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March 8, 2011

Ron Rydstrom, Director
Office of Marketing, Metro

Lorraine Taylor, Manager, Corporate Sales
Office of Marketing, Metro

Dear Mr. Rydstrom and Ms. Taylor:

Thank you for attending the February 7th Riders' Advisory Council Bus Committee meeting and for providing updates on several recent and future planned changes to fare media that will impact Metrobus riders. Bus committee members found the information you provided very helpful, as so much of the information was new to us. As a result, our discussion led to several suggestions pertaining to improved communication with bus customers and with social service agencies as well as to the sale of fare media.

Based on the report of its Bus Committee, the Riders' Advisory Council recommends the following:

1. Metro should tailor its communication format for bus-related matters to better suit bus riders.

While Metro staff have produced numerous brochures, take- one flyers, and signage to educate bus riders on changes to fare media and other matters, WMATA has a poor track record of placing up-to-date information on its buses (e.g., correct bus route pamphlets, brochures regarding fare media changes, etc.). As a result, many bus riders do not even look to find out if there is a "new" brochure informing them of upcoming changes. Additionally, this approach requires riders to actively seek out information that they aren't aware exists.

Furthermore, some bus riders cannot read the information provided in these pamphlets. WMATA might find it more effective to announce upcoming changes on the bus by using the audio announcement system, requesting bus operators to make announcements periodically throughout the route, and sending press releases directly to social service agencies, local government officials, neighborhood associations etc. that interact with a high number of bus riders to ensure the message is received by as many bus riders as possible.

We believe that verbal communication combined with clear, simple and prominently displayed signage is the most effective communication strategy to reach individual bus riders during the course of their travels. Of course, somewhat lengthier written materials that ensure accessibility to all passengers, including passengers who are deaf or who have hearing impairments, are also important. But these lengthier written materials are entirely inadequate on their own.

2. Metro should identify and communicate with its target audiences early and often in anticipation of any significant changes to either Metro's services or to its fare media.

As staff acknowledged, there was inadequate communication with social service organizations regarding the discontinuation of the weekly flash pass. While a press release was issued in October, a meeting to discuss the changes with social service organizations and other organizations impacted by the change was not convened until January 21, 2011, leaving those organizations only eight days to fully understand the process and alternative fare media options for the thousands of people they serve. Future communications efforts should identify particular groups or organizations that will be most affected by any upcoming changes and ensure that they are targeted as part of the communication process.

3. Metro should examine the placement of SmarTrip card charging stations for bus riders (including charging stations that enable the loading of 7-day bus passes), and better communicate to bus riders where they can find a charging station location.

While being able to load SmarTrip cards on buses is essential, a bus can be delayed when there are many riders trying to load or re-load their SmarTrip cards on that bus. This delay can be alleviated if riders are well aware of charging stations throughout the metropolitan area that will allow them to reload their card BEFORE boarding the bus.

Metro should consider placing more charging stations at locations that serve multiple bus routes and are better spread out throughout the region. For example, in DC the current SmarTrip retail outlet locations are as follows: 56 locations in Northwest DC, 7 in Northeast DC, 4 in Southwest DC, and 7 in Southeast DC. We encourage Metro to secure other retail outlets so that they can better serve the entire population of DC. Metro should also consider adding the ability to load 7-day passes at Passes/Farecard machines in Metrorail stations. Rail stations are already staffed and open seven days per week, are distributed widely and evenly throughout the region, are often major bus transfer points and their locations are well-known to members of the public.

4. Metro should develop a performance metric to determine if the retail establishments that have a SmarTrip charging station are properly trained to use the charging station and if an employee thoroughly trained in using the machine is available at all times.

Bus passengers have voiced concern that this is often not the case. Metro should recognize that these retail establishments are an extension of Metro because they are selling a Metro product. Therefore, it is in Metro's best interest to make sure the same level of service is provided at these retail establishments as at a Metro sales office. We also recommend that Metro explore the possibility of offering a centralized training to employees who work at external SmarTrip sales/charging locations, such as CVS.

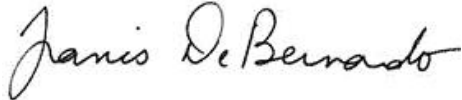
5. We encourage Metro staff to continue efforts to make SmarTrip and the SmarTrip 7-day bus pass easier to load and more accessible to bus riders.

For example, we anxiously await the capability to load up to 4 flash passes at a time, to load flash passes using SmartBenefits, and to load flash passes online. These new capabilities will not only benefit individual bus riders, but will also make the elimination of the paper flash pass much more manageable for the social service organizations that serve the most vulnerable

populations in our region. Currently, these social service agencies have to buy thousands of tokens weekly to meet the needs of the thousands of people they serve. Needless to say, this is cumbersome, both for the social service organizations and for WMATA.

Thank you in advance for your attention to these matters. We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve communication and service to all Metrobus customers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank DeBernardo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Frank DeBernardo, Chairman

cc: Members, Metro Board of Directors
Barbara Richardson, Assistant General Manager for Cust. Service and Communications, Metro
Raj Srinath, Treasurer, Metro