

Riders' Advisory Council
May 1, 2013

I. Call to Order:

Mr. Ball called the May 2013 meeting of the Metro Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:31 p.m.

The following Council members were present:

Ben Ball, Chair, District of Columbia
Barbara Hermanson, Virginia Vice Chair, City of Alexandria
Carol Carter Walker, District of Columbia Vice Chair, At-Large
James Wright, Maryland Vice Chair, Prince George's County
Italo Cruz, District of Columbia
Frank DeBernardo, Prince George's County
Patrick Delaney, Montgomery County
Pat Jackson, Fairfax County
Karen Lynch, Prince George's County
Kara Merrigan, Arlington County
Alex Parcan, Montgomery County
Carl Seip, At-Large
Patrick Sheehan, Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair
Lorraine Silva, Arlington County
Deborah Titus, Fairfax County
Fred Walker, Fairfax County
Candice Walsh, District of Columbia
Mary Ann Zimmerman, Montgomery County

The following members of the Council were not present for any portion of the meeting:

Thais Austin, District of Columbia
Patricia King-Adams, District of Columbia
Etta-Cheri Washington, District of Columbia

The following additional individuals were present:

Chris Barnes, Member of the public
Drew Hunter, Member of the public
Patrick Host, Member of the public
Chief Ron Pavlik, Metro Transit Police Department
Kurt Raschke, Member of the public

Approved June 6, 2013

II. Public Comment Period:

Mr. Ball opened the floor for comments from members of the public.

Chris Barnes thanked the Council for holding its Listening Session in Alexandria the previous week. He noted that some members of the Council said that they heard “new information” from participants in the session; he said that if Council members were on Twitter and followed the conversation about Metro, they would have known this information already.

Mr. Barnes also suggested that the Council continue advocate for a “Riders’ Bill of Rights” that would include such items as ensuring that riders aren’t charged peak fares when Metro is conducting trackwork, establishing better communication with riders, providing for refunds when rail service is delayed because of mechanical failures, and not charging people who end up entering and exiting the same station because of system failures. He said that riders deserve better communications and noted that the MetroForward blog has gone offline, so riders are unable to get much information on this program.

Mr. Barnes also told the Council that there was minimal Metro support and publicity for its meeting – that Metro only sent out a couple of tweets about the meeting to inform the public.

Drew Hunter told the Council that he has noticed that there are often problems on sections of track where Metro has recently completed trackwork and asked whether there might be a link between the trackwork and these problems that develop shortly afterwards. He also discussed the idea of riders boycotting Metro to highlight their concerns about poor service. Mr. Hunter also referenced a recent fight that occurred at the Gallery Place station and asked that if Metro Transit Police were aware of the potential for a fight ahead of time, why they didn’t do more to prevent it from occurring or have more officers on hand.

Pat Host told the Council that he is angry about Metro’s plans to spend money to renovate the Bethesda station. He said that weekend trackwork has destroyed people’s ability to get around on the weekend. He said that he is upset at Metro for a lot of things, including its frequent mechanical problems and the recent fight that happened at Gallery Place. He said that Metro’s arrogance towards its customers and their concerns is disgraceful.

Colin Reusch told the Council that he is a longtime Metro rider, but that this was the first Council meeting that he had attended. He said that he has seen little improvement in the quality of Metro’s service despite increases in its cost. He said that he is tired of paying more for less service, having to fight with Metro for refunds and that he is tired of escalator and track outages. He said that he is also tired of Metro’s lack of accountability and answers. He asked the Council to stand up for the riders that it represents and said that he seconded the idea of a “Riders’ Bill of Rights.”

Mr. Ball thanked the members of the public for providing their comments and noted that the Council is working on most, if not all of the issues that they raised, though some were further along than others in terms of their development.

III. Approval of Agenda:

Without objection, the agenda was approved as presented.

IV. New Metro Transit Police Chief:

Ron Pavlik, Chief of the Metro Transit Police Department introduced himself and told the Council that he was sworn in as chief on March 29th and that he had been at Metro for 18 years, starting his career at the agency as a patrol officer. He said that his priority is customer safety and that the Transit Police use a computer program called “MetroStat” to monitor crime trends and to help them predict where issues may occur. He also noted that the Transit Police conduct a daily conference call regarding youth issues that include the Metropolitan Police Department and D.C. Public Schools’ staff to discuss how any youth behavior issues may spill over onto the Metro system.

Chief Pavlik also explained that Metro works with its federal partners to address terrorism issues, especially after the recent incident in Boston.

The Chief told Council members that they needed to remember that Metro functions as DC Public Schools’ “school bus,” which can be a challenge. He also noted that the Transit Police have several new tools at its disposal, including tools to help with records management and information sharing.

Mr. Ball told Chief Pavlik to consider the Council as a resource if there are items on which the Transit Police would like rider feedback.

Mr. Ball then opened the floor to comments from members of the public.

Comments from members of the public:

Mr. Hansen said that no one can remember the Transit Police’s (202) 962-2121 telephone number and asked whether Metro can get a “911” or other three-digit number. Chief Pavlik said that because Metro operates across three jurisdictions (the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia), it is unable to get a three-digit phone number like “911.”

Mr. Hansen also asked about the response time to calls on the Metro made through 911. Chief Pavlik said that response time depends on the issue – either local police will send an officer or

will let Metro know about the issue so that it can send Transit Police officers. Chief Pavlik noted that Metro has a hotline to all of the jurisdictional police departments. Mr. Hansen also noted that he didn't like the random bag inspections conducted by the Transit Police and riders can easily avoid them, so he thinks they're ineffective and divert officers from crime prevention duties.

Mr. Barnes said that riders want to see more police out in the system, especially in stations further out from the core and asked how Metro determines where to send its officers. Mr. Pavlik responded that police deployment is based on crime statistics or for special events, and that the location of officers is very fluid. In response to a follow up question from Mr. Barnes about how riders should go about advocating for more police officers out in the Metro system, Chief Pavlik said that police effectiveness depends on many factors, such as how wisely officers are deployed and how effectively the Transit Police are able to build partnerships with other agencies, not necessarily the number of officers on the beat.

Pat Host described an experience he had when he was accused of fare evasion by a member of the Transit Police. He noted that the officer that accused him of fare evasion refused to provide his name or badge number. Chief Pavlik said that he would follow up on the incident if Mr. Host could provide him with additional details such as date, location and a description of the officer. Mr. Host said that he didn't think that the Chief would be able to follow up and declined to provide any additional information.

Mr. Ball then opened the floor to comments from Council members.

Comments from members of the Council:

Mr. Wright asked whether the Transit Police were monitoring the situation at the Addison Road station involving disputes between students from Central and Woodson High Schools. He also asked whether Metro had looked into creating a civilian police academy to train volunteers that could assist the police.

Chief Pavlik responded that the Transit Police are aware of the issues at Addison Road and have taken steps to discourage people from "hanging out" at the station – in this case by installing something on the railing at the bus bays to make it impossible to sit on there and hang out He also said that he is familiar with the Prince George's County Police Department's "Explorer" program, but noted that such a program requires a great deal of money and time to create and maintain, and that he isn't sure that it is something Metro would want to pursue.

Ms. Merrigan said that she didn't understand why Transit Police officers all seemed to congregate rather than patrolling separately or in smaller groups. She also brought up an incident in during which the Transit Police tackled a woman as part of an arrest. Chief Pavlik said that if riders have concerns about officer deployments or behavior that they should let him

know so that he can investigate. He also explained that the Transit Police did conduct an investigation of the incident at Gallery Place that Ms. Merrigan referenced and also noted that in the case Ms. Merrigan referenced, the woman involved did not submit a complaint and Metro conducted its own investigation of the incident and found no wrongdoing.

Mr. Seip asked if there was anything that riders can do to help the Transit Police be more effective in their jobs. Chief Pavlik said that riders can be aware of their surroundings, using their electronic devices wisely and keeping devices out of view and try and be a good witness if they are victims of a crime – provide a description of the suspect, note the time and location. Chief Pavlik said that the Transit Police are also requesting that customers not self-evacuate from trains during incidents. He explained that the trackbed is a dangerous place and that riders may not be aware of all of the hazards from other trains, the electrified third rail, etc. He asked that riders remain calm and remain on the train during incidents and listen for the operator's instructions.

In response to a question from Ms. Titus, Chief Pavlik said that the Transit Police's phone number is (202) 962-2121.

Mr. Parcan said that he feels that the lack of professionalism from Transit Police officers is a huge problem and that Metro is doing a terrible job of monitoring what is going on.

Ms. Silva said that her concerns are about crowd control. She explained that whenever a train breaks down the platforms get dangerously crowded and it takes a long time for Transit Police to get there to do crowd control. Chief Pavlik said that this winter's incident at Anacostia led to changes in Metro procedures. He explained that under these new procedures, Metro doesn't wait for incidents to escalate before sending Transit Police and that he hoped people will notice the effects of these changes during future responses to incidents.

Ms. Lynch thanked Chief Pavlik for the work that he does. She noted that Metro functions as the school transportation system for DC Public Schools and asked how the Transit Police prevent incidents from happening. Chief Pavlik said that the Transit Police participate in a daily conference call with representatives from DCPS and the Metropolitan Police Department to discuss any possible issues that may arise after students are let out of school. He said that Metro representatives also meet with schools to help students better understand how to use transit. He added that Metro has also worked with students to launch an outreach campaign ("RESPECT") and listened to their ideas on how Metro could best communicate with youth. He noted that Metro recently hosted a forum for youth on this topic. He noted that some youth behavior is exacerbated by the tight confines of the transit system – in vehicles and stations.

Mr. Delaney noted that Chief Pavlik had discussed how Metro Transit Police handle coverage for large events and asked if he could talk about how the police cover the system during “normal” times. Chief Pavlik said that he couldn’t give out absolute numbers due to security considerations, but added that about 80% of Transit Police officers walk the beat and explained that they take the trains (and buses) and have to use those to respond to incidents, though there are also “mobile” officers in cruisers. He said that MTPD deploys officers based on crime trends and that Metro tries to use the resources it has at its disposal wisely – the system is spread over 86 stations and 12,000 bus stops. He noted that Metro does a good job keeping the system safe and that an individual is much safer within the Metro system than he or she would be in the surrounding jurisdictions.

Mr. Ball asked how the Transit Police patrol MetroAccess service. Chief Pavlik responded that the Transit Police don’t ride MetroAccess but they will respond to issues.

Mr. Ball thanked Chief Pavlik for coming and again reminded him to think of the Council as a resource. Chief Pavlik thanked the Council for inviting him and noted that the Transit Police were hiring if members knew anyone that was interested.

V. Listening Session Recap:

Ms. Hermanson provided the Council with a recap of the Listening Session that it hosted in Alexandria at the end of April. She noted that everyone in attendance was appreciative of the Council for having such a session and added that attendees had a diversity of perspectives on Metro and its service. She noted that at the following day’s Board meeting, the Board Chair expressed his appreciation for the Council’s outreach to riders.

Ms. Hermanson noted that, while she heard many things that she already knew, many participants brought different perspectives to the discussions at the meeting. She also reminded members to remember that they, as Council members, represent a lot of people and while members can certainly bring their personal experiences to their duties as RAC members, they should also do outreach to get other perspectives. She said she welcomed members’ thoughts on next steps and follow ups from this session.

Mr. Ball said that, as chair, he is already beginning to think of possible next steps for the Council in response to what it heard at the session.

Mr. Walker said that there were “general themes” of the discussions at the Listening Session, and that part of the Council’s job is to look at these themes and to make recommendations based on what it heard. He noted that one of the common themes of the discussion was that Metro’s communication isn’t good and that the Council should look into this issue more deeply.

Comments from members of the public:

Mr. Barnes thanked the Council again for hosting the Listening Session and that it is an example of exactly the kind of outreach that it should be doing. He said that the Council needed to advertise better for this session to get a better turnout.

Mr. Ball responded that there was significant advertising for the session and that attendance was about the same as the other Metro events that he has been to. He added that the Council will have its next Listening Session in Maryland, but that it would be a little while before that event occurs, as the Council wants to space the sessions out somewhat.

VI. Report from Safety Committee

Emergency Communications Suggestions:

Mr. Seip moved approval of a letter providing suggestions for Metro on emergency communications. This motion was seconded by Mr. Walker.

Mr. Seip then went through the various points in the letter and the three questions submitted to the Council by Metro to which the letter was responding. He asked members if they had any substantive changes.

Ms. Lynch noted that she had a hard time finding the recommendations contained in the letter and suggested that they be more clearly identified. Mr. Ball said that it seemed like Mr. Seip would be open to this change, though it's a stylistic changes, rather than a substantive one.

Ms. Walsh asked whether the RAC had done any research on other transit systems' handling of emergencies. She noted that other agencies don't seem to have as many communications problems as Metro does. Mr. Seip said that the committee discussed the information provided by other transit authorities at its meeting, notably Chicago, New York and London, but that he would welcome any further examples or suggestions. Ms. Walker added that the letter did include a brochure by the New York MTA as an example. Ms. Walsh suggested citing other systems' emergency procedures in the letter as well.

Mr. Walker suggested that the letter recommend Metro engage an outside consultant to help it work on this issue and help find messages that actually resonate with riders. Mr. Seip said that the Council assumed that Metro is also consulting other parties but that he would be happy to add a sentence with that suggestion to the letter.

Ms. Titus said that the Council should be careful in suggesting that Metro look to other transit agencies for guidance; she noted that Metro is different than other transit agencies and may not necessarily want to copy their approach.

Ms. Walker said that she doesn't want the Council to go on record as suggesting Metro hire a consultant. She added that she thinks that Metro needs a more holistic approach to communications than currently exists, but that wasn't included in the letter. Mr. Seip responded that while he agreed with Ms. Walker's point, the letter tried to answer the specific questions that were posed to the Council.

Ms. Hermanson noted that the general theme of members' comments is that Metro needs to look at what peer agencies are doing and said that maybe looking at other agencies' practices is something that the RAC can review in partnership with Metro. Mr. Seip said that this can be acknowledged in the letter.

Ms. Silva said that the General Manager had previously requested that the Council look at what is being done in other systems and suggested noting in the letter that the RAC had looked at other systems' procedures. Mr. Seip said that he was hesitant to call the committee's review of other agencies procedures and communications academic or thorough. He said that if the Council recommended adopting industry best practices, that may be sufficient.

Ms. Merrigan said that it is important for the Council to approve this letter and send it on its way since this is something that Metro is currently working on.

Mr. Delaney noted that Metro has set a precedent by using other used other transit agencies' campaigns regarding safety – he noted Metro's use of the Boston T's anti-sexual harassment campaign. He said that, while he doesn't necessarily want Metro to copy another agency's campaign, he thinks that it is useful to look at industry best practices.

Mr. Delaney moved to end debate on this letter. This motion was seconded by Mr. Walker. Without objection, the Council ended debate.

The Council then moved to a vote on the main motion, to adopt the letter as presented and to incorporate a summary of its recommendations, as suggested by Ms. Lynch, and a recommendation for Metro to review other agencies' best practices in developing its communications. This motion was approved unanimously.

Incident Communications Workshop:

Mr. Seip then moved approval of a draft letter from the Council to the Board endorsing Metro staff's proposal for a public workshop on Metro's incident communications. This motion was seconded by Ms. Walker.

Mr. Seip provided the Council with background information on the development of the incident communications panel that was held in conjunction with the Board in October 2012 and the staff proposal for a follow-up workshop.

Comments from members of the public:

Mr. Raschke said that he felt that the letter should be strengthened and noted that riders "self-evacuating" from trains during incidents has now become a regular occurrence, rather than an exception. He said that clearly stating this fact to the Board should garner additional support for holding this workshop.

Mr. Barnes said that he didn't see any mention in the letter that some of the issues with Metro's communications are technical in nature and that some of the issues that riders encounter are not necessarily *how* Metro communicates, but instead issues that need technical fixes. He said that he hoped that the letter would more specifically call out that issue.

Mr. Hansen noted that it takes Metro ten minutes before it issues and alert to customers and said that the Council should suggest that Metro issue these alerts more quickly.

Comments from Council members:

Ms. Walker said that she was supportive of the comments from members of the public about possible changes to this letter. She noted that the Council will need assistance from Metro staff in developing and implementing an outreach plan in order for this workshop to be successful. Mr. Seip said that he was OK with that change; he noted that the proposal originated from Metro staff, so they have a vested interest in the workshop's success.

Ms. Hermanson asked why this letter about the workshop was being sent separately from the Council's suggestions on communications, since they both address the same general topic. Mr. Ball noted that these were two separate taskings from Metro staff and so are being responded to separately.

In response to a comment from Ms. Hermanson, Mr. Seip said that he would be fine with referencing the comments from the previous letter about emergency communications in this letter.

Mr. Walker said that he doesn't think that this topic can be fully addressed in one workshop and suggested that the Council suggest a "workshop or workshops;" and also suggested that the proposed location be accessible "to riders," instead of "to the majority of riders," since no one location will be accessible to the majority of riders.

Mr. Seip said that he would like to add something to the letter about the need for Metro to address issues with its "communications infrastructure," the hardware that it uses to communicate.

Ms. Walsh asked whether or not Metro conducts drills to prepare for emergencies. Mr. Ball said that it does. She suggested that perhaps videos of these drills could be shown on

Ms. Walker moved to close debate on the motion to approve the letter about the incident communications workshop. This motion to close debate was seconded by Ms. Merrigan. Without objection, the motion to close debate was approved.

Mr. Ball then called for a vote on the main motion, which was approved unanimously.

Mr. Seip noted that the Safety Committee would be meeting the following week and that he would welcome suggestions for its agenda.

VII. Report from Operations and Communications Committee:

Ms. Lynch reported that there were no action items from the Operations and Committee's meeting, but rather that it had reviewed and prioritized seven items for further action from the committee. Those items are:

1. How to best notify customers about scheduled trackwork.
2. Analyzing customer complaints.
3. Reviewing the standards Metro should use to select bus stops for physical improvements.
4. Improving staff/rider interaction.
5. Making recommendations on how to get riders to enter/exit buses more quickly.
6. Devising an approach to address "courtesy communications."
7. Reviewing Metro's web tools and mobile applications.

Ms. Lynch also noted that the Committee wants to receive an update on Metro's New Electronic Payments Program (NEPP).

VIII. Upcoming Meetings:

Mr. Wright noted that the Council's Budget and Finance will hold its first meeting on May 8th. He said that he is hoping to have someone from Metro staff come to give an overview of the Authority's budget. Ms. Walker said that she thinks it would be helpful for as many Council members to attend the meeting to learn about Metro's budget to prepare for discussions on Metro's FY2015 budget later in the year.

Mr. Pasek noted that Metro will be hosting a public meeting on the Route 80/North Capitol Street line the evening of May 22nd. He said that he would send around information to members via email.

IX. Open Mic:

Mr. Walker said that he had questions about the timeline of the project that is redoing the bus bays at the Vienna Metrorail station. He noted that the work has been proceeding very slowly. He said that it would be interesting to find out Metro's plans for finishing the project and why it's taking so long.

Ms. Merrigan said that she thinks that it would be interesting for the Council to look at some of the concepts that are proposed as part of the Bethesda station redesign. Mr. Sheehan noted that the AAC is also interested in this issue, especially concerning issues of accessibility and lighting. He said that the AAC would like to rework Metro's lighting standards and thinks that it's important for the RAC to also weigh in on this issue, so that the AAC and RAC have joint recommendations. .

Ms. Hermanson said it is beneficial for Council members to educate themselves about Metro projects such as the proposed Bethesda station redesign before developing positions on the issue.

Mr. Sheehan said that the AAC has received reports on bus stops and accessibility. He explained that the jurisdictions are responsible for making improvements to bus stops and he wanted to make sure that the Operations and Communications committee doesn't duplicate efforts with ongoing activities.

Ms. Lynch said that she wanted to talk about some of the behavior issues from DC Public Schools students. She said that she feels like Metro Transit Police are monitoring youth behavior but not effectively addressing these issues. She said that she wanted to know if Metro had come up with any proposals to prevent violence on Metro. Mr. Ball said that the RAC did host a youth town hall on this issue and would welcome discussing

Mr. Parcan said that the RAC should encourage everyone on the Metro to be more creative to look at solutions to youth behavior issues.

Mr. Parcan added that the more he has thought about the proposed Bethesda station redesign, the more ridiculous he thinks that it is. He said that he doesn't think that

Mr. Seip said that the Safety and Security committee would be electing a new chair at its meeting the following week and electing a new chair. He also noted that the committee spent a lot of time at its previous meeting discussing the concept of a rider bill of rights and, given the interest in this topic, it may be something for the RAC to discuss further. Mr. Ball said that the leadership team is supportive of this issue and has already had discussions on this topic.

Ms. Zimmerman said that if the Council is able to get more information about the proposed Bethesda station redesign, it would be helpful so that it can put forward some suggestions that Metro can use. She said she would favor looking into this issue since there is a long lead time on this issue. Mr. Ball noted that the Council leadership did bring up the benefits of having the Council weigh in during the early stages of projects during its quarterly meeting with them.

Ms. Merrigan suggested that members may want to get together outside of meetings to get to know each other outside of official Council business.

Mr. Walker moved to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Ms. Walker. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.