

**Arlington Transit Advisory Committee
Accessibility Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes
April 19, 2018
5:00 p.m.
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Azalea Conference Room**

Attendees:

Members: Alexa Mavroidis, Laura MacNeil, William Staderman

County Staff: William Jones, Andy Wexler

Contractors:

- Diamond Transportation –Tyrone Barksdale
- Red Top Cab – John Sawyer, David Berg
- STAR Call Center –Sabrina Brown, Mary Blyther

Public: Karen Melick, RaeCarole Tekeste, Suzzanne Kamel, Doris Ray

Introductions

Attendees introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes

The March minutes were approved unanimously, and will be posted at <https://commissions.arlingtonva.us/transit-advisory-committee/>.

Introduction of William Jones as Acting Transit Services Manager

The Subcommittee welcomed Mr. Jones, who expressed his eagerness to engage with the group going forward. He and Mr. Wexler will visit the STAR Call Center, Diamond, and Red Top to meet with staff in the near future.

Red Top Cab Transition – Status Update and Discussion

The Subcommittee and STAR Call Center staff noted that many of the problems noted at the March meeting remain ongoing.

All of the public attendees came to the meeting to express concerns about Red Top. Specific points raised at the meeting include the following:

- Excessively long wait times for rides – sometimes over an hour – are common.
- Both customers and the STAR Call Center have difficulty reaching Red Top by phone.
 - Calls to the remote call center still get misdirected frequently, and callers often must wait on hold for long periods. Even the STAR Call Center has had difficulty reaching the Red Top call center, sometimes waiting more than 30 minutes on hold for assistance.

- Calltakers at the remote call centers do not understand the STAR program or the geography of the DC region. In some instances, they seem indifferent to the difficulties STAR riders are facing.
- Communication remains inconsistent. Customers sometimes receive call-outs by phone or text, but not always. Sometimes drivers can see customers' phone numbers even when they are not supposed to. The lack of consistent communication remains a major source of frustration for STAR customers.
- Customers are often told that no accessible taxis are available for them.
- Afternoon and evening trips take a very long time to be assigned.
- Some customers are concerned that Red Top's use of contract drivers rather than company employees may be hurting service quality.
- Red Top's suddenly unreliable service leaves STAR customers feeling unsafe and worried about being left stranded.

Red Top responses:

- Red Top uses two dispatch systems, which may be causing confusion.
- The internal job numbers for specific trips change every day, even for standing order trips by the same customers.
- Contract drivers can choose whether or not to accept trips, but all trips they accept must be completed. Red Top does not tolerate refusal to complete accepted trips, and has terminated drivers for doing so.
- Red Top vehicles cannot loiter in DC because District hack inspectors are very strict and can issue heavy fines. Once they drop off riders, drivers must return to Virginia immediately, which leads to longer wait times for STAR return trips. Other Virginia jurisdictions are more lenient in this regard.
- Red Top can use add-on drivers to help late trips get back on schedule.
- Direct download will eventually eliminate many of the problems.

During the meeting Mr. Sawyer and Mr. Berg took notes and researched some of the reported incidents on the spot. They apologized profusely for the problems and vowed to keep working diligently to correct them as soon as possible.

The County will continue to monitor the situation closely, and will ensure that Red Top takes all steps necessary to provide the level of service specified in their contract.

Adjournment 6:40 PM

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, June 21, 2018, 5:00pm, Courthouse Plaza Azalea Conference Room