

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

FISCAL YEAR 2007

BUDGET INFORMATION SESSION

Tuesday, March 21, 2006

WMATA Headquarters  
600 Fifth Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20001

The public hearing convened, pursuant to  
notice, at 7:00 p.m.

BEFORE:

GLADYS W. MACK, Chairperson

CHARLES DEEGAN, First Vice Chairman

ROBERT J. SMITH, Board Member

CHRISTOPHER ZIMMERMAN, Board Member

DANA KAUFFMAN, Board Member

DAN TANGHERLINI, General Manager

ALSO PRESENT:

DENNIS JAFFEE, Chair  
Riders Advisory Committee

KEVIN MOORE, Chair  
RAC Budget Subcommittee

CHARLES WOODRUFF, Chief Financial Officer  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit  
Authority

RICK HARCUM, Acting Director  
Office of Financial Management

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRPERSON MACK: I'd like to call this meeting to order. I'm Gladys Mack. I'm chair of the WMATA Board of Directors. This evening we have other board members, Mr. Charles Deegan, who represents Prince George's County; Mr. Robert Smith, who represents Montgomery County; and, of course, Mr. Tangherlini, our interim general manager.

We do expect other board members this evening, although I have word from Mr. Jim Graham, who is the chair of the Budget Committee and who had been expected to preside this evening, he is ill and will be unable to attend. And our vice chair, Mr. Gordon Linton, who would be the backup for Mr. Graham, is out of town on family business, and he is unable to attend. But we do expect other board members to come in as we go along.

I would also like to recognize the presence of Mr. Dennis Jaffe, who is the chair of the Riders Advisory Committee. He is not in the room but he is here. He's in the building. And Kevin Moore, who

is the chair of the RAC Budget Subcommittee, I know Kevin is here because I've seen him.

Thank you, and welcome to Metro's first budget information session. I want to start by thanking you for being here tonight, and perhaps we will have other community participants with us also as the evening goes along.

Tonight we are opening our doors to hear for the first time your comments on our proposed budget for fiscal year 2007. For the past year and a half we have taken a back-to-basics approach, and part of that approach has been establishing new ways to communicate with our customers. Part of this effort has been our town hall meetings, the public comments at our board meetings, the posting of board meeting materials on our WMATA website, and the introduction of our Riders Advisory Committee. We plan to continue these open lines of communication so that we will get to know more about your questions, your comments, and your concerns, and your satisfaction with the system.

Let me take a moment to tell you what our plan is for tonight. In a few minutes, we will hear from Chuck Woodruff, who is WMATA's chief financial officer and Rick Harcum, acting director of the Office of Financial Management, and they will give us a brief presentation on WMATA's budget.

Then we will start with the public comment period. Customers who have signed up to speak here tonight will each have three minutes to present their comments. Customers who registered during the session will have their turn after those who pre-registered.

The end of a three-minute period will be shown by a traffic-light timer in the front of the room. Customers who decide not to speak here tonight may submit written comments to the CFO's office, WMATA, 600 Fifth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001, not later than the close of business, June 8, 2006.

Let me provide you with an overview of WMATA's proposed budget for fiscal 2007, which runs from July 1 through June 30, 2007. Our proposed

budget of \$1.8 billion is made up of two budgets, \$1.1 billion, which will go to the operating budget, and \$662 million, which will go to the capital budget.

The operating budget pays for fuel for buses, electricity for trains, and of course the employee payroll, which represents about 75 percent of the WMATA budget. The capital budget pays for new buses and trains for improvements to our stations and garages, and, of course, the maintenance of our vehicles and our facilities.

Funding for the capital budget comes from the federal government and three local jurisdictions we serve; actually, the three states, the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. Funding for the operating budget comes from the fares that we pay on the bus and the rail, from various types of non-passenger revenue that we have in WMATA, such as advertising, and the rest of the funds come from the local jurisdictions' treasuries.

WMATA is the only transportation agency, largest transportation agency in the nation, that

does not have some sort of dedicated source of funding.

Our proposed budget is \$74 million more than last year's budget. This is due to service expansion, rising fuel costs, and overall inflation. This proposed budget also includes some new policy initiatives. Among them is the proposed change of rail service and fares during holidays.

As we all know, ridership continues to grow, and customers have requested that we provide regular service during holidays, such as Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, Presidents' Day, Columbus Day and so on. Our plan is to provide regular service during those holidays, however, this service would be provided using regular fares and not the reduced fares that we are accustomed to on those special days.

Additionally, the proposed budget includes elimination of some late-night bus service and routes that have lower ridership. The resources that would be garnered from reducing these routes would be reinvested to relieve overcrowding and to

improve service on some of our heavily-traveled routes. The presentation from Mr. Woodruff and Mr. Harcum will go more in detail on this matter, and we will be holding public hearings on these proposals within the next few months.

Let me note that Mr. Chris Zimmerman from Arlington County has joined us here, and I will be introducing other board members as they come in.

Let me turn now to Mr. Woodruff, WMATA's CFO, to begin the budget presentation.

MR. WOODRUFF: Thank you, Ms. Mack.

I want to talk to you briefly about some of the things we're doing.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Before you start, Chuck, let me introduce Mr. Dana Kauffman, who is approaching the table, our former chair of the Board of Directors. Thank you.

MR. WOODRUFF: I want to talk to you about some of the things we're doing, the whole budget process, and making information available to our customers and to our board. Two things that we've published this year for the first time.

We have a little brochure, which is the high level on the budget, explains where the money comes from, how the money's spent. And then to go to a bit more detail, we have what we're calling an executive summary. These are available in all of our garages. They're available here; they're available on line. And this is the beginning of an effort to get the word out on Metro how the budget works, the funding, et cetera.

Some other things that we have done, we've implemented quarterly budget updates to the Board. We've did the first one to the Board for the first half of fiscal '06. The change that we've implemented is rather than just take a snapshot of finances month, by month, by month, we're taking the revenues, the expenditures, analyzing those, and projecting forward through the end of the fiscal year.

So in the example of the '06 update, we were able to tell the Board that we're projecting a year-end balance of some \$12 million. We recommend that the \$10 million be set aside to be put in our

third-party, liability-worker comp fund to fund some payouts there. So it provides additional information for staff and for the Board to make management decisions and manage this board over multiple years, '06 and '07 in this case.

We're going to bring the capital budget to the Board every six months. We'll have a complete budget update on the capital budget, and that's in the works. We haven't started that, but that is another plan to keep the public and the Board informed on the entire budget process.

Last September, the Board approved a resolution directing staff to basically re-engineer the entire budget process, and we're doing that. We're going to start with updating the strategic plan, which should be our guiding light for the whole budget process.

We will develop performance measures. Staff will come up with those; they'll come back to the Board for approval. The performance measures, of course, will measure how we're doing as a Metro staff and operations support, the whole arena, which

will allow us to see if we're moving forward to accomplishing our strategic goals. So we're going to go to a performance-based budget. We will begin this in '08. We'll start in the operations areas, and we'll expand it to the entire budget throughout the authority.

We're also looking at best practices that can be implemented. Those will be implemented as they're identified. We're developing benchmarks for all of our performance measures so we know how we compare to our peers, other business entities. And we will develop workload indicators so we can begin to gauge appropriate staffing levels throughout the Authority.

Just quickly, a couple of fun projects that we're starting. We're looking into performance engineering, which there are a number ESCOs, energy service companies. They come in. They look at your buildings, they look at lighting, heating, cooling. Generally, in lighting, if the lighting is more than five years old, you can replace the fixtures in the bulbs; significant savings occur.

You implement that, you save energy. The buildings are better lit, cool, heated, et cetera. You have a better environment, and you finance the repairs through the savings and energy costs. So that's something we're working on. We hope to get that going in the next 60 days, and we'll come back to the Board with that proposal.

We're also looking at having folks come in and do a review of our phone bills, our utility bills, our health payments, make sure we have the right rates, look for accuracy, are all the phone lines truly in use? On average, that usually saves you 10 to 20 percent of your bill as these people come through, and they're paid for by the savings in your various accounts.

We've just modified our auction contraction to dispose of surplus property, and we have included in there that we're going to start using online services to dispose of property. We're going to start with a couple of specific items, do a private program. The benefit to that is the surplus property moves quickly. It goes away from the

authority; we don't have to store it. There are no fees to Metro; the fees are paid by the buyer. The experience there is, again, you should be able to get maybe 15 to 20 percent more for the items because now they're advertised on the Web as opposed to a local auction service, and you get rid of any auction fees.

One other quick thing is reprographics, meaning all of our reproduction capabilities-- copiers, printers, et cetera--where we'll do an RFP, request for proposal, partner with a private-sector firm after we evaluate their proposals, and we'll standardize our copying, our printing so we're not printing 30 copies on a little desktop printer at a high cost per copy. Again, savings should accrue, and we should have a better product and have more standardization of our copying facilities.

So those are a few fun things. I think the performance engineering is going to do very well for us because the system is aging, and we can expect some significant savings there. So unless anybody

has any questions on those, I'll turn it over to Rick.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you, Chuck.

MR. HARCUM: What I'm going to try to do it tonight is answer these two questions, and we're going to keep it at a pretty simple level because WMATA's budget can get incredibly complicated. I'm going and drill down through various pieces so you all can see what's going on. Ms. Mack did say it's a \$1.8 billion budget this year, so there is quite a bit of money at stake.

Even my friends and neighbors and family occasionally ask me the question, how much profit does Metro make? And, of course, we know, Metro's not a for-profit entity. We don't have a profit. We don't have stock. There's no stock options. We run it like a business, but there is not a profit out there. Metro runs at a loss, and it's by design. It's good public policy that Metro runs at a loss. And as a matter of fact, every transit property in America runs at a loss. I think there's

actually only one or two on the planet that generate a profit.

There hasn't been profitable public transit in this country in a long time. Here in D.C., for those of you who are long-term residents, you might remember the name D.C. Transit, way back in the 1970s.

I'll tell a story. Back in the day when I was in high school going to an all-boys, Catholic, parochial school here in the area, they didn't have their own bus company. So my mom would give me bus fare everyday to go out and hop on a D.C. Transit bus and get to school that way. Of course, I'd go right to 7-Eleven and buy cigarettes and then hitchhike to school. Since then, I quit smoking, and I now take transit. I ride it everyday, and I'm healthy, and it's a good system. And what we want to start trying to do is communicating to you how good a system it is. Washington, D.C. has a world-class transit system. It is, if not "the," one of the best transit properties on the planet.

Like Ms. Mack said, it's a big budget. \$1.8 billion is hard to comprehend. I was just messing around on the Internet earlier--not on a porno site but doing some economic research--and it turns out that Metro's annual budget is roughly equal to the gross domestic product of Aruba. So our annual budget is basically the size of a small, Caribbean nation. We're not quite as big as Greenland, but we're definitely bigger than Aruba.

So the question is, what does that \$1.8 billion buy? What does that budget get you? It gets you a lot of things. It gets your 1,400 buses. It gets you over a thousand rail cars. It gets you 10,000 of the most dedicated, hard-working employees in any organization you'll ever come by.

The pictures that you're seeing up here is what goes on both in what the customers see and what goes on behind the scenes; the maintenance workforce, the paratransit workforce, the dispatch and control people, the police and firemen. There's a huge number of people out there all working to try and serve you.

What we want to do is take that 1.8 billion, and since we don't have a profit, I want to try and break into what we spend the money on and where does that money come from. So you've got to pi charts up here. The one on the left says this is what we spend the money on; the one on the right says this is where all that cash is coming from.

The first thing I want to do is look at the left-hand side of these PI charts, the Capital Improvement Program. When I say Capital Improvement Program, this is buying new buses, buying new rail cars, maintaining the assets of the system, keeping the whole thing up and running.

We've got about a \$700 million capital program in place for this upcoming fiscal '07. If you kind of dive down deep into it, sort of slicing it apart to see what that 700 million is planned to buy, you can see pieces here; rail cars, buses, facility improvements, a slice for facility improvements, and there's debt out there. We're

going into debt to advance this program to keep the system up and running for you.

So that's what the money goes for; here's where the money comes from. Almost a third of it is coming from the federal government in both formula and non-formula grants. Those grants are matched by your local governments--Maryland, D.C. and Virginia--and, again, there's debt. So those are the two pieces of the Capital Program. You can see what we're buying with the 700 million and you can see where that 700 million is coming from.

Now, on the other part, the daily operating of Metro, the running of the buses, the running of the trains, it's about \$1.1 billion for FY '07. There you can see the run proportion--where the money is spent. The Metrorail takes up about 60 percent of it. The next biggest slice is the operation of the buses, and there's about a \$56 million a year slice to run the Metro paratransit service.

You can keep drilling this thing down into incredible detail. You take the Metrorail budget.

As Ms. Mack said, the largest component piece is for staff, is for the operators, the mechanics, the janitors, the dispatchers. They have an army of people that's out there keeping the system running, everything from brake parts to office equipment to keep the organization running; power for the trains, heat, light, power for the buildings.

The Metro Bus Company is also very labor intensive. Obviously, if you've got a bus, you've got a bus driver. It's a pretty simple equation. That's where the money goes. There's also a fairly significant cost for diesel fuel and bus parts. Again, there's the slice for Metro access.

And the question of where it comes from, we've got both revenue coming in from the customers and we've got a subsidy coming in from the local governments. That revenue can also be broken apart into pieces. You can see the biggest slice of revenue comes through Metrorail fares. Right behind that are Metrobus fares. These are the fares that customers pay as they get on the trains and the buses.

There's other revenue. It's almost \$100 million a year we take in through the parking lots and advertising programs, leasing fiber optic lines on development programs, all kind of things that are ancillary to the business but help keep the prices down that the customers pay boarding the vehicles. Then you can see the three slices of the subsidy, D.C., Maryland and Virginia.

So that puts it all together on the operating side, what we spend the money on and where that money comes from. So just kind of rolling the whole thing back together, you can see what we spend it on, 700 million to keep it in a state of good repair, to buy new assets; 1.1 billion per year to run the place. The whole thing adds up to a 1.8 billion total.

If anybody's interested, all of the budget documents are available this evening. They're also available on the Web. You can go to [WMATA.com](http://WMATA.com) and click on those links. We have some pretty recent monthly financial reports out there. And, again, the whole point of this is to try to keep the budget

open so you can see what's going on, and prove the transparency, and also for us to listen to what you the customers want to tell us. That's it.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you, Rick. Thank you. A picture is worth a thousand words.

Let me recognize Mayor Bill Euille from Alexandria who has joined us. Thank you, Bill.

I will now call on the people who have signed up to speak this evening. The first person is Jack Corbett from MetroRiders.org.

MR. CORBETT: Good evening, Madam Chairman and members of the Board. MetroRiders.org thanks you for scheduling this first-ever budget information session. We've already filed our comments and pose questions about the proposed '07 budget. Copies are available for everybody who's here tonight.

I won't repeat our technical budget issues other than to make two points. First, MetroRiders are grateful that the Board is not proposing any fare increase in '07. Two, we are disappointed that your budget guidelines for '07 just accept without

question Metro's baseline funding levels from '06. We believe that cost containment in a 1.1 billion Metro operating budget can be far more than the 6.7 million that's required under your budget guidance.

I'd like to focus now on the budget setting process and how small a role there has been for Metro passengers. Please look at the two pages at the end of our letter. The first chart compares the amount of leverage over budget matters held by the contributing jurisdictions and by passengers. Passengers generate, as Rick just mentioned, more revenues to Metro--627 million in '07--then the jurisdictions provide in subsidy, 489 million. Yet the contributing jurisdictions have all the controls over the budget. They appoint all you board members, they can veto board budget items, they have a formal April to June comment period on the proposed budget, and they have a paid liaison staff, the JCC, to work with board members and Metro.

Lastly, the JCC on behalf of the jurisdictions is allowed to participate in budget

committee meetings. In contrast, passengers have no specific board members, haven't had any forum for offering views on Metro's budget until tonight, and can't participate in budget committee meetings.

This last item is most irksome because all Metro policies are shaped in its committees. Even though we and others have been urging public comment periods for Metro committee meetings for 15 months now, this Metro board has yet to take up this issue as an agenda item in a public session. In short, MetroRiders.org believes that passengers deserve a bigger role in Metro budget setting and in general.

Our last page is headed, Metro Riders Want Increased Role. Our requests are for: 1) add a riders representative to the Board; 2) establish a public comment period during budget committee meetings; 3) appoint an inspector general for Metro; and 4) observe open meeting requirements during your Board executive sessions.

We hope you'll act on these suggestions and, again, thanks for the opportunity to comment.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you, Jack. We appreciate your work and your interest in WMATA.

I would ask board members if they feel compelled to comment on anything the speakers say, you are free to make brief comments as we go along.

MR. : I'll withhold until everybody's spoke.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: We've just been joined by board member Kathy Hudgins from Fairfax County.

Our next speaker is Darm--

MR. GURUSWAMY: Guruswamy.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: --Guruswamy. Thank you.

MR. GURUSWAMY: Good evening. My name is Darm Guruswamy. I'm an Arlington resident who works in the District of Columbia. I use Metrobus, Metrorail, and the Metro-managed D.C. Circulator to get to and from work, as well as social engagements, medical appointments, and even public hearings. In a given year, I board Metro about a thousand times, and I do this despite owning a late-model car. To say that I am devoted to public transit is to put it mildly.

I'm pleased to be here today and have the opportunity to comment on the proposed budget. The board chairman, Gladys Mack, has rightly declared this the Year of the Bus, so my remarks will cover the bus portion of the proposed budget.

As mentioned earlier, part of the proposed budget involves adding service to overcrowded routes using savings from eliminating lightly-used routes. I fully support that move and hope that Metro can implement that by the beginning of fiscal year '07.

What I'd like to speak on today, however, is what's not funded in the proposed budget or what staff labeled above guidance, which is to provide much needed additional service on overcrowded routes as well as to provide improvements on priority bus corridors.

I urge the Board to try and fund the above-guidance Metrobus improvements for several reasons. Firstly, all of these improvements are in heavily-patronized bus routes which carry a lot of people and travel in congested corridors. From a public policy perspective, investing in Metro's most

heavily-traveled bus routes is probably the most cost-effective investment.

Secondly, Metro bus riders make less and are more likely to be minorities and Metrorail riders, so the issue has both economic and racial justice implications.

Given the constraints and member jurisdictions' ability to increase subsidies, I would propose that Metro look at increasing revenues to fund these needed improvements. Metro already has a Smart Trip card, and what it needs is a smart fare system to compliment it. I would ask that the Board look at increasing the Metrobus fare selectively. This includes considering peak and off-peak fares, which Metrorail already promised; increasing fares for those paying cash.

There's nothing more frustrating as a bus driver than to watch people put cash bills and coins into finicky fareboxes. And also consider offering transfers only to those who use Smart Trip. When the Chicago Transit Authority implemented a similar

proposal, they found a proportion of those using Smart Trip increased.

Thank you. That concludes my comments. I'll submit the balance.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you very much for your comments.

The next person to speak is Clayton Williams. He does not seem to be present.

Next on our list is Nevin Gaymon. He also is not present.

That ends the list of speakers who had signed up--oh. I was declaring the end of the ones who had signed up prior to this evening.

We have Alphonso Tate as our next speaker.

MR. TATE: Yes. I'd like to thank the Board for listening. I'm a regular rider, and one thing I noticed that would probably be an improvement and would probably save Metro a lot of money and some costs would be to have rubber mats flooring in the rail cars instead of trying to use carpet on public transportation, which tends to hold a lot of foreign objects and stuff. It would be

probably a lot better, especially in the winter time when they are using salt in the entrances of the station. It has a tendency to track into the trains.

Another item would be some of the lighting. Some of it looks like it hasn't been replaced since it's been built. It's very dim, especially Ballston Station. Some of the cleaning sometimes lacks, which is very important to the passengers when they board. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you for your comments, Mr. Tate.

Is there anyone else here this evening who wishes to speak?

I would turn to our board members and ask if any of you would like to make any comments?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: Madam Chairman, I would say that anyone that is interested in having input into this is not limited, of course, to this evening. The Board would welcome any comments that people wish to submit by writing. Some people prefer to do that than to speak in public. Letters may be

addressed obviously to the chair or to any member of the Board. I know some people who live in my jurisdiction like to contact me, and that's certainly welcomed. Most of us can be contacted either through our own offices or by sending something here to Metro.

What is our provision on our website now for submission of comments on the budget?

MR. TANGHERLINI: Nothing specifically for submission of comments on the budget, but that can be arranged.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: Comments in general.

MR. TANGHERLINI: Comments in general, but we can arrange it.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: If someone were looking for those budget documents that Mr. Woodruff was directing people to earlier, if there's a button or something that says you have comments, click here, that would probably be useful just to facilitate those additional kind of comments. I think we should probably review, again, the kind of dates by

which we're going to be making our decisions before we leave.

I did have a couple of specific responses to some of what we heard from a couple speakers tonight, if I may. To try and take the last item first, Mr. Tate talked about the question about whether it's a good idea to have carpet, and people who've been around here longer than mine smiled when I first raised that issue. I think there's almost a rite of passage around here when you say, "Is carpet really the best way to do this?" You get some smiles because people have been through that debate so many different times. We are then told that, actually, carpet is cheaper, or easier to maintain, or whatever the argument is. I will say I have always been skeptical of that, and tend toward Mr. Tate's view myself.

I know I've had this conversation with someone who is now running the agency who's had that question in his own mind as well. In fact, one time before he was running the agency, and he and I were on a bus or something talking about this very

subject. I'll be interested to see now that he's on the inside of the agency if whatever it is that changes people's minds has taken over there or if he has other thoughts yet on that, or whether that's an issue that's worth revisiting.

You don't necessarily have to comment tonight if you don't want to.

MR. TANGHERLINI: Oh, I don't mind. I haven't given up on the idea yet.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: It's one of those things that I do think from time to time we should take a look at again. What may have been true yesterday might not be true today. When you see other agencies make the same choice we do, but still other agencies make a different choice, you think somebody must be wrong; are we smarter than them or are they smarter than us? Or maybe not. Maybe there really is a reason that makes sense one place or another, but that continues to be a bit of a mystery for me.

Mr. Guruswamy's discussion of the fare structure, the fare structure generally I think should be examined. I would commend Mr. Guruswamy's

thoughts to people in the agency because I don't know that he actually said what he does, but he's somebody that's worked in transportation and transit, so he does have some professional knowledge.

Darm, I would encourage you to send in writing some of that, which I know you've shared with me at times, and I think it would be useful for folks here to have a look at it and consider some of the points you make.

The more general point that he made about Smart Trip on bus I think deserves thought. He's thrown out some specific ways you might encourage it, but I do think that there's a gain to be had if more people on bus switched to Smart Trip. On the rail system, it was just amazing how quickly people went to Smart Trip, and it's had tremendous benefits for the functioning of the system.

It clearly has been more difficult on bus. It is being used but not to the same level. That was something we were concerned about; we talked about it a lot when we were going to it.

Originally, we had a plan where we were going to have Smart Trip cards available through a thousand different outlets or something, and we backed away from that mostly because of the cost, not to spend more money than we have to given the budget concerns. But you do have to wonder, are there things we could be doing that we're not doing. Maybe they don't involve a thousand outlets; I don't know. But somehow can we get more Smart Trip cards in more hands, and thereby make the bus system work more efficiently.

I guess my last comment is just to Mr. Corbett. I appreciate his participation. As always, he lays things out nicely on paper as well, so it's easy to review, and I'll certainly look at all his comments.

I did want to say that when it comes to a rider representative, I'm sorry, but I think that's what I am, someone who also came here tonight on the Metro system. I don't know what qualifies one to be a rider representative, but I think that's what all the people who serve on the Board should be. We

should all be riders; we should all use the system. Frankly, I think it's the best way to get around town, so it's what I prefer to do. But I learn a lot from being out there.

I don't know there's any way to pick somebody better other than ways in which board members here are picked. Many of us here have to go face our fellow citizens and ask them to support us to be in the position that puts us here. Other than being selected that way by your fellow citizens, I don't know what makes you more representative.

So as someone who is a representative picked by fellow citizens and who rides, I regard myself as a rider representative. But there's certainly room for lots more viewpoints, and I think MetroRiders does a service by bringing theirs forward and participating in this process, as well as our new Riders Advisory Council, which is getting off to a great start. I think more opportunities like tonight's forum and some of the other meetings we've done have provided more input from the public in general than this system has had in its history.

I think that's a useful thing and we can benefit to the functioning of this agency and to the general confidence of the public.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you,  
Mr. Zimmerman.

Other board members? Mr. Deegan?

MR. DEEGAN: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Mr. Tate, I want to personally thank you for coming tonight because it's always refreshing to see somebody come up and give us what they believe is just a common-sense approach to fixing what's wrong with the system.

I can concur with Mr. Zimmerman and you that that's something we ought to look at, particularly the entrances on the cars and stuff like that. And when you mentioned the salt, that's probably the most corrosive thing we can do, and we're throwing it in our system. That's something we ought to look at as well, is another product we can use besides the calcium chloride.

One thing I noticed when I first came here is the farecard machines; you didn't have the fares on them; And that's one of the little common-sense things that came from other customers and myself, and now we're putting the prices right on the farecard machines.

There's one other little pet gripe that I have, and you might have noticed. When you ride some of the newer cars, the seats are blue and red. But at the end of each of these cars, they have two yellow seats. I understand from some of my colleagues that have been here a lot longer than I, apparently that's because one board member wanted to keep the yellow seat on the new cars.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: You have three members of the committee sitting here, though.

MR. DEEGAN: My point being, it's another common-sense thing that we get from the public that is helpful, and things that we can look at to further save money on the system. So thank you for coming tonight.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you, Mr. Deegan. And I will tell you the real story on the selection of the seats.

MR. DEEGAN: Glad to hear it.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: It actually was done by a committee of the Board, and it was a very thoroughly researched and careful decision. Actually, we came up with the three colors, which sort of represented the three states in the WMATA system.

MR. KAUFFMAN: And Maryland's a blue state, Virginia's a red state.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: I forget the names. Potomac blue for the District, Colonial red for Virginia, and Chesapeake sand for Maryland.

MR. SMITH: I thought it was the red state, the blue state, and the one that doesn't get to vote.

[Laughter.]

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Well, now you know better, Mr. Smith.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: Madam Chairman, in all seriousness, part of the idea with the color scheme, the old color scheme had three colors too.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: It did indeed.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: And there are a number of theories by people who supposedly study things and know more than I do. Part of it, I think in the earlier cars and certainly in this, there's a concept of what draws people in more. And the lighter color at the end, which is where I really think it came from, is intended to facilitate that. So that's what they had actually in the original color scheme, which they weren't all orange. We think of them as orange because the orange jumps at you, but you had actually three tones. So you have the kind of darker colors, and then the lighter colors are more appealing or whatever, that's going to draw people in.

As I said, there are psychologists who study these things and make recommendations to airlines about what kind of colors should go on the inside. There's all kind of theories about this.

And one of the things is that orange is not really a color to put people in a confined space in it turns out. They don't make space craft or airlines with those colors. And that was part of the whole thing, was going to sort of cooler colors.

We did have a lot of professional consulting who advised on this at the time, and then at some point it's just do you think it looks good. And three of us had to go out a number of times to the yard and look at different arrangements of how it worked, and then review what the implications were for the cost as well because one of the issues was integrating.

Here's where the carpet came in and where I first wondered about it because the carpet also has to match the upholstery, and the way it does that is the different fibers in it reflect the colors that are in the car. So when you switch the colors of upholstery, then you presumably need different color carpet.

And that was part of the issue with the cost because the upholstery on the seat does not get

replaced on the same cycle as the carpet on the floor. So how are you going to do it economically? And one of the things we came up with was--and they manufacture the thing this way, so that you could put the fibers in the floor, in the carpet, that worked with either set of upholstery. So that instead of having to shift the whole thing over and have all kinds of cost for that, you can have in effect one bolt that could work on--I forget what it is, but like a three-year cycle versus a seven-year cycle or something like that. That was intended so it would work either way, and we'd economize a little bit. Of course, if we didn't have to have carpet on the floor, that would have made things easier, but that wasn't an option we were given.

So that was the sort of thing that went into analyzing. And in the end, Ms. Mack decided what colors they would pick.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you, Mr. Zimmerman. I had forgotten some of that detail.

MR. DEEGAN: Mr. Zimmerman and Ms. Mack, I sure appreciate that explanation.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: And you'll never ask such a question again.

MR. DEEGAN: I have learned a lot tonight. See, I come from the KISS school, "keep it simple, stupid," and all one color would be fine with me, but what an education. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you. We have any other board members who wish to speak?

Mr. Kauffman?

MR. KAUFFMAN: Just a couple things. I, again, very much appreciate your leadership, Madam Chair, to have this budget hearing in the first place. I find it interesting that we ended up with one speaker for every decade we didn't have public hearings. I don't know what the symbolism is there, but it's interesting.

Also, I appreciate, as always, Jack's detail review from MetroRiders.org, and it certainly once again presents us with a health challenge. I know this board--and just reflecting on the previous year, my colleagues stood fast and quick as we tried to implement a lot of reforms to make this

organization more transparent and more open to our riders.

The reason I was late coming to this meeting is because I was upstairs meeting with the chairman of our Riders Advisory Council, who has been devoting literally hundreds of hours to helping us become more responsive to our riders. And they also provided an opportunity for public comment here--I'm losing track of time now--just recently for our paratransit reform efforts, and generating comments from over 100 people to come, who felt that it was opportune to do it, believe they would be heard, and given the action so far of her ad hoc committee, they are being heard. So some of the reforms we've started to put in place are beginning to make that real difference, as Chris so well noted.

We do have some opportunities for some further enhancements, but I think my colleagues and I want to take a good, hard look at what's working of those improvements we've put in place and see what additional changes we might need as well.

One of those where we have firm agreement is the idea of appointing an inspector general. It's interesting, already this agency is perhaps subject to more review than any other organization inside or outside of the Beltway. We're subject to FDA review, GAO review, congressional public hearings, Maryland State review, county, staff from Fairfax and Arlington, Prince George's, Maryland, the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission. All these other agencies regularly check to make certain we're doing what we need to be doing.

The inspector general adds something more. We're looking, I believe, Madam Chair for moving forward on a staff recommendation that does more than just slides over the reporting relationships but gives real tools to inspector general and also preserves real tools for our general manager.

So these are all some needed changes. We're starting to see the fruits of welcoming those changes. And, again, Madam Chair, I'm grateful that you made this happen tonight.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you very much,  
Mr. Kauffman.

We do have one speaker who signed up--well,  
let me finish the round.

I'm sorry. Ms. Hudgins?

MS. HUDGINS: I just wanted to comment I'm  
glad I could be here. I came here with an  
expectation of this being a preparation for the  
Fairfax County budget hearings, and I just knew that  
there would be hoards of people here by the time I  
got here. Not unlike that one, though, I think the  
importance of it is that it is an opportunity for us  
to receive input. I think whether the numbers are  
large or small, I think it's a very important  
process that WMATA has entered into.

I just wanted to comment. I didn't hear  
the speaker, but Mr. Zimmerman commented on I guess  
the speaker's opinion regarding whether or not a  
rider's appointing was a necessary part of this. I  
think that I'd like to comment that for those of us  
who use the service, we not only serve as riders  
experiencing the service but we have the opportunity

to ride with our constituents and hear directly, probably more than we would hear sitting in a budget hearing, a riders advisory hearing, or anything else because we get a chance to experience what they experience, and they get a chance to share what that experience means to them, and we get a chance to hopefully pass on that knowledge and share it.

So I think representing our jurisdictions and the region in general, we are capable, if we do our duties well here, of representing what's needed through our appointment. I think our commitment to the system does not only have to be experienced through that direct involvement, but it does enhance our experiences by being involved in it, so I think it is an important role to play.

Thanks, Ms. Mack. For those of us that experience it all the time, it's very good to see the openness that WMATA can experience at this point.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you, Ms. Hudgins.

We did have one person come in after the speakers had finished who wanted to speak, and so I

would ask Marlene McGuirl if she'd like to come forward to speak.

MS. MCGUIRL: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just have three short comments. Number one, I think this is a wonderful idea, and I'm so glad that the Board has decided to open up the budget to public scrutiny. But along those lines, I mentioned to Rick earlier that it's a little difficult to deal with the budget like this, especially since there are no comparison figures in this budget. There's nothing here to indicate what were the fiscal '06 expenditures.

So he was kind enough to bring me the fiscal '06 budget and said I could compare the two, which is a good suggestion, however, I don't think I will have time to do that. And I think the normal person isn't going to have time to do that either.

In all deference to Rick, he did say that this was probably going to change in the next fiscal--

MR. HARCUM: Next budget book.

MS. McGUIRL: --next budget book. So I hope that's true because you need comparisons before you can make any judgments.

As for the turnout for this meeting, I'm sorry that it's so small but I think it was not well publicized. In fact, I only heard about it today. And if I hadn't read the post today, I wouldn't have known about it. There was a small, short announcement in the Regions section of the D.C. Metro section of the Post, which said there was this budget meeting.

I didn't see it on the website. I didn't see it on a press release. And so, I suspect that has something to do with the small turnout. And to announce it the same day that the meeting is going to be had puts people at a disadvantage, obviously.

The third comment I have is something that I read in the Wall Street Journal today, which was a comment made by a man by the name of Mr. York, who has been brought in my General Motors to sort of sure up that company. What he told his executives at General Motors was to treat corporate spending

like managing your family check book, and I think that's a very good piece of advice, for WMATA as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you, Ms. McGuirl.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: Madam Chair?

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Yes? Oh, sure. You want to comment on Ms. McGuirl's statement.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: A couple of things. First, on the question about the degree to which this was sufficiently publicized, I think that's something we obviously want to take a look at. I'd note that the first time we did a town hall meeting a year and a half or so ago when Mr. Smith was chairman, we got throngs in here.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Exactly.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: And we went on and we did subsequent meetings. And we had good participation, but nothing like the first time there's an opportunity. And there was all this pinned up--so much, people are ready to talk. Once you give regular opportunities, then the levels aren't necessarily going to be the same. It's important,

but that's the point, is people can say something as it comes up. They don't have 30 years of backed up anxieties to share with you.

So I think there's something of that; that the participation is a regular thing, and it's going to be more modest. The very first day we had public comment at a board meeting, we had an issue about how many we were going to let speak. We haven't had that issue since. We've had speakers every time, and we'll have speakers every time. So I don't think this is necessarily a failing.

We have a budget hearing in Arlington next week, and we now have an online sign-up procedure in advance. You can come at the time too. There's already, as of a few days ago, 53 people signed up for next Tuesday night, and I'm sure that number will double by the time we actually have a hearing. We'll probably have even more in Fairfax. So to some degree it may actually be a function of people because it's not institutionalized yet, and people haven't got used to that.

I will say I think a lot of effort was made to get the word out. We've been all talking about it. A lot of notice has been put out on it. I've hyped it everywhere I could. I told people in our board meetings, in addition to our budget hearing, you now have the chance to talk about the Metro budget. I promoted everywhere I've been. So I do think we made a pretty good effort, but we always can take a look at that again to make sure. Maybe next year when we come back, maybe there will be a few more people who will want to take this opportunity.

But since we're providing a lot more opportunities for people to speak, they may not choose this Tuesday night because there are maybe other things they want to do, but they'll get to us one way or another.

I wanted to also respond to the point about the document, which I think is valid. And I must admit, because of the way we deal with the budget, we don't tend to use that particular document because we tend to get it department by department

with specific documents on them. So we don't look at that document ourselves a whole lot. Maybe some of my colleagues do. But, I mean, don't tend to get at the Metro budget through that particular addition.

In the county, the budget comes out, and it's about a comparable size. Again, I don't know how it's done, Fairfax or Alexandria. But our document for every department shows, actually a 10-year history for each department, and then there's usually a three-year on the details. So there's a lot of opportunity for comparison.

I guess I would suggest the staff here might want to take a look at some of the documents used in our communities and see. I'm sure there's other things done, and some others that are better than what we do. But, again, since we're kind of doing things differently and reviewing how we present some information, some of those that have been kind of used to a lot of interaction because, of course, we have citizen advisory committees who look at all of our budgets and give us opinions on a

regular basis. I think that would be worth taking a look at.

The last thing I'll say is as far as the advice about handling the budget like your personal checking account, I would say there are few households that would as closely monitor what they do as this agency or most such agencies. I know it's common to talk as though agencies or governmental bodies are sort of careless. And I think that that image is out there in a lot of people's mind. And I think that it is almost entirely an inaccurate view.

There are problems in agencies. There are problems, for a variety of complex reasons, about why spending decisions sometimes get made that aren't good ones, but very few people monitor things as much.

My colleague, Mr. Kauffman, was talking about earlier that there is so much oversight. There isn't an insufficient amount of oversight. It's good to have oversight, and there's a lot of it here. If we're doing things wrong in some cases,

there are probably examples of that, but it tends to be overstated. But to the extent that we're maybe doing some things we need to do differently, it's not because anybody's careless; it's not because there is an oversight. It's usually for complicated reasons about decisions that get made and decisions that are on top of other decisions. What's seen individually as sensible decisions often can lead to an outcome that is not sensible. That's part of the whole complexity. That's why it is not simple in a large organization of 10,000 employees, with a \$1.8 billion budget.

So as people study more what goes on and learn more, and more of the public learns more about it, I think that will help because I think there will be a greater understanding of what is right and what is not wrong, and why some things that are wrong are wrong. And I think we'll all be able to do a better job of finding a sensible solution as that understanding deepens. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you,  
Mr. Zimmerman.

I also want to introduce our Riders Advisory Committee chairman, Dennis Jaffe. I introduced him earlier, but he was not in the room at the time. So Dennis is now here, and if you'd like to say a few words, please do.

MR. JAFFE: Thank you, Ms. Mack. As Mr. Kauffman referenced before, we were in a closed-door meeting upstairs or something like that.

The more I come into contact with board members and top-level staff, the higher regard I have for them. However, there was something that was said before that kind of just set me off, and I apologize.

There was something that you said that just kind of dovetailed with a few other things that I've been working on for a few years now. I've made some progress with a responsive board in opening up the agency with a public comment period that I think has worked well, and with the establishment of the Riders Advisory Council that I hope will come to be effective if we have the opportunity, and so far the public forum on Metro access, just as one example,

who are opening up doors even more than they've been before, and we can have more dialogue, and I think that's constructive.

I hate it, for what it's worth, when I hear the point of emphasis by the agency, we have to do a better job at telling you how Metro is a world-class system. People either know it's a world-class system, or they don't, or they think it's a little bit below or a little bit above, by riding it. Overall, it's a really good system, but there are problems. And one of the biggest problems is the way in which the agency has not been historically open enough.

To the Board's credit, under Chairman Kauffman, and First Vice Chair last year, Gladys Mack, and before that with Mr. Smith instituting the town hall meetings, those are steps forward that are very, very significant.

I'd like to just itemize just a few, since we're talking about public input, that are so important. People are frustrated, they're annoyed, they get angry. And the agency has not yet, I

believe, sufficiently heard and responded in a few areas.

Public meetings outside of a regular monthly meeting. Give us a sign-up list, an electronic, e-mail, sign-up list. If you want to be informed, have this kind of meeting; when we hold public hearings on the budget process or on bus routes being cut or added. Give people the opportunity to sign up.

People don't always know about a town hall meeting because they didn't go to the website and look for it. They're great. I take my hat off to you for coming to them. Let's make sure we do a better job at letting people know through a sign-up place.

I also want to quickly mention, staff who has been aiding the Riders Advisory Council have been doing an absolute, yeoman's job above and beyond the call.

Who on the Board shares what committee? Please list it on the website. Please provide an email address for each board member. Board members

are elected officials. People know how to find them--well, they don't know how but they're easier to find. There are some folks who are not elected officials, but do make sure to make their contact information available.

I know it's controversial, but I think board members ought to have additional staff who assist them, and only them, through their jobs--and I'm speaking only for myself in saying that--in being responsive to the public. Elected officials, to a fair degree--already have some staff that are overloaded and there's an infrastructure in place. Board members, who are not elected officials and who don't have elected office, staff, don't have that opportunity, but the public is poorly served by us. And you know what? The agency is poorly served, and you as board members are poorly served because people in the public don't have the opportunity to say, don't you know how something was so stupid that I experienced the other day. Instead it festers, and they're frustrated, and some mistakes by the

agency continue to happen even though the agency is doing a lot of great things.

A calendar of Metro board committee meetings throughout the entire year. I assume most of them are regular meetings. Maybe I'm wrong. Two months ahead of time--the first and third Thursday of the month, XYZ committee meets for the rest of the year.

An email address for each individual board member. It was a great disappointment for me, even though it was a small step forward a year ago that the agency established a general email address, boardofdirectors@wmata.com. Well, it didn't take long for me to get confirmation that a lot of those email messages don't go to the board members.

Well, the public thinks that they do. It doesn't work. It couldn't have worked from the get-go, and it's a year later and I'm saying, for what it's worth, we can do better than that. And certain kinds of parameters can be put into place technologically that can help reduce spam and extraneous information and can route messages.

I thank you for listening to this. The last two things I'd like to mention--and, again, I take my hat off to the leadership of the agency, Mr. Tangherlini, and to the members of the Board, and being here tonight and doing the town hall meetings, and opening themselves up, making themselves accessible.

There are some areas where we need to lift the valve off and allow people more direct communication and access to the agency so that concerns can be aired more easily.

The last two things. The website, the agency really, really, really needs to get some kind of review for the website. I know that staff that's here, they're working real, real hard. There's a problem. The website, as much as it's been improved, is not easy to navigate and find information. It's hard to find out meeting agendas from a past board meeting and minutes from those meetings.

Please change this. I'm taking the trouble and going to the length of saying this in public now

because I have been saying it too many times for about a year and a half, and it's frustrating. It's particularly frustrating, for what it's worth, as you commit to a decent level of resources for the Riders Advisory Council to help us be effective.

I don't think it makes sense to reject a request for business cards for members of the Riders Advisory Council. It would seem to be a silly thing to come up here to mention this, but for those who are elected officials or for those who are not on the Board of Directors, and you have a business card, and you have an office, and you can give that business card out, we don't.

Twenty-one volunteers. We will be lobbyist for guaranteed funding because as much as I will criticize the agency for some things, I think the agency does a great job at many, many things on a day-to-day operational business, and it also needs more money. Some of it won't be well spent, some of it will, but more money is needed.

The Riders Advisory Council is being given resources. Let's make it worthwhile. A little

business card, and we can hand it out to people so we can be a further extension of the agency, so we can as volunteers take more phone calls and get more emails, so we can try to help the agency become more responsive. That's just volunteer time. Throw a few dollars at some business cards and make it worthwhile.

Lastly--and again, it's kind of weird, I admit, to be bringing this up in public, but, boy, it's frustrating and it just doesn't make sense. If I spend maybe 40 hours a week sometimes as a volunteer, I'm trying to set up the Riders Advisory Council and be responsive with respect to Metro access and attend meetings--if I have a meeting for Metro at 7:30 at night, can I please have access to a telephone somewhere in the building that I could remain alone without that request being rejected because I'm not on staff.

We're trying hard to help the agency become more responsive and put in the time. We can't get a temporary telephone; hey, yeah, go here, no one will be here, here are the keys, don't shut down the

trains. Let's continuing opening up doors. Thanks very much for the opportunity to speak.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Mr. Zimmerman?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: A couple of things you mentioned. The sign up you were talking about, to start with. Are you talking about like, for instance, for a meeting tonight, for someone who wants to speak prior to the meeting, signing up on line? Is that what you meant?

MR. JAFFE: No. Let me know when you're holding--

MR. ZIMMERMAN: Oh, a notice list?

MR. JAFFE: Um-hmm.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: So like you send out an email notice to people so people sign up in advance to be notified. Okay, I've got that. We do some things like that in the county. I think that's an idea to look into.

A number of your points had to do with the website, and I generally agree that a lot of websites that were pretty good at one point aren't pretty good anymore because things have gotten

better and better, and I think there are a number of issues in which ours probably could be improved.

I was surprise to hear, though, that the chairs of the committees aren't listed on the website, and I wonder if they are but it's just hard to find.

MR. JAFFE: I can't tell you.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Can I speak to that, Mr. Zimmerman?

They are indeed. The staff directed me to that list today, but it's not easy to find. They are there, but it could be easier to find.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: See, I would imagine that there would be a fairly easy to find Board page, and when you went to the Board page, you'd see things like the chairs of the committees, and the email for a member, and stuff like that, and also a calendar of meetings. I imagine on the Fairfax board that's probably where you'd find it on their website; that's where you find it on our website.

The calendar of meetings, I wouldn't be surprised if that's in there somewhere too.

MR. JAFFE: For two months ahead of time.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: It can be for the whole year because we basically have the meetings pre-scheduled, and they get changed, and you can adjust the calendar. But it seems to me that's pretty reasonable.

MR. JAFFE: If it's there, it ain't easy to find.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: Maybe we can have that looked into, the calendar meetings, and things like the minutes and all that; again, if there was a Board page that was easily accessible that had jumping points, again, I think if somebody took a look at some of the other boards and how they do it, they'd probably get some good ideas.

But the email for board members, I still don't understand. I don't understand why it can't be done the way Mr. Jaffe has suggested it. I also don't necessarily understand what's wrong with-- other than maybe being harder to find. In the case of my board, if you go to our page and you see a

member, you can click on that member, and you can send me an email.

But there's also a lot of places where you can just click on county board, and that's what lots of people choose to do sometimes because they don't care what member they're talking to. Sometimes they'll click on county board and they'll put Dear Mr. Zimmerman or Dear Mr. Tejada, and the office staff doesn't have any difficulty routing these things in the right place. If they come to nobody in particular, they're going to be answered by the chair. If they come to everybody, they're going to be answered by the chair. If they go to a particular member, and it's a unique letter, then that member will handle it. That's our practice.

MR. JAFFE: I believe that these emails are not being forwarded to board members.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: And that was something that would disturb me if that's the case. And, Madam Chairman, I'd ask that we have that checked on, if there haven't been messages, for some reason, that were not getting sent.

It's not all that complicated to administer. Now, I should tell you at the moment, the Board is seriously understaffed because the position that handles that sort of administration is vacant at the moment. We're still in the process of trying to hire a board secretary.

But I would also tell you that while I don't see any big deal about business cards, you should know that folks up here--you've got a chair who's a volunteer also here. She doesn't have a business card either. It's not that they're actually denied anything the board members here have, although my guess is, these days it can't be that expensive to print out a few business cards.

MR. JAFFE: Mr. Zimmerman, you have an elected official business card.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: Sure, my other job I do, yes.

MR. JAFFE: And that's how I would contact you. If I meet you at a meeting, and you say call my staff or call me tomorrow, that's what you would give me?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: As you might too, I suppose, what if other capacity you might as a member be serving in your day job. I'm not saying you're necessarily wrong. Maybe it's a good idea, and maybe we should have. I'm just pointing out that the members who serve here have never been given business cards either just as contacts.

MR. JAFFE: Thank you.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: And thank you very much for your service.

MR. JAFFE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: And I too want to thank you, Dennis, for your service. And as you go about your duties as chair of the RAC, you have brought issues to us, and we have worked to try to resolve them, and we will continue to do that. We've made a great deal of progress, and we're open to listening to the suggestions that you might have.

MR. JAFFE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you.

Mr. Tangherlini, we're not going to get away with you not saying something. So I'm going to ask you, if you would, just make a few comments.

MR. TANGHERLINI: I've actually prepared an elaborate presentation. No. But as a former budget examiner, as a former CFO myself, I can't understand why people wouldn't want to take more time out on a Tuesday to talk about budget numbers, particularly about the budget numbers of this very important agency. I do want to compliment the staff for taking a very complicated thing and trying to give an opportunity for people to see into it.

This is the first time that we've done it, and I think we've learned a lot about how we can do it better. I think we can reach out a little more and let people know more about what's going on. And I think we can do more of providing information on the Web about this information, about how our budget is put together and how it's structured.

I agree with Mr. Zimmerman and I agree with some of the comments. As we look at many things here, we can look at the Web too and see how we can

make our website even more user friendly. I have a lot of suggestions and comments here. I've picked some up from the public. I've even picked some up from the Board, so we'll work very hard to incorporate these into our final FY07 budget. We'll be looking forward to more comments, more suggestions and more ideas as we try to make what is an absolutely fantastic transit service an even more fantastic transit service.

So, again, my thanks to you, Dennis and the RAC, my thanks to you MetroRiders.org, and the members of the public who have commented tonight. We really do appreciate the comments. We even appreciate the criticism. It's through the criticism that we'll get better. So thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Thank you, Dan.

Mr. Deegan?

MR. DEEGAN: Dan, if you could, we have that little committee set up for IT stuff. Maybe they could be part of the ones located on our website as well.

MR. TANGHERLINI: Yeah, that's a fantastic idea. We do have some folks from the region who have come to look at a best practices, peer review of our IT structure overall, but I can ask them to look at the Web as well.

CHAIRPERSON MACK: Okay. I want to thank all of you, the public, for coming out tonight, and also the board members. And while I too expected to have more customers set up to provide comment tonight, I think this is a great beginning. As a former budget director myself, I'm accustomed to listening to public input on budgets. And perhaps one of the reasons we don't have more people signed up tonight is that it's been something that hasn't been available to the public.

I think as more people become more familiar with the budget and also become more aware that we have this process and they can comment, I think we will begin to see more people who come in and talk about the Metro budget.

One of the things about the Metro budget is that we collect a fair amount of the revenue that we

need to run this system from the farebox, but we also collect a significant amount of funds from people who do not take public transit because all of our taxpayers in all of our jurisdictions contribute to this transit service. So we think that there is an opportunity to fully educate the public on this incredible transit system. It is a needed public service, and we think that some of our goals are going to be advanced more with a more educated public.

We, as you know, are in the process of trying to get dedicated funding for Metro. If this is to succeed, it's going to require the entire community coming together to make this happen, and that is going to happen only with an informed citizenry, and we think this is a process that will continue, and it will grow as we go along.

With that, I'll end the comments, and I have an announcement. Is there anyone who has lost a cell phone? It's area code 505.

Thank you very much for your participation. The hearing is over.

[--- Unable To Translate Box ---]

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[Whereupon, at 8:27 p.m., the hearing  
adjourned.]