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July 16, 2009

Chairman Graham and Members of the Board,

Along with my monthly report today I offer my condolences and the condolences of all Riders' Advisory Council and Accessibility Advisory Committee members to the families and communities of those who lost their lives and suffered injuries in last month's tragic accident on the redline. The R.A.C. and AAC adopted a joint resolution offering the sympathies of our members to those directly impacted by the accident.

WHEREAS the Riders' Advisory Council and the Accessibility Advisory Committee represent riders of Metro throughout the region; and

WHEREAS eight passengers and one employee died and at least 80 passengers were injured on June 22, 2009;

Therefore, be it *RESOLVED* that the Riders' Advisory Council and the Accessibility Advisory Committee offer their condolences to the families and communities of the deceased and injured.

As rider representatives, Members of the Council believe it is important both to learn the causes of the June 22nd accident and take steps to prevent such a tragedy in the future, both here at Metro and on other systems. We understand that the investigation will take months, and are encouraged that Metro is taking steps to ensure rider safety in the interim.

Customer Communications

At our July 1 meeting, Allison Hall, the Assistant Superintendent for Customer Operations in Metro's Rail Operations Control Center, briefed us on communicating with customers during unplanned service disruptions, focusing on recent service disruptions on the Red Line and Green Line and at the Pentagon Rail Station. This briefing was done at our request based on reports of delayed or ambiguous communications to both passengers on the rail system and riders who had not yet entered the system during unplanned service disruptions. These reports came from R.A.C. and AAC Members, direct input to our Members from the public, and press accounts of customer communications in the hours after the Red Line accident.

R.A.C. members made a number of suggestions:

- Vary language in verbal and written announcements in stations, on trains, on the website, in e-alerts, on phone lines, to distinguish between types and extent of service disruptions—service delays versus suspended service, and, when possible, identify the length of the disruption.
- Consciously develop plain language approach to service disruption announcements, avoiding the use of "jargon" unfamiliar to riders.

- In major disruption situations, alter audio announcements and Passenger Information Display Sign (PIDS) notices schedule to continuously repeat updates on the disruption and information about alternate routes—including bus options—in stations at frequent intervals.
- Frequent redundant announcements on PIDS notices and over audio are important for riders with visual or auditory disabilities, who do not have a line of sight to a PIDS, or who may speak but not read English.
- Make broader use of the wireless microphones in rail stations to make announcements during unplanned disruptions.
- Improve the audio systems in rail cars and provide more information to passengers on rail cars about extent of service disruptions.
- Hold buses or add buses, particularly limited service commuter routes, to allow passengers traveling through delays to reach their bus and final destination.
- Educate passengers ahead of time about preparing themselves for service disruptions—including what to expect in rail stations, planning alternate routes, and where and how to obtain updated information.

The R.A.C. has provided input to Metro in the past on customer communications during unplanned service disruptions, including emergency situations. One veteran R.A.C. member noted significant improvement in recent years in the quality of WMATA's communications during unexpected service disruptions. However, in light of communications issues identified during recent disruptions, we hope that the Authority will consider the suggestions above as a way to further minimize the effect of service disruptions on the riding public.

We are aware that Media Relations and the Transit Police have designated roles or potential roles in service disruptions and look forward to working with those staff as well.

In addition to unplanned service disruptions, R.A.C. members are also interested in how planned changes in service are conveyed to affected communities. I hope that we can continue this dialogue with WMATA staff on customer communications for the benefit of all riders.

Passenger Safety

During 2007, following a number of accidents involving WMATA employees, passengers and bystanders, the R.A.C. has several discussions with WMATA staff regarding safety in WMATA operations. R.A.C. Members at that time expressed concerns and made a number of suggestions. Among those suggestions were increasing training for operators and including WMATA-oriented training in the local CERT programs.

NextBus

Also on July 1, WMATA's new system-wide NextBus Arrival service was launched to the public. R.A.C. and AAC members were happy to have participated in the development of this program and look forward to seeing it meet the needs of our riders and continue to grow with our system.

Planning for FY2011

Once again, the Council looks forward to working next fall to help advance a thoughtful public dialogue on how Metro can meet the fiscal and service challenges it faces in the coming year and beyond.

Council Working Groups and AAC Report

Our Governance Working Group has met to develop recommendations for Council activity as well as reviewing our bylaws. The AAC marked the 15 year anniversary of the MetroAccess program, including recognition of the many WMATA employees, AAC members and everyday riders who have worked to make that program successful help bring independence to the lives of countless residents of our region.

Thank you for your attention. I would welcome the opportunity to answer any questions that you may have.

Diana Zinkl, JD, MCP
2009 Chair
WMATA Riders' Advisory Council