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October 25, 2007

Metro Board Members,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to present the October 2007 Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) report to the board. This written report covers the following topics:

- Feedback to the Board regarding the ongoing debate about fares, fees and Metro's Fiscal Year 2009 budget;
- Comments on Metro's plan for improved communications during service disruptions;
- Comments about Metro's decision to suspend NextBus information service;
- A recommendation which could help reduce litter and secondhand smoke in Metro stations.

Fare Increase and Metro's FY2009 Budget:

The RAC is concerned that Metro has proposed a fare increase scheduled to take place in the middle of its fiscal year, rather than waiting until the beginning of FY2009 for fare and fee increases to take effect.

Metro management has stated its FY2008 budget is balanced, and that any income collected from fare increases prior to the start of the FY2009 budget would be held in reserve to be spent during FY2009. The RAC believes that, rather than being held in reserve by the Authority, this money should remain with riders until such time as it's required by Metro's budget. The RAC also has concerns that by stretching the funding of a 12-month budget over an 18-month period, Metro will begin its 2010 fiscal year facing a similar deficit.

- The RAC strongly urges the WMATA Board not to allow any mid-year FY2008 fare increase.

Dissenting RAC members did note that a mid-year fare increase would allow for the increases to be smaller, in absolute terms, and may also serve as a smaller foundation on which Metro will base future fare increases.

Also related to fare increases, the RAC is concerned about Metro's proposal to implement fare increases tied to specific economic indicators. Metro has only recently unveiled the proposed elements which would, together, guide the Board of

Directors in setting future fare increases. These elements offer no guidance on the amount of jurisdictional subsidies, nor have provisions for tying fares to performance and customer satisfaction. Since such a policy will guide Metro's fare increases for at least the next several years, increases tied to an economic indicator require more thorough discussion and consideration both by the Board of Directors and by the public prior to their implementation. For these reasons, the RAC also resolved the following:

- The RAC strongly urges the WMATA Board not to impose any "automatic" fare increase structure in FY'09.

Lastly, I'd like to urge the Board to not make any decisions about fare or fee increases before going out to hear from Metro's riders. While the RAC greatly appreciates the thoughtful deliberations that the Board has had on the subject thus far, there is concern that as the time shrinks between the authorization of public hearings and projected adoption of new fares and fees, what is being squeezed the most is the public's ability to participate in the process.

Emergency Communications:

On behalf of the RAC, I'd like to thank Deputy General Manager Gerald Francis and Senior Communications Manager Ray Feldmann for inviting RAC members to participate in last month's meeting on emergency communication and for taking members' suggestions to heart. The RAC shares the Board's interest in Metro's plan to improve communication with customers during service disruptions. As Metro develops specific procedures and evaluates new technologies to help keep riders informed when events occur, the RAC hopes to be an active participant in working with Metro staff to provide customer feedback on recommended improvements. The frankness and honesty shown by Messrs. Francis and Feldmann during their presentation to the Customer Service, Operations and Safety Committee was refreshing, and I hope that it continues through the development and implementation of this program.

NextBus System Suspension:

As Board members are aware, Metro will be suspending its NextBus service at the end of October for a 12 – 18 month period while it makes upgrades. While the RAC is pleased that Metro is addressing reliability issues with the NextBus system before rolling it out through the system, we have concerns that the system was not advertised as a pilot when it was rolled out to additional bus routes in May 2007. We hope that as Metro tests other changes which would affect the customer experience, that it keeps the lines of communication open with its customers to outline its expectations for such changes and to solicit feedback.

Resolution on Ashtrays in Stations:

At its October 3 meeting the RAC voted to recommend that Metro relocate the ashtrays at Metrorail stations to areas outside of the station perimeter. For example, at underground stations, this would have the effect of moving the ashtrays to the street level. The RAC believes that this would reduce litter and cigarette butts at the bottom of escalators as well as eliminate secondhand smoke for passengers on escalators.

Thank you for your consideration of the RAC's suggestions and recommendations.

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

I. Michael Snyder

Chair, Riders' Advisory Council