

**Minutes**  
**Customer Service, Operations and Safety Committee**  
**April 12, 2007**  
**9 a.m.**

Ms. Catherine Hudgins called the meeting to order at 9:58 a.m. Present were:

**Committee Members**

Mrs. Catherine Hudgins, Vice Chair  
Ms. Elizabeth Hewlett  
Mr. Jim Graham  
Mr. Emeka Moneme  
Mr. Peter Benjamin  
Mr. William Euille  
Mr. Dana Kauffman  
Mr. Gordon Linton  
Mr. Chris Zimmerman

**Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as submitted.

**Approval of Minutes**

The February 8, 2007 Customer Service, Operations and Safety Committee meeting minutes were accepted and approved as submitted.

Before the Committee moved forward with the agenda, Mr. Catoe asked the Board's permission to slightly revise the order of business. He stated that Gerald Francis and Steve Feil wished to provide an update to the Board as to the root cause regarding the recent railcar fire on a newly acquired 6K series railcar as well as a staff response to the incident. The Committee concurred.

Mr. Francis first thanked the Board for bringing him on board to work with Mr. Catoe and the Executive Management at WMATA. His top priority will be the review of WMATA's overall Mission and Vision Statement. He understands the Board's desire, as well as Mr. Catoe's, to have safety as a top priority, and he will work with Mr. Catoe to make the system as safe and reliable as possible for the internal and external customer.

Mr. Feil then provided a brief synopsis of the investigation regarding the railcar fire incident on Sunday, April 8, 2007. After careful analysis, the analytical team

determined the root cause to be failure of an electrical component beneath the railcar, causing a voltage surge. At the same time, the new software package designed to monitor the flow of electricity through the railcar also failed, resulting in excessive overheating of the railcar's brake resistor. The two components led to the small fire in the railcar's undercarriage. The team diligently worked with the railcar manufacturer, Alstom, and as of the Committee meeting, had retrofitted 152 of the 190 railcars (6000 and rehabilitated 2000/3000 series) with an older software package. Mr. Feil expected the remaining 38 railcars to be retrofitted by April 14, 2007. Under close monitoring, Mr. Feil assured the Committee members that the railcars are safe and that service should not be affected.

Mr. Zimmerman asked for some clarification as to whether this was a software or hardware problem. Mr. Feil stated it was a software piece that controlled and monitored the filtering device. The filtering device, or hardware piece, has no problems. Mr. Zimmerman also asked if Alstom would assume full financial responsibility for the problem's costs. Mr. Catoe responded yes – Alstom has been extremely responsive assisting to identify the problem. Mr. Catoe and others are working with Alstom to finalize the total cost.

## **Action Item**

### **A. Bus Fleet Management Plan**

Mr. Jim Hughes sought the Committee's concurrence and approval to adopt a new Bus Fleet Management Plan that was last updated in 2004. The plan provides for future buses and facilities to support the additional fleet. Mr. Hughes stressed that the Committee's adoption of the Metrobus Fleet Plan was solely for planning purposes and does not obligate the Board's Committee or WMATA to the Plan's proposed requirements. Therefore, there is no current funding impact. Mr. Hughes also indicated the plan is required to support the grants WMATA currently receives from the Federal Transit Administration for future purchase of buses.

Mr. Hughes briefly reviewed the details of such a plan. Due to current ridership growth of 2% per year, the plan envisions the overall expansion of our bus fleet from 1,481 to 1,709. This growth would be required to keep pace with growing ridership and to keep the average age of our bus fleet at about 7.5 years. Unfortunately, new buses have less seating capacity; therefore, in the plan, staff would replace 400 of the current buses with 461 new buses. Also, the plan would be somewhat different from past bus fleet plans in that the new plan calls for adding 167 new buses, of which 76 would be articulated. This would help WMATA keep operating costs down and respond to ridership growth, an overall improvement to our customer.

Overall, the plan projects the purchase of a total bus fleet of 628 buses over the life of the planned 400 for replacement and 228 for growth.

Also included in the required plans are WMATA's goals for bus maintenance facilities to maintain and house the new buses. If approved, the system bus storage capacity would increase by 172 spaces.

Several questions arose regarding the new bus fleet plan. Mrs. Hudgins asked if the plan also included criteria that must be considered, such as low ridership but high demand. Mr. Hughes responded that recent bus service evaluation looks at the entire region and its existing as well as developing markets. These evaluations will be taken into consideration in the plan development. Mr. Catoe also indicated that a more comprehensive bus service plan versus bus vehicle plan would be presented to the Board in the future that would better define our markets and our strategic plans.

Ms. Hewlett asked if this included regional growth. Mr. Catoe responded that staff would first look at anticipated growth and new markets in the D.C. metropolitan area. We then plan to take a careful look at the entire region, what we are able to afford, and what our future process will be. Mr. Catoe also stated that per Board instructions, some display buses were in front of the Jackson Graham Building for the Committee to see.

Mr. Graham inquired as to our commitment to technology and CNG. Mr. Hughes responded that this would be considered in our plans.

Mr. Moneme asked if the bus fleet plan would be coordinated with other jurisdictional services, such as the D.C. Circulator. Mr. Hughes indicated the final growth of the region does include the services provided by other jurisdictions, although it does not appear in the plan. Mr. Catoe stated that this issue would be considered further. After the budget is approved in June, he hopes to have bi-monthly meetings with all regional operators and begin the process of regional coordination. As equal partners, WMATA will work to regionally coordinate and not always serve as the operator of all bus service to its customers. This is also part of the overall restructuring in WMATA's planning and service development.

The recommendation for a new bus fleet plan was approved as presented.

Before the Committee meeting adjourned, Mr. Zimmerman asked if there was any follow-up to a recent bus public hearing concerning bus routes. Messrs. Hughes and Francis indicated staff is working to respond to individuals and the community so that we may better plan our bus system. This is part of WMATA's strategy as we move forward.

Mr. Zimmerman encouraged more Board members to attend hearings where many unknown issues arise, allowing WMATA to better monitor our customers' needs and desires.

Mrs. Hudgins adjourned the meeting at 10:30 a.m.