



600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-962-2891

May 24, 2012

Chair Hudgins and Members of the Board:

It is my pleasure to present you with the Riders' Advisory Council's report for May 2012.

Communications Recommendations:

The Council discussed and approved recommendations on how WMATA may improve its communications with riders (e.g, WMATA monthly newsletter). A letter detailing the Council's recommendations to expand regular, non-emergency communication with the riding public is attached to this report. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Board and Metro staff to evaluate and implement these suggestions. We look forward to a formal written response from WMATA in response to our suggestions.

Bus Stop Improvement:

Staff from Metro's Office of Bus Planning came to the May Council meeting and provided an overview of Metro's bus stop improvement program and how Metro is working with the jurisdictions to improve bus stop facilities for customers. Council members recognized the important role that bus stops play as gateways to the region's transit system and appreciate the increased attention on improving their safety and amenities. We look forward to working with Metro staff to learn more about the various strategies that are being used throughout the region to make these improvements.

Meeting with Board Chair:

Members of the Council's leadership team meet with Metro Board Chair Catherine Hudgins to discuss the Council's role and ways that it can work with the Board to achieve shared goals. We look forward to continuing this dialogue with the Board to ensure that the Council is providing input that aligns with the Board's strategic goals while addressing rider concerns.

Meeting with General Manager:

Members of the Council's leadership team also met with General Manager Sarles in late April. During this meeting, Mr. Sarles provided examples of subjects that he would like to get the Council's feedback on, which are outlined in the attached letter dated May 11, 2012.

Council Initiatives

Incorporating the feedback from the meeting with from Board members, from the General Manager, and from Council members themselves, the Council has developed a list of five initiatives on which it plans to focus on, and in some cases already has started on, over the remainder of the year. These items are:

1. Bus stop accessibility and enhancements
2. Improving communication with riders
3. Encouraging greater input from low-income and limited-English proficient riders
4. Improving Metro transit service to Dulles and BWI airports
5. Youth safety and youth transit concerns

Emergency Response:

At its May meeting, the Council also approved holding a special meeting to further explore roles and responsibilities for emergency response in light of some recent incidents that have exposed vulnerabilities with current practices. This meeting would focus on providing riders with information about how Metro coordinates with jurisdictional public safety agencies to respond to incidents. It would also help riders gain an understanding of what to expect with regard to incident response as well as highlight riders' responsibilities should they be involved in an incident or the victim of a crime. We discussed this idea with Board Chair Hudgins and look forward to getting her and the Board's feedback as the Council explores this topic further.

Thank you, as always, for your attention. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelsi Bracmort". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelsi Bracmort, Chair



600 Fifth Street NW
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May 18, 2012

Chair Hudgins and Members of the Board:

One of the consistent topics of concern raised by Council members and riders alike is Metro's communication with its riders, and the need for that communication to be clear and informative. Metro has made significant strides in its communication to report delays as well as planned and unplanned service outages, often taking advantage of new technology to deliver more targeted messages to riders.

However, the Council believes that these enhanced communications about delays and construction is not a substitute for sustained communication to provide riders with a clearer picture of the agency's long-term goals, strategic planning efforts and overall mission. For example, riders are provided with clear communications about upcoming trackwork, but not provided sufficient information about the full scope of the rebuilding process or how far along Metro is in that process beyond the warning that the work will continue, essentially indefinitely.

Similarly, riders looking for information about Board and management actions to govern and administer Metro are not easily available and do not fully explain the reasoning behind Board and management decisions. As an example, the fare increases approved as part of Metro's FY2013 budget contain numerous policy choices designed to achieve specific goals. A clear explanation of the approved fare changes and how they align with these goals would have helped to provide riders with clarity on this very complicated and important issue.

The Council notes that there are several bright spots in Metro's communications efforts. The videos recently produced to highlight service changes as part of "Rush+" service that will begin in June 2012 explain not only how service is changing, but also why those changes are necessary, the benefits and disadvantages those changes will give riders, and how these changes fit into a larger plan for realigning service to accommodate the future Silver Line. Similarly the blog run by Metro's Office of Long Range Planning, www.PlanItMetro.com, offers in-depth, thoughtful analysis of Metro's planning efforts, including staff responses to comments and questions raised by members of the public.

In an effort to improve the transit literacy of riders and regain the trust of riders, WMATA should consider the attached communication recommendations. These efforts have the potential to improve Metro's relationship with its clients and broaden their understanding of the work that WMATA is undertaking to improve their riding experience.

Metro has asked for extraordinary patience from its riders over the past several years as it addresses critical maintenance and safety issues, and will continue to ask for their forbearance

for the next several years. Helping riders become informed about Metro's challenges and plans to address them will serve as a benefit to all.

We look forward to hearing back from Metro staff with their evaluation of the suggestions contained in the attached document. Council members would be happy to make themselves available to discuss these recommendations further or provide any further information if requested.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelsi Bracmort". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelsi Bracmort, Chair

Suggestions for Improving WMATA Communications

CEO Report : The Council encourages the Authority to issue a periodic report from the Chief Executive Officer to riders that would provide concise regular updates on authority news, major service changes, operations and maintenance, capital improvements, public hearings and/or open houses, along with a specific list of actions that occur at Board of Directors Committee and Subcommittee meetings during preceding week. The CEO Report should be made widely available, by email subscription, electronically on the Metro Forward blog, and provided on the WMATA.com web page. It should be announced on the Authority Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Examples: Sound Transit's "CEO Corner" (Seattle)

WMATA Monthly Newsletter: The Council also encourages the Authority to issue a periodic newsletter to provide more in-depth summarizes major Authority news over the past month, planned and underway capital improvements, to update the public on WMATA internal investigations and corrective actions to solve problems, and announce public events for the following month. The WMATA Monthly Newsletter should also include a **Monthly Chairman's Report** from the Board Chairman. The Chairman's Report should update riders on Board decisions, policy changes, region wide transit coalition updates, and other Board efforts to improve the Authority and should be made widely available, similar to the CEO Report suggested above.

Example: Metra Rail's "On the (Bi-) Level" (Chicago)

Metro Forward blog: The Council encourages the Authority to more fully utilize its already-established blog, which, as of April 14, 2012, had only six posts written since January 1, 2012 and was last updated in mid-March. Considering the breadth of operational, budgetary, policy, and customer-service issues the Authority faces on a day-to-day basis, the RAC feels that there is no shortage of content of interest to customers. *As noted in the Council's letter, the PlanIt Metro blog offers a model for in-depth, thoughtful posts about Metro topics.*

Examples: Arlington Transit Blog (Arlington, Virginia), Write On Metro (Houston, Texas Metro)

Rider Questions: The RAC encourages the Authority to develop an online system that allows the public to submit rider questions about operations, maintenance capital improvement, and other relevant topics. At least three of these questions should be concisely answered by Authority staff in each WMATA Monthly Newsletter, with additional questions, within reason, answered in regular blog posts.

Twitter: The Council encourages the Authority to explore splitting its Twitter accounts to differentiate between service advisories and news updates, agency information, and additional staff commentary and information. The sheer amount of service advisories often overwhelms the other tweets that Metro uses to provide agency information, general updates or to respond to customer concerns and inquiries.

Examples: MTA New York City's multiple Twitter accounts

Facebook: The Council encourages the Authority to continue to regularly update its Metro Forward Facebook account. In doing so, the Authority should make it clear that the Metro Forward account is the primary, and only, WMATA Facebook account – and not merely a site specific to the Metro Forward campaign. The aforementioned suggestions – CEO Report, Monthly Newsletter and Metro Forward blog posts – should all be linked from this Facebook account.

The RAC encourages the Authority to further develop partnerships with local traditional media organizations, online blog and news sites, and community networks to distribute the above-mentioned items and expand the number of customers with access to WMATA information on a regular basis.



May 11, 2012

Dr. Kelsi Bracmort
Chair
Riders' Advisory Council

Dear Dr. Bracmort:

Thank you for meeting with me on April 27 to talk about the Riders' Council and how you can contribute valuable feedback on behalf of the riders in the area. I view our meeting as a productive and collaborative one and I look forward to working with you on these issues.

During our meeting, I suggested four topics for the Council's consideration to include in its future work plan or agenda. I would like to provide some additional thoughts on these key issues and approaches that the Council may take to make recommendations.

1. How can the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro) encourage respectful customer behavior in its facilities and on board its trains and buses?

The quality of a customer's trip is strongly influenced by the behavior of other passengers. Metro would appreciate the Council's recommendations on how Metro can best encourage rider behavior that is respectful of all customers.

While the Council may develop its own approach, some of the steps that I would encourage include, researching Metro's current rules regarding rider behavior and enforcement, as well as Metro's current and previous outreach to riders to encourage compliance. I would also suggest that the Council review other transit industry campaigns and other noteworthy public service campaigns aimed at changing behavior that have proven to be successful.

2. How can Metro gain greater input from its low-income or Limited English Proficient (LEP) riders?

Metro provides transportation for the entire metropolitan Washington region. While Metro often provides an especially vital service to these individuals, and it is the primary mode of transportation for many of them, participation in Metro-sponsored community meetings or other traditional input opportunities

Washington
Metropolitan Area
Transit Authority

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By Metrorail:
Judiciary Square—Red Line
Gallery Place-Chinatown—
Red, Green and
Yellow Lines
By Metrobus:
Routes D1, D3, D6, P6,
70, 71, 80, X2

by members of these groups is lower than the population as a whole. Any changes Metro proposes to its services or fares has a significant impact on these communities, so we would like to ensure that their voices are included in a meaningful way as part of Metro's outreach and planning efforts.

Metro currently engages in significant outreach to individuals in these communities, and I ask that your recommendations include feedback on our current practices, highlighting those that work and those that could be improved upon. In addition, suggestions for new outreach practices that Metro could explore would be appreciated. Metro staff would assist in identifying the specific issues that the Authority faces with its current outreach practice as a first step in your development of recommendations.

3. How can Metro encourage riders to enter and exit Metrobuses more quickly?

Roughly one-quarter of the time a bus spends in running its route is spent loading and unloading passengers at stops. Getting riders on and off buses more quickly will allow for improved reliability – getting passengers to their destinations sooner and helping Metro keep its buses on-time.

In making recommendations to Metro on how to reduce time at stops, I recommend that the Council consider the following:

- Bus stop layout;
- Fare payment;
- Bus design, interior layout and passenger flow; and
- Customer behavior.

Many cities have been able to significantly improve their bus service by making simple changes that speed customers' trips. As you research this topic, please include a review of industry best practices and take into account the need for solutions to be implemented across the entire Metrobus system.

4. Metro is considering lowering the cost of a SmarTrip® card to encourage more riders to use the card. How can Metro do this in a customer-friendly way?

Currently, Metro charges \$5 for a new or replacement SmarTrip® card. In the near future, Metro will transition to a new type of SmarTrip® card that will work the same as current cards but will cost less. In order to pass these savings along to customers, and to further encourage riders to obtain and use SmarTrip® cards, Metro plans to drop the cost that customers pay for the card.

Dr. Kelsi Bracmort
Page 3

Lowering the price of a SmarTrip® card will require that Metro change its policies with regard to the balance required to enter and exit the rail system. Because of Metrorail's variable fare structure, there are different options available to ensure that customers are able to conveniently enter and exit the system. Please provide recommendations on how to implement this change while reconciling both of these issues.

As you conduct your research, reach out to riders and develop recommendations, keep in mind Metro's policies, decision-making processes and the economic constraints Metro is currently facing. Metro staff will be available to you to support you in these efforts. Recognizing your time constraints, I understand if you are only able to consider a few of these topics this year or would like to consider them in a work plan that extends over a longer period of time. We look forward to working with you as you develop your future agenda.

Thank you for your service and your continued support of Metro.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard R. Sarles". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard R. Sarles
General Manager and
Chief Executive Officer