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May 20, 2015

Chairman Downey & WMATA Board Members:

For the RAC, May began with Lynn Bowersox, Assistant General Manager, Department of Customer Service, Communications and Marketing, in attendance at our monthly meeting. She asked us in advance for ideas on how to get the riding public to take advantage of all the rail safety information available on the WMATA website. We gave it a good deal of thought, and she received several new ideas from the conversation. The recurring themes were that we could find more ways to communicate safety messages while riders are within our stations, including information accessible from their mobile devices while they wait. The RAC's Customer Service Committee plans to take these and other ideas a step further, as part of its #1 work plan priority to collaborate with WMATA staff on safety training and communications.

Also at our monthly meeting, our RAC committees each gave a report of their work plan items for 2015. Our list of 13 initiatives is aggressive, but the length of the list is reflective of the enthusiasm of our current members and the breadth of their interests. At present, 2 of those 13 have been completed and the other initiatives are currently in progress, via information gathering or preliminary discussion.

One of initiatives that the RAC has in progress is understanding Metrorail station operational roles, as riders frequently provide feedback on what is and is not done in our rail stations. Our RAC Customer Service Committee hosted Rita Davis, Director of Rail Infrastructure Support Services, and 2 of her top staff members at its April meeting, which was extremely informative. Following that meeting, Byron England, Director of Rail Stations and Operations, invited me to speak and listen in on part of a Station Managers' training session on May 7th. After those 2 exchanges, I believe the RAC has a much better grasp of some of the challenges in place, and we plan to add our voice to ideas that may help both riders and station managers.

On May 14th I attended several of the WMATA Board committee meetings, where I learned about follow-up action to the major delays May 11th. I was impressed with the survey to riders that went out 2 days after the incident, and even more impressed that Lynn Bowersox was presenting preliminary results 1 day later. The RAC Customer Service Committee will be studying that data to offer additional suggestions for going forward.

We at the RAC know that WMATA faces many demands and challenges as the heart of transportation in this region. The RAC does not have the expertise to be a significant contributor on some of those challenges – a steady funding source, rejuvenating the rail infrastructure, et cetera. Our job is not to tell anyone what should be done about those challenges, but to look closely at what can be done in spite of them – to suggest ways we can still improve the rider experience, which we believe will preserve or increase ridership.

Because RAC members serve 3-year terms, the average tenure is less than 18 months. This means that virtually all initiatives require us to ask WMATA staff to educate us by sharing their data and experience. We appreciate all of the staff members who have answered our questions and have attended one or more of our meetings. Our requests are to further our education, so we can make informed recommendations from the rider's perspective, and we hope that all staff will see them as such.

Many thanks to the Board and Staff members who continue to educate us, so we can provide meaningful rider insight in return.

Sincerely,

/s/

Barbara Hermanson, Chair
Riders' Advisory Council

cc: RAC Members