



July 25, 2019

Chairman Smedberg, WMATA Board members, and WMATA staff:

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

### **Bus Transformation Project**

The RAC received an update on the Washington Area Bus Transformation Project (BTP) from Lora Byala of Foursquare ITP. Ms. Byala summarized the goals of the BTP and the high-level strategies featured in the draft plan as well as public input gathered to date. The RAC was heartened to see that many rider-friendly strategies have thus far been incorporated into the regional plan, including a number of recommendations featured in WMATA's own May 2018 report on stabilizing ridership. For example, the draft plan recommends reducing fares for low-income riders and providing free bus to rail transfers, both policies that the RAC has previously recommended that WMATA adopt.

While we recognize that such a plan will require significant coordination and buy-in from numerous regional entities, in general, the RAC is supportive of the BTP's goals towards a more streamlined approach to bus transit across the DMV. That said, as the WMATA Board reviews the BTP and offers its own recommendations for the process moving forward, the RAC encourages WMATA and its regional partners to prioritize the following principles:

- Equitable service and affordability for low-income and currently under-served populations throughout the region;
- Consistency in data systems to ensure seamless public access to timetables, real-time bus data, and alerts through both official and unofficial applications;
- Service frequency at levels sufficient to allow bus transit to serve as a primary form of transportation for commuters in the region;
- Prioritization of family-friendly policies that make bus transit a safe and welcoming option for people of all ages; and
- Transparency throughout the planning process and rider representation on any regional task forces or working groups associated with the BTP.

The RAC looks forward to engaging in additional discussion with WMATA Board and staff as they develop any further recommendations or feedback aimed at improving the BTP initiative.

### **Blue/Yellow Line Platform Reconstruction**

The RAC once again welcomed Jim Hamre and WMATA Bus Operations staff who provided updates on expanded bus service and shuttles during the ongoing shutdown of the blue and yellow lines south of Reagan National Airport through Labor Day. The RAC appreciated staff's candor in sharing both successes and lessons learned throughout the shutdown to date. Moreover, the RAC was pleased to hear that, despite initial hiccups, ridership on the shuttles has exceeded expectations and that WMATA has largely been able to meet demand in providing consistent bus alternatives for riders affected by the shutdown. We attribute these successes to Jim Hamre and Michael Weinberger's hard work over the past few months.

RAC members did raise concerns regarding real-time bus data for shuttle buses, adjustments to headways on some WMATA bus routes, especially the 11Y. However, on the whole, the RAC views the bus division's efforts as a success and encourages the Board and staff to apply the same principles of continuous quality improvement and transparency through frequent project updates for the public during future reconstruction projects.

The RAC continues to have concerns about a lack of communication regarding work that will take place beyond Labor Day. We strongly urge WMATA to be forthright in announcing what, if any impact this will have and how riders can mitigate any negative effects on their travel.

### **Support for AAC priorities**

The RAC continues its efforts to better coordinate with our counterparts in the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). As such, the RAC discussed one of the AAC's recent recommendations regarding platform escalator optimization. Specifically, the AAC has recommended that escalators traveling down from mezzanine to platform be located closest to the faregate to provide easier access for individuals with disabilities. The RAC voted to support this recommendation. In addition, the RAC will be seeking to coordinate with the AAC on recommendations for the 8000 series railcar acquisition process and other cross-cutting rider issues.

We look forward to working with the Board and its relevant committees on these and other rider-focused issues.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns at: [reusch.colin@gmail.com](mailto:reusch.colin@gmail.com).

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