

Metro Riders' Advisory Council
October 5, 2011

I. Call to Order:

Mr. DeBernardo called the October 2011 meeting of the Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:33 p.m.

The following members were present:

Frank DeBernardo, Chair, Prince George's County
Penny Everline, Virginia Vice Chair, Arlington County
Christopher Farrell, Maryland Vice Chair, Montgomery County
Kelsi Bracmort, District of Columbia
Dharm Guruswamy, At-Large
Chris Schmitt, Fairfax County
Carl Seip, At-Large
Patrick Sheehan, At-Large, Accessibility Advisory Committee
Lorraine Silva, Arlington County
Ron Whiting, Montgomery County
Victoria Wilder, Montgomery County
Diana Zinkl, District of Columbia

II. Public Comment Period:

Michael Lewis of Hyattsville expressed his concerns about discrimination against passengers with disabilities and described an incident in which he almost got into a fight with another Metrobus passenger following a dispute over priority seating. He said that Metro needs to do a better job in terms providing accommodations for its passengers with disabilities and enforcing rules about priority seating, etc.

Mr. DeBernardo asked whether Mr. Lewis had contacted the Metro Transit Police concerning the issues that he raised or about the specific incident he described. Mr. Lewis replied that he had, in fact, contacted the Transit Police and noted that, while they responded, he was not satisfied with the response.

Mr. Sheehan noted that Metro's Accessibility Advisory Committee deals specifically with issues related to senior citizens and persons with disabilities. He provided Mr. Lewis with information on the AAC's monthly meetings and also suggested that Mr. Lewis email him and Christian

Kent, Metro's Assistant General Manager for Access Services for follow-up on the issues that he raised.

III. Approval of Agenda:

Without objection, the agenda was approved as presented.

IV. Blue/Yellow Line Realignment and Communications:

Jennifer Green from Metro's Department of Customer Service, Communications and Marketing, and Michael Eichler, from Metro's Department of Long Range Planning presented Metro's plans for realigning some rush hour Blue, Yellow and Orange line service to provide additional service. The proposal would increase the number of Orange line trains through the Rosslyn portal and send some Blue line trains from across the Yellow line bridge over the Potomac River. Mr. Eichler and Ms. Green also reviewed communications planning and planned signage and map changes that are proposed to accompany this change in rail service and Ms. Green also reviewed proposed changes to station names.

Dr. Bracmort arrived at 6:41 p.m.

Following Mr. Eichler's and Ms. Green's presentation, Mr. DeBernardo opened the floor to questions and comments from members of the Council.

Mr. Sheehan asked whether staff was working with Metro's Office of ADA Programs as it made changes to station signage. Mr. Eichler responded that staff has been working with both ADA Programs and Metro's Office of Civil Rights to ensure that that the signs meet accessibility and other standards.

Mr. Schmitt asked whether headways would change for Vienna – New Carrollton service and whether service would change when Silver line service begins. Mr. Eichler responded that the number of trains between Vienna and New Carrollton would remain the same, but there would be an overall increase in Orange line service because additional trains would be added between West Falls Church and Largo. He added that the service plan for the opening of Phase I of the Silver line was still being developed.

Mr. Whiting said that he was glad that Metro was not considering allowing commercial naming rights for stations.

Mr. Seip asked whether Metro had done any outreach concerning its plan to use dashed lines to show rush hour-only service on the Yellow and Orange lines and whether Metro had looked at other ways of showing different service patterns, such as numbering the lines. Mr. Eichler replied that other systems use dashed lines to show service that only runs at certain times and

that the dashed lines will be shown on the map's legend to help riders understand what they mean. He added that Metro looked at several different maps, including showing services as different lines, changing line thickness, including icons, and that all of these options increased the map's complexity and made it more difficult for riders to use.

Ms. Wilder suggested that if Metro makes changes to the signs on station walls, it should also make those signs larger. She also suggested that the rush hour-only service from West Falls Church to Largo be shown as Blue line service rather than Orange line service. Mr. Eichler said that staff had looked at this option during the development of the map but it ultimately wasn't pursued because Metro had wanted to show that it would be provided additional Orange line service.

Ms. Silva expressed concern that the signage on the trains could be confusing with this change and also asked whether Metro will lengthen the trains on the Yellow line to deal with possible crowding. Mr. Eichler said that train lengths will stay the same but since there will be more trains operating on the Yellow line, there should actually be a decrease in crowding.

Mr. Guruswamy noted that with this realignment in service, the Blue line would become Metro's second-most crowded and would become even more crowded after Silver line service begins. Mr. Eichler said that is possible and that Metro is still determining its operating plan for when Phase I of the Silver line opens. He suggested that if Metro ran trains of consistent length riders would know where to stand to board the train which would ultimately reduce station dwell times.

Ms. Titus said that she was concerned that this change would cause confusion for riders and said that Metro needs to make sure that visual communication cues are provided for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Ms. Zinkl said that Metro may want to consider showing the new service patterns in different colors. Ms. Green said that this was researched in early versions of the map, with a different color for each individual service pattern and customers were not in favor of doing this. She said that the riders they interviewed wanted the map to change as little as possible and that, as part of its research, Metro found out that riders rely on the destination shown on the side of the train to help with their decision-making.

Dr. Bracmort said that she found the map confusing but didn't have any specific suggestions on how to improve it. She also said that she preferred that larger "station ahead" signage option that was shown in the presentation and asked where these signs would be placed. Mr. Eichler explained that the station ahead signage is placed on pylons and on the wall at side-platform stations or above the system map at center-platform stations. In response to Dr. Bracmort's

suggestion that station ahead signage should also be placed in railcars, Mr. Eichler said that this type of display is planned for the new 7000 series railcars that Metro is developing.

Mr. Farrell asked whether Metro expects more riders to transfer at Fort Totten when the new service pattern is implemented and whether there is sufficient capacity at that station to handle the increased transfers. He added that he agrees with the need for larger signage in stations and said that Metro needs to improve the reliability of the side destination signs on trains to help riders choose the right train. Mr. Eichler said that staff had not focused on the possibility of increased transfers at Fort Totten; rather they are most concerned about increased transfer traffic at Gallery Place, which is at capacity. He explained that Metro is conducting a survey of passengers' travel patterns on the Blue and Yellow lines to address this issue. He said that he would pass along Mr. Farrell's concerns about Fort Totten crowding to the staff members evaluating the service change.

Mr. Farrell also noted that better information about service disruptions will help riders choose the best route to take when they have an option to do so, such as between the Red and Green lines at Fort Totten.

In response to Mr. Farrell's comment about the reliability of the side destination signs on the trains, Mr. Eichler asked members of the Council whether they had also noticed this problem. Comments indicated that this was mostly a problem when Metro conducts trackwork on the weekends.

Ms. Everline asked whether there were plans for additional bus service to help riders who would see a reduction in service along parts of the Blue line. Mr. Eichler said that staff is looking at possible bus route options, but any bus service would likely take longer than taking the train, even with increased wait times. He said that as Metro examines the results of its passenger survey it will look at possible alternative services to help passengers complete their trips. Ms. Everline noted that while there have been recent bus service improvements that have reduced the barriers in traveling between north and south Arlington, this proposed change might unintentionally make such trips more difficult.

Mr. DeBernardo thanked Mr. Eichler and Mr. Green for their presentation and for addressing members' questions.

V. Public Safety Meeting Recap/Follow-up:

Ms. Wilder provided a brief overview of the Public Safety forum that was held with Transit Police Chief Michael Taborn in late September. She noted that there were about a half-dozen members of the public in attendance and the following issues were raised as part of the discussion:

- Working with hearing-impaired individuals;
- The legality of having mace within the Metro system;
- Parking lot safety at suburban Metrorail stations;
- Safety of platforms and mezzanines when trains are offloaded;
- Coordination between the Transit Police and DC Public Schools concerning issues of student behavior and student safety while riding on Metrorail and Metrobus.

Ms. Wilder said that she had hoped for additional discussion on MetroAccess and bus safety from the Transit Police.

Ms. Everline said that she also thought that the meeting went well and added that a strong theme that emerged from the meeting was working with youth and schools and said that it would be interesting for the Council to pursue this topic further.

Ms. Titus added that she wanted to make sure that community representatives are invited to participate in any subsequent forums that the Council organizes. Mr. DeBernardo said that he thought the forum went well and that the Council should start thinking of topics for possible future events.

VI. Upcoming Public Hearings:

Mr. Pasek provided information on the dates/locations of the upcoming public hearings on Metrobus service. He asked that any Council members planning to attend these hearings to let him know.

VII. Transit Benefit Program Changes:

Mr. Farrell said that he had planned to discuss changes to the transit benefits program that eliminated the possibility of purchasing certain fare media that are available only in paper form, specifically weekly Metrorail passes, but that he had been advised that there may still be a way to do so through Arlington County's Commuter Stores. He said that he would try to work with Montgomery County's transit fare outlets to see if they would also be interested in providing this service and would keep the group apprised of his progress.

VIII. Riders' Council Reappointment Process:

Mr. Pasek reminded members that Metro is accepting applications for membership until Sunday, October 16th, and that members who wish to apply to be reappointed should have received a form for them to do so. He noted that the opportunity to apply had been covered by various media outlets and hope that it would lead to a good crop of applicants.

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

Mr. Sheehan reported that the Accessibility Advisory Committee had recently received a presentation on Metro's study of making changes to its fare structure. He said that he thought it would be helpful for the RAC to also receive this presentation and to review any recommendations concerning changes to Metro fares.

Mr. DeBernardo noted that the RAC had previously had a presentation on Metro's fare policy principles. Mr. Sheehan replied that this study takes those principles into account and is using them to develop recommendations on specific fare changes.

X. Open Mic –

Mr. Whiting asked how the meetings went between Board members and RAC members from their respective jurisdictions. Mr. DeBernardo said that he thought the Maryland meeting was informative for both Board and RAC members and that the Board members seemed responsive to Council members' concerns. Mr. Farrell also noted that he felt the meeting was productive.

In discussion the District of Columbia RAC member/Board member meeting, Mr. Seip noted that the new members are still learning their roles and responsibilities and that it was a good discussion. Ms. Zinkl said that it was clear that the Board members were interested in getting rider input, especially in terms of informal feedback from RAC members that would provide them with real-world input. She noted that the challenge is to find opportunities for busy Board and RAC members to connect on a regular basis. Dr. Bracmort added that Board members understand that Metro and the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) have various responsibilities when it comes to providing transit service, but that the communication loop between the two agencies could be improved.

Mr. Seip noted that the D.C. Board members wanted to establish more direct communication between Riders' Advisory Council members and DDOT.

There was then further discussion of possible meetings with Virginia Board members and the status of Virginia Board members' appointments as they related to a possible new member joining the Board representing the Commonwealth of Virginia. Mr. Guruswamy noted that the Commonwealth of Virginia was seeking representation on transit authority boards throughout Virginia.

Mr. DeBernardo said that he hoped that there would be future meetings between RAC and Board members and that these subsequent meetings could be set up earlier in the year. Ms. Zinkl asked that members be given more lead time once meetings are scheduled to get them on their calendars.

Ms. Everline announced that due to increased commitments outside of Metro, she would not be applying for reappointment to the Council when her term expired at the end of December. Several members expressed their appreciation for all of the work Ms. Everline has put in during her tenure on the Council.

Adjournment:

Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.