



Customer Service and Operations Committee

Board Information Item IV-B

December 3, 2015

Improving Customer Service Satisfaction

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Board Action/Information Summary

Action Information

MEAD Number: 201684 Resolution:

Yes No

TITLE:

Improving Customer Satisfaction

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:

Staff will discuss customer satisfaction trends and efforts to improve customer experience through operational improvements, as well as customer care initiatives.

PURPOSE:

- Review most recent customer satisfaction data and factors driving satisfaction on Bus and Rail services
- Review operational efforts to improve satisfaction through better service reliability
- Discuss efforts to improve customer care, and to attract and retain riders

DESCRIPTION:

Key Highlights:

- The first three quarters of Calendar Year 2015 saw a precipitous drop in satisfaction among Rail customers, from 82% to 67%. Bus customer satisfaction ticked up slightly to 82%
- Customer surveys and companion research is clear that the only way to substantially improve satisfaction is through sustained and consistent service delivery.
- Metrorail is working on reliability through near term improvements to equipment, infrastructure, and better maintenance schedules.
- Metrobus changes in schedules, street management, maintenance and messaging have demonstrated good results.
- Customer information improvements are also underway, including a new online customer community (Amplify) to engage riders, improvements to the Passenger Information Displays (PIDs) regarding next train arrivals, a wmata.com website refresh, and new software implementation to modernize service at the Customer Contact Center.

Background and History:

Two-year review of customer satisfaction:

Metro tracks the satisfaction of customers on a quarterly basis. While not consistently meeting goal, over the past two years satisfaction has been statistically stable -- in the range of 81% for Rail and 79% for Bus customers. That changed this year, when bus satisfaction trended better while a precipitous drop in satisfaction began among Rail customers, in the first three quarters of 2015 -- from 82% to 67%.

This drop reflects the impact less reliable service is having on customer experience. It also may explain, in some part, the decline of rail ridership. Customer satisfaction surveys and companion research are clear that the only way to substantially improve satisfaction is through sustained and consistent service delivery.

Charting the Metrorail rider journey:

A customer's experience does not begin and end once they step on one of our buses or trains. Their experience starts long before this and ends after they travel; from the time they plan a trip to the customer's arrival at their final destination. Metro has been measuring important points in this journey since we began measuring customer satisfaction. It is these customer touch points, such as reliability, public announcements on the system and crowding, where Metro has opportunities to improve experience. And, we continuously try to strengthen our understanding at other points in the journey, such as feeling secure and the impact of equipment cleanliness.

What we've found is:

- Reliability alone accounts for 30 percent of a customer's dissatisfaction
- Rail customers are experiencing more problems during their day to day trips. Two years ago, the average customer reported less than one problematic experience during their trip (i.e. broken fare machine, non-operating gate, escalator out of service, unavailable employee). These experiences have increased nearly 300% -- and now are reported by customers as two problems during an average trip.
- Experiencing 2+ problems per trip reduces overall satisfaction by 28%

We are now working to develop a new KPI to measure problematic experiences throughout a rider's journey. The measure will track negative experiences at major points in a customer's journey. Monitoring negative experiences gives us a robust and actionable metric for understanding where we have failed to provide the best customer service we can. This will be tracked for both bus and rail customers.

Better Understanding Ridership Trends:

Metro is conducting research and analysis that will begin producing findings in January 2016 to determine reasons for riders leaving or making fewer trips on the system. This new research will test decision levers including service reliability, reduced transit subsidies, lower gas prices, and increased tele-working.

The initial pilot work will attempt to parse out the effects of these factors to nail down magnitude of impact on ridership. If the model is proven effective, we will use it to provide ongoing insights into fluctuating ridership patterns.

Discussion:

Improvements to Rail Service Reliability

Rail customers tell us that service reliability is the root cause of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction on the rail system. In fact, 30% of a customer's dissatisfaction is the direct result of reliability issues. To improve reliability, we must address causes of delays. Metrorail tracks train delays and has identified the following causes in 2015:

- Railcar malfunction prevents dispatch – 36%
- Railcar malfunction (brakes, propulsion, doors) removes train from service – 27%
- Track/systems repair – 16%
- Rider Actions (medical emergency, doors held) – 8%
- Other (includes congestion, delays affecting trains down the line, and police activity) – 13%

Metrorail is working to address the leading factors driving service reliability issues by:

- Working with Kawasaki to improve 7000-series railcar delivery
- Developing revised procurement policies to acquire railcar parts
- Activating overtime for maintenance personnel to accelerate weekend railcar repair work
- Prioritizing railcar maintenance and upgrades under the Capital Improvement Program
- Continuing rehabilitation and repairs to restore normal service at Stadium-Armory following the substation fire

Metrobus Initiatives Driving Customer Satisfaction

As satisfaction among bus customers ticks up in our polling, we're also seeing a drop in bus complaints received at the Customer Contact Center. Top 5 complaints are down for the year every month, and overall bus complaints are down nearly 20 percent – 95 complaints per million trips compared to 117 last year.

Top 5 Bus Complaint Categories

- Delay/Late: -17.16% YTD
- Failure to Service Stop: -22.13% YTD
- No Show: -27.43% YTD
- Rude/Discourteous/Uncooperative: -13.90% YTD
- Unsafe Operation: -14.68% YTD

Initiatives driving customer satisfaction on Metrobus include:

- Performance Improvement Team created to research and address recurring bus operations issues
- Fleet repair campaigns to resolve recurring issues that result in in-service breakdowns
- Increasing and improving on-board messaging
- Ongoing efforts to adjust schedules, run-times and bus assignments to improve on-time performance and reduce crowding

Customer Information Channel Improvements

Metro has developed a robust network of traditional and digital media channels to communicate with riders. Real-time, proactive communications with customers, include the following:

- WMATA.COM – 1.4 million unique visitors per month; high utilization of mobile devices and tablets (accounting for 65% of [wmata.com](#) visitors)
- TWITTER – 166,150 followers across WMATA’s four accounts (@wmata, @metrorailinfo, @metrobusinfo, @MetroTransitPD)
- FACEBOOK – 8,900 friends ([facebook.com/metroforward](#))
- YOUTUBE – 35 videos published in past year ([youtube.com/metroforward](#)); 200 videos total, with nearly 1 million views
- METROALERTS – email/text message system with 119,000 subscribers
- CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTER – 3,500 average calls and emails daily
- AMPLIFY – new online forum engaging 5,000 WMATA customers
- NEWS RELEASES – 10,000 subscribers
- CUSTOMER NEWSLETTER – monthly feature in free *Express* newspaper distributed at Metrorail stations and near major transit centers
- PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN– in-station, in-community, in-person outreach that collected feedback from more than 11,000 riders on large projects like the Takoma Langley Crossroads Transit Center, FY16 Budget and Metrobus State of Good Operations
- RIDER’S ADVISORY COUNCIL – 21-member customer panel advising Board

New Customer Community:

On October 15th Metro officially launched Amplify, an online community of customers who are interested in learning more about Metro initiatives and providing constructive feedback as new ideas are developed. This new tool for customer engagement received considerable attention for being a unique tactic for engaging customers and injecting customer feedback into WMATA decision-making.

In the first weeks, more than 2,000 customers have signed up and represent our diverse customer base. Daily, Amplify welcomes nearly 51 new customers to the community from all parts of the region. We have met initial recruitment estimates and expect to recruit our target of 5,000 customers by year's end.

PIDS Upgrade:

The Next Train signs customers use to determine the next arriving train on the web or in stations is old technology that is limited in its capabilities. However, a recent software upgrade engineered by our inhouse staff now provides information on trains up to 40 minutes away (rather than the previous 20 minute limit).

We undertook this improvement after hearing from riders that it is helpful for late-night and weekend travelers who may experience longer waits because of service changes around rebuilding. We continue to develop solutions to more difficult challenges such as predicting trains in a single tracking area, or when a train is departing an end-of-line

station, but hope this enhancement provides more detail when choosing to travel Metrorail.

Website improvements:

Metro has a seven-year-old website that is undergoing a complete refresh. Together with mobile use, [wmata.com](#) is the single largest information gateway for Metro, and garners [1.4 million unique visitors per month](#).

When launched early in 2016, the new website will provide customers with the following improvements:

- A new look and cleaner feel
- Modern, responsive design with mobile in mind
- Improved navigation
- More prominent display of alerts and advisories
- Enhanced trip planning incorporating maps, custom point-to-point schedules

Customer Contact Center:

The contact center is currently achieving overall satisfaction consistently above the target of 80% with customers for its efforts to provide critical travel and service information.

For the previous quarter ending in October, the positive results for “knowledge” (86% satisfaction, up from 78% a year prior) and “level of effort” (86% satisfaction, up from 78% a year prior) are the highest since we started this survey.

In addition, the contact center is making strides in resolving customer issues as quickly as possible.

- Significantly improve resolution of issues on the first contact. Currently approximately 40% of issues are resolved on the first contact and we will move that to 70% or more in the next year.
- Drive for faster and more consistent resolution of issues. We will be implementing a target of 95% of issues resolved in 5 business days. Currently achieving 75%-85% monthly.

The contact center is also investing in new customer relationship management software that will allow us to more effectively manage customer contacts, engage via social media and chat, and mine data for trends in reported issues for focus and resolution. We expect the new system to be fully implemented by next summer.

In-station customer appreciation events:

At the suggestion of Mr. Dormsjo, Board Members, supported by Metro senior managers and staff, participated in nine “Meet & Greet” customer appreciation events at various Metrorail stations/transit stops throughout the region in October and November.

The opportunity to meet with Board Members and executives has been very well received by customers in the District, Maryland and Virginia. Many speak positively

about their continued need for Metro to access jobs, school, medical appointments, and other destinations. Visitors speak in glowing terms about the ease of access and cleanliness of the system.

Riders noted a level of frustration in several areas. The most frequently mentioned topic is rail service reliability, which is overwhelmingly dominant in conversations in the Blue/Orange/Silver line stations, and on other lines that depend on B/O/S connections. Common themes that emerged include:

- Rail reliability (On time performance of trains; offloading at stations due to mechanical failures)
- Fare issues (Fare vending machines inoperable during rush hours; simplify fare structure; improve information about refunds)
- Communications Issues on the system (lack of informed front line personnel; audibility of announcements; seeking more information about escalator rebuilding)

Attracting and Retaining Customers

Through partnerships, Metro is working to build ridership – with area employers through our smartbenefits program and through business partnerships to increase destination and off-peak travel.

SmartBenefits Growth:

The SmartBenefits program lets employers assign a monthly commuting benefit directly to their employees' SmarTrip® cards, which can be used for parking, rail, van pool and bus travel throughout the D.C. metropolitan region. It also can be offered as a pre-tax deduction made by employees themselves and deposited on their SmarTrip cards.

Through partnerships with regional transportation and business groups (including the Greater Washington Board of Trade, Fairfax County DOT, Prince George's and Montgomery Counties Chambers of Commerce, Dulles Area Transportation Association, and others), Metro's SmartBenefits program continues to grow year-over-year:

- 2013: 231 new accounts
- 2014: 320 new accounts
- 2015: goal is 325 new accounts (as of 10/31/15, reached 90% of goal with 295 new customer accounts)
- 2016: goal is 350 new accounts

Examples of new SmartBenefit accounts developed in 2015 include:

- National Press Club
- The Washington Ballet
- The National Theatre
- National 4-H Council
- National Domestic Violence Hotline
- Tysons Corner Center

- Hill Country Barbeque
- Industrial Bank
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Regional Partnerships:

Marketing partnership barter values increased from \$200,000 in Fiscal Year 2013 to nearly a million dollars this fiscal year. In 2015, these partnerships with business, tourism agencies, and local festivals included, for example:

- Capital Pride Festival
- Choice Hotels
- DC Jazz Festival
- Macy's
- Monumental Sport
- National Cherry Blossom Festival
- Tysons Partnership
- Washington Auto Show
- Enterprise Rental Cars

Also, this holiday season, our marketing team partnered with retailers and restaurants throughout the region to produce a 2015 Metro Holiday Shopping Guide, completely self-funded through paid advertisements in the guide. The guide provides riders with directions to – and discounts at – 13 different shopping centers and more than 60 restaurants and retailers. Staff negotiated discounts for our customers with these businesses, which are available to anyone who presents their SmarTrip card.

Starting just before Thanksgiving and running through the end of the year, the guides will be available at kiosks in all Metro stations and transit centers, and online at wmata.com. Special events will be held across the region to promote Metro as your ride to holiday shopping.

On a final note for our shopping customers, important safety and reliability work continues on the system to get track maintenance on the weekends and at night. Passengers are reminded to check wmata.com before they leave to get the latest train schedule information for Metro. While customers may have to wait a few more minutes between trains – it should be less hassle than parking at the malls this holiday season.

FUNDING IMPACT:

Information item, no impact on funding	
Project Manager:	Lynn Bowersox
Project Department/Office:	Department of Customer Service, Communications and Marketing

TIMELINE:

Previous Actions	2013-2015 -- Customer satisfaction research demonstrates recent decline in rail customer satisfaction
Anticipated actions after presentation	<p>January 2016 -- Customer Research pilot project to begin producing findings to determine reasons for riders leaving or making fewer trips on the system</p> <p>2016 -- New wmata.com website to launch</p> <p>2016 -- Implement overhauled Customer Contact Center to more effectively manage customer contacts, engage via social media and chat, and mine data for trends in reported issues</p>

RECOMMENDATION:

No recommendation being made at this time.



Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Improving Customer Satisfaction

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December 3, 2015

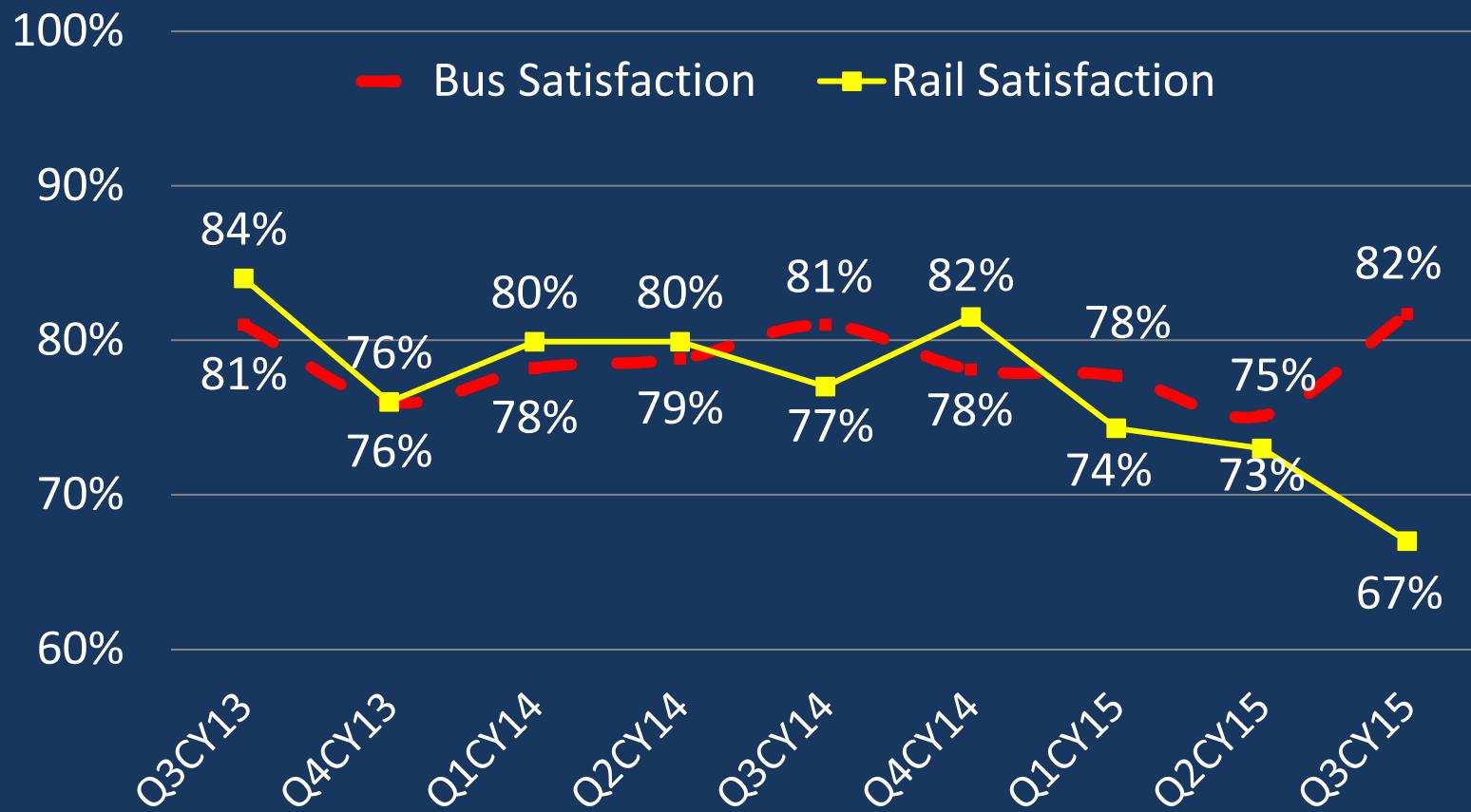


Purpose

- Provide overview of customer satisfaction data and factors driving satisfaction on Bus and Rail
- Review operational efforts to improve satisfaction
- Discuss efforts to improve customer service and customer communication tools, and efforts to attract and retain riders



Two-Year Review of Customer Satisfaction





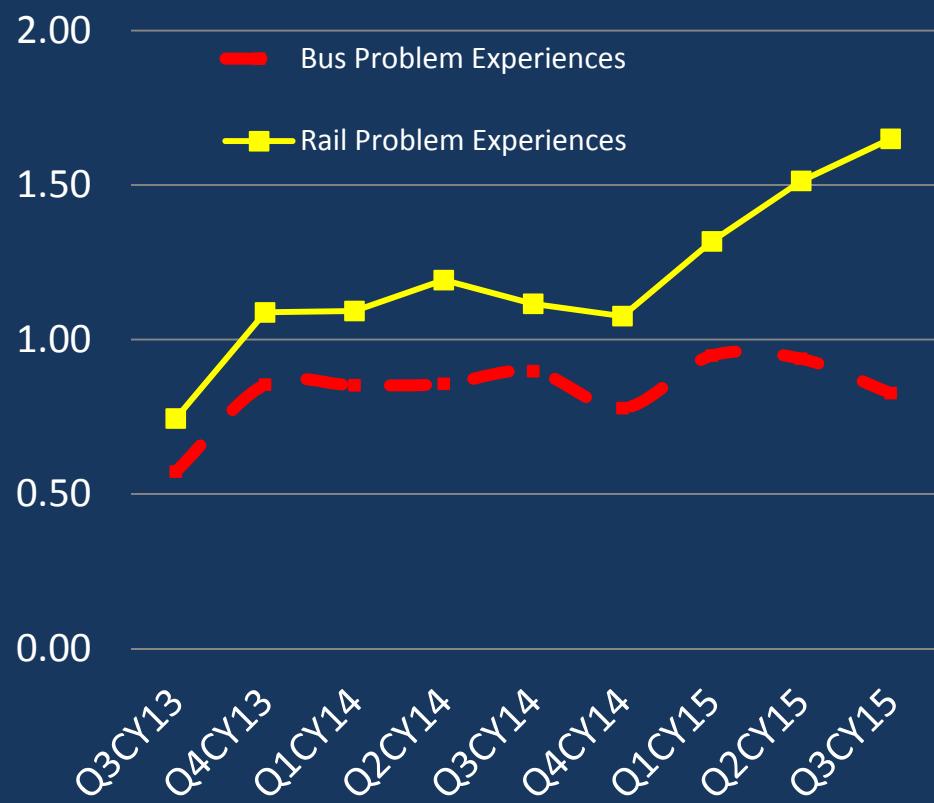
Stages of the Customer Journey



- Charting the Metrorail rider experience
- WMATA measures significant experiences in a customer's journey



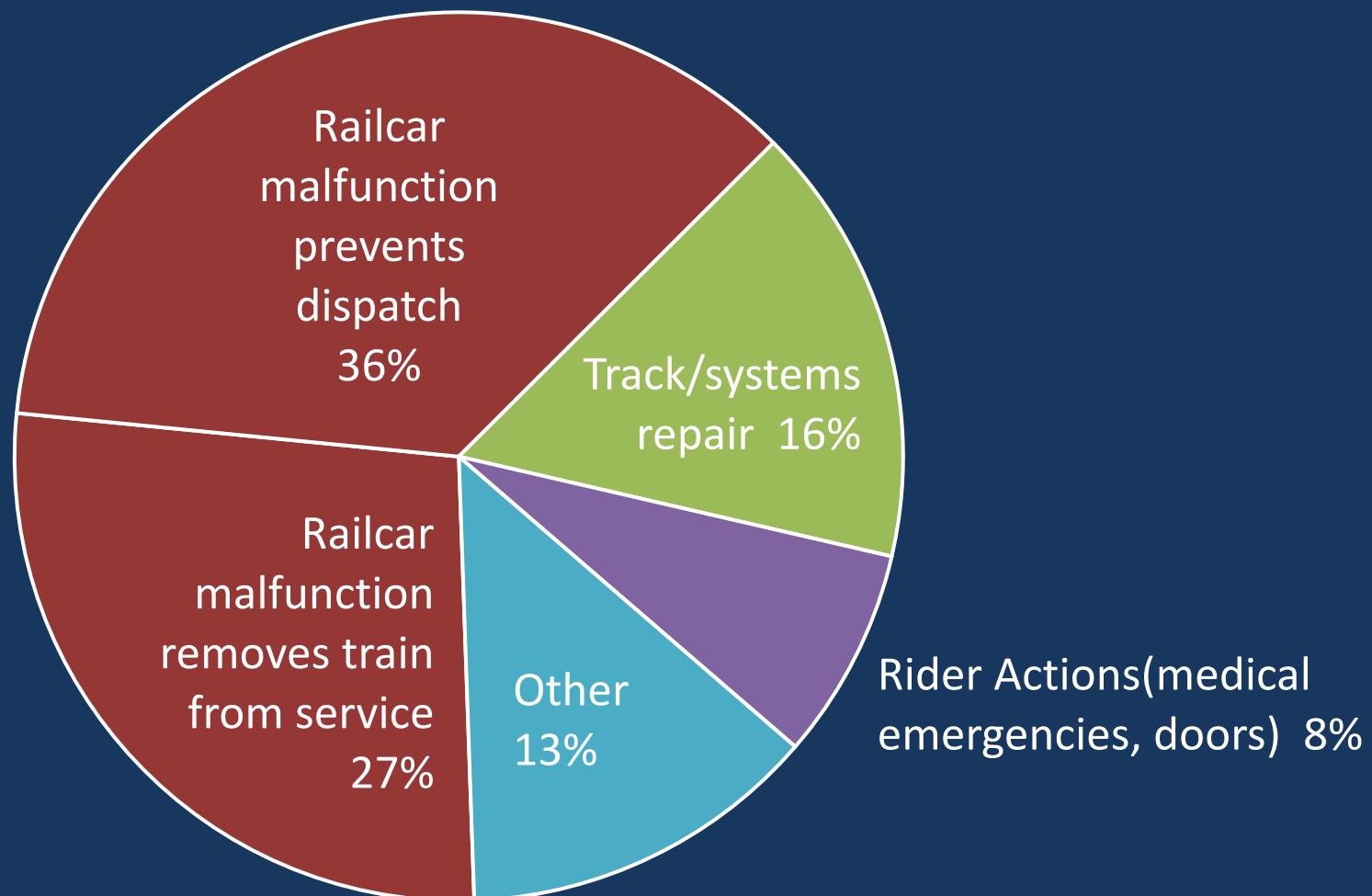
Reliability: Root Cause of Customer Dissatisfaction



- 30% of a customer's dissatisfaction is the result of reliability issues
- Rail customers experiencing evermore problems
- Experiencing 2+ problems per trip reduces satisfaction by 28%



Cause of Rail Delays in 2015





Initiatives to Improve Rail Reliability

- Working to improve 7000-series railcar delivery
- Developing revised procurement policy to acquire railcar parts
- Activating overtime for weekend railcar maintenance work
- Prioritizing railcar maintenance and upgrades in Capital Improvement Program
- Continuing rehab and repairs to restore normal service at Stadium-Armory following substation fire



Metrobus Initiatives Driving Customer Satisfaction

- Performance Improvement Team address bus operations issues
- Fleet repair campaigns resolve recurring in-service breakdown issues
- Increased and improved on-board messaging
- Ongoing efforts to adjust schedules to improve on-time performance and reduce crowding



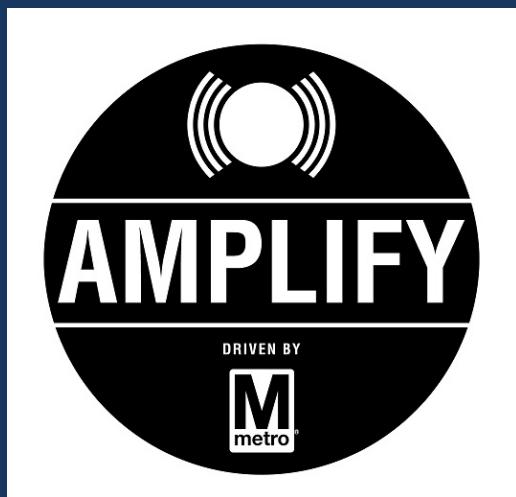
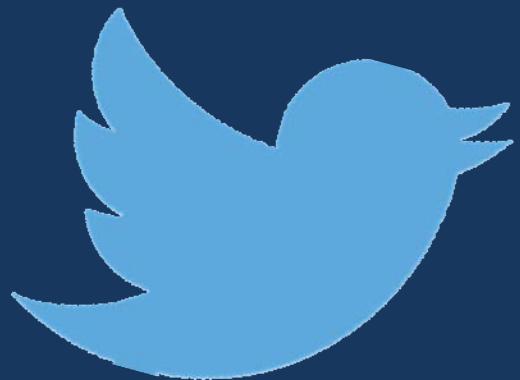
Customer Care Update

- New Station Manager Uniforms





Customer Information Channels





Customer Information Channels



A message from Metro's Board of Directors

Metro's Board of Directors is bringing a new level of oversight to rail and bus service. We want riders to know that we are acutely aware of the concerns you have about Metro safety and reliability. We also want to share the work we are doing to put the agency's house in order and provide new leadership.

So where do we start? We start with safety.

Over the past year, the Board has been reconstituted with new representatives appointed from the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and the federal government. The new Board's dedication to improving safety cannot be overstated. In recent months, Metro has undergone rigorous safety inspections by both the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). We will ensure every recommendation from these outside safety audits is addressed and that investments are being made to accelerate improvements in key areas.

On the business side, the Board has worked to ensure that new management, new processes, and new financial controls are in place to make Metro's accounting more accurate and transparent. And we have commissioned a top-to-bottom efficiency study to see what a blueprint going forward. Perhaps the most visible catalyst for change will be the hiring of a new General Manager. This summer we cast a wider net to move our search beyond the transit sector, and our goal is to select a new executive this year.

We never lose sight of what's important to our customers, and that's the service you depend on every day. The Board approved a budget this year that included more new rail cars to replace the unreliable equipment with rail cars that provide significant improvements in safety, reliability and comfort for your daily commute, while supporting Red Line growth and future ridership.

Now, we want to hear from you about how to improve your ride every day. When you see us riding in the system or out in the community, please let us know about your experience. We're listening.

Meet Metro's Board

Metro Board members are spreading out across the system to meet riders and learn more about your daily riding experiences. Stop by the stations below to share your experiences and suggestions. Events run from 4 to 6 p.m.

Date	Station
Oct. 20	Wheaton East
Oct. 21	Bronzing Ford
Oct. 27	Clarendon
Nov. 3	King St. Old Town
Nov. 10	Largo Town Center
Nov. 16	Wheaton
Nov. 17	Congress Heights
Nov. 19	Rheeslyn

Join Amplify, Metro's Customer Community

Want to help shape transit decisions in the D.C. region? Amplify is your chance. Amplify is Metro's newest tool for engaging customers in day-to-day decision making. Community members will gain insight into Metro's direction and help shape new initiatives. Sign up now at www.amplifybymetro.com.

Facebook: facebook.com/metroforward **Twitter**: [@govmetrorail](https://twitter.com/govmetrorail) **YouTube**: [@govmetrorail](https://youtube.com/govmetrorail) **Instagram**: [@govmetrorail](https://instagram.com/govmetrorail)

M metro.com - 202.637.7002 TTY 202.638.3780



Public
Participation
Plan
Outreach



Amplify Customer Community

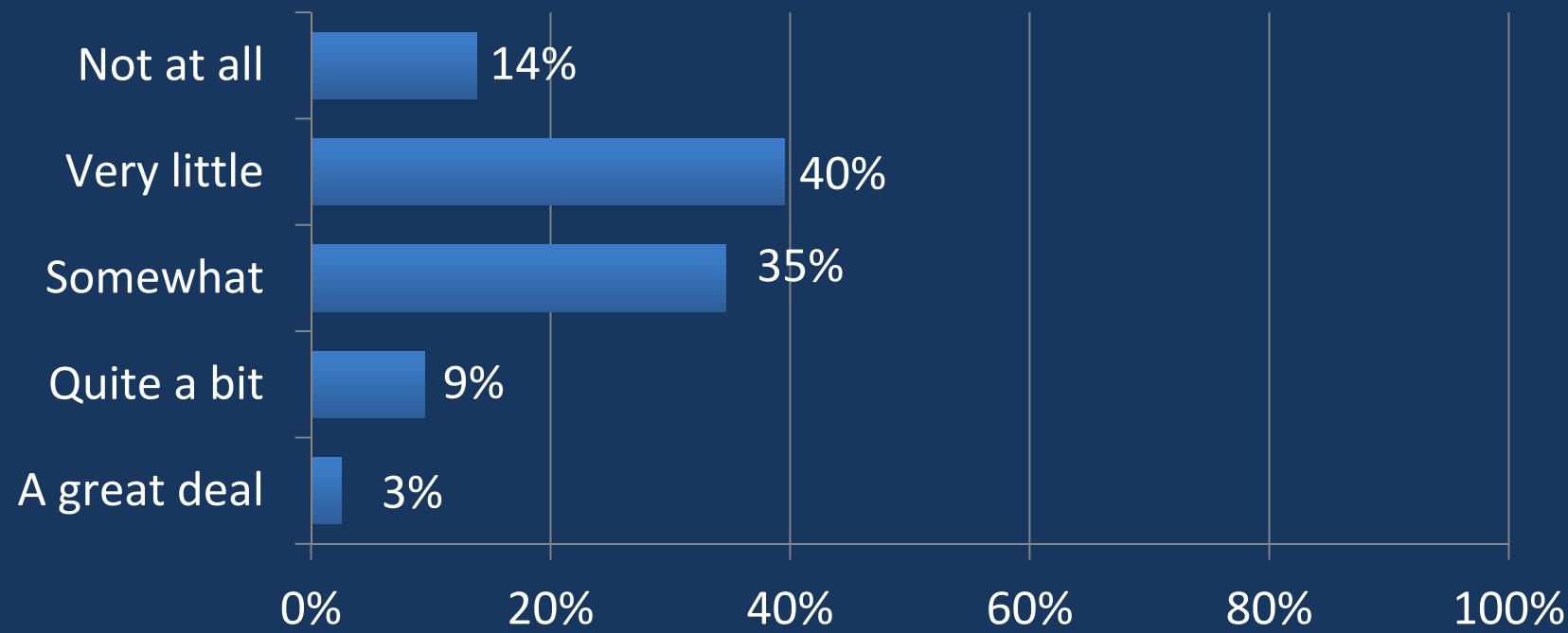
- ~2,000 members
- Averaging 50 new members per day
- Meeting initial recruitment estimates





Amplify Customer Community

QUICK POLL: How much do you think WMATA cares about your day-to-day experiences riding the bus and rail systems?





Customer Information Improvements



Passenger
Information
Displays (PIDs)
Upgrade

Real-time bus
arrival displays





Customer Information Improvements

- Coming soon:
wmata.com redesign
- Coming soon:
One-stop Customer
Contact Center

Contact Channels



decrease in telephone
calls from FY14 to FY15



increase in email
communications



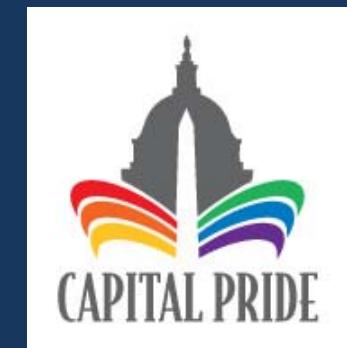
Attracting and Retaining Customers

- SmartBenefits Growth:
 - 2013: 231 new accounts
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Regional Partnerships





Regional Partnerships



- 2015 Metro Holiday Shopping Guide:
 - Discounts and directions
 - 13 shopping centers featured in MD, VA, DC
 - 60 restaurants and retailers
 - Self-funded through paid advertisements in guide



Customer Appreciation Events





Customer Appreciation Events

