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June 27, 2013

Chairman Downs and Members of the Board:

It is my pleasure to present you with the Riders' Advisory Council's report for June 2013.

Offboard SmarTrip® Reloading: The Council received a presentation at its June meeting on Metro's plans to add machines at select bus stops where riders could add value to their SmarTrip® cards, rather than doing so at the bus farebox. Council members appreciated that Metro is looking for ways to improve customer convenience, and felt that these new machines could be a significant amenity in neighborhoods that are far from current locations where riders can add value to their cards. Council members wanted Metro to ensure that the machines would provide a reliable alternative to on-board loading and that they would include security features, since they would be unattended.

Council members also encouraged Metro to consider adding "self-service" machines inside CVS and Giant locations, as well as at additional neighborhood retailers, such as check-cashing or convenience stores. This would address safety concerns about riders loading money at unmonitored machines and would also make these locations more convenient for riders. Members had concerns about the current procedure for riders to add value at these retail locations, which is not well-publicized and often involves customers having to track down the appropriate store employee for assistance. Members suggested that Metro expand its marketing efforts to make riders aware of this option to add value to their SmarTrip® cards in addition to its plans to add machines at bus stops.

New Faregates: Council members also had the opportunity to try out and provide feedback to Metro staff on possible new faregates and turnstiles being considered as part of both the New Electronic Payments Program and Metro's plans for station renovations. Council members' comments will be provided to the Board as part of a broader staff report that will also include feedback from Accessibility Advisory Committee members and focus group participants.

I would also like to note that Carl Seip, one of the Council's longest-serving members, left the Council at the end of May. The Council benefitted greatly from both his professionalism and his sustained focus on issues of rider safety. We look forward to the Board moving quickly to make an appointment to fill his seat.

I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

Ben Ball, Chair
WMATA Riders' Advisory Council