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Chairman Zimmerman and Members of the Board:

It is my pleasure to present you with the Riders' Advisory Council report for April 2008.

I would like to take this opportunity to applaud Metro for its performance during the recent special events – the Nationals' home opener and last week's papal visit. Metro took the time and effort to do extensive planning prior to these events, and that planning clearly paid off handsomely. The RAC appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback to Metro during its planning for these events and looks forward to working with staff in the future on similar projects.

Passenger Communications During Service Disruptions:

One of the most frequently-heard complaints from Metro's passengers – and RAC members -- centers on communication with passengers during emergencies and service disruptions. During such events, riders want clear, consistent and concise information that will allow them to make informed decisions about how to best complete their trips.

Clearly WMATA leadership has understood the need to address these concerns. At our April meeting, Deputy General Manager Gerald Francis, along with Yellow/Green Line Manager Rita Davis and Rail Transportation Managing Director Dan Epps, gave a presentation highlighting changes in various forms of communication used with riders. They outlined improvements – some already implemented and some in the works – ranging from changes at the Operations Control Center to changes in rail station manager training and equipment. They also talked about some ideas that the RAC had put forward over the past two years, including "pre-marking" locations around rail stations where bus bridges would queue if needed, and providing station-specific maps outside the paid areas that would assist rail riders in making choices about catching an existing bus or walking to another, non-affected station.

The RAC is encouraged by the presentations. We realize, though, that Rome wasn't built in a day, and that any change to procedures followed by thousands of operating employees and familiar to hundreds of thousands of riders will take time. As long as steady progress is made, however, RAC knows all riders – and employees – will benefit.

As part of the discussion following the presentations, the RAC suggested the following elements be added to Metro's plans for improved customer communications:

- Provide additional information for riders outside of the fare gates, so that they are aware of service disruptions before entering the system;
- Provide information that is consistent from station to station;
- Increase information provided to bus riders, including getting the "NextBus" service back online as soon as possible and explore other options to communicate service disruption information to bus riders;

- Ensure that service disruptions are announced on all rail lines, particularly on trains serving major transfer stations (as many riders use more than one line to reach their destinations);
- Provide maps in stations (to be used when service is disrupted at a station or line) that indicate walking distances/locations of other, unaffected rail stations as well as bus route alternatives;
- Renew efforts to provide more visible signage on rail cars and in rail stations concerning prohibited actions – specifically eating and consuming beverages in the system (it was noted more PA system announcements of this are being made);
- Analyze all communications – signage, etc. – to ensure that their messages are accessible to riders with all manner of disabilities;
- Continue to explore the use of technology to assist riders with disabilities, including motion activated announcements (and we know that will come with the new Metro Channel) as well as using cell phone and GPS technology to help with arrival times of rail cars and buses (as a supplement to Next Bus);
- Test the public address systems in train cars and making sure, before leaving a railyards each morning, announcements can be heard in every car, which is not always the case now; and
- Continue to upgrade the public address systems in its rail stations and testing those upgrades in several areas, including outside the paid area, and on platforms, since there can be significant distances between platforms and mezzanines.

2008 Work Plan:

The RAC is also in the process of finalizing a work plan for the remainder of 2008. The RAC's work plan will incorporate specific aspects of the Board's goals, adopted at the March meeting, along with items of interest and concern raised by members of the RAC's subcommittees. It is my hope that scheduling the RAC's activities over a longer timeframe and aligning them with the priorities and programs put forward in the Board's 2008 Goals will allow the RAC to make timely, topical comments to the Board on new or revised programs and policies.

It is also my expectation that, by mapping out what the RAC will discuss and offer advice on over the coming year, the RAC will then be able to decide when and how it wants to offer its input on particular topics. Specifically, my hope is that this work plan will allow the RAC to decide, on a project-by-project basis whether or not to provide Metro with comments in the early stages of a project or wait until staff is able to provide a draft proposal for RAC members' reactions.

Other April Activities:

RAC members were invited to Tuesday's (April 22nd) display of various types of hard flooring in rail cars at National Airport. On behalf of all RAC members – and 3 of us were able to attend – we thank staff for the opportunity. The members who experienced the flooring did feel that it could be an improvement over carpeting. We would all like to hear what riders think of the change as some of the test cars are put into service.

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RAC subcommittees also had the opportunity to learn about Metro's Bus Stop Customer Information Study and received a presentation on Metro's future capacity needs and its plans for a realignment of service on the Blue Line. We look forward to receiving additional, more specific information from Metro on the proposed realignment of the Blue Line – or enhancement of the Yellow Line, if you will, especially concerning how any changes in service would be communicated to customers.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Nancy Iacomini, Chairman