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January 29, 2009

Chairman Zimmerman and Members of the Board of Directors:

It is my pleasure to present you with the Riders' Advisory Council's report for January 2009. Though I indicated in last month's report that December's Board meeting would be my last to address you as Council chairman, the RAC's elections originally scheduled to take place at its January meeting were deferred until its meeting in February. This means that my term as chairman will continue until next week's meeting when members will elect new leadership. Under our by-laws, the new chairman will be a District of Columbia resident.

**Paper Transfer Elimination:**

Though it may now seem like a distant memory, Metro and many regional bus operators eliminated paper transfers as of January 4, 2009. While it appears that this change in policy was achieved fairly smoothly, the Council would ask Board members to continue to be vigilant with regard to this issue, especially to ensure that senior citizens and persons with disabilities have convenient access to purchase and reload their appropriate SmarTrip cards. The Council also asks the Board to continue to advance the planned enhancements to SmarTrip, such as the ability to load passes onto the card, the ability for customers to reload their cards online and for Metro to increase the number of sales and reloading outlets in the region.

**Presidential Inauguration:**

The Council would like to add its voice to the many offering congratulations to Metro on a job well done for its service during the Inaugural festivities. The General Manager and other Metro staff provided an update to the Council on Metro's plans for the Inauguration at our January meeting and solicited members' feedback on issues related to planning for the event. Of course, those plans were subject to change up to and in some cases on Inauguration Day, and Metro is to be commended for its flexibility to adapt to rapidly-changing conditions while providing service to a record number of riders.

Metro's success on January 20<sup>th</sup> highlights the importance of clear and abundant communication to alert riders to delays or other disruptions – the preponderance of letters and other comments in the media stressed what a critical role robust communication with riders played in Metro's success. If the Authority does a "lessons learned" exercise as a follow-up from last week, it is my hope that staff will review their communications efforts with an eye towards further institutionalizing these practices.

**Chairman's Remarks at January Council Meeting:**

Metro Board Chairman Chris Zimmerman addressed the Council at its January meeting, and in addition to taking questions from members, he outlined the challenges that Metro will face in the coming year. Mr. Zimmerman also gave counsel to members on how to most effectively communicate with members of the Board of Directors.

I know that I speak for the entire Council in expressing our sincere gratitude for his work as Board Chairman over the past year and especially for his willingness to engage the Council and solicit its opinion on several issues.

**New Metro Website:**

Staff from Metro's Information Technology department also came to the Council's January meeting to give an overview of the recent upgrade to the Authority's website. The Council was encouraged to learn that even though the major upgrades to the website were completed in December, staff is still looking at additional changes to improve the user experience, such as posting schedules in different formats.

**Capital Needs Inventory:**

On January 14<sup>th</sup>, the Council co-hosted a facilitated work session with members of Metro's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) to provide input on Metro's Capital Needs Inventory. The meeting allowed RAC and AAC members to weigh in on priorities for the next iteration of Metro's Capital Improvement Plan which will begin in FY2011. While the meeting couldn't go through all of the items in the proposed \$11 billion capital plan on a project-by-project basis, we appreciate staff's willingness to reach out to Metro's advisory groups during the early stages of development of the capital plan.

**FY2010 Budget:**

The Council has not yet had the opportunity to discuss the General Manager's proposed FY2010 budget and have placed an initial budget discussion on the agenda for our February meeting. Members are concerned about the potential for service cuts to balance the budget. As transit riders, the prospect of cutting service is naturally very troubling to each of us on the Council. We are hopeful that Metro will engage its riders in a robust public process before making any decisions on service reductions.

The Council is looking forward to receiving more detailed information on the budget and the proposed timeline for budget development. Members would also welcome any suggestions from members of the Board on how they can best provide feedback to assist the Board in its decision-making on this critical issue. We appreciate the Board's sharing information about its upcoming Budget Work Sessions and hope to use the discussions from these meetings as a guide to our own deliberations on the budget.

**Customer Service Standards:**

Deputy General Manager Gerald Francis shared a draft of Metro's customer service standards with members of the Council last month and we are in the process of putting together comments on the document. The Council is excited about the idea of Metro having clear, public standards and would like to thank Mr. Francis and his staff both for moving this project forward and for soliciting the Council's comments as part of the process.

Lastly, the Council notes that Metro is holding meetings on several bus lines as part of its Service Evaluation Study and would like to be kept abreast of any planned changes to bus service that result from these meetings.

I appreciate your attention and welcome any questions you may have, and once again would like to thank you for all of the support that you have shown the Council and me over the past year.

Sincerely,

Nancy Iacomini  
Chairman