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Dear Chairman Smedberg and Members of the Board,

The Riders' Advisory Council has been busy the past few months organizing the council, onboarding new members, and engaging in discussions about the pertinent issues facing the WMATA system and the riders therein. As we transition to a new fiscal year in more than a month, the economy continues to "open up", and several new capital projects have been announced, it truly is an exciting time for WMATA.

The RAC recently elected new leadership. Brian Meyer (Virginia) was elected Chair while Siddharth Divakaruni (Maryland) and Darryl Brewer (Washington D.C.) were elected Vice Chairs. The three of us are excited to represent the RAC in its goal of representing the public's voice in WMATA issues. Furthermore, all new RAC members underwent orientation to become familiar with WMATA's governing structure, the budget, and general operations of the transit system.

At our last meeting, the RAC was debriefed on the phasing out of the 2000 and 3000 series railcars in favor of the new 8000 series. While issues were raised about some safety and accessibility concerns, the RAC in general saw the 8000 series passenger railcars project as a much-needed improvement on WMATA's current and aging fleet. The project keeps many of the most desirable features from the 7000 series while expanding new technological capabilities that enhance the rider experience, protect the soft/hardware of the trains, ensures passenger safety, and all in an environmentally friendly way. As the interior of the railcars is subject to additional design and functional changes, the RAC would love to participate in that process to the extent we can provide feedback about the 8000 series.

We began preliminary discussions about metro fares. Most of the discussion was dedicated to ensuring the RAC members had a comprehensive understanding of the fare structure, pricing model, and delivery systems. The RAC is interested in discussions pertaining to how fares may change or develop in the short term to increase ridership as we transition into a period where more riders are returning to work in person.

Lastly, we are happy to see that per additional funding from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, WMATA can continue operations of the system throughout the latter half of FY22 without further disruptions attributed to lack of funding. In tandem with Board discussions concerning the gradual return to pre-COVID service levels, the RAC stands ready to advise and engage with the Board on how best adapt to riders' changing needs. Furthermore, as we think about changing habits in ridership across the system, the RAC is interested in what new opportunities for revenue generation and business development can be done to create a more resilient and diversified operating budget.

Sincerely,

Brian Meyer, Chair
Riders' Advisory Council