



12 December 2019

Chairman Smedberg and Members of the WMATA Board:

I am pleased to present you with an update on the activities of the WMATA Riders' Advisory Council (RAC).

I. 8000 Series Railcar Recommendations

The RAC welcomed Tino Calabia of the WMATA Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) to present their working draft of recommendations for railcar design in anticipation of the procurement of the 8000 series railcars. Tino and RAC/AAC member Patrick Sheehan highlighted recommendations aimed at improving various aspects of accessibility and overall rider experience, with a particular eye toward the shortcomings of the 7000 series railcars (e.g., placement of hand holds, signage, electronic announcements, etc.).

To date, the RAC has offered suggestions for further refining the AAC's railcar design handbook and will continue to work closely with the AAC to ensure that our collective recommendations are well-aligned with accessibility best practices and broadly benefit all riders.

II. Rush Hour Promise and Refund Policies

The RAC revisited the issue of refund policies, including the Rush Hour Promise policy. This discussion included an overview of refund policies in place at other major transit agencies. Ultimately, the RAC agreed not to immediately pursue additional recommendations for improving WMATA's refund policy but does reiterate the need to amend the language in the existing Rush Hour Promise policy per the RAC's November recommendation. The RAC believes this modest change will better align the policy with rider expectations and the policy's original intent, mitigating the risk that customers view WMATA's decisions to suspend the policy as arbitrary. The RAC encourages the Board to take up this recommendation as soon as possible.

[Recommended change to Rush Hour Promise language from November]

However, credits will not be issued under the following limited circumstances:

- *Major capital work projects when customer notification is made in advance.*

- *Severe weather events (e.g. major winter snowstorms) when Metro service is adjusted and/or customer notification is made in advance.*
- *Extraordinary circumstances or "force majeure" events **not due to WMATA's own action or inaction**, such as a region-wide blackout or major security incident, when service is affected.*

III. FY2021 Budget

The RAC remains eager to learn more about the specifics of the FY2021 budget proposals, including efforts to improve customer service, proposed changes to bus routes, and fare structure modifications. Of particular interest is any analysis on the impact of fare changes or information on the impetus for such changes (e.g., \$0.25 charge for cash loading on Metrobus). The RAC is also especially interested in better understanding the rationale for proposed changes to bus routes.

The RAC encourages the board to consider expanding pass options and streamline the pass system to increase the likelihood that customers will purchase passes. The RAC continues to receive feedback from riders, namely those employed by federal agencies, that they are unable to utilize their Smart Benefits to purchase unlimited passes. The RAC recommends additional outreach to employers, including federal agencies, to identify and eliminate barriers to the purchase of passes. Finally, the RAC reiterates the need to explore mechanisms for subsidizing the purchase of unlimited passes for low-income riders.

We look forward to a fruitful dialogue on these issues in the coming months. Please feel free to contact me at colinreusch+metro@gmail.com with any questions or concerns.

Thank You,
Colin Reusch
Chair, WMATA Riders' Advisory Council