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Metro Board Members,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to present the March 2007 Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) report to the Board. This written report discusses the progress from our RAC subcommittees; outlines the RAC's initiatives surrounding the fiscal year 2008 budget; and safety and security issues.

Communication and Customer Service Subcommittee – The Communication and Customer Service Subcommittee is dedicated to exploring improvements to customer communication regarding transit services and better outreach to riders that rely on these services via the vast array of media used by Metro, including signs, announcements, the web site, advertising, event publicity, system outage alerts, and disaster/emergency planning.

Last Month, the Communications and Customer Service Subcommittee met with Mr. Lendy Castillo to discuss a customer service failure on the “Y” bus reported by Nardra Johnson, a RAC member. She was trying to report disruptive behavior on the bus involving shoplifting and alcohol consumption. She was attempting to be stealth in her approach so as not to endanger herself or her two children. Unfortunately, she got the run-around. Mr. Castillo indicated that, based on his initial assessment, information about the incident should have immediately been forwarded to Bus Operations for action. It would have then been Bus Operations' responsibility to contact the bus driver, Metro Police, or both. It was his inclination that Customer Service needs to have better processes in place to recognize and handle a “real-time” incident; and better processes to take information from a rider without the need to keep them on the phone while they decide on a course of action. The RAC would like to see documentation and demonstrable processes that show this type of incident will be handled correctly in the future.

The Communications and Customer Service Subcommittee has been invited to tour the Customer Service Operations Center during a future meeting. Hopefully by then we can see new processes and procedures in place.

Budget Subcommittee – The Budget Subcommittee is dedicated to exploring opportunities for Metro to increase non-fare revenue, identify cost saving measures, and to vet management recommendations for changes in fares and services, with the goal of maximizing customer value in transit services consumed.

The Budget Subcommittee conducted a three day Budget Workshop to explore opportunities to find cost savings and revenue enhancements in the areas of Fare Policy, Non-Fare Revenue, Criteria for Service Changes, and Administrative Cost Savings. Participation in the workshops was not the groundswell that we had hoped for, but Mr. Rick Harcum would agree with me in saying the process was very helpful. Our brainstorming produced 56 distinct ideas that we have

categorized into approximately one dozen policy areas, which we then used Force Field Analysis to analyze and discuss. The RAC over the next month will use the input from these workshops to publish a policy position report that can be used in fiscal year 2008 and in subsequent fiscal years. We ask for the opportunity to present this report to you at your May Budget Committee Meeting.

Meanwhile, I expect that Mr. Harcum will be using some of the better analyzed policy ideas in Metro's ongoing budget preparation. I am pleased that we have been able to participate in the Budget Process and look forward to similar efforts in the future.

Safety and Security of Metro:

At the January and February Board Meetings, I asked Mr. Catoe and the Metro Board to make safety and security, Metro's #1 priority. Since his appointment, Mr. Catoe has taken this challenge seriously. He has begun revising the training program for Bus Operators, and has indicated an intention to allow RAC Members to participate in future events.. Metro has hired a Safety Consultant to review Metro's processes and procedures. The RAC has been invited to participate in a Focus Group with the consultant in early April. Metro is holding a Rider's Focus Group on Bus/Pedestrian Collision and RAC members will be participating. I am extremely pleased that the RAC and other customers have been invited to participate in the development of Metro's Safety Program. This type of interaction is how Metro can demonstrate both transparency and openness in its decision making process.

Of the top 65 initiatives that the RAC has identified over the course of the last year, 25 percent have a Safety and/or Security component. Three of the number one issues in our five categories are safety/security concerns. Pedestrian Safety, 5000 Car Derailments, Bumpy Domes, Bus Operator Safety Checks, and Communication items all are initiatives that can be addressed by implementation of a better Safety Program by Metro.

I have formulated a plan that I will be offering to your Safety Consultant and at other focus groups that I think will help Metro address Safety, Communication, and Customer Service head-on.

This plan calls for personal accountability by the front line workers of Metro. I ask that Mr. Catoe empower Bus Drivers, Train Operators, Station Managers, and other staff to take full responsibility for their vehicles, facilities and services provided. I believe that accountability and responsibility go hand-in-hand to achieve superior customer service. Great customer service in turn reduces communication and safety issues.

Bus Drivers. Each bus driver must take responsibility for his/her vehicle. A complete pre-operations check MUST be performed prior to putting the bus on the road, as is required by policy. There is no excuse for broken windshield wipers, non-working lift gates, trash / graffiti, missing maps and schedules, or empty announcement signs. The bus should be in full operating condition to receive and service passengers. As an added touch, I believe that Metro should have the name of the operator prominently displayed at the front of the bus, with a message saying "How is my driving? Call Metro at 202-962-7000 to report problems, issues, and compliments." The RAC also encourages the driver to frequently greet riders with a "Welcome to Metro," and pay attention to open communications with passengers about schedule delays, and other activities that are not being provided by the electronic enunciators. Additionally, when a bus

changes operators along the route, I do not believe that riders would be upset by a brief safety or operations check and an introduction by the new driver.

Train Operators. Each train operator must take responsibility for his/her train. A complete pre-operations check MUST be performed prior to putting the train in service, as is required by policy. There is no excuse for incorrect destination signs, door problems, inoperable speakers, mildewed carpets, or trash / graffiti. The train cars should be in full operating condition to receive and service passengers. As an added touch, I believe that Metro should have the name of the operator prominently displayed at the front of the car or in an announcement, with a message saying “How am I doing? Call Metro at 202-962-7000 to report problems, issues, and compliments.” The RAC also encourages the operator to frequently greet riders with a “Welcome to Metro,” and pay attention to open communications with passengers about schedule delays, and other activities that are not being provided by on a regular or useful basis.

Station Managers. Each station manager must take responsibility for his/her station. A complete pre-operations check MUST be performed prior to coming on shift, as should be policy. There is no excuse for improper signage, burnt out light bulbs, inaudible speakers, trash / debris in the station or along the rails, trashed elevators/escalators, broken turn styles, inoperable fare machines, misplaced recycling containers, full trash cans, missing system maps, missing bus schedules and much more. I believe that the station manager’s name should be placed more prominently with a message saying “How is my station, let me know? ... or, Call Metro at 202-962-7000 to report problems, issues, and compliments.”

The number of incidents involving smoke and fire in the rail stations seems to have reached epidemic proportions. An engineer friend of mine put it this way, “Steel and Concrete don’t burn: debris in the track bed is what is responsible for fires.” Station Managers need to take responsibility for scanning the track bead for debris and reporting it to rail maintenance. Mr. Catoe has expressed the importance of cleanliness in the system on numerous occasions. This is an example of what can occur when attention to cleanliness is deferred: thousands of customers are inconvenienced.

Concluding Remarks:

During last month’s Report to the Board I outlined our process for organizing and tracking our goals and initiatives. As I explained, we have two GW Public Policy masters candidates developing the requirements and processes for tracking initiatives from inception through to implementation. We are currently evaluating Metro’s CRM system as one alternative for deploying this system. Once this system is formalized I anticipate producing a summary report out of this database to include as an appendix to this report. I’d like to thank Ms. Cali Ence and Mr. Dan Paekpe for taking on this project. I’d also like to thank John Pasek, our RAC Coordinator, and Ms. Deborah Lipman for taking the time to work with these students.

There are many universities here in the Washington Metropolitan Area that have a need for students to participate in the evolution of Metro, through work/study, as interns, as community service, and for class related projects. I encourage Metro to make room for these smart and ambitious members of our community to give their time and effort to Metro. In his first weeks, Mr. Catoe indicated a desire to reach out to our local community to find the next generation of Metro staff. I encourage him to follow my lead. Dr. Sharon Conn, a RAC member has connections with GW and I have worked with interns from Southeastern University in the past. It is not hard to find students willing help. This is a great opportunity that I do not think you

should pass on because of “lack of space and equipment.” With some creativity these obstacles can be overcome.

Finally, I ask you to appoint a replacement for Ms. Katy Chang who has stepped down as a RAC Member from the District of Columbia due to relocation from the area.

Again, I ask you to find opportunities for the RAC to participate in focus groups, workshops, and media events as Metro addresses the challenges of safety, security, customer communication, and other critical services. I want everyone at Metro in the pre-planning phase of a new initiative to ask:

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

I. Michael Snyder
Chair, Riders’ Advisory Council