September 28, 2016

Linda Ford, Director
FTA Office of Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: FTA Inquiry No. 2016-0058-IN – Between-Car Barriers on WMATA 7000-Series Railcars

Dear Ms. Ford:

This letter responds to a June 28, 2016 letter from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) directing the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to perform testing of the between-car barriers used on the ends of the 7000-series rail cars.

The 7000-series rail cars have a dual between-car barrier system. On an eight-car train, the traditional chain barriers are installed between the first and second cars, third and fourth cars, fifth and sixth cars, and seventh and eighth cars; and the new rubber barriers are installed between the second and third cars, fourth and fifth cars, and sixth and seventh cars.

On August 18, 2016 at 10:00 a.m., WMATA performed testing of the detectability of the between-car barriers by people who are blind/low vision. The testing took place at the Greenbelt Metrorail station, with an eight-car train positioned on the inbound side of the platform. The test involved six participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Disability Type and Mobility Aid</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Blind - white cane</td>
<td>WMATA Accessibility Advisory Committee Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Blind - service animal</td>
<td>American Council of the Blind (ACB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Low Vision - none</td>
<td>National Council Citizens with Low Vision</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Blind - white cane</td>
<td>National Federation of Blind - MD Chapter</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Low Vision - white cane</td>
<td>Virginia Tech</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Blind - white cane</td>
<td>Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind</td>
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Testing

WMATA facilitated two tests of barrier detectability:

1. **Station Entrance to Platform to 7000-Series Car Door** – In this test, the participants were asked to: (a) begin at the station entrance; (b) navigate to the station platform; and (c) locate themselves wherever they chose on the platform and “wait for the train to arrive.” At this point, WMATA conducted a mock train arrival (i.e., arriving announcement, door opening announcement, and door opening). The participants were then asked to board the train.

   This test was designed to measure the participants’ ability to safely board a 7000-series vehicle with or without detecting the between-car barrier.

2. **Random Placement** – In this test, WMATA staff randomly placed the participants at random points on the station platform lined up in front of various sections of the train: door, traditional between-car barrier, new between-car barrier, or body of a train car.

   This exercise was designed to test the detectability of the between-car barriers. Participants were asked to: (a) walk to the edge of the platform; (b) identify what part of the train they were standing in front of; (c) for those standing in front of a between-car barrier (traditional or new); asked what type of between-car barrier they were standing in front of; and (d) navigate from the platform edge (random location) onto the rail car.

Results

Test 1: Four of the six participants took part in Test 1 (two participants arrived after the conclusion of Test 1). All four participants were able to successfully navigate from the station entrance to the platform and on to the train without incident.

Test 2: All six participants were able to navigate safely to the platform edge and to successfully detect at which part of the train they were located. The four participants who were placed in front of a between-car barrier were able to accurately detect the barrier and identify the type; and all six participants were able to successfully navigate onto the train without difficulty or incident.

Conclusion and Next Steps

WMATA took great strides to ensure that safety and accessibility compliance were the highest priorities during the design and decision-making process leading to the dual between-car barrier concept. WMATA remains confident in the safety and accessibility of the design, and in its compliance with all
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the safety and accessibility of the design, and in its compliance with all applicable law. Even though our testing confirmed the safety of the current design, after consulting with our customers and the FTA, WMATA has decided to conform all 7000 series between-car barriers to the design currently in existence on all other cars in revenue service. WMATA will install traditional chain barriers between all cars and has already engaged the 7000-series vendor in this decision. Cars that are still in production and all future orders will have the chain barriers installed prior to delivery to WMATA, and cars currently in revenue service will be retrofitted over the course of the next 8-15 months.

For additional information or questions, please contact Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services at 202-962-2100 or ckent@wmata.com. You may contact me directly at 202-962-1000 or at pwiedefeld@wmata.com.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Paul J. Wiedefeld  
General Manager and  
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Patrick Lavin, Chief Safety Officer  
Joseph Leader, Chief Operating Officer  
Christian T. Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services  
FTA Region III