

No. 525 Fare Hearing Reston VA

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY
(WMATA)

PUBLIC HEARING
Hearing No. 525 Docket No. B07-3
METRO FISCAL YEAR 2009 FARE PROPOSAL

Reston, Virginia
Tuesday, November 13, 2007

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- 1 PARTICIPANTS:
- 2 Board Members:

No. 525 Fare Hearing Reston VA

6 Fiscal Year 2009 fare proposal. I'm
7 Catherine Hudgins, and a member of Metro
8 Board of Directors. And with me tonight is
9 Dana Kauffman, a member of Metro Board in
10 Fairfax County, and General Manager John
11 Catoe.

12 The purpose of tonight's meeting is
13 to elicit the comments of our customers and
14 public about the range of fare proposals for
15 Metrorail, Metrobus service, and amended
16 parking fees that Metro is considering as
17 part of the fiscal 2009 operating budget.

18 This tonight is the first of one of
19 six public hearings being conducted
20 throughout the region. Your comments will
21 become part of the public record that will be
22 examined by the Metro Board of Directors

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1 during its deliberations on the FY 2009
2 operating budget, as it considers the
3 possibility of fare increases.

4 Any fare increase that might be
5 approved by the Metro Board is tentatively
6 scheduled to take effect on or about January
7 6, 2008.

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Metro is proposing to implement the
9 fare adjustment in early 2008, before the
10 beginning of Fiscal 2009, and the additional
11 revenue would be reserved for use until July
12 2008, which is the official start of FY 2009
13 budget fiscal year.

14 For those attendees who might have
15 questions or comments about other aspects of
16 Metro's service, please note that Metro staff
17 has set up an information table during the
18 open house portion of our meeting, and staff
19 is ready to listen to comments or questions
20 on topics other than the fare proposal or
21 service area change. They will provide
22 comment cards and basic service information,

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1 if requested.

2 Notice of this public hearing was
3 made in The Washington Post. Advertisements
4 were also placed in The Washington Examiner,
5 the City Paper, India This Week, Express
6 India, El Tiempo Latino, and the Washington
7 Hispanic.

8 In addition, notice was posted on
9 the Metro web site, in our buses and trains,
10 and sent to area libraries in the City of

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11 Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Montgomery,
12 and Prince George's Counties, and the
13 District of Columbia.

14 Briefly, I will cover the procedure
15 that we will follow during the hearing.

16 First, we will hear a staff
17 statement presentation on the proposal, and
18 that will be given by the general manager in
19 the beginning.

20 Secondly, we'll hear from those
21 persons who registered in advance, to present
22 testimony. Each pre-registered speaker will

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1 be limited to three minutes, except for
2 public officials, who will be heard first,
3 and allowed five minutes.

4 Third, we will hear from anyone
5 present who indicates a desire to be heard.
6 Please provide your name and address to
7 Leenda Chambliss, and Leenda has her hand up
8 here, if you wish to speak and have not
9 pre-registered. Each speaker who registers
10 to speak tonight will also be limited to
11 three minutes.

12 I will signal when you have 30

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seconds left and will also let you know when
14 your time has expired.

15 When you come to the microphone,
16 please state your name and address for the
17 record. If you have a written copy of your
18 comments, please provide it to Ms. Chambliss.

19 Further testimony may be submitted
20 in writing until 5:00 p.m. Monday, November
21 26, 2007 to the Office of the Secretary,
22 WMATA, 600 Fifth Street, Northwest,

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1 Washington, D.C., 20001.

2 Alternatively, you may send an
3 e-mail to public-hearing-testimony@wmata.com.
4 That's public-hearing-testimony@wmata,
5 w-m-a-t-a.com. Please include your name,
6 address, and docket B07-3 in your submission.

7 Please note that the use of
8 profanity will not be tolerated during this
9 public hearing. In addition, smoking is only
10 permitted outside on the sidewalk or outside
11 of the building. If you haven't already done
12 so, please silence all your cell phones.

13 A verbatim transcript will be made
14 of this hearing, and a copy of the transcript
15 may be purchased from the Beta Court

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16 Reporting at telephone number (202) 464-2400.

17 At this time, I would like to
18 welcome Mr. John Catoe, who will make a
19 presentation.

20 MR. CATOE: Thank you very much.
21 And the first slide I'd like to go through, a
22 little bit of the history of fare increases

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1 at Metro, as well as the necessity for my
2 proposing a fare increase for FY 2009.

3 In the last 12 years, Metro has
4 increased fares on two occasions; the first
5 in July of 2003, and the second in July of
6 2004. And although the fare increases over
7 this period of time have been approximately
8 14 percent for bus and 23 percent for rail,
9 inflation has grown more than 37 percent,
10 and, in fact, the cost of fuel for all the
11 vehicles that we operate have grown more than
12 300 percent.

13 We avoided a fare increase last
14 summer, as proposed in FY 2008 budget by
15 reducing personnel, 250 positions, and also
16 additional program costs that saved
17 approximately \$34 million. In addition, we

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19 had a one-time settlement of \$40 million to
20 help offset the gap that we had for really
21 this year's budget, the FY 2008 budget.

22 And the 2009 budget has increases
that are up and above this amount. The first

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1 is in FY 2008 we used a one-time funding
2 source, and that funding source is not
3 available for FY 2009. And the second is
4 that inflation has increased our overall
5 operating costs, our personnel costs, our
6 medical costs, and our fuel costs, and
7 looking forward into next year.

8 Just for your information, and, as
9 I have found, there's some misconception.
10 Metro does not operate at a profit. And, in
11 fact, our customers pay approximately 55
12 percent of the total operating costs of both
13 Metrorail and Metrobus, as well as
14 MetroAccess services. This includes
15 approximately 79 percent of the costs for the
16 rail system, the operating costs, and 32 to
17 33 percent for the bus. The other difference
18 in operating costs is made up by the various
19 jurisdictions of Northern Virginia, the
20 District of Columbia, and the State of

21 Maryland. And it's also important, just for
22 your information, that increases in fares and

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1 fare revenues are not used for any capital
2 expenditures, and that means the buying of
3 buses, railcars, or other equipment that's
4 used in the operating of our services.

5 Metro FY 2009 budget, which will
6 begin July 1, 2008, is estimated to be at
7 \$1.3 billion, and the gap that we have
8 identified between the subsidies provided by
9 the jurisdictions and in increase in
10 subsidies that we are requesting and the
11 budget is approximately is \$109 million. And
12 the fare increase that I have proposed to the
13 board is intended to close that gap.

14 We expect that the increase before
15 you today for discussion, consideration, and
16 input will bring approximately \$111 million
17 in additional revenues over an 18-month
18 period of time. It is proposed to begin in
19 early 2008. Again, in order to keep the
20 increase as low as possible for our
21 customers. If we were to wait until July of
22 2008, the amount necessary would be the same,

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1 but the amount that I would propose for a
2 fare increase would be larger.

3 The benefits of the proposed fare
4 increase, of course, it allows us to continue
5 our services at the same levels with same
6 expansion of six-car trains on the rail
7 system. There would be no reductions in
8 Metrobus or Metrorail services as are
9 proposed for the coming in. In fact, by the
10 end of 2008, as I mentioned, 50 percent of
11 the railcars and rush hour trains will be
12 eight-car trains. There will be no fare
13 increase for off-peak Metro rail services.
14 The boarding charge when using SmarTrip for
15 Metrobus will remain the same.

16 After a one-year transition,
17 Metrorail and Metrobus transfers will only be
18 accepted by using the SmarTrip card, and
19 there's no increase proposed for the
20 MetroAccess services. There is a 10 cents
21 increase proposed for Metrobus, and those are
22 under consideration, as well as increases in

1 the Metrorail and charges to parking.

2 Metro staff has prepared a summary
3 of the fare increase proposals that are
4 available this afternoon. The summary titled
5 "Metro Proposed Fare Changes" will provide
6 you with a detailed description of the
7 proposed changes. And while staff will not
8 go through and I will not go through this
9 document in detail in the presentation, I'd
10 like to provide some important points.

11 One, the proposal for your input is
12 an increase of 30 cents for the Metrorail
13 peak boarding charge, an increase of 80 cents
14 for the maximum Metrorail peak fare, and no
15 increase, as I mentioned, for Metrorail
16 off-peak.

17 An increase of 10 cents for the
18 Metrobus cash boarding fare, no increase if
19 you use a SmarTrip card, and no increase for
20 passes.

21 An increase of \$1.15 for the daily
22 parking fee. Again, that's a proposal for

1 consideration.

2 An increase of \$10 for the monthly
3 reserved parking fee, and an increase in the
4 number of reserved parking spaces by 3,500.
5 This really is the increase that's proposed
6 for consideration. This is not an increase
7 that's been approved. This is not an
8 increase that's been recommended by the
9 board. It is proposals for discussion as a
10 result of the increases that I have requested
11 that the board consider for the 2009 budget.

12 And, with that, I would like to
13 begin the public input process for you to
14 give your input for our consideration that we
15 will take to the board, and, again, to
16 emphasize that we will be taking written
17 public comments through November 25.

18 And, so, with that, if we could
19 call the people who have signed up to speak
20 for their input.

21 MS. HUDGINS: Thank you, Mr. Catoe.
22 I'm going to go through the list, and, as I

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1 call your name, if you will come forward, and
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2 you have three minutes to speak.

3 Caneisha Mills. Caneisha Mills.
4 Crystal Kim. Crystal Kim. Esteban Olivares.
5 Esteban Olivares. Eugene Puryear. Eugene
6 Puryear. Liz Lowengard. Liz Lowengard.
7 Matt Murray. Matt Murray. Natasha Persaud.
8 Natasha Persaud. Peta Lindsay. Peta
9 Lindsay. Robert Moses. Robert Moses. Roger
10 Scott. Roger Scott. Sarah Freidman. Sarah
11 Freidman. Sunil Freeman. Sunil Freeman.
12 Tom Esbrook. Tom Esbrook. Cali Ence. Cali
13 Ence.

14 MS. HUDGINS: Thank you. I'm going
15 to cheer for Cali.

16 MS. ENCE: All right.

17 MS. HUDGINS: Please come forward.
18 And remember to state your name and address.

19 MS. ENCE: Okay. My name is -- my
20 name is Cali Ence. I am a recent graduate of
21 Masters of Public Administrative, so I have
22 somewhat of an understanding of the

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1 complexities of public decision-making, and I
2 appreciate the opportunity to come and voice
3 my input.

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I live in Vienna, and every day I
5 walk or sometimes take the bus to the Dunn
6 Loring Metro, and I then ride to Metro
7 Center, where I work at a non- profit
8 organization.

9 Right now, my roundtrip fare costs
10 about \$6.10, and with the proposed increase,
11 it would cost me an additional \$300 a year.
12 I understand that budget shortfalls are
13 something that need to be dealt with both on
14 an organizational level and also on a persona
15 level, I also have to balance my budget, and,
16 so, I'm coming her to voice -- voice my
17 opposition to the fare increase, particularly
18 the extensiveness of the fare increase.

19 And I also come with a suggestion
20 or recommendation that I'm sure that you all
21 have considered, but, as you talk about what
22 you are doing to reduce the fare or, you

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1 know, to reduce the fare increase, I haven't
2 seen it mentioned, and that is to increase
3 advertising with the Metro.

4 I rode the Metro home this evening,
5 and there were blank advertising signs, and I
6 often see signs that are advertising events

7 that were months old, and, so, I think, you
8 know, one, you could better use what current
9 advertising space, and then, secondly, more
10 aggressively market to increase the revenue,
11 and that way -- I realize that the solution
12 to this problem is going to be a
13 multi-faceted approach, that you're going to
14 have to have a combination of things, but I
15 would just recommend and encourage you to
16 take a look at that additional revenue coming
17 from outside sources instead of putting the
18 burden onto us as riders.

19 And another issue that I'm not
20 going to get into because it's a little bit
21 more complicated, but is dedicating fund --
22 dedicated funding.

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1 So, that is all I have to say.
2 Thank you again for letting me speak today.
3 MS. HUDGINS: Thank you very much,
4 Cali Ence.
5 I have no other persons up --
6 there's more coming here. Niels Pemberton.
7 Remember to state your name and address.
8 MR. PEMBERTON: My name is Niels

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Pemberton. My name is Niels Pemberton. I
10 live at 11538 Links Drive, Reston, Virginia.

11 I used to -- I used to take the
12 Metro into Washington every -- every day when
13 I worked in Washington. Now I rarely do it
14 because I'm on a limited -- I'm on a -- I'm
15 on a very limited income right now, and it's
16 -- it's very expensive. I'm -- I'm having to
17 take the bus a lot more because I simply
18 cannot afford the Metro fares now, and I
19 think we have to make some hard choices.

20 We have to -- I think -- I think we
21 should think -- think about terminating the
22 MetroAccess Program because it -- it is used

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1 by relatively few people and turn it all back
2 to local governments. I think we have -- are
3 going to have to -- have to make a very hard
4 choice with that.

5 We also need to cut Metro
6 employees' 100k -- \$100,000 a year salaries.
7 100k and overtime, that is just outrageous.

8 Service on the Orange line, a lot
9 of -- a lot of weekends, they're doing track
10 work. Are we -- are we getting value --
11 value for the money right now? The answer is

12 no. I think there needs to be some -- be
13 some reforms to Metro, possibly considering
14 contracting out Metro service to -- to
15 private operators as -- such as Veolia, where
16 Veolia would step in and -- and operate a
17 garage for Metro and that needs to be looked
18 at.

19 Finally, we have to consider
20 seriously a dedicated -- a dedicated funding
21 source for Metro. We -- we have to look at
22 something like an interstate compact and --

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1 and things like that, but things cannot go on
2 as they -- as they have been. There's a
3 limit to how much money people -- people can
4 afford. I think we should look -- look again
5 at getting rid of or terminating the
6 MetroAccess Program and turning that access
7 -- MetroAccess Program over to local
8 governments.

9 I don't -- I really don't want to
10 subsidize 'cripples', 'spastics', and 'blindies'
11 transportation.

12 MS. HUDGINS: Thank you, Mr.
13 Pemberton. The next speaker is Peg Owens.

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14 MS. OWENS: Good evening. I'm Peg
15 Owens. I'm from Oakton, Virginia. I live
16 only two miles from the Vienna Metro, but,
17 for me, that's a little bit far to walk. And
18 my major issue with the fare increase,
19 actually, is the parking increase. I really
20 find it hard to believe that the burden is
21 put totally on the people that park at -- at
22 the Metro stations. \$1.15 increase seems a

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1 bit outrageous. I want to remind people that
2 actually a year ago, November of last year,
3 we lost 625 spaces at Vienna, and, obviously,
4 people didn't think outside the box because
5 that lot has sat totally vacant for this
6 entire year instead of some kind of month to
7 month lease to have those spaces available.

8 The other thing is there doesn't
9 seem to be any effort in the parking lots to
10 keep people from parking over 24 hours. So,
11 if -- you know, if you want to be smart about
12 it, you can save a heck of a lot of money to
13 park at Vienna rather than park at National
14 Airport.

15 The other things I'm concerned
16 about is the word about having additional

17 reserved spaces because it sounds like let's
18 just really hit the people. If you're lucky
19 enough to get there early enough, you'll get
20 a space. Otherwise, you're going to have to
21 not only pay more for parking, you're going
22 to have to pay additional to get a reserved

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1 space.
2 I mean, the bottom line is the bus
3 transportation in the Vienna area, with the
4 exception of the 2W bus is totally
5 unreliable. And it could take -- if I try to
6 take the 2B bus, which is actually, you know,
7 walking distance to my home, the best I can
8 do probably is a 45-minute commute for two
9 miles. It -- since the 2B bus runs on
10 absolutely no scheduled whatsoever -- I've
11 seen two of them come in a row when I'm
12 waiting for the 2W -- you'll have no way of
13 planning to be able to ride that bus. That's
14 just not acceptable for me. I'm not -- when
15 I live two miles away, I'm not going to spend
16 an hour to get home on the Vienna Metro.
17 The other thing I'm concerned about
18 is service on the Orange line. Right now,

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going to Vienna, off-hours can be hit or
20 miss. You have a situation where trains
21 mysteriously decide to terminate West Falls
22 Church rather than terminating at Vienna.

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1 I've seen the sign change while I'm sitting
2 there at Federal Triangle waiting for the --
3 the train to pull in. It'll say Vienna,
4 Vienna, and I look up, and, all of a sudden,
5 it says West Falls Church.

6 It used to be -- and I've been
7 riding the subways, mostly the Yellow line,
8 and then, most recently, the Orange line,
9 that at rush hour, the trains were 6 minutes
10 apart, 12 minutes apart at non-rush hour, and
11 now it's regular that you could spend 20
12 minutes waiting, and I just --

13 MS. HUDGINS: You have 30 seconds.

14 MS. OWENS: Okay. The other thing
15 I want to point out is a lot of people don't
16 have transit subsidies, pointing out my older
17 son who's in college. I mean, today he came
18 home and walked home and left the car there
19 because he said he didn't have enough money
20 to get it out of the garage. So, and that's
21 with the current \$3.75.

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MS. HUDGINS: Thank you very much,

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1 Ms. Owens.

2 That's the last person signed up to
3 speak. Are there any people in the audience
4 that would like to speak? Are there any
5 persons that would like to speak at this
6 time?

7 If there is no one at this time --
8 yes, you may come forward. Come forward and
9 give your name and address. Thank you.

10 MR. ROWLEY: Hi, my name is Ray
11 Rowley. I live in the Lorton area. And I'll
12 try to be brief. I'm not going to repeat
13 what's been said earlier today. I, myself, I
14 appreciate the fact that Metro has some
15 concerns and some funding shortfalls and is
16 -- needs to find a way to make this thing
17 work, so I understand that there may be some
18 need for increases on the whole. I'm opposed
19 to what I'm seeing across the board.

20 As a general rule, I ride in the
21 Metro. I ride on the Blue, Yellow, and Red
22 lines every day from beginning at

1 Springfield. After I get in my car and have
2 to drive 12 to 15 minutes to get to this --
3 to the Springfield lot.

4 My concern is this. With -- I've
5 done some rough crunching of numbers, and I'm
6 seriously considering either getting back in
7 my car or switching to the VRE.

8 VRE used to be more expensive.
9 with these fare -- with -- with these --
10 without the fare increases, with the free
11 parking that I can get at the VRE Lorton lot,
12 it's pretty much awash with the increases.
13 I'm either get back in my car or I'm going to
14 switch to VRE.

15 The only -- and I'm sure you folks
16 have considered this, raising the revenue
17 isn't necessarily going to get you more
18 money. You may lose some customers, and, in
19 the long run, it may not get you the money
20 you're looking for.

21 So, I'd just ask you to consider
22 that and maybe see if we could do something

1 to temper some of these -- some of these
2 increases.

3 Thank you.

4 MS. HUDGINS: Thank you, Mr.
5 Rowley. Is there anyone else that would like
6 to speak? Is there anyone else that would
7 like to speak?

8 Yes?

9 MS. LEWIS: I'm Mary Lewis, and I
10 live in Fairfax. I've just moved back to
11 this area and taken a job in downtown
12 Washington. The only way I would even
13 consider a job in downtown was because of the
14 availability of Metro. I do live within
15 walking distance of Vienna Metro and I ride
16 down to Federal Triangle.

17 It appears to me that the proposed
18 fare increases, so I understand the need to
19 increase fares, falls disproportionately on
20 those of us who are out in the suburbs. I
21 realize we ride further, but there's also an
22 awful lot of us who are making very efficient

1 use of this service.

2 I was surprised when I came back to
3 this area, very surprised to get on Metro in
4 the morning at Vienna and find it standing
5 room only sometimes on those cars. It's
6 packed. We're doing our best to keep off the
7 roads and be responsible citizens.

8 Earlier, there was a comment about
9 someone's commute going up about \$300 a year.
10 Mine will go up over 600. That's a lot of
11 money, and I don't think that the riders in
12 D.C. who are riding buses bear the same
13 responsibility. I think that the increases
14 need to be thought out in terms of what is
15 fair for all riders, not just subway riders.
16 So, I'd ask that you give that a further
17 consideration.

18 MS. HUDGINS: Thank you, Ms. Lewis.
19 Yes. Let --

20 MS. OWENS: Just one comment.

21 MS. HUDGINS: We have time. We
22 generally don't take additional comments,

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1 but.

2 MS. OWENS: Just real quick.
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3 MS. HUDGINS: I guess we have time.

4 MS. OWENS: I just have a comment
5 about choice of location. I really don't
6 understand why this public hearing is here.
7 I went on MapQuest. It told me it couldn't
8 locate where I was supposed to go. I really
9 don't understand why it wasn't somewhere like
10 Oakton High School where people could get off
11 the Vienna Metro and walk down the street.
12 That's my comment. I think the small turnout
13 here is -- is indicative of the fact that
14 it's not even on MapQuest.

15 MS. HUDGINS: Thank you. Thank you
16 for that comment. There are other locations,
17 but I understand your comment.

18 Are there any other people who have
19 come in late that would like to speak?

20 Okay. Yes, please come forward.
21 Give your name and your address.

22 MR. GHAREEB: I just want to

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1 apologize ahead of time; I don't mean to
2 repeat anything. I just want to apologize
3 ahead of time; I might repeat a question that
4 was already asked, but I was just curious why

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6 can't you --

7 MS. HUDGINS: Give you name and
8 address.

9 MR. GHAREEB: Oh, my name is Alex
10 Ghareeb, and I work -- I live in McLean
11 Virginia. But I was just curious, can you
12 not make up like the money that's lost or the
13 money that you guys are trying to make up by
14 raising the -- the price on a fare? Can't
15 you make it up through like advertising like
16 inside the Metro? Have you guys taken that
17 into consideration? Did you guys talk about
18 that before? I was just kind of curious.
19 You already touched on that? Sweet. Sorry.
20 Thanks.

21 MS. HUDGINS: Thank you for
22 thinking, Alex, and we're trying to do the
23 same. All right.

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1 Are there any other speakers? Is
2 there anyone else who would like to speak?

3 Okay. Well, I want to thank
4 everyone who's come out and participated.
5 This is very important. As the general
6 manager has indicated, this is the input that
7 he, as well the board members need from the

8 public in order to make a reasonable
9 decision, and all of your comments will be
10 part of the record. And, as indicated
11 before, that record is available to you, the
12 public, as well.

13 At this time, I think we can close
14 the public hearing and thank everyone for
15 coming out. Thank you very much.

16 Let me do a person piece. This
17 public hearing is out in the Dulles area,
18 which is unusual. And I want to thank
19 someone who has traveled all the way from the
20 south side of Fairfax County to come as a
21 board member to participate and come this
22 distance, but, more importantly, this will be

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1 one of -- I'm not sure what he will do with
2 the other public hearings -- his last public
3 hearing as a member on the Metro Board. And
4 Dana Kauffman has been a solid regional
5 leader in working for the betterment of the
6 region and the transportation system of
7 Metro, and I've appreciated working with him
8 on the Board of Supervisors, as well as on
9 the Metro Board, and I would like very much

10 No. 525 Fare Hearing Reston VA
11 to acknowledge the kind of service he has
12 given to the region and wish him well in the
13 future.

13 Thank you.

14 (Applause)

15 (Whereupon, at 7:34 p.m., the
16 HEARING was adjourned.)

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