

Metro Riders' Advisory Council
June 1, 2011

I. Call to Order:

Mr. DeBernardo called the June 2011 meeting of the Metro Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:32 p.m.

The following members were present:

Frank DeBernardo, Chair, Prince George's County
David Alpert, District of Columbia Vice Chair
Penny Everline, Virginia Vice Chair, Arlington County
Christopher Farrell, Maryland Vice Chair, Montgomery County
Kelsi Bracmort, District of Columbia
Jamie Bresner, City of Alexandria
Stephen Clermont, Fairfax County
Patricia Daniels, District of Columbia
Dharm Guruswamy, At-Large
Joseph Kitchen, Prince George's County
Chris Schmitt, Fairfax County
Lorraine Silva, Arlington County
Deborah Titus, Fairfax County
Carol Carter Walker, District of Columbia
Ron Whiting, Montgomery County
Diana Zinkl, District of Columbia

II. Public Comment:

There were no comments from members of the public.

III. Approval of Agenda:

Without objection, the agenda was approved as presented.

IV. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes:

Without objection, the meeting minutes for May 2011 were approved as presented.

Mr. DeBernardo recognized Metro's new spokesperson, Dan Stessel, who was in the audience.

V. Station Naming Policy:

Mr. DeBernardo introduced Jennifer Green, Metro's Director of Strategic Communications, and Tom Harrington, from Metro's Office of Long Range Planning to provide a presentation on Metro's station naming policy and possible changes to that policy.

Ms. Zinkl arrived at 6:41 p.m.

Following Ms. Green's and Mr. Harrington's presentation, Mr. DeBernardo opened the floor to questions and comments.

Mr. Alpert suggested that Metro consider a policy that would define how far from a station a particular point of interest can be located and still be included as part of the station name. He also asked whether Metro staff was looking for feedback on changing existing station names to comply with the naming policy and whether staff was looking for feedback on the proposed names for the Dulles Corridor extension stations. Ms. Green responded that Metro would take feedback on both. Mr. Alpert said that he thought that Metro should change existing station names to make them comply with this policy and that the station names proposed for the Dulles corridor extension are bland and repetitive. He added that the proposed names would not comply with Metro's policy guideline of making station names unique or evocative.

Mr. Farrell arrived at 6:50 p.m.

Mr. Kitchen asked about the cost of changing a station's name and whether it was cheaper to change several station names at once. Mr. Harrington replied that cost estimates vary depending on the type and scope of the name change. He explained that for the upcoming Blue/Yellow line realignment, planned for 2012, staff has estimated that it will cost approximately \$2 million to change all of the affected signage. He added that to replace all of the system maps in railcars and in rail stations is estimated to cost from \$300,000 - \$500,000. Mr. Harrington said that for a system-wide change, costs could be \$1 million or more. Mr. Kitchen asked whether there were savings in changing multiple station names at once, as opposed to the cumulative cost of doing each renaming separately. Mr. Harrington said it would be somewhat more efficient by making multiple station name changes all at once.

Mr. Kitchen also expressed concerns about changing station names, and said that many people who live near Metro stations identify with the station and wouldn't want the name changed. He noted that the station names represent community history and that Metro needs to be sensitive to that history. He added that he was concerned about Metro's proposed timeline for making changes and suggested that staff extend the timeline in order to conduct additional community outreach.

Mr. Clermont asked about the costs when station names were changed or appended previously. Mr. Harrington said that he couldn't provide costs for previous station renamings but noted that there were several "one-off" changes several years ago. Mr. Clermont noted that a substantial amount of resources had gone into changing station names to what they are now and said that he had concerns about using additional resources to change those names again.

Ms. Everline said that she also has concerns about the costs of changing station names. She said that she also understood the concerns mentioned in the presentation about the accessibility of station names and that it is important for individuals with cognitive disabilities that station names be distinctive. She said that the names proposed for Silver line stations would be difficult for individuals with cognitive disabilities.

Mr. Whiting noted that if Metro is making changes to station names, it should ensure that the new signage is large enough to be easily read, especially signage and maps displayed in railcars. He also suggested more sophisticated electronic station name displays in railcars. Mr. Harrington said that new digital displays would be included in Metro's new 7000-series railcars.

Ms. Walker said that she would like to see more opportunities for greater community outreach as part of the station naming policy. She added that infrequent riders would be especially confused by similar-sounding station names.

Ms. Titus suggested that if Metro is getting feedback from the public on the station naming policy that it should also get feedback on whether or not the public thinks changing names is worth the cost. She also suggested specifically looking for feedback on keeping station names the same.

Mr. Guruswamy suggested that Metro look at other major subway systems' station naming policies and show how their policies would compare to the policy proposed by Metro.

Ms. Zinkl said that it may be useful for Metro to look at how advances in technology in terms of Metro's ability to display information on signage may relate to its station naming policy. She added that she thought that, on the whole, it is useful to list major attractions as part of station names and the usefulness of including those attractions outweighs the need to keep station names short. Ms. Zinkl also said that many communities may be resistant to changing their Metro station name, and that she isn't sure whether changing station names will be worth the negative feedback that Metro will get from communities and the negative feelings the proposed changes may generate towards Metro.

Mr. Alpert asked a follow-up question about the incremental cost of changing station names. Mr. Harrington responded that changing the name of a station on the Red line, which won't be

affected by the planned realignment of service on the Blue and Yellow lines, would cost approximately \$100,000. He said that other types of changes may have different financial impacts and the proposed policy was trying to clarify those costs.

Ms. Daniels suggested that Metro repaint signs to make them easier to read.

Mr. DeBernardo noted that Metro had a station naming policy set down by its first general manager and asked how, if this policy has been in existence, Metro has ended up with so many station names that don't conform to it. Ms. Green replied that it had become a "slippery slope" – once an exception was made to the naming policy on one occasion, it became more difficult for Metro to refuse other requests for changes to station names that would violate that policy.

Mr. Alpert moved that the Council send correspondence to the Board noting the Council's concern about the names proposed for the Dulles corridor extension stations, because they are repetitive and may be confusing to tourists, individuals with cognitive disabilities and infrequent riders. This motion was seconded by Ms. Daniels.

Ms. Walker asked whether Mr. Alpert would be amenable to mentioning the Council's concern about the proposed timeline for making the name changes in the letter to the Board. Mr. Alpert suggested that issue be addressed separately.

This motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Walker moved that the Council request Metro to extend the timeline for deciding on station names to allow for additional input from members of affected communities. This motion was seconded by Ms. Daniels.

Mr. Alpert asked about the timeline for deciding on the name changes, specifically that the Board would be discussing and approving the policy in July and then deciding on the actual station names in October. Ms. Green confirmed this timeline. Mr. Alpert then asked whether an October decision on station names was necessary to meet the timeline of the proposed Blue/Yellow/Orange service realignment. Mr. Harrington said that Metro needs eight months to design, fabricate and install new signage, so the names will need to be decided by November 1st in order to meet the timeline for the Blue/Yellow/Orange realignment. He said that Metro will be printing new maps again in 2013 when Phase I of the Dulles extension opens and again when Phase II of the extension opens, so that there would be opportunities to make additional changes.

Mr. Alpert said that if Metro has to have names approved by November 1st, the Council may want to word its request differently, perhaps by saying that controversial name change should allow additional time for community input. He noted that any request for a name change would

need to be approved by a jurisdiction, which would be reluctant to approve a name change that was controversial.

Mr. Guruswamy asked whether the station naming policy would be applied retroactively to station names that didn't meet the criteria. Ms. Green replied that staff hasn't made a recommendation on whether or not to change existing station names to comply with the new guidelines. She added that it would be up to the jurisdiction as to whether it would want to rename a station to comply with the policy. Mr. Harrington added that Metro hopes to show the Dulles extension as "under construction" on the map being rolled out in 2012 with the Blue/Yellow realignment. He added that the station names could be changed between the time that they first appear on the map and when the stations actually open.

Mr. Kitchen said that conducting community outreach during the summer months when community groups are in recess would feed ill will against Metro. He asked Ms. Green why Metro is discussing this policy if Metro will have to depend on jurisdictional action to change any existing, non-compliant station names and if the names of the Dulles extension stations have been decided. Ms. Green replied that while Fairfax County has made a request regarding the Dulles extension station names, they still need to be approved by the Metro Board. Ms. Green said that the September submission deadline would give jurisdictions the opportunity to request station name changes in conjunction with the June 2012 service changes.

Mr. Kitchen asked if Metro has received any requests for station name changes. Ms. Green said that staff is aware of requests to jurisdictions for station name changes, though she added that the only formal action taken by any jurisdiction is the request by Fairfax for station names for the Dulles extension.

Ms. Silva said that there should be something in the policy requiring the jurisdiction to take community feedback into account. Ms. Green noted that community support for station name changes is outlined in the existing policy, but what isn't detailed in the policy is how that community support is obtained.

Ms. Walker said that she feels that it is disingenuous for Metro to have such a tight timeline and still expecting to include customer input. She said that there isn't sufficient time provided in the timeline as shown to truly conduct outreach. She said that she would like to see Metro specifically incorporate something in its policy that specifically states it will allow for sufficient time to solicit customer feedback.

Ms. Titus said that there needed to be clarification regarding the timeline and that there should be additional input on Metro's proposed timeline for making changes.

Dr. Bracmort asked whether the policy would apply only going forward or whether it would be applied to existing station names. Ms. Green said staff's recommendation doesn't address changing existing station names and that it will be up to the Board whether or not it wants to change station names retroactively. Dr. Bracmort said that she didn't have any problems with the policy, as proposed, though she did have concerns if Metro didn't take into account the communities around the existing stations when making decisions about changing existing station names.

Mr. Alpert noted that staff is going to take the feedback they receive to the Board and suggested that the Council ask staff to let the Board that the Council has concerns about the outreach process. He also suggested that the Council may want to revisit this topic after the Board has made a decision on the station name policy and before any revised names are decided on. He said that the Council can decide then whether or not it would need to push for any more formal input process.

Ms. Green clarified that Council members' concerns are about the timeline for making changes to station names, rather than with the policy itself.

Ms. Walker said that she would like some kind of written communication to let the Board know of the Council's concerns. Mr. Kitchen suggested that this be included in the monthly report to the Board. Mr. DeBernardo said that if that is the sense of the group, he would include it in his report.

Mr. Alpert restated Ms. Walker's motion to include the need for adequate time for community input on station names as part of Metro's station naming policy in the letter previously approved to be sent to the Board on this topic. This motion was approved unanimously.

VI. Recommendation for Board Bylaws/Procedures:

Mr. Alpert introduced this item by noting that after last month's discussion about the Board's bylaws with Board members Mary Hynes and Kathy Porter, Mrs. Hynes explained that the Board would be discussing and voting on a final draft of its bylaws on June 9th and suggested that the Council put forward any changes to the section of the Board's bylaws concerning the Council prior to that meeting.

Mr. Alpert explained that the RAC's Governance Committee discussed possible changes to the Board's bylaws:

- Requesting language that would ensure that "items of significant rider interest" are presented to the Council; and
- Requesting language that would clarify the process for the Council, as a group, to ask for information from Metro staff. Mr. Alpert noted that requests for information would need to come from the Council as a group and would not apply to confidential information. He also reviewed the procedures that the Council would follow when making such a request and suggested procedures for the Board in terms of responding to a request from the Council.

Ms. Everline provided some additional background for this proposed language. She explained that the Board is now focusing more on policy and oversight and leaving operational decisions up to the General Manager and his staff. She noted that riders still have some operational questions, and, while the Riders' Advisory Council advises the Board, it also works closely with Metro staff. She said that part of the reason for this proposed language is to make it clear that the Council's requests for information are appropriate for its mission and for how it advises the Board.

Ms. Titus asked for more information on the Jurisdictional Coordinating Committee (JCC). Mr. Alpert explained that the JCC is an advisory body to the Metro Board that is composed of staff from the various

jurisdictions that Metro serves. He noted that the Board bylaws specifically codify the JCC's existence and role.

Ms. Zinkl suggested that Mr. Alpert review the resolution that created the Riders' Council and possibly use some of the language from that resolution, especially the language that lists the Council's functions in proposing language for the Board bylaws and procedures. She said that incorporating that language would help reinforce the idea that the Council had the ability to request information and discuss topics independent of items scheduled to come before the Board.

Mr. Kitchen asked for clarification of what the Council was being asked to approve. Mr. Alpert suggested that the Council approve the suggested language for the Board bylaws and procedures and that the Council approve, in principle, a set of procedures for itself in terms of requesting information.

Mr. DeBernardo said that he agreed with an earlier point that Mr. Kitchen had raised stating the need for the Council to have procedures in place before requesting language in the Board's bylaws and procedures. He said that this should be done before the Board's Governance Committee meets on June 9th.

Dr. Bracmort asked what would constitute "RAC approval" – whether this be approval of the chair, or a committee chair. Mr. Alpert said that requests would be noted in the chair's report to the Board. Dr. Bracmort said that she hoped that this wouldn't make requests for information more cumbersome.

Dr. Bracmort also noted that some Council members have been able to establish working relationships with Metro staff members and community leaders and asked if this proposed language would limit those relationships. Mr. Alpert said that this would not limit individual members' ability to contact staff directly.

Mr. Whiting said that during his time on the Council he has been impressed with how responsive Metro staff has been to requests from the Council. He said that he hoped that this will not require the Council to become too formal in requesting information from Metro. He said that he trusted the Council's chair to get the information necessary information to the Council.

Mr. Alpert said that it may make sense for the Council to separate "formal" requests from the Council from "informal" requests from individuals. The "formal" requests would be strengthened by having the backing of the Board in its bylaws.

Mr. Guruswamy added that he also thinks that Metro staff is responsive in providing information to the Council. He said that an informal adjudication process in the case that a request for information was denied would likely be sufficient.

Mr. Alpert moved to request that the Board add the language shown on p. 27 and 28 of the meeting packet to its bylaws and procedures, respectively and to send the Board proposed Council procedures for the Riders' Council to make information requests.

This motion was seconded by Mr. Kitchen and was approved unanimously.

VII. FY2012 Budget – Public Hearings:

Mr. Pasek updated the Council on the status of Metro's FY2012 budget – he said that Maryland and Virginia would likely be able to provide additional subsidies as called for the General Manager's Proposed Budget and that the District of Columbia would be able to come up with most of the money requested though there may also be some service reductions in D.C. He noted that this information was unofficial, since the budget has not yet been approved.

Mr. DeBernardo asked members whether they had any feedback from the public hearings held in mid-May.

Ms. Everline noted that there was opposition at the Arlington hearing to the proposed reductions in weekend rail service. She said that she was surprised by the turnout, especially since there were no bus service reductions specific to Arlington that were proposed.

Ms. Titus said that she was impressed with the turnout at the hearing in Northwest D.C. She also asked what can be done to get more people to hearings. Mr. DeBernardo asked how the Council can, as a body, take responsibility to encourage more public participation.

Ms. Zinkl said that she went to the meeting in Southeast D.C. and that it had strong attendance, and that there was a lot of negativity and frustration with Metro service. She added that she spoke with staff from Metro's Office of Civil Rights concerning some proposed changes to Metro's outreach.

Dr. Bracmort said that she also attended the hearing to ensure that the feedback the Council provides matches the feedback provided by the general public. She said that there were a lot of concerns raised about the lack of communication by Metro.

Mr. Alpert said that the comments at the hearing in Northwest D.C. focused on the need to preserve bus service proposed for elimination, especially because these routes serve senior citizens and students.

Mr. DeBernardo directed Council members' attention to a draft letter to the Board concerning the FY2012 Budget. Mr. Clermont moved approval of the letter. This motion was seconded by Mr. Whiting.

Mr. Kitchen said that it was unclear to him whether the amount of additional money that the jurisdictions would be able to provide would be sufficient to offset reductions in service. He said that he would support the letter and hoped that, in the future, the Council would have more detailed information concerning the status of the budget.

Without objection, the letter was approved.

VIII. Upcoming Meetings:

Mr. Pasek said that there would be an opportunity for members to take a tour of a "soft mock-up" of the interior of 7000-series railcar on June 7th.

Ms. Everline said that the Bus Committee would be meeting to discuss bus operator responsibilities on either June 15th or 22nd.

IX. Questions/Comments on RAC and AAC Chair Reports:

There were no comments on the RAC Chair report. There was no AAC Chair report provided as the AAC had not yet had its June meeting.

X. Open Mic:

Dr. Bracmort recounted recent experiences with students on the bus. She said she would like information about student ridership patterns on Metrorail and Metrobus. She said that this could help provide information to address certain quality of life issues. Mr. Kitchen noted that the D.C. City Council is doing a study on student travel patterns. Mr. Pasek said that some information may be available that shows which bus routes are used most heavily by students and when students are most prevalent in the rail system.

Ms. Titus noted that the Secretary of Transportation will be intervening in the discussion concerning the placement of the proposed Metrorail station at Dulles Airport.

XI. Adjournment:

Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.