



600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-962-2891

Dear Chair Downs and WMATA Board Members

I am pleased to present highlights of the Riders' Advisory Council's (RAC's) activities since our last report to you.

FY2015 Budget Recommendations:

The RAC Budget Committee, comprised of two members each from the three major jurisdictions, met on February 19 and did further work via e-mail to present a proposal on the WMATA Proposed FY2015 Budget to the full RAC at its March meeting.

The Budget Committee's recommendation was adopted by the full RAC with one exception: After intense discussion, including public comments, the RAC voted to retain the cash surcharge on Metrobus. While members were sensitive to the relief that could be gained by some of the most price-sensitive riders, we voted for the option that we thought would best support movement toward a cashless system—ultimately a more cost-efficient option for all riders.

The RAC also unanimously endorsed the reduced cap and fare multiplier on MetroAccess fares as proposed by Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair and RAC member Patrick Sheehan. Our letter was transmitted to all WMATA Board Members and WMATA Staff on March 12. A copy is also attached to your copy of this report.

Marcel Acosta, Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, invited me to formally present our recommendations at the March 13 meeting of his Committee. In addition, prior to the March RAC meeting, Mary Hynes, Arlington Board Member, convened a meeting with Arlington County's RAC and AAC members, to discuss recommendations on the fare increases. We hope to have similar meetings with other Board members during the year.

March RAC Meeting and 2014 Workplan

The highlight of our March meeting was an informal and informative presentation by WMATA Board Chair Tom Downs, followed by an extended Question and Answer session with RAC members.

This presentation was a wonderful lead in to a discussion of RAC's 2014 Workplan and establishment of Committees which took place at a special meeting on March 19. Mr. Down's focus on the future of WMATA beyond 2025 helped to expand our vision and our role in WMATA's future. The 11 members who attended the Special Meeting organized themselves into workgroups to further refine the Committee Structure and Workplan developed by the RAC Leadership Team. We expect to formally establish Committees and finalize our 2014 Workplan at our April Meeting.

Metro Roundtable:

Ben Ball, the RAC's 2013 Chair and I attended a March 11 Metro Roundtable hosted by Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton at #1 Judiciary Square. The four panelists were Richard Sarles, CEO & General Manager, WMATA; Jackie Jeter, President ATU Local #689; WMATA; Klara Baryshev, Chair of the Tri-State Oversight Committee; and David Alpert, a former Vice Chair, RAC and founder/editor-in-chief of Greater Greater Washington, a blog that focuses on transportation and other issues in the DC metropolitan area. Although there were only about a dozen people in attendance, the discussion among the panelists and Congresswoman Holmes was rich and deep. Personally, I came away with an even more ambitious view of what could be done via various partnerships across jurisdictions, governments and audiences.

Sincerely,

Carol Carter Walker
Chair, 2014 Riders' Advisory Council



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March 12, 2014

Dear Chair Downs:

Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) members attended each of the six public hearings on the proposed FY2015 WMATA Budget. At its February meeting, the RAC established a six-person Budget Committee to review the proposed FY2015 WMATA Budget and analyze the views and perspectives of its members, WMATA staff, and the public in order to develop a position for presentation at the RAC's March meeting.

In formulating its position on the proposed FY2015 WMATA Budget, the RAC assumed the proposed increase was necessary and prudent. The recommendations listed below are the RAC's recommendations for the combination of fare increases, policy changes, and jurisdictional contributions which will meet the budget target based on the various proposals listed in the docket.

SUMMARY

The RAC recommends modest changes in fares and fees that we believe would have the least impact on riders. The RAC wants WMATA to send a message to regular users that their patience with the inconvenience caused by the Metrorail rebuilding effort will not go unrewarded.

The RAC is enthusiastic about the implementation of the Convention pass and sees this as a creative way to raise revenues with minimal investment. The RAC would like to see continued attention paid to simplification of the fare system.

While the RAC's impulse is to eliminate the surcharge for cash fares on Metrobus as a way to simplify the fare system and be sensitive to the needs of extremely price sensitive customers, the RAC believes that it is in the best interests of all riders to move to a cashless system. The RAC voted to continue the surcharge because it believes that encouraging the use of cash would be a step in the wrong direction.

The RAC also reviewed the proposals recommended by the Accessibility Advisory Committee and unanimously endorses its proposals to cap the maximum MetroAccess fare at \$6.50 and to modify the fare calculator to reflect a 1.25 to 1.50 multiplier from the bus fare, assuming that this change has minimal impact on the anticipated fare revenue of WMATA's proposal.

Finally, the RAC recognizes that its fare recommendations fall short of the funds necessary to meet the proposed operating budget. The RAC recommends that jurisdictions be asked to make up the relatively small shortfall between its recommendations and the proposed budget levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Metrorail Fares

4% Fare Increase to Peak fares. No increase to Off Peak fares.

Fare Period	Boarding Charge (current)	Boarding Charge (RAC Recommendation)	Max Fare (current)	Max Fare (RAC Recommendation)	Total Additional Revenue (estimated)
Peak	\$2.10	\$2.20	\$5.75	\$6.00	\$16m
Off Peak	\$1.70	\$1.70	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$0

Rationale:

The RAC concurs with the recommendation to increase peak rail fares in line with inflation.

The RAC recommends keeping off peak fares the same in order to encourage more off peak usage, especially by those who have been most impacted by weekend track work.

Metrorail Special Fares

Convention Pass (1-Day or Multiple Days)

Fare Period	Boarding Charge (current)	Boarding Charge (RAC Recommendation)	Max Fare (current)	Max Fare (RAC Recommendation)	Total Additional Revenue (estimated)
One Day	NA(new)	\$10.00/Day	NA(new)		\$ 1.5m

Rationale:

The RAC agrees with the docket proposal of a convention pass as a way to generate extra revenue at limited marginal cost.

28-Day Rail Pass

No change to the current price for a 28-Day Rail Pass

Fare Period	Boarding Charge (current)	Boarding Charge (RAC Recommendation)	Total Additional Revenue (estimated)
28-Day	\$230.00/Month	\$230.00/Month	\$ 0

Rationale:

There is currently no fare incentive for use of the 28-day rail pass, and as a result it is not widely used. The RAC sees an opportunity to encourage use of the 28-day pass by separating it from the overall fare increase. This will incentivize regular riders (in particular those with Federal transit benefits) to take advantage of the program. The RAC sees monthly passes as a rider-friendly way to encourage use of the system, particularly in off-peak periods.

Metrobus Fares

Increase Local/Limited SmarTrip fare by \$.10.

No change in cash fare. Retain cash surcharge.

Increase Express SmarTrip fare by \$.35. No change in Cash Fare.

Increase Airport SmartTrip and Cash Fare by \$1.00.

Service Type	Fare SmarTrip/Cash (current)	Fare SmarTrip/Cash (RAC Recommendation)	Total Revenue
Local/Limited	\$1.60/\$1.80	\$1.70/\$1.80	\$ 8m
Express	\$3.65/\$4.00	\$4.00/\$4.00	
Airport	\$6.00/\$6.00	\$7.00/\$7.00	

Rationale:

The RAC believes that the proposed SmarTrip bus fare increase of 9% is excessive and disproportionate. As an alternative, the RAC suggests an increase in line with inflation which roughly matches the proposed increase in rail fares. In the interest of riders, the RAC recommends the continuation of the cash surcharge and WMATA's initiative toward a cashless system which has the benefit of improving on-time performance.

Parking

The RAC agrees with the \$0.25 increase in parking fees for all jurisdictions. The RAC disagrees with the special additional fee for parking in Prince George's County, as the reason for the increase in a specific jurisdiction is not clearly explained.

If you have questions or need further information, please contact me or Fred Walker, Chair of the Council's Budget Committee.

/s/

Carol Carter Walker
Chair, Riders Advisory Council

cc: Marcel Acosta, Chair, Finance & Administration Committee
WMATA Board Members
Carol Kissal, Chief Financial Officer, WMATA
Riders' Advisory Council