



April 25, 2019

Chairman Evans, 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).

Membership & Leadership

As you know, the RAC has welcomed two new members, Andrew Kierig of Arlington and Rob Cavese of DC, both of whom have already established themselves as eager and well-informed rider advocates. During our April meeting, in accordance with our revised bylaws, the RAC held leadership elections with the following results:

- Chair - Colin Reusch
- Virginia Co-Chair - Andrew Kierig
- Maryland Co-Chair - Wil White

The new leadership team looks forward to meaningful interactions with the Board and WMATA staff as we work together to improve rider experience, safety, and overall reliability of WMATA. We encourage both the Board and staff to consult with us as they consider any new initiatives that may impact riders and, in turn, we will strive to ensure that the RAC provides timely and useful input. Moving forward in the most cooperative spirit, we hope to continue positively engaging with the Board and WMATA to build a transparent and forward thinking transit agency.

Blue/Yellow Line Platform Reconstruction Project

During our April meeting, the RAC welcomed WMATA Director of Bus Planning Jim Hamre and Project Construction Manager Jeff Stoll, along with Communications Specialists Morgan Bassford and Marc Bowman, to speak about the upcoming reconstruction project on the Blue and Yellow lines south of National Airport. In general, the RAC was pleased to hear that WMATA will be applying a number of lessons learned from previous major reconstruction projects to ensure that riders are appropriately informed and have multiple bus alternatives for daily commuting during this shutdown, including shuttle buses that are accessible for persons with disabilities. However, multiple members of the RAC expressed concern that the capacity of the replacement buses may not be comparable to the lost rail capacity along those corridors.

Mr. Hamre indicated that while the bulk of the reconstruction (i.e., that requiring track and station closures) would be completed by early September, work would continue through the end of 2019, likely impacting riders even after rail service resumes. The RAC requests additional information regarding the type of work that will be conducted after Labor Day as well as anticipated interruptions of service or delays during that time period and efforts to bring riders back to the system once reconstruction is complete. Members of the RAC have submitted

requests for this and other information regarding the reconstruction project to WMATA staff via the Board Secretary's office and hope to receive a full briefing after the first phase is completed.

In addition, the RAC encourages the Board and WMATA staff to consider the full array of maintenance needs in any segment of the system for which major reconstruction is planned so that repair and reconstruction contracts for track, platform, elevator, and escalator repair can be optimally aligned to allow for concurrent work. And for any such contracts, the RAC emphasizes the importance of transparency and quality assurance mechanisms to avoid the need for work to be repeated.

Finally, the RAC requests information on how WMATA plans to mitigate the impact of track work to ensure schedule adherence during this reconstruction effort and future significant track work initiatives. Currently, schedule adherence on weekends and during periods of intensive track work is poor, leaving riders in the dark when planning daily commutes, recreational trips into/out of the District, or airport travel. While this is a concern beyond the scope of this specific reconstruction effort, the RAC is sensitive to the fact that predictable, if not frequent, service is a key factor in retaining and growing ridership. As such, we encourage the Board to consult with both the RAC and WMATA staff to explore ways in which WMATA can ease the uncertainty that riders frequently express about large projects.

FY2020 Budget

While the RAC did not have the opportunity to discuss the Board's recent vote on the FY2020 budget during our April meeting, it is not lost on us that a number of rider-friendly provisions were included in the final resolution, including extension of Yellow Line service, elimination of the Silver Spring turnback, acquisition of new rail cars, updated passes, and continuation of current fare prices. In addition, the budget does not include flat weekend fares, which the RAC felt would not likely have had the intended effect of improving weekend ridership.

However, the RAC strongly encourages the Board and WMATA staff to re-examine the May 2018 report "Stabilizing and Growing Metro Ridership," which includes a number of recommendations that have the potential to address long standing rider concerns. Of note are recommendations to improve schedule adherence and on-time performance, reduce the impact of track work by more narrowly isolating work zones and providing additional turnbacks, provide free bus/rail transfers, and improve customer service at all touchpoints. The RAC would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these strategies with representatives of the Board and WMATA staff at future meetings.

In addition, while we understand that WMATA has chosen not to reinstate late night service, the RAC remains concerned that the budget does not include initiatives to supplement late night service through public transit options like additional bus routes, especially routes that mirror existing Metrorail routes. Again, the RAC would appreciate the opportunity to discuss potential strategies for addressing this ongoing service gap.

RAC Workplan

Late last year, the RAC revisited its priorities and, under new leadership, will likely be doing so again to some degree. That said, I feel confident that a number of evergreen rider issues will remain a focus for the RAC through next spring, including:

- Improving WMATA customer service and rider experience
- Agency transparency, proactive communications to riders/public, and rider engagement
- Streamlining fare/pass processes
- Budget accountability (e.g., railcar acquisition)

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.

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