

Ben Ball  
Chair, WMATA Riders' Advisory Council  
Remarks to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Board of Directors  
January 24, 2013

Chair Hudgins, Members of the Board:

My name is Ben Ball, and in January I was elected as chair of the Metro Riders' Advisory Council. This is my second year on the RAC, where I proudly represent the District of Columbia.

As we all know, Metro is in the process of addressing its past while at the same time building its future. Track work, increasing fares, realignment of bus routes – all of these are required for Metro to once again take its position as one of our country's premier transit systems. Riders know this, and have proven extremely patient because they realize that in the long term, they will benefit.

And yet, riders are still caught in the middle. Many have abandoned Metrorail on the weekends, when unrelenting track work wreaks havoc on schedules and routines. Others have crunched the numbers and discovered that driving their cars into work makes better economic sense than a daily bus ride. Still more have left a system that they feel is inconvenient, untrustworthy, or even unsafe.

The cost of bringing Metro back is significant, and riders feel it – in their wallets, in opportunities missed and discovered, in the very geography of where they choose to live and work.

Yet as we work together to bring Metro forward, I want to remind the Board and Metro staff that transit riders desperately want them to succeed. We are on Metro's side. In spite of everything, Metro is a critical part of who we are and what we do.

All we ask is that in everything you do – every decision you make, every budget you approve, every idea you release into the public realm – you think of riders first. That's where the RAC stands ready to help. We are here to advocate for the interests of riders from the ground up, and also to provide rider feedback on ideas that come from the top down.

The RAC is working to fulfill its mission more efficiently and effectively. Through our new committee structure, we will cover more ground. With some procedural enhancements, we hope to improve the quality of the feedback we provide. And in the coming year, we hope to broaden our interaction with the riding public so we can better reflect and respond to their views.

Over the coming year, the RAC hopes to work with the Board and WMATA staff on improving the rider experience, promoting communication with the riding public, and laying the groundwork for a customer-oriented transit system that will be enjoyed for decades to come.

Thank you all once again for your service to the region's transit customers.