

**MINUTES**  
**BOARD CUSTOMER SERVICE, OPERATIONS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
**February 24, 2005**  
**9:00 a.m.**

The meeting was called to order at 9:25 a.m. Present were:

**Committee Members**

Mr. Robert Smith  
Mr. Dana Kauffman  
Mr. Jim Graham  
Mr. Charles Deegan  
Mrs. Gladys Mack  
Mr. Christopher Zimmerman  
Mr. Calvin Nophlin  
Mr. Catherine Hudgins  
Mr. Gordon Linton

**Approval of Agenda:**

The Agenda was approved.

**Approval of Minutes:**

The Minutes of December 16, 2004 were approved as submitted.

**INFORMATION ITEMS:**

**APTA Peer Review on Metrorail Operations**

Mr. Richard White, Chief Executive Officer and General Manager, introduced members of the APTA Peer Review Panel, which was convened at the request of Mr. White to review the current rail operations. Mr. Greg Hull from the American Public Transportation Association explained the purpose and process of the panel, which would present its detailed findings on WMATA's rail system operation, training and certification, Operations Control Center (OCC), vehicle engineering, and safety issues. Mr. Michael Mulhern, General Manager of MBTA, provided a detailed report on the key areas the panel focused on: Staffing, Organization, Procedures, and Transportation Staff Migration, Training Programs, Railcar Crash Worthiness, and Service Capacity Limitations.

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Mr. Mulhern then reviewed the panel recommendations, citing major areas that needed improvement and suggesting solutions. The panel recognized the age of the Metro system, a deteriorating infrastructure, growth in ridership and customer demand, and an unstable financial plan as contributing factors in the decline in service reliability. Some of the recommendations include:

- Increase train consist length and reduce number of trains on a line, running fewer but longer trains. Mr. Mulhern pointed out that he is not suggesting to convert the existing schedule to all eight-car trains, but to use them to reduce overcrowding and increase capacity during rush hour on the worst trains. The Committee requested that staff make available the in-house Power Study that was prepared to support running eight-car trains.
- Restructure rail divisions and create Line Supervisors who are highly qualified and experienced to handle responsibility and ownership of their line. There is excessive personnel movement at WMATA that creates lack of ownership and accountability. These front-line supervisors should be the backbone of operations management.
- Line Supervisors should be better trained to troubleshoot in-service problems. Reduce the number of mobile mechanics. Prioritize in-service problem response with Line Supervisor and OCC personnel dealing with incidents. OCC personnel does not have confidence in Train Operator diagnostics.
- Strengthen the required skills for hiring Train Operators and Station Managers.
- Re-design the interior of the railcars and optimize the movement of passengers on and off the trains by using platform decals and signage for directing passenger flow, and survey customers about these changes. Mr. Mulhern suggested a pilot program to re-design a 6-car train to use as a prototype.
- Reorganize track inspectors to report to supervisor/manager in charge of the line and improve track inspection training. Mr. Mulhern noted that there are only 32 track inspectors to cover a large geographical area.
- Evaluate Engineering staffing to support car maintenance.

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- Examine career path or progression of bus driver, to train operator, to station manager, to rail supervisor and determine differences in core competencies required. Currently, there is a greater emphasis on respecting the seniority rights of union members than developing a highly skilled workforce. Identify and research management rights within current collective agreements to more effectively manage Transportation staff migration.

Mr. Mulhern then summarized four key areas at the end of his presentation that address:

- 1) Reorganization – In terms of better alignment of controls and responsibility. Improve accountability on the line.
- 2) Movement of Trains – Optimizing movement of trains and people on the system. Mr. Mulhern suggested WMATA consider low tech/high concept techniques to facilitate efficient movement on and off the cars:
  - re-design railcar interior
  - examining passenger flow in and out of doors
  - floor markings for queuing on the platform; decals on platform and signage for passenger flow, i.e., exit to the right/enter to the right
  - getting on and off the cars is clumsy, compared to other transit systems he has visited
  - engage/re-educate customers and initiate customer surveys on these techniques
- 3) State of Good Repair – The top priority must be to ensure that we have sufficient operating and capital funds to keep our existing system “in a state of good repair.”
- 4) Dedicated Funding -WMATA needs a dedicated funding source. This must be a top priority for the agency. In addition, qualifying for future federal “new starts” funding will be dependent upon an adequate and reliable funding stream.

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Mr. Greg Hull closed the presentation and advised the Committee that the final Peer Review Panel report will be completed in the next three weeks and the panel will be available for any subsequent questions or follow-up. The Committee responded with comments and questions on the recommendations and observations, and questioned what other transit industry practices are. The panel further responded to questions and comments from the Committee in the areas of lack of funding for infrastructure renewal, career paths for bus drivers and train operators, decentralization of the customer call process, track inspection, station dwell times, running 8-car consists, re-design of railcar interiors, and farebox recovery. They also noted institutional challenges and imbedded contractual constraints within the Authority that will restrict "quick fixes" or implementation of some of these recommendations.

The Committee Members commended the Peer Review Panel on its report and findings and requested a list of Mr. Mulhern's four points he summarized at the end of his presentation. They also requested an itemized list of all recommendations made by the panel, staff response to each recommendation, and a table tracking the progress to implement recommendations.

#### **Improving Service Reliability and Customer Service**

Due to the interest of time, this item was not presented.

#### **Bus Safety, Security and Community Issues**

Polly Hanson, Chief of Metro Transit Police, summarized ongoing and upcoming initiatives to improve safety and community outreach to protect and deter crimes against Metrobus operators, a concern shared by Local 689 and WMATA management.

The Committee recognized and commented on WMATA's efforts to increase focus on MTPD and local police visibility, coordination with local prosecutors to fully charge perpetrators, coordinating with area communities and schools to reduce crime, equipping buses with cameras, feasibility of protective film on bus windows, and re-routing buses late at night to avoid repeated crimes against bus operators.

Mr. Jack Requa noted that transit and local police have concentrated on the areas where rock throwing incidents have occurred, but that we have not eliminated routes. He further explained that silent alarm systems have been deployed on Metrobuses, new buses have been equipped with cameras, and an

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additional 125 buses to be equipped with cameras will be concentrated in high crime areas. The Committee suggested that staff examine lower cost options to retrofit the rest of the bus fleet with cameras.

Committee Members requested to be included in meetings with MTPD when they meet with local communities and schools, and recognized their role in reaching out to community leaders and organizations to reduce these crimes against bus drivers. They also noted that legislative action is forthcoming to treat crimes in the District of Columbia against bus operators as serious crimes.

Meeting adjourned at 12:09 p.m.