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July 27, 2023

Chair Smedberg and Members of the Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Riders' Advisory Council's report for July 2023.

Transit Rider Group Outreach:

As explained at the last Board of Directors meeting, the RAC is working to build relationships with various transit-centric groups within the region with the goal of building awareness between rider groups, exploring opportunities for collective impact when working together, and identifying additional opportunities for WMATA to engage riders during the FY25 budget season. To that end, our July meeting featured guest speakers – Kai Hall representing the DC Transit Equity Network (DC TEN) and Pat Sheehan, Phil Posner, and Denise Rush, representing Metro's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). We discussed both groups' advocacy priorities and strategies in the context of broadening the RAC's outreach to other organizations in the region. Representatives from DC TEN, AAC, and the RAC particularly highlighted the fact that each rider's use and needs for Metro are unique and personal, and that distinctively human side of the story should not get lost in the numbers and statistics presented during the FY25 budget season.

We're grateful to both groups for taking the time to share their expertise and personal stories. As Metro begins to formulate its strategy and outreach around next year's fiscal cliff, the RAC wants to help drive engagement that is reflective of Metro's importance to the region.

We plan to invite additional representatives from transit rider groups around the region to subsequent RAC meetings to foster a dialogue about how to sustain and expand transit service in the region.

Unauthorized People on the Tracks:

The RAC's June Report noted that riders cited anecdotal evidence suggesting at least the appearance that more unauthorized people are jumping onto the tracks. The RAC also previously recommended a zero tolerance policy for the obvious reasons of danger, delays and national security. Shortly after the June Report was finalized, the issue was publicized in local media, including one where a man was caught on camera blatantly moving across the tracks and narrowly missed touching the third rail. The RAC believes high visibility trespassers must be subject to criminal culpability in order to deter others from engaging in the same behavior. As such, the RAC believes Metro should provide an update on whether the man in the video was identified; whether he was a fare evader (for identification purposes); and if Metro anticipates announcing criminal charges.

Better Bus Improvements:

Due to scheduling issues, the RAC was unable to discuss the various Metrobus improvements highlighted earlier today with Metro staff. We are planning to take up this topic in September and will provide feedback and recommendations to the Board then.

Like the Board, the RAC will be taking a break during the month of August. I look forward to returning to you in the fall, refreshed and ready to take on the important issues facing transit in the region.

As always, thank you for your time and attention, and I remain available for any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Mike Lebowitz

Mike Lebowitz, Chair
Riders' Advisory Council