metro's customer-facing communication products and engagement efforts

#### February 2021

- Established APAC meeting ground rules
- Presentation of King County Metro Access 2020 Rider Survey Results
- Completed orientation to King County Ombuds Office

#### March 2021

- Completed orientation to King County Metro Customer Information and Complaint Process
- Presentation of King County Metro policy updates for the Metro's Strategic Plan, Metro Connects, and Service Guidelines
- Received and provided feedback on MV Taxi Trip broker service

#### April 2021

- Completed orientation to King County Metro organizational structure
- Established APAC involvement in annual Access workplan and APAC-supported projects

#### May 2021

- Identified core APAC-supported projects from the Access workplan for 2021
- Supported launch of Access Mystery Rider Project (driver evaluation program)
- Received quarterly review of March 2021 Key Performance Indicators Report

#### June 2021

- Established APAC member recruitment and interview task force

#### July 2021

- Work out timelines to meet future report schedules
- Consider areas where we may wish to make specific data requests and then schedule time in meetings to review data once a quarter for existing KPIs and for example to customer satisfaction surveys.

#### **Materials Reviewed by APAC**

- Monthly Key Performance Indicators dashboards provided (data from November 2020 – April 2021)
- Access Paratransit Six-month Oversight Report, July 2020
- 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 disabilities and part of the commission's work has been about developing meeting practices and work processes that meet a variety of accessibility needs such as use of Zoom automated captioning, live CART/captioning, making documents to be screen shared available to screen reader users for whom Zoom 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's info portal among other measures.

This report is being respectfully submitted by the APAC 2020–2022 members:

### Executive Committee Members

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

### At-Large Members

- Clark Matthews, District 2
- Dorene Cornwell, District 2
- Ginger Kwan, District 7
- Christina Schaefer, District 9
- Jamilah Ibrahim, District 6

The following members contributed, in part, to the recommendations, but resigned prior to the report being drafted: David Egan, District 3; Leonard Williams, District 6; and Colleen Malone, District 5.