



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

September 27, 2007

Metro Board Members,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to present the September 2007 Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) report to the board. This written report discusses the progress from our RAC subcommittees; outlines the RAC's issues surrounding Metro's 2009 budget process and fare policy; communication with riders during emergencies; and concerns from the Greenbelt Station.

2009 Budget Process and Fare Policy

The RAC passed the following resolution:

"The RAC, on behalf of riders, finds the proposal of a mid-fiscal year fare increase disquieting. The RAC does not believe any such proposal should be considered without full public hearing, including consultation with the RAC."

The RAC bylaws stated goal is to encourage public input in order to provide the best service to all of Metro's customers and to:

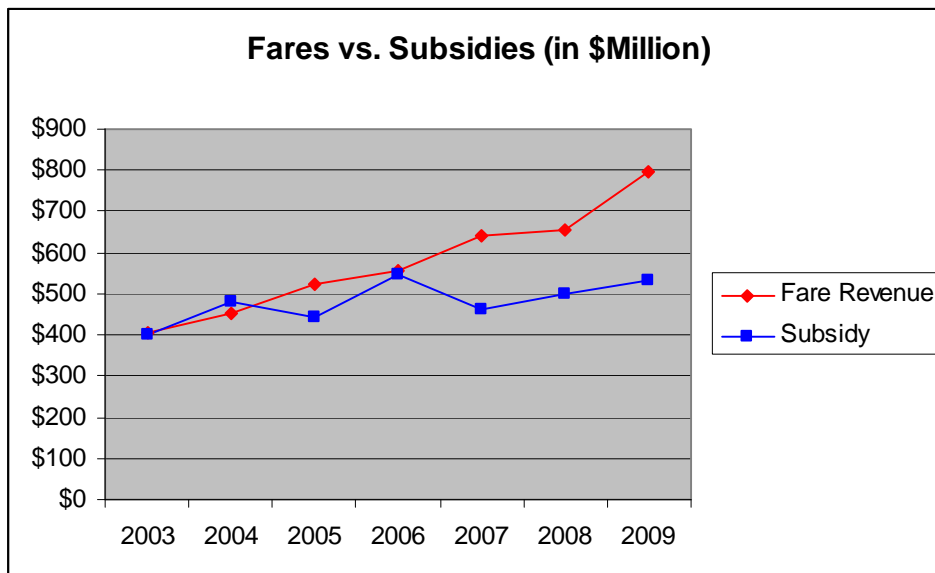
- Advise the Board of Directors on operating and budgetary issues;
- Encourage an open decision-making process by WMATA;
- Support improvements in service; and
- Aim for a high level of rider satisfaction and public confidence in WMATA.

The process that the General Manager has used to identify funding alternatives for addressing anticipated and/or perceived shortfalls for FY 2009 and the development of a long-term strategy as requested by the Board at the Finance, Administration and Oversight Committee was not inclusive of the RAC or the riders we represent. The Board went as far as to exclude the RAC by directing the cancellation of a budget briefing to the RAC. This is unsatisfactory and contradicts the Boards goals for the RAC in our bylaws.

In our discussions during the FY 2008 budget process and the drafting of the above resolution, the RAC has indicated that it recognizes the need for a future fare increase, but recommends that it be based on increases in wages. We would also like to see any attempt at automatic fare increases be tied to a performance

indicator or a customer-service measurement. If Metro's services are meeting expectations, riders would be more receptive to a modest fare increase.

Additionally, the RAC would like clarification on whether Metro strives to maintain parity between fare revenue and jurisdictional subsidies for the operational budget. Prior to FY 2007, these amounts were approximately equal. However, in the past few years the subsidies for "public transportation" have dropped to 43% and Mr. Catoe's latest recommend calls for a 60% contribution from fares and only 40% from subsidies. This disparity between fares and subsidies represents a difference of over 260 million dollars (\$260M) more from fares. This proposal was recommending one of the highest fare recovery ratios in the country.



Source: WMATA Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports FY2004 – FY2006, Approved FY2006 and FY2007 Budgets and Proposed FY2009 Budget, www.wmata.com

The RAC would like to resume discussions with Mr. Rick Harcum, Director of WMATA's Office of Management and Budget on the FY 2009 Budget; long term strategies for a fare and subsidy policy; and alternative revenue sources to allow for RAC and public input into the budget process.

Customer Communication in an Emergency

At the September RAC meeting, Deputy GM, Mr. Gerald Francis presented a detailed account of the 20+ events that occurred in the Rail System on Sunday, August 26, 2007 and Monday, August 27, 2007. He also discussed his immediate, short term, and long term strategy for correcting the causes of this disaster as they are identified and plans for improving on communication with customers.

On Thursday, September 20, 2007 Metro had a kick-off meeting of an "Emergency Communication Subcommittee" to look at Metro's policies and procedures to communicate information to passengers during service disruptions and to recommend possible changes to these policies. The Subcommittee will be headed by Ray Feldmann from Metro's Office of Corporate Strategy and Communications to consist of staff from various departments within WMATA and RAC members.

It is unfortunate that Metro riders had to experience a devastating melt-down of rail services to launch this initiative. As you know, the frequency and magnitude of service disruptions has dramatically increased since March 31, 2005 when I was one of 75,000 inconvenienced passengers to experience my first complete rail-line shutdown in over 20 years of riding Metro.

As a member of the "Emergency Communication Subcommittee", I will be recommending a more timely distribution of information to customers and station managers; a greater deployment of Metro employees throughout the system; posting of station specific emergency plans and services system wide; and techniques for a more rapid response by emergency personnel.

Rail Car Configuration

At the September 2007, RAC Rail Subcommittee, Mr. Dave Kubicek, Metro's Chief Mechanical Officer discussed railcar maintenance and design issues. He also led RAC members and rail line customer service managers in a railcar tour at the Greenbelt Yard on Wednesday, September 19, 2007. The tour provided an opportunity to view and walk around inside some of the railcars that Metro staff had modified with different interior configurations and features. The presentation and tour allowed for a dynamic discussion and I will provide the RAC's recommendations in a subsequent report.

30s-Line Restructuring Study:

At this September 2007, RAC Bus Subcommittee Mr. Hamre presented the Summary of Public Meetings from July 2007 which documented all of the outreach activities that Metro undertook as part of the process. The next round of public meetings is planned for mid-October and Mr. Hamre will be coming to the Bus Subcommittee for our comments prior to those meetings.

The Bus Metro Subcommittee also discussed with Mr. Hamre the loss of fare revenue when bus operators do not check transfers and passes more thoroughly. The RAC was pleased to Mr. Catoe plans to address this issue in his FY 2009 funding plan through the use of a SmarTrip only transfer policy and extending the allowable transfer time.

Language Assistance Plan:

At this September 2007, RAC Communication & Customer Service Subcommittee, the Office of Civil Rights presented its study and plans for Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency. The RAC was encouraged by the initiatives undertaken to better serve this growing customer base. We added recommendations for better communication of these plans with all Metro's customers to address public sensitivity on this topic; to continue to work closely with the ADA community and Metro's initiatives for ADA compliance to reduce redundancy and overlap; to coordinate on efforts to improve customer service by front-line workers in general; and to explore alternative technologies in cooperation with Metro's communication network enhancements.

Concluding Remarks:

During our visit to the Greenbelt Rail Yard, I had an opportunity to speak with two station managers at the Greenbelt Station. The three biggest challenges faced by these station managers are as follows:

- 1) Greenbelt Station at the end of the Green Line has a significant level of one-time use customers, requiring the purchase of a SmarTrip Card to exit the parking facilities. The need to pay \$10 to exit a \$3.50 lot is a source of constant frustration by visitors to our region. When will credit cards for parking be deployed to this station and throughout the system?
- 2) There is a constant stream of passengers with requests to use the Restroom Facilities. Unfortunately, with only one station manager on duty, it is difficult to provide the level of customer service required to other riders when so much time is devoted to escorting passengers into this secured location. The RAC's recommendation to deploy more personnel at rail stations could alleviate this issue.
- 3) The unclear one-day pass policy that does not allow for its use prior to 9:30 has necessitated the impromptu creation of signs by the station managers to better communicate this policy. These un-official signs demonstrate a need to better explain the policy during purchase, to add better signage, or to change the policy.

In conclusion, as a Board advisory committee the RAC would appreciate timely opportunities to offer feedback on operating and budgetary initiatives so that we may achieve a higher level of rider satisfaction and public confidence in WMATA. I'd like to thank those Metro staff who include the RAC in pre-planning and ask:

What would Metro's customers on the RAC think of this idea?

I. Michael Snyder

Chair, Riders' Advisory Council