Safety and Operations Committee

Board Information Item III-A

September 10, 2020

Rail Operations Control Center (ROCC) Improvement Plan
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Board Action/Information Summary

○ Action  ○ Information  MEAD Number: 202203  Resolution: ○ Yes  ○ No

TITLE:
Rail Operations Control Center Improvement Plan

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:
Staff will present the Board an update on the Rail Operations Control Center (ROCC) Improvement Plan, including the short-, medium- and long-term objectives, and highlights of progress to date.

PURPOSE:
To inform the Board of the direction, vision, approach and current status of the coordinated plan to transform culture and performance in the ROCC, including Corrective Action Plans, culture, and operational or technical initiatives taking place within the ROCC now and over the coming months.

DESCRIPTION:
The plan is divided into five workstreams: Leadership and Performance, Roles and Accountability, Process Culture, Talent Management, and Training.

A snapshot of the ROCC Master Tracker provides an overview of the various activities currently taking place under each workstream.

Staff describe the actions being taken to improve in the short-term (by the end of 2020), medium-term (2021) and long-term (2022 and beyond).

Highlights include achievements so far since the initiative started in July.

Contractors and interested parties include: Krauthammer & Associates, WSP, K&J, McChrystal Group, and Goose Creek.

Key Highlights:
The following are highlights of progress to date:

- An integrated master schedule was developed that aligns and coordinates all ROCC improvement efforts, setting short-, medium- and
long-term goals

- An organizational assessment was launched to examine:
  - Organizational structure
  - Roles and responsibilities
  - Communications and decision-making
  - Distribution of tasks and workload

- A nationwide search was initiated for a ROCC Director

- WMATA engaged four vendors in support of the following tasks:
  - Organizational Assessment
  - Controller Training Review
  - Operational Communications Review
  - Leadership Coaching

- Began distribution of a bi-weekly ROCC Report to all stakeholders (from Board of Directors and WMSC to frontline ROCC staff) to include highlights of all operational, cultural and CAP-related activities and progress

- Management responded to Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC) draft audit

**Background and History:**

In June 2020, the General Manager directed staff to develop a plan that addresses organizational structure, management coaching/training, process changes, controller engagement, internal communications tools, and other strategies to strengthen the safety and leadership culture.

Jayme Johnson (formerly Director, Strategic Initiatives) was appointed in July as Director, Change Management for the ROCC to lead this effort. Subsequently, a plan has been developed to begin the foundational steps to changing culture, Consultant resources have been engaged to assess the department’s shortcomings, review best practices, and develop and implement solutions.

**Discussion:**

Initial conversations with all ROCC managers and many frontline ROCC staff revealed several critical gaps and opportunities for improvement. An assessment of the current operating environment concluded that a long-lasting safety culture needs to be reestablished. New leadership and management practices are needed to improve employee retention, performance and operations. Simultaneously, discussions revealed blurred lines of accountability and communication, plus gaps in process, procedures and training of core duties.
Actions were put in place immediately to begin to address morale and performance. But staff recognizes changing a culture for the long-term takes time.

This is a coordinated approach that combines all ROCC-related improvement efforts involving Corrective Action Plans, culture change, and operational technical issues. An integrated master schedule has been created to track all efforts that will achieve the ROCC’s vision. This schedule is divided into five workstreams:

1. Leadership & Performance
2. Roles & Accountability
3. Process Culture
4. Talent Management
5. Training

The new vision for the ROCC, drafted from suggestions and ideas of ROCC managers and staff is: “Our people are at the center of what we do. We are a world class, safety-driven control center and the best place to work in Metro”.

Described here in their final form, the five workstreams contribute to the ROCC’s vision in the following ways:

Leadership & Performance – The foundational principle of putting people first underpins everything at the ROCC, builds trust, and allows ROCC leadership to meet the needs of employees and proactively address safety and performance issues before they surface. An emphasis on safety and teamwork yields pride and professionalism among staff.

Roles & Accountability – The room is re-set, with lines of authority, accountability and communication clearly drawn and practiced. Teams work seamlessly across a shift - and between shifts - and a culture of safety governs behavior.

Process Culture – All staff are committed to following procedure to the letter, because they have faith in the systems and documents that underpin them. Staff rarely make errors and if they do, they seek to engineer them out of the system.

Talent Management – ROCC is fully-staffed, with four Ops Desk, and has a bench of candidates waiting to join. Satisfied employees promote the ROCC as the best place to work at Metro.

Training – ROCC’s robust training program certifies that all staff are well prepared for their respective roles. Regular skill drills ensure that responding to emergencies and incidents is second nature.
The approach to achieve this vision can be distilled into three distinct phases.

**Short Term (by end of CY2020):** Improvement efforts will focus on establishing two key foundational elements of ROCC Operations. First, the Authority will focus on putting safety at the center of everyday actions in the ROCC, by identifying what matters, using safety metrics to drive behavior, and building a structured feedback loop to proactively manage safety issues on a day-to-day basis. Second, the Authority will focus on putting people first in the ROCC, by building trust between managers and staff, setting a clear direction with an ROCC mission and vision, providing managers with the basic tools and skills they need to manage, setting a code of conduct for all to follow, and setting expectations and delivering a consistent commitment of managers to staff. This will be underpinned by a well-being program, which will coach managers and staff to care for themselves and one another.

In addition, the short term includes a rapid, in-depth assessment of the ROCC – how the room and its people are structured, how demand and supply of staff resources are distributed, how roles, responsibilities, channels of communication and decision-making authority are aligned, and a comparison with control center best practice both from within and outside the transit industry.

**Medium Term (by end of CY2021):** The ROCC team will implement the majority of the recommendations laid out in the first phase assessments to ensure that the ROCC meets the highest operational and cultural standards. These improvements will focus on quality procedures, recruitment, training, communication, decision-making, and accountability. This phase will also build upon the foundations established in the first phase, seeing senior leaders provide direction and support, managers empowered to make decisions and proactively nurture performance across their staffs, and all staff consciously practicing proactive safety mitigation on a day-to-day basis.

**Long Term (end of CY2022 and beyond):** Efforts will be centered around reinforcing these changes and creating a culture of excellence – in the areas of safety, continual improvement and collaboration to meet the needs of the operating environment. Safety and risk management will be systematic. Managers will be totally focused on their staff’s needs, recognizing that investment in people is the way to secure success. Policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated regularly, and drilled throughout the year so excellent execution is second nature.

An overview of the goals and changes across the three phases of the ROCC Improvement Plan are discussed in the attached presentation.

**FUNDING IMPACT:**

There is currently no impact on funding.

Project Manager: Jayme Johnson
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Department/Office:</th>
<th>Director, Change Management for the ROCC</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**TIMELINE:**

| Anticipated actions after presentation | November/2020 – Presentation of findings from the organizational assessment and progress on the ROCC Improvement Plan to date |
Our Approach

- The **new vision** for the ROCC, drafted from suggestions and ideas of ROCC managers and staff is:

  "Our people are at the center of what we do. We are a world class, safety-driven control center and the best place to work in Metro".

- There are five (5) areas of supporting focus:
  - Leadership & Performance
  - Roles & Accountability
  - Process Culture
  - Talent Management
  - Training
Focus Area 1

Leadership & Performance

Short Term (by December 2020): The foundations for a people first culture redefine the future of the ROCC. An evaluation assesses the overall effectiveness of internal communications.

- A mission, vision, principles and code of conduct enable the ROCC to educate, embed, and reinforce a people first culture.
- Clearly defined metrics track the ROCC’s progress.
- An integrated master schedule tracks all ROCC improvement efforts.
- The launch of a new committee focuses on supporting employee welfare.

Medium Term (by December 2021): A common mission, vision, and code of conduct equips leaders to make decisions and empower their staff. A common operating picture allows all staff to know exactly what they need to do in order to perform their jobs well.

- A common operating picture allows the ROCC to operate in unison.
- Amended team communications address information gaps.
- Standardized handovers promote safety and ensure that nothing comes as a surprise.

Long Term (by December 2022): A people first culture underpins everything at the ROCC, builds trust, and allows ROCC leadership to meet the needs of employees and proactively address safety and performance issues before they surface.

- Strong leaders put their people first, provide clear direction at all times, and trust their employees to get the job done.
- Employees feel supported and trust management.
Focus Area 2

Roles & Accountability

**Short Term (by December 2020):** An evaluation assesses the overall effectiveness of lines of authority and accountability at the ROCC. There is no ambiguity about who should be doing what and when during incidents and emergencies.

- **Basic Changes: Setting the Foundation**
  - New uniforms and nametags reinforce team mentality
  - An organizational assessment identifies what the ROCC needs to change in order to improve.

**Medium Term (by December 2021):** A review of the proposed recommendations to improve the current organization of the ROCC facilitates the launch of a comprehensive restructuring plan.

- **Implementing the More Complex Changes**
  - The implementation of a restructuring plan reflects the findings of the organizational assessment.

**Long Term (by December 2022):** The room is re-set, with lines of authority, accountability and communication clearly drawn and practiced. Teams work seamlessly across a shift - and between shifts - and a culture of safety governs behavior.

- **Reinforcing Change So It Lasts**
  - New job descriptions and standard operating procedures ensure that staff know their specific roles and how to perform their daily duties.
  - Restructured communications are clear, succinct, and consistent across teams and shifts.
Focus Area 3

Process Culture

**Short Term (by December 2020):** Information is easily accessible and employees are using the most up-to-date checklists and procedures.

- Restructured network drives eliminate confusion and easily connect employees with the information they need to perform their jobs.
- A review of the use and state of checklists evaluates their effectiveness.

**Medium Term (by December 2021):** New checklists equip staff with the tools they need to safely perform their jobs. All staff know how and when to use them.

- A review of existing processes identifies and corrects gaps. New checklists reflect these updated processes.

**Long Term (by December 2022):** All staff commit to following procedure to the letter, because they have faith in the systems and documents that underpin them. Staff rarely make errors and if they do, they seek to engineer them out of the system.

- A new doctrine of operations drives behavior and decisions, underpinned by just culture.
- Staff adhere to a system of continual improvement and transparency driven by commitment to safety.

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Basic Changes: Setting the Foundation

- Restructured network drives eliminate confusion and easily connect employees with the information they need to perform their jobs.
- A review of the use and state of checklists evaluates their effectiveness.

Implementing the More Complex Changes

- A review of existing processes identifies and corrects gaps. New checklists reflect these updated processes.

Reinforcing Change So It Lasts

- A new doctrine of operations drives behavior and decisions, underpinned by just culture.
- Staff adhere to a system of continual improvement and transparency driven by commitment to safety.
Focus Area 4

**Talent Management**

**Short Term (by December 2020):** The launch of a new recruitment plan solves for current staffing shortages. The establishment of a team helps the organization understand and resolve persistent retention and recruitment issues.

- A new director leads the ROCC.
- A recruitment taskforce assesses current and future staffing needs.
- A review of salary and shift options helps address retention issues.

**Medium Term (by December 2021):** The fulfillment of vacant positions ensures that the ROCC is no longer understaffed. A clear recruitment strategy prevents the ROCC from being understaffed in the future.

- A comprehensive restructuring of staffing packages and job descriptions drives retention and make roles within the ROCC more attractive.
- A pipeline of candidates is on hand to safeguard against potential staffing shortages.

**Long Term (by December 2022):** ROCC is fully-staffed, with four (4) Ops Desk, and a bench of candidates are waiting to join. Satisfied employees promote the ROCC as the best place to work at Metro.

- A successful recruitment strategy means quality applications far outpace open positions.
- Staff surveys show that current employees feel satisfied and empowered in their roles, and represent the ROCC externally as brand ambassadors.
Focus Area 5

Training

Short Term (by December 2020): New training promotes best practices within the ROCC. Managers know how to support their staff and lead more effectively.

- Managers’ skills workshops equip managers with the knowledge and tools to drive change within the ROCC.
- A pilot of skills drills enhances the ROCC’s emergency preparedness.

Medium Term (by December 2021): Improved training in the classroom and on the ROCC floor proactively meets the training needs of all staff.

- The ROCC’s training program fulfills the needs of all staff.
- Employees feel comfortable performing their jobs because robust training and skills drills ensure they are prepared.
- New employees are successful from the start in their roles.

Long Term (by December 2022): ROCC’s robust training program certifies that all staff are well prepared for their respective roles. Regular skill drills ensure that responding to emergencies and incidents is second nature.

- The ROCC wins awards and industry peers recognize Metro for its excellence in training.
- Staff feel prepared to take on all elements of their job descriptions, and overall anxiety in times of emergency is at an all time low.
## Integrated Master Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workstream</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Target End Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roles &amp; Accountability</td>
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<td>7/17/2020</td>
<td>11/30/2020</td>
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<td>Operational Safety Matters (Content and Safety Review)</td>
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<td>Director Search</td>
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<td>12/31/2020</td>
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<td>Training</td>
<td>Managers' Skills Workshops</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>7/17/2020</td>
<td>12/31/2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roles &amp; Accountability</td>
<td>Emergency Incidents</td>
<td>Open</td>
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<td>Training</td>
<td>Skill Drills &amp; Simulations</td>
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<td>12/31/2020</td>
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<td>Metro Alerts and Incident Categorization</td>
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Critical Recent Activities

1. ROCC Audit & Existing Corrective Actions
   - Washington Metrorail Safety Commission Audit – 45-day deadline to respond to 21 findings with Corrective Action Plans
   - Power Restoration CAP – interim solution piloted with third party oversight launching by September 30

2. Leadership & Performance
   - 1-on-1’s for all ROCC staff as a core foundational step
   - Safety and “People First” department metrics
   - Mission, Vision, and Managers’ Code of Conduct

3. Roles & Accountability
   - Launched organizational assessment
     - Organizational structure
     - Roles and responsibilities
     - Communications
     - Distribution of tasks and workload
     - Recommendation based on best practice

4. Training
   - Consultants engaged to deliver:
     - Controller Training Review
     - Leadership Coaching Program for Superintendents
     - Managers’ Skills Workshops

5. Talent Management
   - Launch of a national search for permanent ROCC Director

6. Program Communications

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WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY