

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Board Action/Information Summary

<input checked="" type="radio"/> Action <input type="radio"/> Information	MEAD Number: 102695	Resolution: <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
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TITLE:

Station Naming Policy Discussion

PURPOSE:

To obtain Board approval on revisions to the station naming policy.

DESCRIPTION:

Last fall, staff was requested to bring to the Customer Service and Operations Committee an update on the practical, operational and policy considerations associated with station names regarding: higher educational institutions, hospitals, and other landmark institutions; commercial naming rights; and alternative station wayfinding tools.

With station name changes, there is more to consider than just signage. Name changes touch practically every part of our system including vehicles, Passenger Information Display Systems (PIDS), station signage, announcements and so forth. From an operations and practical standpoint, brevity is very important. In the Metro system, concise names with limited characters are those that have stood the test of time. For customers, besides brevity, consistency is important for recognition, recall and ease of use while traveling the system, especially for Metro's customers with disabilities and limited English proficiency.

Staff conducted extensive outreach to other transit agencies and commercial entities as well as focus groups with respect to station name policies and customer input. The following summarizes the findings.

Wayfinding Tools

Today, Metro has a variety of customer wayfinding tools available, including station signs, neighborhood maps in stations (last updated in 2010) and the online Trip Planner and the interactive map that is connected to the PIDS and Google maps, and features a "Search Nearby" option to find restaurants, landmarks, and more. Metro also partners with local businesses and organizations to promote our transit services.

Customers have told us that they are opposed to adding more to system map. They indicated that Metro should explore and develop alternative ways/tools such as mobile applications, destination guides in pamphlet form, and updated station neighborhood maps to enhance wayfinding for customers. Metro plans to explore new ways of

improving current and developing new tools to help customers get to their destinations.

Higher Education

Precedent has been set for the permission of university names within station names, as long as the request came through one of Metro's jurisdictions. The names of the schools have applied to station names inconsistently – some have abbreviations, others spell the majority of the name.

Other transit agencies are not specific about the names of higher learning institutions. However, in practice most do not use the names of academia in their station names. Instead, agencies may use the names of universities and college as a part of station identifiers or station destination signage.

According to research, customers appreciate having names/initials of universities on the map if the school is the main landmark at a station stop. However, the groups were split on whether Metro should consider adding more universities to station names in the future.

Landmarks

The current station naming policy states that the primary criterion in the adoption of station names shall be that the names identify the station locations by geographical features or centers of activity, provided that landmark names are within one-half mile of the station. In previous years, landmarks in station names did not have to meet a distance requirement.

Most customers agree that the cultural institutions/attractions already on the map should remain and all agree that minor institutions/attractions should never be part of a station name. However, there is some variation about future landmark. Some say new institutions should not be added to station names or the map as it would make it more cluttered and less user-friendly. Others say an institution should be added to a station name if it is the major reason riders are using that stop.

Hospitals

Today, Metro currently uses the international symbol **H** on the map to designate hospitals within a half mile of Metro stations. Through research, customers supported the use of the **H** symbol. However, riders also indicated that they used a variety of means to determine how to get to a specific hospital and most times, it was not by the Metro map.

Commercial Naming Rights

Metro's current policy is silent on commercial naming rights. In doing research across the country, staff found that some transit agencies, comparable in size to Metro, allow commercial naming rights of stations and some do not. Those that do allow naming rights include Boston, New Jersey and Denver; those that do not include Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The majority of customers strongly oppose commercial naming rights. Riders are connected to historical value of the city, stating "It would mean the city is "selling out"

and, “It would be inappropriate for the nation’s capitol because of the historical landmarks here”.

Some customers indicated they would consider it naming rights only if substantial revenue could be generated to cover the cost of changing the name, making needed repairs to the system and erase Metro’s debt.

As long as the station names are not changed, customers are very receptive to expanding advertisement opportunities throughout Metrorail stations including fare card machines, fare cards and neighborhood maps. This year, Metro’s advertising revenue will reach \$20 million. This is due, in large part, to the fact that station domination continues to be strong and the economy is improving.

Therefore, staff recommends the following.

With respect to **wayfinding**, this fiscal year, staff will:

- Initiate station signage evaluation
- Promote prominently online tool
- Promote mobile apps

With respect to the station naming policy, staff recommends the following for each category:

Higher Education/Universities

- Revise policy to grandfather all existing higher education/universities
- Revise policy to limit future school additions to accredited colleges or universities that offer undergraduate, graduate or doctoral degrees with enrollment of at least 5,000 and whose primary/main campus boundary is within ½ mile of a Metro station and on which the majority of the full-time enrollment attends classes; satellite campuses or school buildings that are affiliated but not located on main campuses may not to be included in station names.

Institutions/Landmarks

- Retain current policy
- Grandfather all existing institutions/landmarks
- Encourage landmarks on neighborhood and interactive maps

Hospitals

- Retain current practice
- Include hospital names within ½ mile of stations on neighborhood maps and online tools

Commercial Naming Rights

- Continue current practice of not selling commercial naming rights
- Promote station domination and other opportunities to grow revenue outside of changing station names

FUNDING IMPACT:

Updating the policy does not impact the budget. Revenue and expenses relative to the need to change signage on the basis of the policy will be considered at the time of implementation.	
Project Manager:	Barbara Richardson
Project Department/Office:	Chief of Staff

RECOMMENDATION:

Board approval to:

- Revise the station name policy to grandfather all existing higher education/universities
- Revise policy to limit future school additions to accredited colleges or universities that offer undergraduate, graduate or doctoral degrees with enrollment of at least 5,000 and whose primary/main campus boundary is within ½ mile of a Metro station and on which the majority of the full-time enrollment attends classes; satellite campuses or school buildings that are affiliated but not located on main campuses may not to be included in station names.

SUBJECT: STATION NAME CHANGES POLICY

2012-20
RESOLUTION
OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF THE
WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

WHEREAS, On November 3, 2011, by means of Resolution 2011-46, the Board directed staff to analyze the practical, operational and policy considerations associated with station names limited to: (1) the names of higher educational institutions, hospitals, and other landmark institutions; (2) the use of corporate names, logos, trademarked and copyrighted terms, and (3) the use of alternative station way finding tools as a means to direct customers to landmark institutions and return to the Board with recommendations following consideration of public comment and customer research on any new policy; and

WHEREAS, Staff analyzed the practical and operational touchpoints of station name changes; and

WHEREAS, Staff conducted extensive outreach to transit agencies, advertising agencies, examined past community input, conducted customer research, and completed an inventory of customer wayfinding tools; and

WHEREAS, Staff analyzed the findings of all outreach methods and presented the recommendations to the Board Customer Service and Operations Committee on July 12, 2012; and

WHEREAS, With respect to wayfinding, in FY2013 staff will:

- Initiate station signage evaluation
- Promote prominently online tool
- Promote mobile applications

WHEREAS, Staff recommends the following for each category with respect to the station naming policy:

Higher Education/Universities

- Revise policy to grandfather all higher education/universities that are currently part of existing station names

Motioned by Mr. Downs, seconded by Mr. Bulger

Ayes: 8 - Mrs. Hudgins, Mr. Downs, Mr. Downey, Mr. Nichols, Mr. Dyke, Mr. Bulger, Mr. Acosta and Mr. Barnes

- Revise policy to limit future school additions to station names to accredited colleges, universities or major community colleges that offer associate, undergraduate, graduate or doctoral degrees with enrollment of at least 5,000, that have significant classroom presence at a particular location within ½ mile of a Metro station and on which the majority of the full-time enrollment attends classes

Institutions/Landmarks

- Retain current policy
- Grandfather all institutions/landmarks that are currently part of existing station names
- Encourage landmarks on neighborhood and interactive maps

Hospitals

- Retain current practice
- Include hospital names within ½ mile of stations on neighborhood maps and online tools

Commercial Naming Rights

- Continue current practice of not selling commercial naming rights
- Promote station domination and other opportunities to grow revenue outside of changing station names; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Directors concurs with the staff recommendation on revisions to the station naming policy to grandfather all higher education/universities that are currently part of existing station names; and limit future school additions to station names to accredited colleges, universities or major community colleges that offer associate, undergraduate, graduate or doctoral degrees with enrollment size of at least 5,000, that have significant classroom presence at a particular location within ½ mile of a Metro station, and on which the majority of the full-time enrollment attends classes; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That this Resolution shall be effective immediately.

Reviewed as to form and legal sufficiency,



Carol B. O'Keeffe
General Counsel