



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

January 18, 2017

Chairman Evans & WMATA Board Members:

The RAC met for the first time in 2017 on January 4. The following business was conducted:

- GM/CEO Paul Wiedefeld was introduced to the new members of RAC and he updated the members on progress made and future plans for improving Metro. He spent considerable time answering members' questions.
- Paul Smedberg, Virginia Alternate Board Member from Alexandria, introduced himself and made a presentation to RAC members, outlining his concerns for the Metro system.
- New RAC members Dexter Williams representing the District of Columbia and Yvette Washington representing Prince George's County introduced themselves.
- Nominations of Officers-No one was nominated for chair and election of chair was postponed until February meeting. Three RAC members indicated interest in the position. Robert Fogel, current Maryland Vice Chair, was approved as interim chair. Clarence Flanders and Robert Fogel were elected Vice Chairs of the District of Columbia and Maryland respectively. With four openings for RAC members from Virginia, election for the Vice Chair was postponed until the WMATA Board approves additional Virginia RAC members.
- RAC Committee organization-a convener was appointed for the five RAC standing committees. This person has the responsibility for organizing a meeting or e-mail communication among those RAC members who want to serve on these committees. This process will determine who will serve as the committee chairs for 2017, when the meetings will occur and what a work plan will begin to look like.
- Barbara Hermanson, former RAC chair, presented an orientation for current and new RAC members.
- For our February meeting, we plan to have a draft of our initiatives for the year, which we will review with the WMATA Executive Committee at a date to be determined.

Sincerely,

Robert Fogel

Robert Fogel
Interim Chair, Riders' Advisory Council

cc: Lynn Bowersox
RAC Members



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The following is a recap of Riders' Advisory Council activities for 2016. These supported our primary function of providing our perspective to the WMATA Board and staff on matters that most impacted Metrorail and Metrobus riders. These activities include our interactions with many stakeholders and the translation of those into formal and informal recommendations.

1. Interactions with Riders:

Interactions with Metrorail and Metrobus riders are obviously essential for us to be able to reflect their interests. During the year, the RAC took advantage of many opportunities to interact with or hear from riders, beyond our exposure to them throughout our daily commutes:

- Region-wide public hearings, including those for WMATA's 2017 operating budget and proposed rail schedule options for fiscal 2018
- Community-centric events, such as Alexandria hearings on the new Potomac Yard station
- Community organization meetings specific to our individual members' local jurisdictions
- WMATA's Youth Summit
- Emergency drills, where we interacted with other rider volunteers
- Public input given to the RAC at our monthly meetings and via email directed to our *raccomments* mailbox
- Public input given to the Board at their monthly meetings
- Interactions in Metrorail stations during our *Metro Volunteer Person* shifts
- Recaps of results from Amplify surveys and other surveys or outreach conducted throughout the year

2. Interactions with WMATA Board and Staff:

Understanding WMATA's environment is also critical to the RAC's ability to make any reasonable suggestions on behalf of riders. Our relationship with the WMATA Board and access to WMATA staff members are critical to that understanding. Many of the events and activities listed above, where the RAC interacted with riders, also brought us in contact with WMATA leaders. During 2016, we also had many other opportunities for interaction with those leaders:

- Guest speakers at our monthly RAC meetings provided their perspectives and answered our questions. This year, we were fortunate to have many, including:
 - Board Chair Jack Evans, who provided insight on the financial environment
 - Board members Ms. Carol Carmody and Mr. Malcolm Augustine, who came to hear more about the RAC and respond to questions
 - General Manager and CEO Paul Wiedefeld, who attended three of our meetings to present his priorities, plans and updates
 - Assistant General Manager Lynn Bowersox, who spoke on how the RAC has contributed to many policies and processes, and gave us an overview of Back2Good
 - OEM Director Ron Bodmer, who spoke about the emergency exercises and agreed to have a RAC member participate in their planning process
 - Chief Safety Officer Patrick Lavin, who presented his perspective on developing a safety culture
 - Bus Planning Director Jim Hamre, who presented proposals for bus coverage of reduced rail operating hours
 - MTPD Deputy Chief Kevin Gaddis, who spoke on crime prevention and response
 - Many other staff from these and other departments, on a variety of topics
- Our RAC Committee meetings also had some of these same leaders attend, as well as many other staff members who came to discuss topics of interest to the RAC. These provided an in-depth understanding of many issues to our committees, which was essential to our ability to make recommendations or provide other feedback.
- Our RAC and AAC Leadership meetings with the Board Executive Committee provided a focused forum to discuss critical rider-centric issues. During these, we presented our work plan for the year, gave updates on that plan, and discussed our recommendations throughout the year. We know that the Board has an extensive list of issues to face each year, and we appreciate their carving out this time for their rider advisory groups.
- Our Maryland Board members met with our Maryland RAC members to exchange ideas of special interest to their jurisdiction.
- A RAC representative spoke at each Board monthly meeting, and members were present for or able to listen in on all open Board Committee meetings.

3. Participation in other Metro-centric events and activities

There were several other events and activities in 2016 that were open to some or all RAC members. These improved our understanding of WMATA's role in the region and provided opportunities to hear from a broader range of riders and leaders:

- Attending the *Metro at 40* Summit/Forum sponsored by Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) and Greater Washington Board of Trade (GWBOT)
- Attending the National Press Club introduction of our new General Manager
- Speaking to Maryland legislators within WMATA's transit area about the RAC
- Testifying at the Maryland legislative hearing on the new Metro Safety Commission
- Educating Journalism and Public Administration students from George Washington University and Virginia Tech on the RAC's role in public advocacy
- Reading news clips from regional media

4. RAC recommendations and other feedback

Formal recommendations came from the RAC throughout 2016 on several topics, which were typically in the form of letters to the Board and/or items presented at Executive Committee meetings.

Formal feedback included:

- Budget recommendations for fiscal 2017, including a grace period for riders exiting rail stations soon after arrival, support for Select Pass, and an unfavorable response to taking bus fare loading off buses
- Several options to reduce Blue Line crowding and improve safety (e.g., more 8-car trains, Silver Line turnbacks, etc.)
- Recommendation to discontinue peak fares during Safe Track
- Recommendation for a RAC social media presence, starting with Facebook
- Support for encouraging more employers to accommodate Select Pass
- Request for additional staff support for the RAC and/or direct contact with staff
- Recommendation of a rail schedule less radical than Midnight closure on weekends, for a specified (not indefinite) period of time, and for extensive bus coverage during reduced hours
- Budget options to consider for fiscal 2018, within and beyond the existing fare structure for bus, rail and parking

The RAC full expected that not all of our recommendations would be implemented, but we considered it our responsibility to present them for consideration regardless.

Informal feedback to the Board or staff members was typically provided at the time of their presentations at RAC meetings, or via emails forwarded by our RAC Coordinator.

Informal feedback included:

- Support for increasing police patrols and providing more of a presence on platforms
- Support for the decision to shut down rail service during the January storm and when a serious safety issue was identified in March
- Support for the extensive outreach conducted on critical issues, such as fares, advance Safe Track communications, and rail schedule options
- Support for the GM's initial priorities and the publicly posted reporting
- A request for RAC involvement in planning for a WMATA-branded mobile application
- Recommendations on resolving data issues for public applications and reports
- Feedback on RAC observations during all emergency exercises, for all roles assigned (injured and uninjured riders on train, riders waiting on platform, Train Operator and Station Manager)
- Suggestions for SafeTrack education for Station Managers and other SafeTrack feedback
- Support for and feedback on the WIFI pilot
- Feedback on the busETA pilot
- Feedback on the website during the beta period
- Support for the Back2Good program
- Suggested questions for survey on 7000 series rail cars
- Many other topics, in response to presentations at RAC meetings

5. Looking back on 2016

The education and progress of the RAC throughout 2016 would not have been possible without the support of its many key contacts on the Board and the WMATA staff. Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the RAC, and especially to John Pasek and our other liaisons in the Board Secretary's office.

Finally, my personal thanks to the RAC volunteers who gave me the honor of serving as their Chair over the past two years, to our RAC Coordinator Joi Moorner for her remarkable organizational skills, and to the Board and staff members who unfailingly welcomed my involvement.

Sincerely,

Barbara Hermanson

Barbara Hermanson
2015-2016 Chair, Riders' Advisory Council