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December 13, 2007

Metro Board Members,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to present the December 2007 Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) report to the board. This is my final report as Chair of the Riders' Advisory Council and I would like to thank the Board, my fellow RAC members, and the riding public for having the opportunity to serve.

This written report covers the following topics:

- Recognitions from the Chair
- Departure of RAC Members
- The Year in Review
- Metro's Fare Increase and Public Hearing Process;

The accomplishment of the RAC and improvements to Metro services, processes, and procedures over the last year would not have been possible without the education of myself and other RAC members; your attention to riders' concerns; Metro's substantive interest in RAC issues; and your sincere commitment to the Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority as a public trust.

I'd like to personally express my thanks to Mr. John Pasek, Mr. Gerald Francis, Mr. Bob Hester, Mr. Jim Hamre, Mr. Fred Goodine, Mr. Ray Feldmann, Mr. Rick Harcum, Ms. Vicki Ellis, Mr. Lendy Castillo, Mr. Gary Erenrich, Mr. Jack Corbett, Mr. Jim Madaras, Ms. Debra Johnson, Ms. Ann Chisholm, Ms. Deborah Lipman, Mr. Kevin Donahue, Mr. Gordon Linton, Mr. Charlie Deegan, Mr. Peter Benjamin, and finally Ms. Polly Hanson for getting me involved in the first place.

I'd also like to recognize the General Managers Mr. Dan Tangherlini, Mr. Jack Requa, and Mr. Catoe and Board Chairs Ms. Gladys Mack, Mr. Charlie Deegan, Ms. Betty Hewlett for taking RAC recommendations seriously on many occasions.

I'd also like to thank those 100's of others within Metro and on the periphery who I missed here, yet have helped me to further the mission and goals of the RAC as advisors to the Board and have asked:

What would Metro's customers on the RAC think of this idea?

Departure of RAC Members:

I'm saddened to announce the departure of three very fine RAC members:

Mr. Dennis Jaffe who served as the RAC's first Chair will be relocating from the area.

Ms. Aline Stone who served as Chair of the Customer Service and Communication Committee who will be stepping down for personal reasons.

Mr. Justin Chittams, our high school student, who is headed off to college and has represented a valuable Metro constituency.

I look forward to the appointment of three new RAC members from the District of Columbia, and ask that consideration be given to another high school or college student.

Year in Review:

On the positive side, Metro has made commitments to improve communication with rail riders, in emergencies, during delays, in trains, on platforms, and at the entrance to stations. This includes a policy of openness and realism in communication during delays, expanded use of PID displays on platforms and outside fare gates, and the introduction of kiosk displays. We've also seen an improvement in escalator information and safety messages.

We have had to continue to press Metro on track debris; recycling; lighting, audio, literature distribution, enforcement of the smoking, eating and drinking policy; plus accessibility, safety and customer flow initiatives. We have seen modest improvements and hope to see much more progress in the year ahead.

On the downside, we saw pedestrian, customer and employee fatalities this year. The latest fatality was Mr. Tao Sun of my hometown, Rockville. The RAC and I wish to express our condolences to his family and friends.

We ask that during this holiday season and every day of the year, that every driver whether in a public or private vehicle -- be attentive, considerate, and mindful of posted speed limits, weather conditions, and the pedestrians, bicyclists, and wildlife that use our road-ways. Do this in memory of Mr. Sun and the other senseless deaths. Do this also for your loved-ones who all share our roads and highways.

Fare Increase and Metro's FY2009 Budget:

RAC members attended the Public Hearings on the proposed fare increase and service changes in November and had an opportunity to review the oral and written public testimony.

In a letter to Ms. Hewlett dated Nov. 1, 2007, I encouraged Metro to ensure that the hearings be well-advertised and be targeted to Metro's riders throughout the system. Unfortunately, outreach was limited, yet 422 people actively participated and hundred's more attended in support of the speakers.

On behalf of the RAC, I'd like to thank each and every rider who took the time to participate in this valuable process.

Over 93% of those who testified were opposed to the fare increases as proposed and the public outcry was largely directed towards the fairness of the proposal.

Many riders recognized that the funding of Metro is a difficult process, but it can't be done at the "expense" of meeting the challenges of reducing congestion, and providing public services to fixed and limited income riders. It is unfortunate that the fare proposal options, presented to the public, served to pit different segments of Metro's riders against one another, rather than to recognize Metro's value as an integrated system.

The RAC was unanimous in support of the following resolution:

In response to public comments on WMATA's proposed fare increase, the RAC strongly recommends that the WMATA Board:

- 1) Not implement a mid-year fare increase;*
- 2) Not move forward with a fare increase that solely burdens peak riders;*
- 3) Focus on increased access and public awareness of SmarTrip before implementing preferential fares for SmarTrip users;*
- 4) Tie any fare increase to measurable benchmarks in service improvements and customer relations;*
- 5) Ensure future fare hearings are well-advertised; and*
- 6) Not implement any fare increase prior to 60 days following Board approval.*

The RAC as a representative body of regular users of Metro services, well educated in the operational and budgetary obstacles faced by WMATA, understands the reality of fare increases in our future. However, the Board must

use the information collected during these public hearings as input into the development and implementation of:

- a fair and equitable fare policy;
- expansion of non-revenue opportunities;
- reasonable expectations for customer service and reliability;
- a concerted effort at fiscal constraint and cost controls;
- independent auditing by the inspector general;
- policies that encourage and reward the use of public transit; and
- techniques that assist those with the greatest need.

These principles extracted from riders views echo what has been said by the RAC in our meetings and discussions. Still, there was gold in the hearing process. Metro's riders can be a tremendous resource for the Board as it goes through the decision-making process on fares and fees, as evidenced by this sampling from the public testimony:

Mr. Michael Perkins of Arlington Virginia said: *“Increasing the high cost recovery ratio of Metrorail means that more peak customers pay over and above the cost of their trip, which is the wrong policy for reducing congestion, pollution, and energy use”*

The Honorable Tom Hucker of Silver Spring/Tacoma said: *“Many middle income workers depend upon public transportation for daily commutes. A fare increase disproportionate to inflation, at this time, surely will deter ridership and bring about a backlash of citizen concerns ...”*

Mr. Al Hines of Alexandria DASH said: *“It would make more sense ... to provide those passengers ... who truly need assistance with transit fares a Smart Benefits program through the jurisdiction's human services agencies ... rather than offer overly discounted fares to all passengers regardless of actual need.”*

Ms. Cara Seitchek said: *“If you are going to raise fares (which will affect long-distance riders the most), why not create some fare incentives so that people will continue riding. Until a few years ago, a \$20 metro card purchase resulted in an additional \$2 added to the card. ... You should want to reward frequent riders, not penalize them.”*

Finally, Mr. James Engelhardt of Fairfax said: *“I heard of at least one person who pays for a reserved space at the Vienna station simply because ‘I usually have to go into DC a couple of times a month.’ ... if we allow them to pay for reserved parking, why not go all the way and allow them to reserve a seat on every train*

they board?" This is an interesting perspective that speaks to how commuters see the abuses in the reserved parking program.

Closing

In summary, the RAC strongly advises the Board to:

- review the testimony received thus far;
- have Metro revise their assumptions, sharpen their pencils; and develop a detailed budget; and
- then craft a more balanced fare proposal for public comment in the February/March timeframe -- for a revised end-of-April decision.

There is still time. The 2009 Fiscal Year does not start until July, and the FY2008 is already balanced.

As individuals with different ridership patterns, different demographics, and a great variety of experiences -- we on the RAC are all willing to give our time and energy to the improvement of Metro. You must find a way to use this valuable resource on a more regular basis.

In the matter of the budget, we are willing to work with the Board and Metro staff in the crafting of a fair fare proposal for FY 2009 that will allow for more balanced debate than was experienced at these hearings.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve as RAC Chair and again I continue to encourage the Metro board, management and staff to ask:

What would Metro's customers on the RAC think of this idea?

I. Michael Snyder

Chair, Riders' Advisory Council