



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

September 30, 2010

Chairman Benjamin and Members of the Board of Directors:

It is my pleasure to present you with the Riders' Advisory Council's monthly report for September 2010.

WMATA Governance Review Committee:

As mentioned previously, the Council has established a committee to review Metro's governance to develop an opinion on these matters from the riders' perspective, in the light of two other governance reviews being conducted by the Council of Governments/Board of Trade and the Government Accountability Office. As part of its information-gathering activities the committee held three public discussion sessions in September, in addition to a meeting in August, to receive input from current and former members of Metro's Board of Directors and members of advocacy organizations and other Metro stakeholders. I have included a listing of the individuals who attended and participated in these sessions. Several members of the Board participated in these sessions. The Council is especially appreciative of your participation and for the very constructive dialogue at these meetings. We look forward to using the information gathered in these sessions in the development of our report and look forward to sharing the report with you once it is completed.

In addition, I provided testimony to the Council of Governments'/Board of Trade's Joint Task Force on WMATA Governance at their meeting on September 17th. I have attached my testimony to this report for your reference.

Meeting with Assistant General Manager for Communications:

Barbara Richardson, Metro's Assistant General Manager for Customer Service, Communications and Marketing attended the Council's September meeting to introduce herself and discuss ways in which she can work with the Council. As the issue of communications is near and dear to riders' hearts, we very much look forward to working with Ms. Richardson and her staff on projects and issues to improve rider communications.

Fare Policy Principles:

The Council also had a committee meeting to discuss Metro's proposed fare policy principles that will be presented to the Finance and Administration Committee in November. I look forward to providing the Board with the Council's thoughts and recommendations on this topic at a later date.

SmarTrip® Card Price Reduction:

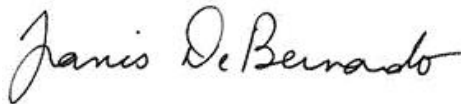
At the request of the Board Chairman, Staff from the Office of the Chief Financial Officer also attended the September Council meeting to discuss options for implementing the proposed reduction in the price of SmarTrip® cards while ensuring that Metro would not expose itself to financial liabilities. Council members' comments were incorporated into the presentation provided at this month's Finance and Administration Committee meeting on this topic.

Congressional Testimony:

The Council was also invited to provide testimony to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee's Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, the Postal Service and the District of Columbia at its September 23rd hearing on Metro. I have attached my testimony for your reference.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank DeBernardo". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Frank DeBernardo, Chairman

**Riders' Advisory Council
WMATA Governance Review Committee
Public Discussion Session Participants**

Wednesday, August 25th

Rick Rybeck, Former District of Columbia Government staffer

Wednesday, September 15th:

Peter Benjamin, Chairman, Metro Board of Directors

Jackie Jeter, President, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689

Gladys Mack, Former Member, Metro Board of Directors (District of Columbia)

Tina Slater, Vice Chair, Action Committee for Transit

Monday, September 20th:

Rich Bradley, Executive Director, Downtown BID

Jim Dinegar, Greater Washington Board of Trade

William Euille, Member, Metro Board of Directors

Catherine Hudgins, Vice Chair, Metro Board of Directors

Dennis Jaffe, Sierra Club, D.C. Chapter

David Robertson, Executive Director, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Chris Zimmerman, Member, Metro Board of Directors

Wednesday, September 22nd:

Mortimer Downey, Member, Metro Board of Directors

James Dyke, Greater Washington Board of Trade

Katherine Hanley, Former Member, Metro Board of Directors (Fairfax County)

David Robertson, Executive Director, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director, Coalition for Smarter Growth

Matt Watson, Former Board Member, Metro Board of Directors (District of Columbia)

Statement of Frank DeBernardo
Metro Riders' Advisory Council
to COG/BOT Joint Task Force on WMATA Governance
September 17, 2010

Good morning Chairman Dyke, Chairmen Robertson and Dinegar and members of the Task Force.

Thank you for inviting me to participate in this session today. My name is Frank DeBernardo, and I serve as the 2010 Chair of WMATA's Riders' Advisory Council. The Riders' Advisory Council was established by Metro in September 2005 and is the riders' voice within WMATA. We provide feedback to the WMATA Board and staff. Our members are appointed by the Board of Directors. The Riders' Advisory Council consists of 21 members, six each appointed from the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia, two members appointed at-large and the Chair of Metro's Accessibility Advisory Committee. Members use Metro's transit services – Metrobus, Metrorail and MetroAccess – and represent a diverse mix of ages, backgrounds and ways in which they use Metro. I am a representative from Prince George's County. In my day job, I serve as executive director of an organization with the quixotic goal of reconciling the Catholic Church and the lesbian gay community. Perhaps it is because I work every day at the intersection of religion and sexuality that transportation issues, no matter how controversial or vexing, seem to just slide off my back.

The subject of WMATA governance is both an important and timely one. As you are aware from our August 10th correspondence, the Riders' Advisory Council wrote to express its concern about the Task Force's procedures for examining WMATA's governance structure, particularly the fact that promised transparency had not

materialized. In that correspondence, we also expressed our concern that you had not sought input from riders and rider advocacy organizations on this important issue. We are very pleased to have been invited to this session today along with other organizations that represent a broad range of rider interests and perspectives. We feel that this kind of input, if heeded, can greatly enhance your deliberations.

In our August 10th correspondence, the Riders' Advisory Council took the opportunity to inform you that we were also conducting our own research into WMATA governance. In its five years of existence, the Riders' Advisory Council has not broached this topic formally. We feel that now is a good time for us to begin to form opinions, from the riders' perspective, about this important issue. We are currently in the process of soliciting input from regional stakeholders, including current and former Board members and members of regional advocacy groups. We look forward to sharing our results later this fall.

At this early stage in our own exploration, we want to let you know that one governing principle on which our Council has consensus is that any good governing structure would be one in which the voice of riders is not only present, but strong. The Riders' Advisory Council feels that it is important for the Metro Board of Directors to bring the riders' perspectives into its discussion of policy issues and to bring rider concerns to the attention of Metro management.

Just as the issues of safety, customer service, reliability, and affordability have a direct impact on the riders' experience, the Riders' Advisory Council also holds that governance is similarly impactful. We also hold the reverse of that statement, too: just as riders have an interest in topics such as safety, customer service, reliability, and affordability, they also have an interest in how Metro is governed. We believe it is

short-sighted to think that riders do not have an interest in higher levels of decision-making. The Riders' Advisory Council believes that any discussion of Metro's governance that does not fully include its rider stakeholders is incomplete. Metro riders are a politically savvy group of people who easily recognize how higher level decisions impact their experience of the transit system. They want, and deserve, a voice within those deliberations and decision-making processes.

Those who govern Metro have to be people who are responsive to riders' concerns, and we propose this as a strong factor in evaluating the proper composition of the Board. Unfortunately, we have not yet discussed the issue of whether appointing elected officials, industry experts, or electing rider representatives is the best way to insure that those who govern Metro will be most responsive to riders. These more detailed types of responses, I trust, will be covered in our final report, and, as I have stated, we will be glad to share that with you and the public when it is complete.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to me and other rider advocates today. I look forward to answering your questions to the best of my ability.

Statement of
Francis DeBernardo, Chair
Riders' Advisory Council
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Before the
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service and
the District of Columbia
United States House of Representatives

September 23, 2010

Chairman Lynch and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for inviting me to testify today. My name is Francis DeBernardo and I am the 2010 Chair of the WMATA Riders' Advisory Council.

The Riders' Advisory Council was established by WMATA in September 2005 and serves as the riders' voice within Metro. The Council provides feedback to the Board and customer input to Metro staff. Council members are appointed by the Board of Directors. The Council consists of 21 members; six appointed from each jurisdiction, the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia; two members appointed at-large and the Chair of Metro's Accessibility Advisory Committee. Members use Metro's transit services – Metrobus, Metrorail and MetroAccess – and represent a diverse mix of ages, backgrounds and ways in which they use Metro.

Your invitation letter noted that this hearing would focus on the National Transportation Safety Board's Railroad Accident Report on the June 22, 2009 Metrorail collision and the shortcomings in Metro's internal communications and its ineffective safety culture within the organization. As an entity composed specifically of non-Metro employees, it will be difficult for me to comment on Metro's internal workings. However, I would like to focus my testimony today on how Metro's communications with its external stakeholders, namely its customers, affect safety and how, as it rebuilds its safety culture, it must include its riders in that effort and look at safety as part of an overall perspective.

As the National Transportation Safety Board's report on last year's Red Line accident noted, several factors, both human and mechanical, contributed to the collision. The Council is confident that under the leadership of Interim General Manager Sarles, Metro has been

identifying and addressing the mechanical factors that contributed to last year's collision. It is clear that Metro needs the best safety managers and a culture that, from top to bottom, ensures that all employees respect and follow the safety recommendations. Metro has made strides in filling vacancies in its Safety Department. It is our hope that these new employees will provide the foundation for a robust safety culture and that one day, hopefully very soon, the immediate safety crisis will be a memory.

However, in addressing its safety challenges, Metro cannot only look inward for solutions. It must also look to its 1.2 million daily Metrobus, Metrorail and MetroAccess customers on how to address safety concerns and, even more fundamentally, to help identify those concerns.

While I understand that, in the wake of last year's crash, the focus has been on the safety of the train control system and the safety of employees working on Metro's right-of-way, I would also suggest that other aspects of the rider experience are also critical to creating a safe Metro system.

Working to reduce crowding and improve service reliability, along with ensuring that communications with riders are clear, direct and timely will all greatly improve rider safety. Crowded platforms, crumbling platform tiles and broken elevators and escalators pose threats to customers' safety that while not as dramatic as last year's crash, are just as dangerous because of their ubiquity.

We are encouraged that Metro is making some steps to improve its communications with riders that will directly impact safety and security. Earlier this month, Metro's Assistant General Manager for Communications, Customer Service and Marketing, Barbara Richardson, unveiled signage that will prominently feature the telephone number for the Metro Transit Police Department and be installed in buses and railcars to help riders more quickly report problems or safety concerns. This is an example of a rider-suggested change that will directly improve safety for Metro's customers. We look forward to working further with Ms. Richardson and other Metro staff to continue to open the lines of communication between Metro and its riders.

As it rebuilds its safety culture, Metro also needs to rebuild its culture of customer service. Employees, especially front-line employees, who are actively engaged with Metro's customers, will be better able to recognize dangerous or potentially dangerous situations earlier and begin to work to correct them. In addition, an organization that listens to its customers and effectively works to address their concerns makes it more likely that those customers will identify and report safety concerns in the future. Metro's 1.2 million daily riders represent 1.2 million pairs of eyes

and ears on the system every day and are a resource that cannot be taken for granted if Metro truly wants to become safer.

The Council is also encouraged by Metro's recent efforts in tracking and reporting information on service and safety. Its new monthly *Vital Signs* report, which was unveiled over the summer, provides a clear, timely snapshot of Metro's performance, including its safety performance, along with information on the causes of changes in performance metrics and the steps that Metro is taking to improve them. By making this information clearly available to a broad swath of Metro's stakeholders – its employees, staff from its partner jurisdictions, its Board of Directors and its riders Metro makes itself more accountable to its stakeholders and, hopefully, more likely to take steps to improve its performance.

However, improving Metro's and, ultimately the region's safety will require facing head-on the issue of Metro's chronic underfunding, both as a result of federal transportation spending rules which contain built-in biases against transit funding, to state and local fiscal decisions which fail to adequately fund a system that has brought billions of dollars in economic value to the region.

Ensuring stable and sufficient capital funding for Metro is necessary to improve safety. The Council appreciates Congress's support for the \$150 million annual federal capital funding for Metro last year and hopes Congress will continue to provide these funds, especially as these funds will be directed specifically to safety improvements. We are also encouraged by the Metro Board of Directors' action in June to approve a \$5 billion, six-year capital funding agreement to ensure that Metro attains and maintains a state of good repair. Unfortunately, these actions leave Metro several billion dollars short of its identified capital needs over the next 10 years and will not fund critical capacity improvements such as more 8-car trains or additional station entrances and exits.

And, as Metro implements its capital program, it must ensure that any safety upgrades look critically at all aspects of safety. As Metro has moved forward on replacing its 1000-series railcars, one of the top recommendations from the NTSB report, it has made decisions regarding seating and door placement that may increase safety but may also contribute to increased crowding. Metro must ensure maintains service quality, while improving safety, because impairing overall service in the long run in the name of safety will only drive commuters to

other, more dangerous modes of travel. Transit must be safe; it also must not be permanently hamstrung in ways that actually make travelers across all modes less safe.

The NTSB has very clearly laid out what it expects from Metro, and Metro has shown that it is moving forward on implementing the NTSB's recommendations. However, riders have also expressed their vision for improvements at Metro: they want more reliable service, greater focus on customers, and clearer, more direct and more frequent communication from Metro, especially when things go wrong. Metro must work to ensure that these two visions complement each other, rather than compete against one another.

A safe, reliable, well-maintained and adequately funded Metro system will contribute to the safety of the entire region. I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Attachments:

Attachment A – List of Current R.A.C. Members

**Riders' Advisory Council
Roster**

(as of February 3, 2010)

2010 Officers:

Chair: Frank DeBernardo
DC Vice-Chair: David Alpert
MD Vice-Chair: Victoria Wilder
VA Vice-Chair: Dharm Guruswamy

Jurisdiction:

At-Large:

Dharm Guruswamy
Carl Seip
Patrick Sheehan (AAC)

District of Columbia:

David Alpert
Kelsi Bracmort
Patricia Daniels
Kenneth DeGraff
Carol Carter Walker
Diana Zinkl

Maryland:

Sharon Conn (Prince George's County)
Frank DeBernardo (Prince George's County)
Christopher Farrell (Montgomery County)
Ronald Whiting (Montgomery County)
Victoria Wilder (Montgomery County)

Virginia:

Penelope Everline (Arlington County)
Robert Petrine (Fairfax County)
Clayton Sinyai (Fairfax County)
Lorraine Silva (Arlington County)
Evelyn Tomaszewski (Fairfax County)
Lillian White (City of Alexandria)