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Chairman Evans, WMATA Board members, and WMATA staff:

Below is a copy of the RAC statement from the September 27, 2018, WMATA Board meeting. At our last RAC meeting on October 3, Christian Dorsey joined us by phone, though he was the only Board member to do so.

Hello everyone, and for most of you, this is also goodbye. As Board members are aware, because they've decided it, the RAC will be dissolved next month, thirteen years after it was created.

We're certainly disappointed in this decision. Especially as we'd been told both in public and in private, in no uncertain terms, and including here at Board meetings, that there were absolutely no plans to disband the group.

The RAC has never been as effective as it could have been, and we acknowledge that. That's what the operational review was for. That's why, in coordination with some Board members, we created a plan to make the RAC more efficient and effective, from changing the membership requirements to shortening terms to combining committees and more. Our meetings and activities have been curtailed since February, and we haven't had new members appointed in nearly a year, even as existing members left to take jobs in other cities.

We've often felt that we were shouting into a void. Questions and requests went unanswered, recommendations were ignored. As an example, we had Metro police staff come talk to us at our last meeting, and there was a lot of discussion about fare evasion and criminal behavior throughout the system. We asked for more information on a few topics and were promised it, but nearly a month later, we haven't received any of it.

WMATA is undoubtedly doing better, operationally speaking, than it has in previous years. Fewer fires and offloadings and better trains - all of that is positive. But you have a serious credibility gap with the riding public, and have not yet begun to fix the sense that you're a secretive agency opposed to transparency. Eliminating the only direct rider connection that you have, instead of trying to fix that connection, is short-sighted and only reinforces the public perception that you're not to be trusted. Relying exclusively on an online feedback system won't help the region feel that they have a voice or any insight into your decisions.

We do have one more RAC meeting left, at 6:30pm on Wednesday, October 3, here at headquarters. Jack, we've asked you to attend that meeting, especially in light of the broken public promises that the RAC would continue.

Sincerely,

Katherine Kortum
Chair, Riders' Advisory Council