

Report by Safety and Operations Committee (A) 11-19-2020

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Board Action/Information Summary

Action Information

MEAD Number:
202222

Resolution:
 Yes No

TITLE:

Metrorail Station Name Changes Proposal

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:

Briefing on jurisdiction requests for rail station name changes.

PURPOSE:

Board approval of jurisdictional requests to change two Metrorail station names from Tysons Corner and Prince George's Plaza to Tysons and Hyattsville Crossing respectively.

DESCRIPTION:

There are no parties with an interest in this matter.

Key Highlights:

- As was the case with the first phase of the Silver Line, station signage and map update for phase two of Silver Line service present an opportunity to review current station names.
- Two proposals were received to change the names of current Metrorail Stations under the current policy: one request each from Fairfax County and Prince George's County.
- Each jurisdiction has committed to fund the incremental \$332K needed to make the signage changes.
- In compliance with the Board's Metro System Station Names Policy, both proposals include letters of support from community groups.
- The proposed names are in response to efforts to rebrand the areas around the Metrorail Stations to encourage transit-oriented development.
- WMATA conducted a regional survey of riders and the public to collect feedback about the proposed station names. The survey had 5,508 responses and found that the majority prefer current station names to those that are proposed by the jurisdictions.

Background and History:

Station names are guided by Board policy (P/I 4.1/4). Station name changes (or new names) are to be submitted by jurisdictions to the Metro Board for approval. The submissions must include community support and a funding commitment for any signage

and map changes.

Major tenets of the Metro System Station Names Policy include the following:

- Jurisdictions are to complete outreach in their communities to determine potential station names. Names are then formally submitted to the WMATA staff to conduct required regional research of the potential names;
- Names should identify the station locations by geographical features or centers of activity, provided that landmarks are within one half mile of the station (walking distance);
- Names should be distinctive and evoke imagery in the mind of the patron; and
- Each station name should be no longer than 19 characters (including spaces and punctuation), except for transfer station names, which should be no longer than 13 characters.

In May 2011, the Board reviewed and updated the Metro System Station Names Policy to:

Higher Education/Universities:

- Grandfather all existing higher education/universities
- Limit future names to main campuses within 1/2 mile

Institutions/Landmarks:

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

Hospitals:

- Retain current practices

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

Discussion:

In advance of the next phase of Silver Line service, Metro is preparing for systemwide signage and rail map changes. Notices went to the Board and jurisdictions that station name changes could be considered as part of the signage changeouts. The signage changes need to be finalized by December 31, 2020, in order to meet all deadlines and avoid delay penalties.

Two proposals were submitted under current policy to change the names of Metrorail Stations from Fairfax and Prince George's Counties. Under the proposals, the current Tysons Corner Metrorail Station name would be changed to Tysons Metrorail Station. And, Prince George's Plaza Metrorail Station would be changed to Hyattsville Crossing Metrorail Station. Each jurisdiction has committed to fund the incremental \$332K needed

to make the signage changes throughout the system.

The proposed name changes are in response to economic redevelopment efforts in each jurisdiction. As part of the Tysons Master Plan, the community, led by the Tysons Partnership, is working to change Tysons Corner to Tysons. In February 2011, the Fairfax Board of Supervisors requested a change to Tysons to the United States Postal Service (USPS) for the 22182 and 22102 zip codes. Change was approved by USPS in March 2011. In 2015, the US Census officially changed the name of the area to Tysons. Fairfax County and the local business community, including the Tysons Partnership, have continued work to re-brand the area to Tysons since that time. The Fairfax Board of Supervisors has been working to rebrand Tysons Corner as Tysons. Fairfax County completed the required community outreach and received letters of support for the change to Tysons Metrorail Station from the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

The Prince George's Plaza Transit District Development Plan (PGPTDDP) has been updated to provide more unity and connectivity between the Metrorail Station, the nearby shopping center, and the surrounding area. Hyattsville Crossing was selected as the new name for that area.

Prince George's Plaza Metrorail Station was named after Prince George's Plaza, a shopping center mall. The name of the mall changed to the Mall at Prince George's in 2004 and is now branded as "MPG." The jurisdiction has been interested in renaming the station for more than 10 years. The Prince George's Plaza Transit District Development Plan was updated to help create a compact, walkable transit-oriented community around the Prince George's Plaza Metro Station that will promote greater use of public transit, serve as a regional destination and economic engine for the County, and increase local tax revenues. After multiple community meetings and consideration of more than 10 names, consensus formed on the new "Hyattsville Crossing" name for this area in November 2017. Renaming the station would be the most significant action to advance this rebranding effort, and was timed to coincide with the Silver Line Phase 2 signage changes. The City and County, though, still want to proceed based upon the community engagement effort from 2017.

Prince George's County also completed the required community outreach and received letters of support for the change to Hyattsville Crossing Metrorail Station from Prince George's County Government, Office of the County Executive and the City of Hyattsville. These efforts fulfilled the community outreach requirement of the policy.

Following community outreach, Fairfax County and Prince George's County committed to fund the name changes and submitted the following name changes to WMATA for customer testing:

- Tysons
- Hyattsville Crossing

Consistent with the policy, WMATA conducted an online survey that was completed by 5,508 respondents, including SmarTrip customers, Metro's Amplify customer panel and the general public. The survey was actively promoted via local TV news, print media and social media.

Respondents were asked to rate the potential station names in meeting each of the following Metro System Station Names Policy criteria:

- Relevance: Describes the location well
- Brevity: Easy to remember
- Uniqueness: Not easily confused with other station names
- Evocation: Appealing; Clearly conveys where you are when you reach the station
- And, to determine if customers like the name

The results of the survey found that the current station name of Tysons Corner is significantly preferred over Tysons across all key criteria. Based on the comments provided by respondents, there is concern that riders associate the Metrorail Station with Tyson Corner Center and that could potentially cause confusion for riders.

The survey also found that the current station name of Prince George’s Plaza is significantly preferred over Hyattsville Crossing across all key criteria. Based on the survey results, the primary concerns are that the name does not clearly convey where you are when you reach the station and that the name could be confused with other stations.

Group: All Respondents
n=5,508 – including registered SmarTrip customers, Amplify panel, and general outreach

“Tysons Corner”							
	Agree	Disagree	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
I like the name	67%	10%	49%	18%	23%	4%	6%
The name is easy to remember	88%	4%	70%	18%	8%	2%	2%
The name is not easily confused with other station names	85%	7%	70%	14%	8%	3%	5%
The name clearly conveys where you are when you reach the station	83%	8%	67%	17%	9%	4%	4%
The name describes the location well	81%	9%	64%	17%	10%	5%	4%

“Tysons”

	Agree	Disagree	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
I like the name	36%	45%	21%	15%	18%	17%	29%
The name is easy to remember	62%	20%	37%	25%	18%	6%	14%
The name is not easily confused with other station names	58%	22%	37%	21%	19%	7%	16%
The name clearly conveys where you are when you reach the station	48%	35%	29%	19%	17%	15%	20%
The name describes the location well	47%	36%	28%	19%	17%	15%	21%

"Prince George's Plaza"							
	Agree	Disagree	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
I like the name	51%	20%	36%	15%	29%	11%	9%
The name is easy to remember	67%	13%	46%	21%	21%	8%	5%
The name is not easily confused with other station names	71%	8%	54%	17%	21%	4%	4%
The name clearly conveys where	61%	18%	45%	16%	20%	10%	9%

you are when you reach the station							
The name describes the location well	58%	19%	42%	16%	23%	11%	9%

"Hyattsville Crossing"							
	Agree	Disagree	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
I like the name	33%	48%	17%	16%	20%	13%	35%
The name is easy to remember	37%	42%	18%	19%	22%	15%	27%
The name is not easily confused with other station names	29%	51%	16%	13%	20%	15%	35%
The name clearly conveys where you are when you reach the station	27%	51%	13%	14%	22%	16%	36%
The name describes the location well	26%	49%	13%	13%	25%	14%	35%

FUNDING IMPACT:

No funding impact because, per Metro's station name policy, the jurisdictions have committed to cover the \$332K incremental costs related to station name changes that are beyond the Silver Line signage plan.

Project Manager:	Lynn Bowersox
Project Department/Office:	Customer Service, Communications and Marketing

TIMELINE:

Previous Actions	2011 – Board revisions to Metro System Station Names Policy
Anticipated actions after presentation	2021 – Metro begins systemwide signage changes for Silver Line phase II

RECOMMENDATION:

History with Metrorail Station naming informs us that our riders and the communities we serve develop attachments to rail station landmarks and resist change. According to a Harvard Business Review last week, this may be especially true in the turbulence of 2020 when we are experiencing 3D change – dramatic change on many fronts – rather than linear, incremental change punctuated by occasional and larger disruptors. Navigating perpetual, pervasive, and exponential change is a test of leadership in this new era, to paraphrase the authors (Aneel Chima and Ron Gutman). This is a consideration for WMATA as jurisdictions leverage the power of Metrorail station names to create a sense of place, encourage transit-oriented development, and rebrand an area while riders learn about new destinations, landmarks, and changing travel patterns.

In the case of “Tysons” six in 10 survey respondents found the name easy to recall and not confusing with other names. Should the Board wish to approve the jurisdiction’s request, it is likely that the new name will become synonymous with the surrounding community over time and customers will find it sufficient for wayfinding.

Likewise, Prince George’s Plaza, a now defunct name for a shopping center, is preferred largely because it is more familiar. Notably, fewer than half of survey respondents like the current name. While Hyattsville Crossing exceeds the character count in current policy (20 characters rather than 19 characters, due to a space between the two words), staff notes that rail stations play an important role in the identity and economic development of the surrounding area. In approving the County’s request, the Board would be supporting its effort to rebrand the area, promote transit-oriented development and create a transit district where people want to live, work, visit, and shop. The weak support for the existing station name suggests that riders will eventually embrace the new station name as it become identifiable.

For the aforementioned reasons, staff recommends the Board approve the jurisdictions’ requests to change the two Metrorail Station names to Tysons and Hyattsville Crossing.

SUBJECT: TYSONS CORNER AND PRINCE GEORGE'S PLAZA STATION NAME CHANGES

RESOLUTION
OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF THE
WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

WHEREAS, Pursuant to Resolution 2011-36 and Metro System Station Names Policy (P/I 4.1/4), as amended, the Board of Directors is required to approve all changes to Metro station names; and

WHEREAS, Fairfax County has requested that Tysons Corner Station be changed to Tysons Station and committed the funding (\$332,000) for the full cost of the name change; and

WHEREAS, Prince George's County has requested that Prince George's Plaza Station be changed to Hyattsville Crossing Station and committed the funding (\$332,000) for the full cost of the name change; and

WHEREAS, The station name changes will continue to assist the traveling public in wayfinding; and

WHEREAS, The Safety and Operations Committee recommends waiving the 19-character limit established by the Metro System Station Names Policy for Hyattsville Crossing because the name is preferred by Prince George's County;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Directors approves the following station name changes:

- Tysons Corner Station to Tysons Station
- Prince George's Plaza Station to Hyattsville Crossing Station,

that will take effect upon installation of new signage associated with the beginning of passenger service for Silver Line Phase Two stations; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That this Resolution shall be effective 30 days after adoption in accordance with § 8(b) of the WMATA Compact.

Reviewed as to form and legal sufficiency,

/s/ Patricia Y. Lee

Patricia Y. Lee

Executive Vice President and General Counsel

WMATA File Structure No.:
20.9.2 Rail Station Names

PROPOSED