

Riders' Advisory Council

July 7, 2010

I. Call to Order:

Mr. DeBernardo called the July meeting of the Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:34 p.m.

The following members were present:

Frank DeBernardo, Chair, Prince George's County
David Alpert, Vice-Chair, District of Columbia
Victoria Wilder, Vice-Chair, Montgomery County

Kelsi Bracmort, District of Columbia
Sharon Conn, Prince George's County
Penny Everline, Arlington County
Chris Farrell, Montgomery County
Robert Petrine, Fairfax County
Carl Seip, At-Large
Pat Sheehan, At-Large/Accessibility Advisory Committee Chairman
Lorraine Silva, Arlington County
Clayton Sinyai, Fairfax County
Evelyn Tomaszewski, Fairfax County
Carol Walker, District of Columbia
Ron Whiting, Montgomery County
Diana Zinkl, District of Columbia

II. Public Comment Period:

Anna Socrates, representing the Transit Riders United of Greenbelt (TRU-G) asked the Council, on behalf of TRU-G, to reject Metro's proposal to cut bus service in the Greenbelt area. She told the Council that a majority of TRU-G members voted to oppose the planned bus service cuts as proposed. Ms. Socrates said that Metro is engaging in a "semantic game" by calling this a restructuring rather than service cuts. Ms. Socrates noted that the proposal consolidates three routes into two and eliminates another route altogether. She said that riders had concerns that the proposed restructuring would result in:

- longer travel times;
- shorter span-of-service;
- required transfers to reach popular destinations vs. current one-seat rides;
- less frequency.

Ms. Socrates said that she thinks that Greenbelt riders would get worse service under the proposal. She told the Council that TRU-G is asking that Metro retain current service with some specific efficiency improvements – splitting R12 @ Greenbelt Station to improve on-time performance, rerouting R12 to

Lastner Lane to serve currently unserved areas, retaining T16/T17 service on Hillside and Laurel Hill, and eliminating of C2 service to Beltway Plaza in early morning. She said that she proposed plan would worsen service to the eastern part of Greenbelt.

Ms. Socrates explained that that there was community participation in transit planning, dating back a year-and-a-half, prior to the latest Metro budget crisis. She said that there needs to be more time to evaluate the proposed restructuring and to develop a better plan. She asked that the R.A.C. support TRU-G in its opposition to Greenbelt restructuring.

Mr. DeBernardo said that he is very familiar with this plan, as he is a Greenbelt resident. He said that he had advance notice of this concern and explained that he has asked Ms. Everline, as chair of the Metrobus Committee, to look into this matter further with TRU-G members and with WMATA staff . Ms. Everline said that the Council would need to get a better understanding of this issue before taking any kind of position and suggested setting up a meeting of the Committee with Metro staff to discuss the matter further.

Mr. Alpert asked what the timeframe is for Metro to make a decision on this matter. Mr. Pasek said that the matter is scheduled to come before the Board in September. He noted that this matter isn't on the Board's July agenda and that the Board will not have a meeting in August.

Linda Lee raised concerns about bus drivers being hired back who had been suspended by Metro, one who was suspended for causing a fatal accident and another who punched a police officer dressed as McGruff the Crime Dog. She said that children need role models and these bus drivers are not providing those role models. Ms. Lee also noted that the bus driver in question may assault a passenger, based on his previous behavior of assaulting McGruff and that this would complicate driver-police relations, which could affect passengers' safety.

Ms. Lee also noted that she has witnessed several instances of children misbehaving on the bus as well as running in front of or behind buses. She said that she has also witnessed people standing in front of the yellow "standee line" on crowded buses along with children standing among tightly-packed crowds on buses, both of which she feels are safety concerns, especially if buses come to an abrupt stop. Ms. Lee suggested that there need to be better rules for how parents should handle their children when using transit and that bus drivers need some way for bus drivers to report or otherwise address safety infractions by passengers.

Mr. DeBernardo noted that he had recently had a casual conversation with Peter Benjamin, the Metro Board Chair about the rehiring issue and he said that a lot of the issues with rehiring are based on arbitration findings, which do not give Metro discretion, but which also raise concerns with riders.

Mr. Sinyai noted that an arbitrator investigated all of the facts in both of these cases before deciding to reinstate the drivers, and may have had more information than was presented in the media about these cases.

Dr. Conn and Dr. Bracmort arrived at 6:45 p.m.

III. Approval of Agenda:

Without objection, the agenda was approved as presented.

IV. Vital Signs Report:

Mr. DeBernardo then introduced Rick Harcum, from Metro's Office of Performance, to provide an overview of Metro's "Vital Signs" performance report.

Mr. Harcum provided the Council with some background on his history at Metro. He explained that until he took his current job in Metro's Office of Performance, he was Metro's Budget Director. He noted that to improve its performance, Metro is measuring as many of its activities as possible. He noted that Metro was hoping to follow the adage that "What gets measured gets managed."

Mr. Harcum explained that Metro had tried instituting performance measurement systems in the past and they never really had staying power, largely because they were imposed from the top down. He said that in developing the Vital Signs report, staff from the Office of Performance had meetings with staff from all of the departments within Metro to assess their departments' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. He said that several common themes came out from these meetings:

- Lack of internal communication
- Departments don't work well together
- No one knows what goes on in headquarters.

Mr. Harcum said that the analysis revealed that Metro operates in a "tactical mode" – reacting to current crises rather than thinking about what they *should* be doing.

He told the Council that that the Office of Performance doesn't want to be Metro's "performance police," i.e. to be adversarial with departments or taking on an enforcement role in getting departments to meet their performance targets. He said that the Office of Performance is focusing on helping operations staff with analysis and thoughtful reflection about what is going on in their departments, with the result that departments and field offices are more readily asking for help in measuring their performance.

Mr. Harcum said that the Vital Signs report tries to report on the "right" measures that show system performance without providing overwhelming amounts of data. He then reviewed the performance measures contained within the report along with the General Manager's 21-point action plan, which is also included in the report. He noted that the performance measurements include a target along with information on what factors may be affecting performance and what steps Metro staff is making to improve performance.

Mr. Harcum explained that the report will allow for policy discussions if Metro doesn't meet its performance targets after a period of trying. Mr. Harcum said that if Metro is unable meet its targets after a period, it suggests that these targets may be set too high. He explained that some of the performance targets in the Vital Signs report are historical and that their origins are not all clear to current Metro staff, but that staff is working to find the basis for these targets.

Mr. Harcum added that the format of the reports are standardized to help users find information and focus on the performance data presented rather than on the reports' format. He noted that Metro also provides a

“Scorecard” on Metro’s website that combines the information in the Vital Signs report with other measures, such as Metro’s Customer Satisfaction report and financial measures.

Mr. DeBernardo then opened the floor to questions.

Mr. Alpert said that he appreciated that Metro is disclosing these metrics. He suggested that it might be helpful for Metro to identify certain targets that it specifically believes that it can improve in the near future – he said that it would be a good thing for Metro to come back in a year or so and demonstrate improvements in certain categories. Mr. Alpert noted that not all of the factors that go into each measurement are under Metro’s control – he said that bus on-time performance, for example, was influenced by factors outside of Metro’s control, but that Metro could identify the elements that it can control and report on its actions in improving those. He also suggested adding greater specificity to the General Manager’s goals.

Mr. Sheehan asked whether the information provided was color-coded (red, yellow, green). Mr. Harcum responded that only a small portion of the information was represented in that way and added that the IT department is working to make the website more accessible.

Dr. Bracmort asked whether 2009 was the first year that Metro collected the data is provided in the Vital Signs report. Mr. Harcum responded that Metro had been collecting all of this data for a long time but that this is the first time that Metro had compiled it within a comprehensive report. Dr. Bracmort then asked if Metro is able to identify that it hasn’t been meeting its targets over the several years that it has been measuring this data, what changes will it make to try and reach those targets. Mr. Harcum said that this discussion will likely be reflected in Metro’s discussions on its budget for the next year – if some aspect of performance isn’t meeting targets, there would need to be a discussion of resource allocation and whether more resources would be needed to meet goals. He said that this would allow discussions of performance to be tied to discussion of resource allocation.

Mr. Whiting noted Mr. Harcum had explained that the Office of Performance was unclear on the origin of some of the performance goals and asked who was raising that issue with the individual departments to see where these goals originated. Mr. Harcum responded that his office was researching each of these goals with the individual departments. He said that this has been made more difficult by turnover at Metro, and if Metro is unable to determine why a target it set at a certain level, staff will work to develop a new target.

Ms. Walker asked why financial measures for Fairfax County were broken out separately and whether similar information was provided for any other jurisdictions. Mr. Harcum responded that the Fairfax figures were provided in that specific format due to the specific requirements of the County’s own performance management system. Ms. Walker added that she was very impressed by the report and that it presents a good overview of what is going on in the organization.

Ms. Tomaszewski asked whether there were any metrics that measured Metro’s communications with its customers, specifically as they would relate to Objective 5.1 on p. 5: “Enhance communication with customers, employees, Union leadership, Board, media and other stakeholders.” Mr. Harcum responded that there is not a measurement for that at present; he explained that Metro is not showing a measurement

that is directly tied to every objective listed to avoid overwhelming the Board and the public with too much data. He said that the report tries to separate tactical and strategic measurements, and also noted that all goals are not equally weighted – for example, “Creating a safer organization” is weighted more heavily than “Enhance Metro’s image.” Ms. Tomaszewski noted that improving communications with riders can improve safety.

Mr. Seip said that he thought the report was very useful without being overwhelming. He added that he thought it would be helpful to put in deadlines for Metro to meet certain targets. He said that it would also be useful to show in the report the most recent actions taken which could impact the performance for each particular metric. Mr. Harcum said that the R.A.C. should point out instances when the report seems to repeat itself from month to month.

Mr. Seip also said that he didn’t see any measurement of rail reliability in the report, which would be useful because it seems that this has been declining recently. Mr. Harcum replied that rail reliability isn’t currently included in the report, but that it will likely be added. He explained that it will likely consist of two measurements, one focused on rail fleet reliability and the other on the condition of Metro’s rail infrastructure, which does not have an equivalent for bus. Mr. Harcum added that there is also a “gaping miss” in terms of Metro’s measuring its capital performance and whether or not its facilities are in a “state of good repair.” He said that while there are some statistics that help measure capital performance, such as average fleet age, additional measurements are needed to get a full picture.

Mr. Seip added that it would be helpful to include some kind of communications metric especially since Metro has had problems in the past in communicating with customers.

Mr. Petrine said that he thought the report was a good effort and said that he agreed with other members’ comments.

Ms. Everline said that she appreciated the report and that the three additions previously discussed would be helpful in adding information. She asked whether information could be added about NextBus performance. Mr. Harcum responded that there had been a discussion among staff on whether or not to include NextBus performance information especially because NextBus provides so much high-quality information, and the consensus was that getting NextBus working was an internal management issue rather than a policy issue – Metro should get the system working properly, period. He said that as a policy question, the Vital Signs report is providing information on bus on-time performance.

Mr. Farrell arrived at 7:16 p.m.

Ms. Silva noted that at some point, the performance targets were achievable. She said that as a first step, Metro should try and meet these targets before trying to change them. Mr. Harcum said that he and other staff agreed with Ms. Silva’s assessment, and that they consciously left these old targets in place when launching the Vital Signs report and will leave them there for a certain period. He added that if Metro goes a year or so without reaching a particular target, staff will have to look at why the target isn’t being reached. Mr. Harcum also provided an example a change that was made to a particular target. He explained that because new buses were arriving more slowly than originally expected, staff reduced the

bus reliability target, since Metro was now operating more older buses than initially forecast and these older buses are more susceptible to breakdowns.

Ms. Zinkl said that she thought it would make sense to have an objective aligned with all of the goals – and to define the goals so that they were more specifically related to Metro (i.e. Metro only has so much influence to improve region’s economy, etc.). Mr. Harcum noted that there will be an annual performance report which will have information that has measures tied to each of the objectives.

Ms. Zinkl added that Metro also needs to provide better definitions of the data it uses in developing these measurements along with the sources of that data. She said that she thinks that it may make sense to include the definitions listed in the appendix in the body of the report or on the same screen as the performance measurements, if shown on a webpage.

Dr. Conn noted that the NextBus system provides quantifiable data that can be used and that Metro should use that data to look at the scheduled and actual arrival times of buses. She also noted that the Vital Signs report didn’t include any customer service measurements, such as the number of calls to Metro’s customer service line and how those calls related to other performance metrics shown in the report. Mr. Harcum said that this may be included in the annual performance report.

Mr. Sinyai asked about the methods used to produce the data, specifically the sample size used to calculate bus on-time performance and the sample used to create the MetroAccess on-time performance measurement. Mr. Harcum responded that he didn’t know because the measurements were provided by the individual departments. He noted that there are certain measurements required in the MetroAccess contract that the contractor reports to Metro. Mr. Sheehan added that there are several measures reported by the MetroAccess contractor.

Mr. Sinyai also asked how Metrobus on-time performance compared to ten years ago and whether Metro had statistics on other bus systems’ on-time performance. Mr. Harcum said that he wasn’t sure whether Metrobus on-time performance was better ten years ago and noted that, regarding comparisons with other transit agencies, each transit agency measures its performance differently, so comparisons are difficult. He added that the Federal Transit Administration is considering writing national performance standards as part of the next transportation funding bill.

Mr. DeBernardo commented that he didn’t think that the measurement for bus on-time performance was effective because it allows buses up to two minutes early to still be counted as “on-time.” Mr. Harcum said that he would like to have a broader discussion with the Council on whether or not the specific targets and measurements Metro is using are appropriate.

Mr. DeBernardo thanked Mr. Harcum for his presentation.

V. Comments on RAC and AAC Chair Reports:

Mr. DeBernardo asked whether any members had questions on the R.A.C. or AAC Chair reports.

Mr. Sheehan said that the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) had asked him to bring up two issues related to railcar design. The AAC has expressed the opinion that having automated announcements on new Metro railcars is an important issue. He said that the Board will have to make a decision on whether

or not to include these announcements on the new railcars and that the AAC would like the Riders' Council to raise this issue with the Board. He said that the AAC had additional comments about the proposed railcar design, specifically that it would like to change the wheelchair access locations currently proposed.

Ms. Everline asked whether the AAC had ever gone on record with its positions on these issues. Mr. Sheehan said that the AAC is on record about these issues and can draft letters to support those positions, though it had not yet done so.

Ms. Tomaszewski made a motion that the Riders' Council support automated announcements in the new Metro rail cars. Mr. Petrine seconded this motion. Ms. Walker said that it might be a good idea for the R.A.C. to work on a joint letter with the AAC to the Board on this issue. Mr. DeBernardo asked for a vote on sending a joint letter to the Board on this issue.

In favor: Mr. DeBernardo, Mr. Alpert, Ms. Wilder, Dr. Bracmort, Dr. Conn, Ms. Everline, Mr. Farrell, Mr. Petrine, Mr. Seip, Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Silva, Mr. Sinyai, Ms. Tomaszewski, Ms. Walker, Mr. Whiting

Opposed: none

Abstentions: Ms. Zinkl was out of the room during this vote.

Mr. Pasek provided details about the upcoming Transportation Planning Board Citizens' Advisory Committee meeting which Mr. DeBernardo had been invited to and which had been mentioned in his report.

Ms. Everline asked Mr. Sheehan whether there is a timeline for comments on the 7000-series design. Mr. Pasek said that he isn't aware of any upcoming Board actions related to the design of these railcars, but that he would make sure. Mr. Sheehan suggested that the AAC committee responsible for this issue get together with R.A.C. members to draft correspondence to the Board.

Ms. Wilder asked about the currently-proposed placement of wheelchair locations. Mr. Sheehan said the AAC's concern about the proposed wheelchair locations was that they would make entry and exit difficult due to its placement near the middle doors and that they would prefer that they were moved to the ends of the railcar.

VI. Committee Reports:

Metrobus Committee:

Ms. Everline noted that the Metrobus committee met and discussed customer communications, especially during times when service is disrupted. She said that there would be additional discussion on this topic at the committee's meeting scheduled for July 12th.

Dr. Conn left the meeting at 7:47 p.m.

Long-Term Projects Committee:

Mr. Alpert gave an overview of the most recent meeting of the Long-Term Projects Committee which focused on the design for Metro's next generation of railcars, the 7000-series. He said that based on the discussion, many of the interior design decisions do not seem to have been formally or finally decided upon and that there may still be opportunities for changes, even though the Board has approved their purchase. He said that there was some discussion and debate at the meeting about having longitudinal versus transverse seating and Metro's decision to have transverse seating in the new cars based on safety concerns that staff wasn't able to fully quantify. Mr. Alpert added that there was also discussion about the number of doors on the new railcars.

Mr. Seip asked why the consists weren't being articulated. Mr. Alpert responded that staff said there were homeland security concerns with articulating train consists and that Metro's maintenance facilities are not set up to accommodate articulated railcars. In response to a question from Ms. Wilder, Mr. Alpert said that articulated cars would help ease crowding by making it easier for rider to spread out.

Mr. Alpert said that, if it was interested, the Council could consider sending a letter to the Board noting its concerns about future capacity as they relate to these new railcars and issues like seating arrangement and articulation.

VII. Discussion Item – Letter to the Council of Governments on WMATA Board Governance Review:

Mr. Alpert provided a brief history of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (COG) and Board of Trade (BOT) task force that had recently been formed to make recommendations on Metro's governance structure. He said that he and members of other transit advocacy groups didn't think that it was appropriate for the Council of Governments to join on to the BOT's group without including any riders or transit advocates on the task force. Mr. Alpert explained that he wanted to see whether the Council wanted to express concern about this issue and advocate for the Riders' Council and other rider groups to be given more of a voice in the governance review process.

Ms. Walker asked which elected officials were included on the task force. Mr. Alpert said that there were several local elected officials on the COG Board, such as D.C. Councilman Kwame Brown, Fairfax County Supervisor Penny Gross and the Mayor of the City of Greenbelt.

Mr. Sheehan said that he didn't understand where this Board of Trade group got its authority or legitimacy to recommend changes to Metro's governance. He said that he expected that the task force would make recommendations for changes to Metro's Compact, which would then need to be approved by the Compact's signatories. He noted that anyone is able to lobby for changes to the Compact. Mr. Alpert added that the Board of Trade believes that its standing in the region gives it some influence and by including participation from COG, the task force's recommendations would gain more support.

Ms. Everline noted that COG and the BOT have worked together on Metro issues in the past, specifically on the issue of dedicated funding for Metro. She noted, however, that based on her attendance at a task force meeting, its members didn't seem to be very knowledgeable about transit and there has not been a

lot of research conducted on transit agency governance. She said that she is concerned about the lack of rider representation on the task force.

Mr. Sinyai asked whether COG functions as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Washington region. Mr. Alpert said that the Transportation Planning Board is the region's MPO, and COG serves as the TPB's host.

Ms. Walker suggested that there be more education on this subject before the Council takes any positions and that if members are interested in pursuing this issue further, they should develop a draft letter that can be presented for the Council to discuss and debate. Mr. Seip expressed his agreement with Ms. Walker's suggestion. He also noted that it would also be possible for the R.A.C. to make its own recommendations rather than simply commenting on the recommendations of the COG/BOT task force.

Ms. Zinkl suggested that if the Council is going to draft a letter on this issue, it should look at previous efforts undertaken on this subject.

Mr. Alpert moved to form a committee to examine this issue further. This motion was seconded by Ms. Everline.

Mr. Seip asked whether the purpose of the committee is to ask to participate in the COG/BOT task force or if it is to make recommendations on Metro governance. Mr. DeBernardo said that it would be an exploratory committee on the topic, so there is no predetermined outcome.

In favor: Mr. DeBernardo, Mr. Alpert, Dr. Bracmort, Ms. Everline, Mr. Farrell, Mr. Petrine, Mr. Seip, Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Silva, Mr. Sinyai, Ms. Tomaszewski, Ms. Walker, Mr. Whiting

Opposed: None

Abstentions: Ms. Wilder

VIII. Letter on Communication of Fare Changes:

Ms. Wilder directed members' attention to the letter that she had circulated prior to the meeting. She said that the letter had initially intended to address the Board's decision-making process regarding the fare increase and its lack of transparency, but it instead raises concerns about how the details of the fare increase is being communicated to customers. She noted that there was a great deal of confusion about the details of the fare increase at the June Riders' Council meeting and the June Board meeting, specifically with regard to certain bus fares and MetroAccess fare policy. She then reviewed the text of the letter.

Mr. Pasek noted that the 5¢ fare surcharge referenced in the letter had only been approved in concept by the Board but had not been approved for specific stations.

Mr. Seip said that he would be more comfortable expressing general concerns about the communications related to the fare increase and perhaps listing the items referenced in the letter as some examples of those concerns, rather than focusing only on those specific items.

Ms. Walker moved that the Council send the letter as presented. This motion was seconded by Ms. Everline.

Ms. Walker suggested adding text to note that the Council has other, more general concerns in addition to those listed in the letter. Mr. Seip suggested adding language stating that the general public remains confused about the scope and complexity of the fare increases, providing the three examples put forward at the June Riders' Council meeting and urging the Board to address these specific examples in the larger context of improving communication on the fare increases.

Mr. Petrine said that the changes Mr. Seip suggested may be achieved by reorganizing the text of the letter, though he noted that he felt that the overall communications efforts on the fare increase had been less than complete.

Ms. Zinkl suggested separating out the Council's concerns and its recommendations in the letter.

Mr. Sheehan noted that there is still confusion about the MetroAccess fares based on the information received by the AAC. He added that materials in alternate formats are generally provided by Metro's Office of ADA programs.

Mr. Seip moved to amend the letter to note that "general confusion remains because of the scope and complexity of the fare increases," and that the Board must improve communications. Ms. Wilder asked whether the confusion is because of the complexity of the fare increase or due to the lack of communication. Mr. Seip said that it is likely due to both. He then restated his amendment. Ms. Tomaszewski seconded this motion. Ms. Walker suggested a change to the wording of the amendment, which Mr. Seip accepted.

Mr. DeBernardo called for a vote on Mr. Seip's amendment.

In favor: Mr. DeBernardo, Mr. Alpert, Ms. Wilder, Dr. Bracmort, Ms. Everline, Mr. Farrell, Mr. Petrine, Mr. Seip, Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Silva, Mr. Sinyai, Ms. Tomaszewski, Ms. Walker, Mr. Whiting, Ms. Zinkl
Opposed: None
Abstentions: None

Mr. Seip's amendment was approved. Mr. DeBernardo then called a vote on the full letter, as amended.

In favor: Mr. DeBernardo, Mr. Alpert, Ms. Wilder, Dr. Bracmort, Ms. Everline, Mr. Farrell, Mr. Petrine, Mr. Seip, Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Silva, Mr. Sinyai, Ms. Tomaszewski, Ms. Walker, Mr. Whiting, Ms. Zinkl
Opposed: None
Abstentions: None

The letter was approved as amended.

Mr. DeBernardo noted that the Council will be inviting the Barbara Richardson, Metro's Assistant General Manager for Communications to attend its August meeting. He asked that if members had specific questions for Ms. Richardson, they circulate those questions via email prior to the meeting.

Ms. Zinkl noted that she will be sharing transit pictures from her recent vacation in the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

IX. Adjournment:

Without objection, Mr. DeBernardo adjourned the meeting at 8:31 p.m.