

Metro Riders' Advisory Council
September 5, 2012

I. Call to Order:

Dr. Bracmort called the September 2012 meeting of the Metro Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:39 p.m.

The following members were present:

Kelsi Bracmort, Chair, District of Columbia
James Wright, Maryland Vice Chair, Prince George's County
Lorraine Silva, Virginia Vice Chair, Arlington County
Thais Austin, District of Columbia
Ben Ball, District of Columbia
Frank DeBernardo, Prince George's County
Chris Farrell, Montgomery County
Dharm Guruswamy, At-Large
Barbara Hermanson, City of Alexandria
Patricia King-Adams, District of Columbia
Joseph Kitchen, Prince George's County
Kara Merrigan, Arlington County
Pat Sheehan, At-Large/Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair
Deborah Titus, Fairfax County
Carol Carter Walker, District of Columbia
Candice Walsh, District of Columbia
Ron Whiting, Montgomery County
Victoria Wilder, Montgomery County

Other individuals in attendance:

Andrea Burnside, Chief Performance Officer, Metro
Tom Harrington, Office of Long Range Planning, Metro
John Pasek, Council staff coordinator, Metro
Loyda Sequiera, Board Secretary, Metro

Chris Barnes, member of the public

Dr. Bracmort asked the Council's newest member, Ms. King-Adams, to introduce herself. Ms. King-Adams told the Council that she wanted to join the Council because she had concerns about some of the comments she has heard about Metro service and wanted to help make improvements.

Approved January 9, 2013

II. Public Comment Period:

Chris Barnes said that he appreciated that the Council was allowing greater audience input in its meetings. He also asked that members make themselves more publicly available to the riders that they represent. Mr. Barnes suggested that Council members should have individual, publicly-available email addresses or phone numbers where they can be reached, that the Council should broadcast its meetings live over the internet for the benefit of those who cannot attend and that members write letters introducing themselves to the riders they represent.

Dr. Bracmort reminded members that the Council had adopted a new public participation procedure at its last meeting that provides the opportunity for members of the public to provide comments on agenda items during the meeting.

III. Approval of Agenda:

Ms. Silva moved approval of the agenda as presented. This motion was seconded by Mr. Ball. Without objection, the agenda was approved as presented.

IV. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes:

After discussion, the approval of past meeting minutes was deferred until a subsequent meeting to allow members additional time to review them. Mr. Pasek said that he would ensure that minutes needing approval were sent to members in advance of the next meeting and would post those draft minutes to the website so that they could also be reviewed by members of the public.

V. Rail Service Standards:

Andrea Burnside, Metro's Chief Performance Officer and Tom Harrington, the head of Metro's Office of Long-Range Planning, provided an overview of Metro's proposed standards for Metrorail service.

Ms. Burnside explained to members of the Council that the Board is currently engaged in strategic planning effort, and as part of that planning effort, Metro is trying to more clearly define what it means to "deliver quality service." She reminded members that she had gotten their thoughts on the elements of quality rail service at their February meeting and had used their comments in developing the proposed rail service standards.

Ms. Burnside noted that the proposed standards had been brought to the Board over the summer and that the Board had asked staff to reach out to Metro's advisory groups to get their feedback. She said that Metro had also posted information about the proposed standards on its blog, www.PlanItMetro.com to solicit comments from members of the public.

She explained that Metro does not currently have Board-adopted, formal standards for rail service, though it does have informal standards used by staff in planning and managing service. She added that as part of the Board's adoption of bylaws, it is required to develop and adopt service standards. She also noted that the proposed rail service standards did not represent a proposal to reduce service and said that what is currently being proposed are the initial phase in the development of a more robust set of standards.

Ms. Burnside also provided an overview of the reasons why Metro wants to set standards, including to help set customer expectations, to guide deployment of current service, to plan for future service and to help plan for capital investment and operating resource needs. She then provided greater detail about the proposed standards, which include system operating hours, train frequency (headway), and passengers per car.

Ms. Burnside reviewed the standards used by other transit agencies in measuring their performance and how those standards are used by those agencies. She also explained the constraints that Metro has to consider in setting standards, including constraints of the system's design, lack of equipment, as well as lack of budget resources and personnel. She concluded her presentation with the specific proposed standards:

- *Hours of service:* Open 5 a.m. weekdays, 7 a.m. weekends
Close midnight Sun. – Thurs., 3 a.m. Friday and Saturday
- *Rush hour frequency:* 2.5 – 7 minutes
- *Passengers per car (rush hour):* 100 (range of 80-120)

Mr. Harrington added that Metro is still developing the operating plan for the Silver Line but is anticipating operating it on a seven-minute rush hour frequency, which is reflected in the proposed standards.

Dr. Bracmort then opened the floor to questions from members of the public and the Council.

Mr. Barnes noted that Ms. Burnside had stated in her presentation that Metro's proposal wouldn't lower its performance standards but then proposed lowering standards by increasing the maximum time between trains during the peak period.

Kurt Raschke said that it is his understanding that Metro's design capacity allows for trains every 90 seconds except for on the Dulles extension, where it allows for trains every 2 minutes 15 seconds. Mr. Harrington explained that one of Metro's findings from its "Core Capacity Study" was that headways were limited to 26 trains per hour, and that limit was largely due to the capacity of the junctions where lines come together. He added that in crowded conditions, headways are also constrained by the need to allow for sufficient dwell time at stations to let riders enter and exit trains.

Another member of the audience suggested that Metro look into adding more trains to the Blue line during rush hour.

Ms. Wilder asked whether Metro had a plan to make power system upgrades to allow for more 8-car trains to be operated during rush hour and when such upgrades might be completed. In response to this question, Ms. Burnside said that some power system upgrades are being completed as part of Metro Forward. She noted that this doesn't necessarily add capacity and that additional railcars are also needed in order to do that. Mr. Harrington added that the system is current constrained at operating 50% of trains as 8-car trains, and that Metro is almost at that point on the Red line presently. He said that there is no funding in the current Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to provide more than that. He noted that if

ridership growth continues, Metro will run up against the proposed 100 passenger/railcar standard, which could help define why additional railcars or propulsion upgrades are necessary.

Ms. Hermanson said that she was surprised that there wasn't a standard proposed for non-rush hour service and also suggested that there should also be a discussion of escalator availability as a measure of rail service quality. She asked how the proposed standards would reconcile the proposed standards with the 12-minute gaps between some Blue line trains as part of Rush+ service. Mr. Harrington noted that Rush+ levels are included in the proposed standards. Mr. Burnside added that Metro anticipates developing additional rail service standards in the future and that escalator reliability could be included in those standards.

Ms. Walker asked whether the Board has been presented with data that would show how much it would cost to maintain service as it is now or even reduce headways. In response to this question, Ms. Burnside said that the Board hasn't been presented with that specific information but that defining service standards would help staff in providing such an estimate. Ms. Walker said that it would be helpful for the Board to know how much it would cost to maintain a six-minute headway or even to reduce it.

Mr. Ball noted that it may make the standards easier to understand if they showed proposed headways for each individual line. He asked what the consequences would be if Metro didn't meet the proposed standard and whether ongoing trackwork was helping Metro operate more 8-car trains. He also asked whether the proposed seven-minute headway for the Silver line is changing as the project gets closer to completion. Ms. Burnside said that Metro reports its performance to the Board quarterly in its "Vital Signs" report, which is also posted on Metro's website. She added that if Metro weren't meeting its standards, that information would show up in that report and staff would have to have a discussion with the Board about how it would hold the General Manager accountable for the system's performance.

Mr. Kitchen said that one of the concerns riders have about Metro's standards is how Metro develops and measures those standards, and provided the example of how Metro defines bus on-time performance as an item of concern. He asked whether Metro would be willing to publicize the information about how well it is meeting its standards and provide performance measurement data on a monthly basis. Ms. Burnside noted the Metro had previously produced the Vital Signs report monthly and the Board had asked that it cut that back to quarterly. She added that she would take Mr. Kitchen's suggestion to produce a report on a monthly basis under advisement.

Dr. Bracmort noted that riders are concerned about how they will be able to verify whether or not Metro is adhering to the standards that it sets. She also asked Ms. Burnside to explain how Metro calculates its span of service, especially in light of the recent issue when baseball game went into extra innings, past Metro's closing time, meaning that some fans were unable to make their train home. Ms. Burnside said that the proposed standards only addressed normal closing times and don't take into account special events, and explained that Metro has a "rolling" closing time that varies by station. Dr. Bracmort suggested that Metro may want to explain that more thoroughly as part of its proposed standards.

Mr. Sheehan noted that the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) had received this presentation at its meeting the previous day and wanted to know when these proposed standards would be presented to the Board for adoption. Mr. Sheehan said that he wants to make sure that the AAC coordinates its comments with the RAC's. Ms. Burnside said that the Board's Customer Service and Operations Committee would be considering the proposed standards at its October 11th meeting and asked that any comments be provided in advance of that meeting. She also asked that, if the groups were to provide several additional standards for Metro staff to consider, that they prioritize them, since Metro will be rolling out additional standards in phases.

Ms. Merrigan noted that each station has "last train" times posted at the station manager's booth and, in her experience, those times range from midnight to 12:30 a.m. In response to her question about the meaning of the term "farebox recovery," Ms. Burnside explained that the term refers to the percentage of operating costs that are covered by passenger fares. In response to an additional question from Ms. Merrigan, Ms. Burnside explained that some systems measure and report certain performance standards, but only use those measurements for reporting purposes, not for service planning.

Mr. Farrell asked why Grosvenor was selected as a turnback point for trains on the western leg of the Red line and whether that had to do with load factors or if there was some other reason. Mr. Harrington explained that Metro turns trains around at Grosvenor because there is a pocket track there, which allows trains to reverse direction off of the main line, and that crowding is more of a factor closer to downtown. He noted that adding a "passengers per car" standard will require Metro to measure and collect more data on factors such as crowding than it does currently, which will require Metro to collect more data on passenger loading throughout the system and at different times of day. He explained that currently, Metro only measures passenger loads at what it calls its "Max Load Points" – the place where trains are most crowded.

Mr. Guruswamy noted that the proposed standards allow for seven or fourteen minute headways and asked if that meant that the proposed headway for the Silver Line when it opens will be seven minutes. Mr. Harrington said that Metro is still developing the operating plan for the Silver Line, but that it currently anticipates seven-minute headways, which was determined by splitting the 26 train per hour maximum between three lines. He added that the headways underscore how all of the Metro lines operate together as a system and how changing the headway on one line will result in changes to the headways on other lines throughout the system.

Mr. Guruswamy also described his experience riding Metro during a federal holiday, which made him think that the constraint on the number of trains Metro can operate is related to the amount of time trains must spend at each station loading and unloading riders. He said that this points to the need for Metro to look at ordering new railcars with four doors on each side, rather than the current three doors, which would allow faster loading/unloading.

Ms. Titus asked whether there would be a change in the headway once new railcars arrived, since they will have better performance characteristics than the older cars. Mr. Harrington responded that frequency is constrained more by characteristics of the system, rather than the number of railcars, and that adding

more railcars will help increase the number of eight-car trains, but not necessarily the frequency of the trains.

In response to a question from Dr. Bracmort about the phases of adopting rail service standards, Ms. Burnside said that she didn't anticipate that the Board would adopt standards all at once, but that it would, instead adopt standards in a phased process.

Dr. Bracmort thanked Ms. Burnside and Mr. Harrington for their presentation and said that the RAC would get together with the AAC to further refine its comments and recommendations regarding Metro are proposed rail service standards.

VI. Emergency Communication Panel:

Dr. Bracmort gave a brief history of the emergency communications panel proposal – she noted that the idea for having a public meeting regarding Metro's response to emergencies arose back in the spring, after a couple of incidents where it appeared that there could have been a better response from either Metro or a jurisdictional responder. She said that the Council had developed a proposal that it had sent to the Board, and, the Board agreed to work with the Council to put together a public meeting on this topic. She explained that the Council had received the proposal that was included in members' meeting packets for a meeting that would be the first in a series of steps in engaging the public on this topic.

Dr. Bracmort said that she wanted to hear members' feedback on the proposal and what they think the Council would bring to the discussion, should the meeting go forward. She said that the meeting on October 11th would function as a scoping meeting and that there would be a more formal town hall meeting on this topic that more directly engages members of the public.

Mr. DeBernardo asked what Dr. Bracmort meant when she referred to the October 11th meeting as a "scoping meeting." Dr. Bracmort responded that the October 11th meeting would be an information-gathering meeting to identify issues that need further follow up and input from the public at subsequent sessions.

Mr. Ball said that while it would be good to have a discussion, the Council might want to propose a more creative approach, such as having an event within a Metro station or at a Metrobus stop that is more of a simulation of what would happen during an actual incident. Dr. Bracmort said that this is something that could be taken into consideration.

Mr. Whiting noted that many of the goals contained within the proposal are to "provide information." He said that hoped the meeting would do more than just provide information and that officials would talk about the training that employees receive to respond to incidents, what happens when employees don't follow that training and what Metro is doing to make improvements. He added that he has heard that during incidents, the biggest issue is often that employees don't know how to react.

Mr. Kitchen said that he had expressed his concerns about this meeting to members over email, earlier in the week, but wanted to reiterate that he was concerned about the proposal for several reasons. He said

that he was concerned about the proposed day/time for the meeting, which would fall in the middle of the workday and make it very difficult for members of the public to attend, and added that he didn't think that the proposal was responsive to the Council's initial request. Mr. Kitchen said that there needed to be two-way communication between Metro staff and its riders about what is supposed to happen during an incident, and that the proposal, which calls for questions from the public to be pre-screened by Council members, would inhibit that conversation. He said that he feels that it is his job as a Council member not to speak for other riders, but rather to help create opportunities for them to have their voices heard. Mr. Kitchen also raised concerns about the length of time – several months – between the Council's initial request and any public meeting on this topic. He suggested that the Council had the authority to hold its own meeting on this topic.

Ms. Titus said that the Council should think about inviting representatives from the Metro Transit Police and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to address this topic.

Ms. Austin said that she and other riders are concerned about Metro's lack of accountability. She said that riders are looking for resolution and for changes to procedures to be made to help Metro improve its response. She noted an experience that she had where Metro staff did not assist her.

Dr. Bracmort said that she thinks that the meeting on October 11th is a first step towards having a subsequent public meeting. She said that while the Council could have its own meeting, she didn't think that the Council would be able to get the same response from Metro staff without the Board's involvement. She added that there may be room to negotiate aspects of this meeting with the Board and noted that this meeting represents a significant example of the Board being willing to work with the Council. Dr. Bracmort said that she understood members' desire to get these issues resolved quickly, but that this proposal provides the opportunity for the Council to give voice to riders' concerns.

Mr. Ball asked about the nature of the incidents that would be covered in this panel; he said that in reviewing the proposal, it appeared to cover service-related incidents, not those that involved crime or personal safety. Mr. Kitchen said that the proposal by the Board was not responsive what the Council had initially proposed, since the Council's proposal was in response to incidents involving crime and response in the Metro.

Mr. Pasek said that the Council's initial proposal referenced both types of incidents – both those involving crime and personal safety and those that involved service disruptions and emergency response. He noted that, after submitting its initial proposal to the Board, the Council was asked to refine it further, which it did at its July meeting. He explained that, at that time, the Council had decided that tackling both types of issues would be beyond the scope of one meeting and decided that the meeting should focus on service disruptions and emergency response. Dr. Bracmort and Mr. Kitchen said that they disagreed with this recollection of the July meeting discussion.

Mr. Guruswamy said that he thinks that the RAC should be working to get the Metro Board to incorporate public input into its decision-making. He said that the Council needs to work with the Board to bring them along regarding involving the public, and that working together on this meeting presents an

opportunity to do that. He noted that the Council's holding a separate meeting, without Board involvement, wouldn't help advance the larger goal of greater public involvement and transparency by the Board.

Ms. Walsh noted her concerns about the proposed time of the meeting and said that it would be difficult for members of the public to attend. Dr. Bracmort replied that she understood these concerns and that, in her discussion with Board Chair Hudgins about this meeting, Mrs. Hudgins understood that the meeting on October 11th wouldn't be the only opportunity for input from the public. Dr. Bracmort said that the October meeting will help refine issues for later public meetings.

Ms. Sequeira said that the Board doesn't intend for the proposed meeting on October 11th to be a time for public input. She explained that the purpose of the meeting on October 11th is to have a discussion about policies and procedures that are currently in place and the changes have been made to those policies and procedures in response to previous incidents as well as to get the Council's perspective on incident response. She said that the October 11th meeting would help formulate a structure for a subsequent public input process.

Ms. Walker asked whether the portfolio of the Board's Safety Committee covers both emergency response and issues regarding personal safety. Mr. Pasek and Ms. Sequeira said that the committee covered both types of incidents. Ms. Walker said that she thought the proposed meeting would cover emergencies that affected many people, but that she didn't want to disregard the personal safety incidents brought up in this discussion. She said that she had concerns about the format of the meeting, specifically that its format was very tightly controlled, and also about opportunities for members of the public to be involved in the discussion. She added that she had concerns about the Council's participation in any meeting that would restrict public input.

Dr. Bracmort said that the Council's leadership will be meeting with the Board's leadership on September 27th and will have an opportunity to present the Council's concerns about the proposed October 11th meeting at this time.

Ms. Walker said that she didn't want the Council to be in a position where, in the future, the Board could say that it solicited public input through the Council when that was not really the case. Dr. Bracmort said that she understood Ms. Walker's concerns and the Council would need to review any documents related to this meeting to ensure that they reflect the Council's position on the issues raised.

Ms. Hermanson said that she was confused about the audience and goals for this meeting, and whether it was aimed at the public.

Mr. Kitchen said that the Council voted on a proposal that was clear about what it wanted to do. He said that the proposal provided by the Board isn't responsive to its initial request and doesn't mention any follow-up actions after the October 11th meeting. He noted that the Council allowed this to happen by seeking the Board's permission to hold such a meeting. Mr. Kitchen said that the Council needs to decide

whether or not it wants to go forward with this meeting or whether it wants to go forward on its own. He said that he wants to make sure that the public is included in planning at every stage.

Ms. Silva said that she was confused about the level of public participation at the October 11th meeting – the proposal from the Board calls for the public to “attend” but not participate, but she noted that Metro would be advertising the meeting. Dr. Bracmort said that members of the public would have the opportunity to submit comments or questions in advance of the meeting. Ms. Silva said that she understood that the meeting on October 11th was just the first step in a larger public outreach process, but was confused as to why the public was being invited to this initial step. Dr. Bracmort said that this question could be raised with the Board’s leadership.

Dr. Bracmort said that the larger question for the Council is whether it wants to work with the Board on this or meeting or not.

Mr. Ball said that there isn’t a doubt that the Council wants to work with the Board, but that more information needs to be provided about this meeting – what is being proposed, what types of incidents will be discussed, how the public will participate in this meeting.

Dr. Bracmort asked whether anyone was opposed to working with the Board on having such a meeting about incidents – whether related to personal safety and security or to emergency response. She noted that the meeting on October 11th wouldn’t be the final discussion on this topic.

Mr. Kitchen said that he would be willing to give Dr. Bracmort the leeway to move forward with this meeting, provided that a better time can be found for the October 11th meeting that would allow for more meaningful Council participation. Dr. Bracmort noted that Mr. Seip was the lead on this project and that he would be able to attend and participate in the meeting.

There was agreement from members of the Council that it should move forward with this meeting, in concern with the Board, but that there were concerns, especially about the October 11th meeting time. Dr. Bracmort said that she would make those concerns known to the Board.

Ms. Wilder suggested that the Council should make its concerns known prior to the meeting between the Council and Board leadership scheduled for September 27th, as that wouldn’t allow sufficient time to make changes in advance of the October 11th Safety and Security Committee meeting. Ms. Sequeira noted that that Board had requested a response to its proposal by September 10th; Dr. Bracmort said that she would raise the Council’s concerns with the Board about its proposal as soon as possible.

VII. Upcoming Committee Meetings:

Mr. Ball told members of the Council that the Airport Accessibility Working Group would be meeting with a representative from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority on September 25th to discuss access to Dulles Airport.

VIII. Questions/Comments on the RAC and AAC Chair Reports:

Mr. Pasek noted that while there was no RAC report for August, the AAC submitted a written report to the Board. Mr. Sheehan said that the AAC continues to work on the new MetroAccess contract and on implementation of a MetroAccess fare calculator. There were no questions for Mr. Sheehan regarding his report.

IX. Open Mic/Community Meetings:

Dr. Bracmort asked that Mr. Kitchen provide her with information on follow-up activities from the Youth Town Hall that the Council co-sponsored in July so that information could be included in the Council's monthly report to the Board.

Dr. Bracmort also noted the concerns raised by a member of the public earlier in the meeting about the Council being more responsive and available to members of the public. She reminded members to let their contacts know about the monthly Council meetings and also suggested that the Council may want to participate in any Metro public meetings by having members available prior to such meetings to talk with riders in attendance.

Mr. Kitchen asked members of the Council as to whether they would be interested in getting a presentation from Metro staff regarding its findings from the "Mystery Rider" program. He noted that Metro had refused to release information about the program's findings, claiming that some of the information was proprietary. Dr. Bracmort noted that there had been concerns about Metro's lack of transparency and asked Council members to get back to Mr. Kitchen with their thoughts on having such a presentation.

Mr. Farrell noted that he recently had the opportunity to ride the BART system in the San Francisco area and brought back some printed materials to share with other Council members.

Mr. Ball suggested that it might be helpful for Council members to hold themselves to similar time limits on their comments as those imposed on members of the public to help move meetings along.

Mr. Guruswamy told members that there would be a tour of Columbia Pike on Saturday, September 8th at 10 a.m. sponsored by the Coalition for Smarter Growth and the Virginia chapter of the American Planning Association. Mr. Pasek said that he would forward information about this tour to members.

Mr. Pasek said that there are planned hearings on proposed bus service changes and that he would provide the Council with more information about those meetings when it becomes available. He said that those meetings would likely be held in late October.

Mr. Pasek also noted that, at the end of September, he would begin the outreach process to recruit new Council members. He said that he would be sending emails to members whose terms are expiring to let them know about their opportunity to apply to be reappointed.

Dr. Bracmort reminded Mr. Pasek that the Council still needed to schedule meetings between members and their jurisdictional Board members.

X. Adjournment:

Without objection, Dr. Bracmort adjourned the meeting at 8:32 p.m.