

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

TOWN HALL MEETING

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

7:00 p.m.

George Mason High School Cafeteria  
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P A R T I C I P A N T S

PANELISTS:

BOB LEVEY, Moderator

DANA KAUFFMAN, Chairman

DICK WHITE, GM/CEO

KATHERINE HUDGINS

BOB SMITH

CHARLIE DEEGAN

CHRIS ZIMMERMAN

MARCEL SOLOMON

DAN TANGHERLINI

P R O C E E D I N G S

MODERATOR LEVEY: To the second of a series of Town Hall Meetings offered to you by Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, I'm Bob Levey. I will be your moderator tonight, your question selector, and your all-around master of ceremonies. I'm a former columnist for The Washington Post, and it is a pleasure to be with you here and to follow up on the first in this series of meetings which was held at Metro headquarters downtown last November.

It was a remarkable success, remarkable because I thought the evening was unusually honest. I thought no pies ended up in anybody's faces, although a lot of people thought that they might get thrown and received, and I think everybody went home having learned something, and I hope for exactly the same outcome tonight.

I am here, I think, not just because gray hair looks wonderful in junior high schools, but because I did this same job at the first Town Hall meeting, and because I think I hold the olympic and world record for most columns written for The Washington Post about Metro. Yes, I am still on the sides of the buses two years later here and there, and just as an example, today I have ridden four

metro buses and four subways. I came here tonight on the subway, so I've got the disease real bad, and it's nice to see everybody here has it, too.

Here is the process tonight: Questions will be read from comment cards like these. The ones that I have already have questions on them. If you would like to ask a question, please obtain a blank yellow card at either end of this room. This way or this way, fill out your question and then give it to a Metro staff member who will be circulating around. I will choose which questions will be asked, publicly; we will direct the question to whoever on the panel chooses to stick up his or her hand and answer it.

Glory be, the people up here at the table have agreed to limit their answers to two minutes. Keep a watch on them, okay? We're going to try to keep this moving as quickly as we can, and we ask everybody on the panel, please, to observe the two-minute rule.

Also, if media are here, please conduct interviews out in the lobby--that way or that way--so as not to disrupt the meeting.

Housekeeping. Restrooms down this way outside, and down slightly down that corridor. Immediate death, please to all pagers and cell phones, and we do expect this meeting will be broadcast on television, but I don't have the information yet. I should have it by the end of the evening, and I will announce it when I do.

Apologies in advance if your question is not chosen. We will almost certainly not have time to ask and answer every question that every one of you has. However, all questions that are chosen and all questions that are answered will be posted on the WMATA website within one week. For those without internet access, you can sign up at the customer service information table to have one mailed to you. Metro now has several other outlets for customer input, so if your question is not addressed during the meeting, the other outlets available include monthly on-line chats, upcoming public comment periods during board meetings.

New e-mail address for the board, by the way, is Board of Directors at WMATA.com. Also copies of questions and responses from the November meeting are available at the consumer information table.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, it's my pleasure to introduce the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Dana Kauffman.

[Applause.]

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: Well, thank you for that applause and remember that when the evening is over.

Before I begin introducing colleagues, I just want to thank you for coming here, not only as members of--I'm sure there's many county residents here, but also regular metro customers.

I'll now briefly turn over the microphone to Council Member and former Mayor of the City of Falls Church, David Snyder.

[Applause.]

MR. SNYDER: On behalf of the citizens of the City of Falls Church, welcome to one of our public schools, and to further complicate things here, actually, however, physically located in Fairfax County. So I'm sure that both of those jurisdictions wish to provide you a very warm welcome.

On the job I have the opportunity to travel around the world, and I can tell you that the metro system is a world-class transportation system. And I think what tonight

is all about is maintaining that which is good about it and addressing that which can be even better. And I want to close by adding our welcome to each and every person here, and especially a welcome to everyone involved with the metro system made up of a board of directors that's second to none, not only in this country but around the world.

So again, welcome, and we look forward to a very productive and useful evening this evening.

[Applause.]

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: Okay, let me begin by introducing some of my colleagues who are up here, members of the Metro board. At far end of the table over here--let me just try to figure out--ah ha--representing the District of Columbia, the Mayor's Office, Dan Tangherlini.

[Applause.]

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: Dan is also the head of an organization called DDOT for the District Department of Transportation.

Next to Dan we have my colleague on the Fairfax County Board, Katherine Hudgins.

[Applause.]

Former Chairman of the Metro board and  
representative from Maryland, Bob Smith.

[Applause.]

Chris Zimmerman from Arlington County.

[Applause.]

And, of course, Dick White, our General Manager.

[Applause.]

Then coming this way, Mr. Charlie Deegan,  
representing the State of Maryland.

[Applause.]

And Mr. Marcel Solomon, representing Prince  
George's County.

[Applause.]

And thank you for coming here to make this a part  
of our regular routine. You will hear me talking about,  
intriguingly, back to basics, and certainly this is  
something we've taken to heart as the Metro board and Metro  
staff. And, frankly, there's nothing more basis than simply  
getting out and listening to people.

I imagine that most of you here tonight are from  
Fairfax, but just let me ask for a show of hands how many  
from Fairfax County?



[Show of hands.]

Okay. How many from outside of Fairfax County?

[Show of hands.]

Okay, well, that's everybody else, of course, that was pretty silly, an easy logic test.

I also want to introduce before I forget, Linda Smith, also my colleague on the Metro board. Linda, of course, represents the area around many of our current and future Metro stations. While particularly in citing Linda for being here, on March--let me make sure of the date--yes, March 21, while it was little noted in the media, we did as a Fairfax County board unanimously put forward our intentions to revisit Vienna metro station to make sure it works better for both current and future Metro customers, and that's a key initiative of Linda, and I want to commend her for that.

Now I will turn the microphone over to Dick for a few brief comments. Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Dana, and good evening, all. We're very happy to be here to listen to you. I'm going to spend just a very little time trying to take you

very quickly through three slides to try and frame some issues from you in terms of how we see it here from the Metro management point of view. I want to let you know we have a lot of Metro staff here, so, hopefully, if none of us at this table are able to answer your question, one of the many Metro staff will be, so, hopefully, you're going to leave today with all of your questions answers. If yours couldn't be read today by Bob, we'll, hopefully, be able to stay around a little longer so you can get your questions answered, because we want to thank you for taking your time to come out here, and we want to tell you how important it is to listen to what you have to say.

I'm here both as WMATA General Manager and Chief Executive Officer but also as a Virginia ex-county resident and a daily user of the Orange line. So I'm here to kind of listen to what your experiences are and to compare them to mine and others' as well.

Current challenges, just very, very quickly--and I think these are challenges of success: Number 1, we're getting old. I know Dick White is getting old, I'm in my early to mid-50s, and I don't feel like I used to when I was in my 30s. And, you know, our system is advancing in its

age as well, you know. Sixty percent of our Metro rail system is 20 years of age or older, so we're deep into the replacement cycle, the useful life cycle of the investment, but large parts of the system have not had the benefit of that reinvestment. So I think you can compare that to your own experience with your own home or your own automobile and can relate to what happens if you're not able to keep pace with making our home the way it should be or your automobile. And, quite frankly, we face some of the very same situations.

The bus system is aging as well. I'm not happy to say we have one of the oldest bus systems in the nation, and we made a lot of progress, and then we slid back a little bit. We don't want to see the useful life of the average age of our bus fleet to continue to climb back; we want to deal with that.

We are somewhat victims of our own success. Our ridership is growing probably faster than any other transit system in the country, certainly, for such a sustained period of time. In the last eight years alone, we've grown our ridership by 33 percent, yet we have not been able to keep pace with having the capacity out there to make that a

comfortable ride for everybody to have a seat, or, dare I say, even a standing space for everybody to get on the system.

I guess we can say--and I would just put it here in my words, that warts and all we heard Dana talk, and we heard Dave Snyder talk about the kind of system that we have here today and what the challenge is, is to keep the system in that shape, and I know all of us has kind of seen in the recent past perhaps it's not everything we thought we knew it to be. But our job is to keep the system in the best possible shape it can be but try not to lose sight, despite all of the challenges that we have, if you do take a look at it from a comparative point of view, I daresay it still remains the finest transportation system in the United States, and certainly one of the very best in the world. And I think it's important to recognize what we have and to stay focused on the positive aspect of keeping it that way.

With these challenges there is relief on the way. Things are happening. We are going to see the benefits of them very quickly. We had it, literally, a funding agreement last year. All of Metro's funding partners came to the table with kind of great angst and consternation and

signed to the bottom line on a six-year \$3.3 billion funding agreement. So that's great news. It's just going to take a little while before we see those investments come in place, and you have to understand that it's a six-year only program.

So it's certainly great news for interim relief. We're buying lots of rail cars and lots of buses--you see the numbers up there. We're moving to what is really the salvation for the rail system, which is eight-car trains. That's what the system is designed to carry on a maximum basis, and that's our goal is to get the system to eight-car trains. It's the most cost-effective investment that we can make to bring capacity into the system and to make sure that we do a commensurate job on the bus side, proportionately, to bring the same kind of expansion capabilities into the bus system.

You heard our current Chair talk about our focus. Late last year we announced a very nuts and bolts back-to-basics program recommitting everyone in the agency to our basic core mission: reliability, safety, and cleanliness. We've done a lot of independent reviews. We've opened ourselves up, we've done a lot of honest self-evaluation.

We've asked others to come in and take a look at us and to make recommendations, and we anxiously embrace those, and we look to implement them. And we've recently reorganized ourselves around the notion of improving our overall accountability to our customers and to our citizens and to stay focused on continuing to deliver system improvements.

My final message for you is, if we have interim relief on the way, it's only interim, and our future--and that's really only about six years down the road--is entirely in the hands of a dedicated funding source. A lot has been written about this. It's been analyzed to death. I think it's pretty hard to challenge the fact that the need is there. We just need to kind of bring all of our citizens together and their elected officials to see if we can reach some sort of consensus.

We're the only transit system in the country that does not have a dedicated revenue source. Nationwide, the average for all of our peers across the country on the capital side is 52 percent; we are zero. And then the operating side is 33 percent, and we're a two. So I think you can't argue with those numbers, and in the future we have to find out what the public and political will is, is

to come up with a funding source that can keep our metro system healthy in the future.

I look forward to hearing your questions and talking with you. Thank you.

[Applause.]

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you, gentlemen. here they come. Thank you. I will sift these in a minute, but first, again by prearrangement, the first question goes to me, and then the rest of the questions to you. I'm often asked, when I speak around the country: What is the most absurd thing you've ever seen in Washington? And I say that's easy. There's a piece of the Orange line that runs from approximately, oh, a few hundred yards west of Boston all the way up to Vienna, and the tracks run right through the middle of an interstate highway. And most of the time every single day you can get on a subway train and go 60 miles an hour along that stretch, and at the same time you can get in a car and go three miles an hour. And yet people, constantly, want to go three miles an hour. It stands logic on its head, ladies and gentlemen of the panel.

So my question to you is what, honestly, is it going to take to get Northern Virginians out of their cars

and into the Orange line, and what is your plan to achieve this? Who's up for this one?

Yes, sir?

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: I'll go ahead and start.

Actually, I think there's quite a few folks on those Orange line trains; at least that's what I hear. And how many folks here ride the Orange line, just to see.

[Show of hands.]

I'm not surprised.

Well, I don't think you're lonely, are you? And one of the things that's certainly Linda Smith and the rest of my colleagues on the county board and all of us on the Metro board are trying to do is introduce some things that we found under the rubric of rail relief, meaning getting some bus service for some of the outlying parts of the counties so they can take a bus directly in, so they can ease some of the loading on those rail cars.

Also, we're working very hard to expedite getting these eight-car trains in this region is pull together to make happen. And, finally, we're looking at system changes, basic operation changes, make it so folks can get onto and



off of cars faster and look at, frankly, some of the splits as the trains work their way on into D.C.

MS. HUDGINS: I want to join Dana in pointing out that there are an awful lot of people that do use transit in Northern Virginia, and I am not one that has a rail station that comes all the way into my district, and I look forward to the extension of the system into the Dulles corridor and Tysons.

But I need to note that today, out of the corridor, 16-to-17 thousand people ride from the corridor to metro, West Falls Church metro, and it is a constantly growing demand of people. So I think what is one thing that is needed is, really, the accessibility to rail further into Northern Virginia. When you watch both the reverse commute and the commute into the corridor at West Falls Church, you see that there is a demand for the service out into the area.

I think in order to do that, it means not only bringing the system, but the system must be accessible and dependable, and while we wait for rail we need to make the bus services equally that. And that, I think, is one of the

things that we all on the Fairfax County board and I think in the Northern Virginia area try and work to do.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: Orange line carries 170,000 riders a day. It's the second most heavily used line in the whole system, and weighted a little more on the Northern Virginia side on the Orange line. So there are quite a few Northern Virginians getting on and off the Orange line every day.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Okay. Anyone else care to take a swing at that question?

[No response.]

Okay, next question. From Del-Chen of Falls Church, Virginia, who asks: "Why is the rail to bus discount not reciprocated to give a discount for bus to rail?"

Who would like to answer?

MR. WHITE: I'll answer that. The board has already made that the policy decision that we should have a balanced transfer. Right now there's only one little problem: Not all of our buses have the technology that's equipped to be able to reciprocate that for people who are using smart trip cards, for example. Although we now have

all new fare boxes in all of the metro buses, we're now in the process of moving--we have a very large-scale regional and even statewide program in Maryland to put these same fare boxes in all of the bus systems here in Northern Virginia, the county-based operation systems in Northern Virginia as well as throughout Maryland. Once that capability exists, we will then move to a balanced transfer where you will get a discount on both ends of your trip, both rail to bus and then bus to--vice versa.

So it's on its way soon.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you. Anybody else care to comment? Yes, sir?

MR. TANGHERLINI: Can Tangherlini here from D.C. Actually, both these questions actually relate to a bigger issue which is integrating, further integrating our rail service and our bus service. So having that balanced transfer, having those connectivity-at-the-station nodes, this is something that I think is really the next dimension that we have to go to here in Metro, and with our service is actually having a stronger sense of integration.

MODERATOR LEVEY: All right, thank you very much. Next question from Celia Patterson of Falls Church--it's not really a question--she writes: "Eating on trains should be better policed." I think we get the point, Celia. Anybody on the panel want to take that one?

MS. HUDGINS: Well--

MODERATOR LEVEY: Go ahead, then.

MS. HUDGINS: I think you're--I think that's really a point that we, as a board, keep trying to figure out how best to do, having ridden in with someone drinking a cup of coffee tonight. Because I think there is a great deal of people who do conform to our rules, but I think our message needs to be broader and I'll give you an example. I looked up and I noticed the sign, and it said, "No eating on trains, and please remember on the buses, and please remember to fold your stroller going off."

My bus had a combination of people of different languages on that bus, and it would be a question to me whether or not they all could pay attention or read that sign clearly. And I think we need to convey the message a lot more thoroughly and make it, as we have started with Metro, a lighter way to get a serious point across.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Anybody else care to comment?

[No response.]

A reminder that if you have a question, these blank yellow cards are available from metro staff at either end of the room.

Next question from Melanie Maysok. Melanie, I'm sorry, if I'm mispronouncing your last name. She's from Washington, D.C., Southeast Washington. She writes: "I have missed the bus several times because it came early and had to wait 45 minutes for the next bus. I understand that it's hard to prevent buses from being late because they get stuck in traffic, but what is Metro doing to ensure the bus drivers do not depart stops early?"

Ladies and gentlemen of the panel?

MR. WHITE: Yeah. I mean that's--that's--it's an excellent question. I mean it's one that relates to the basic supervision of the service, you know, how we, you know, can closely work with our bus operators to make sure that, you know, they understand that it's just as bad--in many cases worse--to be running ahead of schedule than it is behind schedule. You know, I think

it is, obviously, a nuisance to people, particularly on a 40-minute headway interval like Melanie's question suggests.

We are, we're on the verge of, hopefully, being able to use technology soon to really help supplement what has largely been just a human-based supervision system. We have an automatic vehicle location system that's on our bus system, but we haven't really been able to take advantage and use the benefit of that until we can integrate it into our scheduling system, which is not in the process of kind of being automated and being brought to life.

So when we can combine the new scheduling system with the automatic vehicle location system, it then gives people who managed this service kind of centrally in our operations control center a vision quickly about service that is both running ahead of schedule and running behind schedule, and we have new radios on our buses which, then, allows a more instant communication to the operator from the central control.

So I think the real answer here is the best solution beyond supplementing our day-to-day supervision of the service is to take advantage of these large technology investments that we have made in radios and fare collection

and scheduling systems and be able to optimize those investments. And we're in the process of doing that.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you, Mr. White. Anybody else? Yes, sir?

MR. TANGHERLINI: Real quick, in the District of Columbia one of the things we're going to do is build off of that, and some experiments they've done in Virginia to actually put what's called "Next Bus" or something that tells you when that next bus is going to arrive. In our new bus shelter contract, we've asked the provider to provide that.

I think the other answer is to make sure that we're targeting the right investments in our bus service to reduce headways that we have enough buses, we have enough service that the bus service is reliable; that the bus service is something you can count on, that you can build your life around so that more and more people will continue to ride the bus.

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: I'm just briefly going to add, certainly, we're taking a level of pride in trying to regionally one-up each other in bringing quality bus service

to basically mimic the type of consistency of service you see on the rail side.

In Fairfax--this is on the Richmond Highway corridor--we have a new service called REX, and our intent there is to over time have it so you have a display telling you when the next bus is going to be there. It can notify your PDA or whatever you might have so again it can be seen as a part of the extension of the rail. And, frankly, we copied Arlington.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Okay. Next from Mark Tipton of Fairfax, who writes: "WMATA is selling or leasing land at metro stations to developers. Should WMATA be encouraging development, given the current stresses on the metro system, and community opposition, and negative impact such as the loss of parking spaces at the Vienna-Fairfax metro station?"

Who would like to handle that one? Yes, sir?

MR. SMITH: Yes. I think the answer is, yes, we should be encouraging development around metro stations just from a planning perspective, if nothing else, because that helps to concentrate density near the stations to give people the opportunity to use the trains and the system we have without exacerbating the suburban sprawl that has



become a problem on infrastructure and roads in particular throughout the region, both on my side of the river and on the Virginia side of the river.

So the development is very important, plus it does bring back revenue that makes use of land that is there under the title of Metro, and brings revenue to the Authority, which, in turns, helps us to develop a system more extensively.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Anyone else care--yes, sir?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: Yeah, I think that that's right. The question is not whether development is going to occur but where it's going to occur. And so if we don't have it near the metro station, we're going to have it all over the place, and people will be, you know, more in cars driving around to get to it, including driving to metro stations and other places.

The extent that we can make good use of what is really the most valuable land we can have, land within the quarter mile of a metro station is incredibly valuable, but not if we waste it. And if we don't use it, efficiently, then we are wasting it, and that's throwing away a resource that helps not only the system in the ways that, you know,

Bob was talking about, which is true--we know we do get some revenue--but, more importantly, it's helping all the other problems we have. I mean it's reducing air pollution, it's reducing runoff, it's reducing a whole range of environmental and other effects that we have to deal with every day locally.

So it's important how we do it; it's critical that we do it in a sensitive way when we develop to make sure we develop a place that actually is walkable. Otherwise, you are missing the point. But to not do it, you know, to say we're just--we're not going to let people develop near there, is wasting the big investment we have in the station.

Ultimately, the stations pay for themselves and the system pays for itself not through so much ridership. I mean the fare boxes are only going to pay so much, but it can pay for itself big time through the increased value of all the land around the station and all the revenue, public and private, that flows from that.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Yes?

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: Just very briefly, periodically, you know, to say Metro's out there encouraging development isn't quite right. The bottom line is, is

periodically, we send out to the jurisdictions, the member jurisdictions a listing of the properties near metro and say, do we want to have these properties put out there for solicitation? And the solicitation is, frankly, to help complete the counties' or localities' comprehensive plan. That is the key governing document is, how does the local government body vote when it comes to land use?

So again, we're not out there doing development. We're not trying to step on the local government's toes. We're basically trying to convey the properties, and the decision is made by the local governing body.

MODERATOR LEVEY: All right, thank you very much.

Next question from Steven E. Delaney of Northeast Washington, who says he's a regular rider of the D-6 bus, which is regularly late. "The drivers are regularly rude, there's a lack of customer service and follow up," and he wants to know, "What is Metro doing?"

MODERATOR LEVEY: Yes. Gentlemen?

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: Steve grabbed me before we started. I have his e-mails, and, Steve, we'll make it work better for you. Thank you.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Okay. Mr. White, you wanted to add something?

MR. WHITE: Well, I mean we can be most helpful when we get specific, you know, examples of exactly what bus was a problem, what driver was a problem. And we follow up on that, and we will pledge to do that. I'm sorry that he has this experience.

MODERATOR LEVEY: All right. Thank you.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: To get more specific on that, too, Mr. White, you mostly want to know the time, the specific bus, the time, if somebody catches the four-digit number on the bus, some information so you can actually follow up.

I've had, you know, experiences like that with constituents, and if we give that kind of information, they will follow up and action will be taken. It's a little bit difficult when they don't know, you know, specifically, what bus or what time it was.

MODERATOR LEVEY: All right, gentlemen, thank you.

Next question. Mary Hall, also of Southeast Washington. She says: "I have personally reported four bus drivers who were using a cell phone while driving the bus.

One driver ran a stop sign. What is Metro currently doing to address this issue?"

MR. WHITE: Well, it's a serious disciplinary issue. Clearly, we have a policy that prohibits that, and there are local laws, particularly in the District of Columbia, that speak to how and when you can use a cell phone while driving. So, you know, we are enforcing the policy, we take it very seriously. I do know that it happens. I hear it reported, we actively follow up on it. We have 1444 buses that are in our system. We have a lot of services out there and a lot of operators, and if you see, witness this yourself again, you know, please provide us with the very specific information. We take it very seriously, we follow up on each and every instance. And the extent to which disciplinary action needs to be taken up to and including dismissal, it is taken.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Any other comments on this question?

[No response.]

Okay.

Next from Mark Bochetti of McLean, Virginia. Mark says: "Why has Metro never had a citizens advisory board?"

Yes, sir?

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: They will now. Frankly, it's overdue. Any type of a customer service organization has to find a way to regularly, consistently, hear from their customers, and this board is committed to making that happen. And we will have it in place later this year.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you. Next question is anonymous, but good nonetheless: "Why doesn't Metro have an office of hiring employees in Virginia?"

Let's hear from some of our Virginia delegates on the board on this one.

MS. HUDGINS: I can only say that's a very good question. I'm sure that for the folks that are out here looking for employment, we hire transit people in Fairfax County all the time, at least on the bus side, so I'm sure there'd be an opportunity in many of the services to hire Virginia folks without having to go into the location of Washington.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Okay. Mr. White?

MR. WHITE: Yeah, I mean I think we have to learn how to, you know, expand our opportunities. We have a lot of staff people here. If you have anything to do with our

hiring process, please raise your hand. Bill and others here, there are a number of people in the room that are involved with that here.

You know, I dare say we do have a large number of vacancies inside of the organization with a 10,000-person work force. And with turnover in that work force, you can-- we're a large employer, and I think the extent to which we can find out what a, you know, cleverly and creatively, partner with others in local government and use the facilities that we do have that are located in various parts of our community to try and take advantage of that.

So if, you know, we can kind of probe that question a little further with some members of the staff, we'd be happy to do that.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Okay, thank you. Anybody else care to comment?

[No response.]

Gentlemen, you've been remarkably silent here on my right. What does it mean?

MR. SOLOMON: Prince George's County is really happy.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Prince George's is really happy. Good. We'll hear from you anyway any time you like.

Next question from Robert Lohman, who doesn't say where he's from. Robert asks: "When a bus is full, passengers stand in front of the bus rather than moving to the rear. Could drivers be a little more proactive on this?"

Comments? Mr. White?

MR. WHITE: Yeah. I mean I'm sure--I'm sure they can. They--they--they are instructed to try and help, you know, encourage people to move down the--throughout the bus. We do have, you know, two sets of doors to help people get on and off the bus. So it's something that we can do. It's all part of, you know, the process of how we use the capacity that we have.

This is a bus issue and a rail issue. We have a finite, you know, number of, you know, feet of space and seats in both the bus and the rail car. And what we need to do is to, you know, actively and cleverly, utilize every square inch of that space so that we can make the capacity that we do have as usable as we can.



So again, that is an issue where we continue to work with our bus operators to help them understand that. We happen to have our Chief Operating Officer of bus here, Jack Requa, who can raise his hand. Jim Hughes over here, who's the Assistant General Manager for Operations. And there are people in this room that can talk to you about these issues further.

Any further comments, board members?

[No response.]

Thank you. Next from Marilyn Hennetty of Annandale, Virginia. She says: "Trying to get passes or cards not used up and get refunds, all of that takes place at 12th Street." I gather she means the Metro Center windows there right in the center of the station. "The lines are very, very long, and cannot service all the people on their lunch hours. Why don't we have more places to take care of cards exchanges, et cetera?"

Have we broken through the silence over here? Surely, Prince George's has that problem. Okay, it's a question for Dick White.

MR. WHITE: I would agrees that this is not a conven--this is not a convenience that we have here.

There's no doubt about it. You know, I think we need to be--  
-I do believe we can--you can mail it in, can you not?  
Leona, you can actually get envelopes at each of our  
stations, the stations managers do have them. They can be  
collected. I know that's only one step better, you still  
have to wait for it to be processed, and I do recognize  
that, you know, there's an inconvenience with that.

You know, we do have to figure out if there are  
more creative ways that we can do that. We're trying to  
balance the whole issue out with, you know, our station  
managers are really not in the business of kind of handling  
cash and dealing with fare media, and it's not really one of  
the job assignments that we want, you know, to have them do.  
Yet, on the other hand, our customers, you know, predominant  
experience that they have, certainly, on the rail system is  
with our station manager. And that's the person that they  
see and that they expect to get service from when they're in  
our station.

So I think we have to continue to probe that  
issue. I know there have been conversations that have taken  
place inside of the organization with respect to challenging  
some of those notions we have about how we do our business

today and whether we can be a little bit more creative in how we use our station manager.

We will take that away as an action item here. We'll try and probe that question a little bit further and see if there's more that we can do.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Dan, you had a comment?

MR. TANGHERLINI: Absolutely, and I'll probably surprise all my fellow board members, Dick and all the Metro staff here, but I think I would add something to it. I should have filled out a yellow card. For a fewer bus rider and you have a Smart Trip, the only way you can add value to it is to go to a metro station. So as we think about ways that we can improve our customer service, as we think about ways that we can reach out, we have to figure out ways that we can also find ways that other bus riders can add--add value to their Smart Trips beyond the metro stations and--

MR. WHITE: You can do that on the bus and--

MR. TANGHERLINI: Okay.

MR. WHITE: Yeah. I mean I think--I think not every--and I think that, and I think not everybody knows about that.

MR. TANGHERLINI: Not everybody knows it.

MR. WHITE: I think we have probably one of the best kept secrets, and I accept that as, you know--it is a mystifying process to a lot of people who, you know, who, even for those who use our system regularly, particularly when we introduce new technology like we are on the bus side. It's something that people aren't accustomed to, so fair point here is that we can just make--promote better kind of some of the things that we do, do today.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Anyone else care to comment on this question?

[No response.]

Thank you.

Next from Mary Frances Moriarty of Falls Church, who asks the question that I thought would be all over yellow cards, and so far she's the only one to ask it. Here it goes, panel: "When will construction begin on rail to Dulles-Tyson, and what is the estimated date of completion?"

MS. HUDGINS: I'm very glad that she asked the question. I came to night to answer it.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you, Mary Frances. The elephant in the room.

MS. HUDGINS: We really hope that next year we will have a full funding agreement which will, hopefully, have with that the go-ahead to start construction in no later than 2007 and, hopefully, in 2009 or 11--2011--2011 we'll hopefully open. And that is the time frame that we're on.

I would tell you that if you are along the Dulles Toll Road any time, you will see a construction out there, but it's sole boring (ph), so it is in the preliminary engineering which will be completed soon, and that stage will put us really in the forefront of ready for construction.

I want to mention two other things that I think are very important. We've had some major milestones in this project, and at this stage we really have lined up practically all of the funding sources that are needed. The State has made it's commitment. We have the State's first phase of the tax district which has collected the first year's taxes to go to that capital improvement ending fiscal year June 30th.

And I think the last more important thing is we are actually in, in conversations with the eastern--the

western tax district for the second phase, although it is not on the program. But we look forward to the extension to go not only to Weile (ph), but to continue down the toll road to the airport and into Loudoun County.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you. Anybody else care to comment about the Dulles-Tyson part of things?

[No response.]

All right, thank you.

Mark Bochetti again from McLean. Mark says:

"Metro union contracts are generous. My research two years ago showed that union members paid no portion of their premiums for medical insurance. Federal employees pay 28 percent of those costs. Metro is now seeking more money, but what assurance do we have that additional money will not simply be consumed by continuation of the same approach to labor costs, i.e., give the unions what they want?"

Comments? Charlie wants that one. Okay, Charlie.

MR. DEEGAN: Well, we're currently in labor negotiations now, right, Mr. Scott? And we're looking at some work rule changes and, yeah, Metro employees do have a very generous package compared to other local governments and people working for Fairfax County, people working for

Prince George's. I'm very envious of what the employees have. I'm not saying they don't deserve it, but there are probably enormous cost savings that can be derived, particularly in health care, you know. We have to keep pace with what the rest of the world's doing.

We'd like to give the employees everything, but the money's just not there to do it. And I think we're a very fair employer, and we'll continue to be that, but we have to be prudent in how we spend our money.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Well, let me follow up. Are you saying that this issue will be off the table during the negotiations? That the unions are going to have to accept a share of the health care costs themselves?

MR. DEEGAN: I think it's something that's on the table.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Okay.

MR. DEEGAN: And that we're under negotiations now. And, hopefully, we'll have an amicable agreement to-- that will be satisfactory to both Metro and the employees.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you. Anybody else care to comment? Wow, here we go. Yes, Bob.

MR. SMITH: Yes, on the labor front, I mean when we, particularly in Maryland, we've been hammering the issue of cost control and cost containment at WMATA for the past couple of years. And I think what one has to realize in terms of getting a hold of cost containment and cost control in organizations such as WMATA that 75 percent or so of our budget, \$1 billion a year goes to labor. So in order to control cost or to keep a lid on that which gets passed onto the taxpayer, you have to focus on labor because it's such a large chunk of the budget to begin with. Necessarily, anything else you do to control costs, and you read some of the idiosyncracies here and there in the newspaper where this was wasted or that was wasted, yes, things can be improved there. But you're nibbling around the edges.

The reality of it is to deal with the costs of WMATA, you have to deal with the costs of labor. And the work rule situation is one, certainly, worth discussing. Labor rules in this country with regard to rail grow out of somewhat of an arcane system established federally. And we are trying to work to improve those, particularly on the front with the benefits packages and the rules for how you progress through the system.



One thing that Charlie and I and others have been harping on is the notion that in order to become a trained kiosk manager or a train operator, a place where you might be out there with the public greeting people and trying to show them how to use the system, before you get there you've got to drive a bus.

Now, you know, in 21st century America, that's probably not the right line of job description, and we're working to change that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: Just very briefly, there are three key elements you should keep in mind when you're looking at someone's compensation. Certainly, benefits is a large part of it, but also salaries, and what are the job expectations? As is mentioned earlier, we are looking at how to better balance these benefits that I'd certainly want to highlight for you. And when it comes to salaries, we have been working hard, and we just completed one phase of those negotiations with our largest transit union. And, Bill, correct me if I'm wrong, we're looking at two years of 1.5 percent increase each year.

And then if you look at the folks who manage, who will receive this very large organization covering some 1500

square miles of service area, the white collar folks at the main office have seen an average of 2.7 percent increase in salary over the last three years.

And the other challenge there is that's a good challenge is the average years of service in our organization, some 15 years. So we have a very senior, dedicated work force.

Finally, the position description. Where you see the folks in this room, our customers, the face of Metro you see is that bus operator, that train operator, that station manager, we're rewriting all of the position descriptions for those roles to make them more customer-focused.

A perfect example is up until last year the only thing determining a station manager role was seniority. We added a customer service requirement. So here we're trying to make certain that the men and women who serve you, serve you well.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you, gentlemen. Anybody else?

[No response.]

Okay, next question from June O'Connell, who says she is a taxpayer from Arlington, Virginia. Question: "How

are buses assigned, and how are new ones allocated? I fear Bethesda, Chevy Chase and the like, that the new and better buses versus South Arlington. Thank you. June," she writes.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: I get this one. Well, in South Arlington we've got--is it a--is it 164--I'm trying to remember--a whole bunch of new buses are on their way to South Arlington. The Metro has three facilities to serve, three bus facilities that serve Northern Virginia. One of them is in Alexandria, and the other two are in Arlington. And the largest of them is the four-mile facility down below Crystal City, south of Crystal City. And that has about two-thirds or so of the Metro bus fleet in Northern Virginia, including those that basically serve South Arlington. And that facility will be re---it would be opened, the new renovated facility, in August, I think we're aiming for, and we'll be converting to C&G. So we will have clean buses, all of them brand new low floor buses coming out of there. And you'll be seeing that before the end of the year, so--

There's been, basically, when you do things other than the occasional order of buses you can get, to some

degree there is a, you know, a facility by facility. We did the Bladensburg facility in D.C., for instance, a couple of years ago, and at some point, and I think, historically, Metro has probably gone a lot longer between renovations of bus facilities than they needed to. There are a number of us that would say the bus service has been kind of the poor stepchild of the system, and we've been trying to get that turned around a little bit.

Another thing that is, I think, an important step that's being made is that we're going to finally get a new Northern Virginia bus facility. Folks in Fairfax County have advocated for a while that, you know, we could get one out if we worked with Fairfax County, and we just did finally get that worked out so that there will be out near Ox Road, a joint Fairfax Connector/Metro bus facility that will enable the system to serve a lot of the growing areas that have more and more demand for bus service which, otherwise, is basically been coming all the way out of Arlington.

So there are better things coming, and new buses and some new facilities, and I think that will be an improvement that you'll see soon.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you. Anybody else care to comment? Yes, sir?

MR. SOLOMON: Prince George's question. In Prince George's County, we always ask that question, where do new buses go? And why don't we get some of them? It seem like we have one of the oldest fleets in the--in the system, a lot of old diesels.

And you've probably been reading in the paper lately about the controversy, if you will, between jurisdiction on the C&G buses and hybrid buses. Well, we don't have any of those C&G buses that Mr. Zimmerman just talked about, because we don't have one of those facilities out there to service those buses. And guess what: We won't get any. We won't get any because the District of Columbia have the buses, and Virginia has the buses, and Maryland doesn't have the facility either.

So what we are, and sometime we have to put on some of our selfish hat and, as a board, we work very good together, and I'm very proud of all of my members on the board. And we're very collegiate with each other, and we can negotiate and take care of all of the issues that come up. But sometimes there are some selfish interests in all

of our bags, and one of them is, then, for Prince George's County some of these new buses. So we advocate in part sometimes these clean diesels, only because if we get off the road the old buses that are big pollutants, we would help clean up the air with some modern buses that would have less pollutants.

So for us, we need some new buses, and that's a big issue. Thank you.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you. Anybody else? yes, Dan.

MR. TANGHERLINI: I was just going to say that sounded like a Southeast Washington complaint, actually, so--but I think that's--the bigger point is the one that was made that I think the Metro board was set up the way it was so that no one jurisdiction could run away with all the good stuff, leaving the others with the bad stuff. And so I think--I think that's one of the things that we spend an awful lot of time. I'm looking forward to working with the board on, is making sure that we do strike the right balance and that everyone does feel like they're getting a fair level of investment.

MODERATOR LEVEY: All right. Thank you, everybody.

Next question from Mark Tune of Arlington. Her asks: "Will any new rail stations have public restrooms accessible to train riders?"

Well, that sounds like a Northern Virginia question. Yes, sir?

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: I don't know whether I want to have that labeled a Dana question, but I'll take it. We, with the support of my colleagues, went about opening up our restrooms in all the stations where security would allow us. And that, basically, covered almost all of the stations with the exception of a few where Chief Hadsen (ph) gave us a very clear reason why we could not.

So we have to, though, track the different alert states, but almost all the time those restrooms are open and available for your use.

MS. HUDGINS: I--

MODERATOR LEVEY: Yes?

MS. HUDGINS: I think that the issue, also, is as we design new stations and--and expand, we--we really take these things in consideration. There are a lot of issues

that people see as not only necessities but also the comforts that make it an attraction to use the system. So as we design facilities, we keep the things in mind that will make them secure in order to provide the type of use that the system needs.

And so that's what a great deal of discussion in terms of those kinds of needs. As it moves, we talk about extending the system into the corridor as well.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you. Next from Cassi and Jeff Lauterette from Springfield, Virginia. Their question is this: "Several people are here representing the D.C. segueway organization. We use our segueways to bridge the gap between Metro and our final destination for personal business and for disabilities. We understand that Metro's official stand is that sequeways are allowed in the system but may not be ridden unless necessary. Recently, there have been reports of owners being denied access to the stations by transit police. Can you please clarify the policy now and in the future?

"Also, can a written document be provided to owners outlining this policy?"



Who would like to be a segueway answerer? Mr. White?

MR. WHITE: Well, I'm probably going to have to defer it, quite frankly, to the staff. I mean I know that we have had a lot of controversy around this issue in terms of what constitutes a motorized device that has been sanctioned by whatever, you know, places that need to sanction its use. And, quite frankly, Chief, could you please clarify that for us?

MS. POLLY HANSON: [Off mike.] I think you have many laws that are on the books before this type of technology was developed, so, by law, many jurisdictions, say, might actually be prohibited, because I know the Authority applying (ph) the books to balance, allowing these technologies, and, of course, states the insecurities. So if someone has this design, our officers have been told not to deny access, but, you know, once again it's an issue of insuring that someone is walking it safely. People aren't allowed to ride bicycles--[off mike.]--and when you have--platforms, so we're really trying to balance the safety of all our customers with emerging technologies and finding a way to allow that technology to be used in our system.

Does that answer the question?

MODERATOR LEVEY: I think so. That speaker, by the way, was Polly Hanson, the Chief of Metro Police. Thank you, Chief.

Next from Marilyn Hennetty of Annandale, Virginia: "What is Dick White's salary, including living allowance? What are the other executives' salaries?"

They are thinking. [Laughter.]

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: No, we're just deciding who best to bring it forward. That is, for the senior staff, we are putting that out there. Certainly, that is a matter of public record, and we are sharing it. And I'll turn it over to Dick.

MR. WHITE: Okay. Well, I have an employment agreement with the Board of Directors that lays out the compensation issues for me. It has been developed. In the last time the contract got modified, which was back in 2002, the board, when they made that decision, they did a market survey so that they would look around the country to generally see what the market pay was of the systems that were considered to be the large comparative systems.

When the board decided to try and peg my pay at the time that contract was negotiated, it was somewhere in the top five--not the top--but in the range of the top five to recognize that this is a system that was in--it's within the top five in the United States. It's the second largest subway system in the country, and it's the, I think, the 5th or 6th largest bus system and, collectively, is the 4th largest system in the country. So they used that criteria when they made that decision.

The amounts are adjusted on an annual basis under the employment agreement. Today the base salary is \$259,000, which is, quite frankly I think, outside of the top five, currently, at this moment in time. There is a living allowance of about \$42,000, which is current, which is somewhat standard throughout the country in employment agreements with--with my peers. So that's what it is today, and that's the basis upon which the contract was negotiated between myself and the board that was in existence at the time that the contract was negotiated for extension.

MODERATOR LEVEY: More comments? Yes, Mr. Kauffman?

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: Just one last brief note. You know, being a transit system general manager and CEO isn't something that you can get your newly admitted MBA and walk out and do it. I had a conversation with a former county executive in Fairfax, who is making a point. He is developing a close working relationship with Dick, and his comment, which I found rather telling, was, "Look, as a county executive, guys like me are comparatively a dime a dozen. There are only so many folks who can manage a transit system of this size and of this coverage area. And you have one of the best in the country." And that was directly from our then county executive.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Next question, Wesley McGee from Falls Church. He says: "On weekends along Columbia Pike in Northern Virginia, the buses are scheduled to make a diversion to serve the Cullmore (ph) neighborhood just north of Columbia Pike, and west of Leesburg Pike. Increasingly, buses are bypassing this neighborhood without notice or warning. Complaints through official channels have yielded little success. As Cullmore is largely an emigrant community that relies heavily on bus service, reliable service, having random buses not serve these groups of

passengers is troubling. What is being done to rectify this situation?"

Who wants it--

MR. ZIMMERMAN: I guess I'll start.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Yes, sir.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: I mean I, you know, live in the Columbia Pike corridor myself and frequently ride the 16 line. Cullmore is actually outside of Arlington, so it's not my jurisdiction, per se, and I have to say I have not heard this problem. There are specific routes that serve Cullmore, and I think this seems to refer to the weekend there's a different pattern.

But I have not specifically heard, and if it's possible to pass on, you know, perhaps after this the name and then contact information, if we have it, for the questioner, I'd like to, you know, see it pursued because it's just--it's not something I've heard before, but if the buses aren't going where they're supposed to be, that's obviously something we would take very seriously and would want to know about.

The other, you know, kind of situations that have been brought up like a buses going ahead of schedule so it's behind, I've, you know, I've experienced that myself and called that in. But if they are actually not following the route there, that's even the more serious problem. So we would want to know, specifically, then that happens, and if we can follow, you know, follow up on it with that particular individual, I know that--okay, can you make sure afterwards we get information? We'll certainly follow up because, you know, that's just not supposed to happen.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Anyone else care to comment about the Cullmore situation?

[No response.]

Thank you.

Heather Migdon is next. Heather lives on--in Northwest Washington, D.C. She says: "I've been a daily bus rider since 2002. I'm actually very satisfied with Metro bus with the exception of the 30 bus lines. That's 30, 32, 34-5-and 6. During rush hours, the bus is supposed to pass every four or five minutes, yet waits of 25 to 30 minutes are not at all uncommon. If traffic is the

cause, why not change the schedules to make them more realistic?"

Who wants to take a swing at that?

MR. WHITE: I think that's the age-old, you know, question, the one that we struggle with. We look at our bus running times as regularly as we can, and we try and adjust them against the traffic conditions, and we try and make sure that the appropriate running time is put in and recognizing that it's kind of one of those kind of Goldilocks things: not too hot and not too cold. I mean it's a find balancing act because of the cost. There's a cost to deliver the service, and we try and do it in a way that has running times and makes them the most cost-effective utilization of our 75 percent labor cost and the uses of our buses as well.

We do also, periodically, go through reexaminations, kind of comprehensive reexaminations of how the entire route is structured, because a lot of our routes are long and circuitous and really need to be broken up into sub-routes, if you will, in order to help keep the bus on schedule. So there are a number of these particular types of things that we look at on a periodic basis.

I think it would have to be quite an extreme condition to have service that's running on a four-minute headway to have a delay that would be that long. I would imagine that it has to be some incredibly extenuating circumstances. But again, if we have some more specific information on that, we would like to hear it.

I guess the final part of the answer I'd like to give is that we had that issue. I told you in the beginning that we've opened ourselves up to a number of independent reviews. We had a review done of our bus system as well as our rail system, and we're kind of in the process now of trying to accept the preliminary recommendations that have come up on the bus side, and I think we have some food for thought here that's going to be given to us coming out of these reviews about whether for some of our most heavily utilized lines like these that would fit into that criteria, instead of trying to run a published schedule, run a headway. And it's a lot easier to manage the service when it's headway-based as compared to time-based, and based it that way.

So I think that we're--we're ripe for reexamination of a number of our issues. If we have any



specific thoughts and ideas and suggestions that any of you have about specific routes or this matter in general, please--please pass it along to us, because we're critically reexamining all those issues right now.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Any other comments? Dan, you have a comment.

MR. TANGHERLINI: Well, you know, as the guy who's in charge of traffic management in the District of Columbia, I feel like I have to make a personal apology to this customer. But I think the bigger issue is how do we make-- how do we work together as a transportation agency, as a transit authority, to make the key investments we need to start moving those buses through a little quicker.

We have a project we're working on with WMATA on Georgia Avenue that will give buses signal priority. We have projects we're working on to designate bus lanes for WMATA buses through the K Street corridor and other places in the District. I think that this is one of the ways that we'll make buses move safer and faster, and will continue to attract people into the service.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you, everyone.

Next question from Barbara Greig of Northeast Vienna, Virginia. She writes: "Overall I think Metro is very good, especially considering its age and how many people it serves. But,"--and now capitals everybody--"DO NOT REMOVE SEATS. Long commutes are tiring for older people. Those who have senior handicap seats, don't give them up." And Barbara points out seating is needed for nonrush-hour and weekend travel.

Let me synthesize this, Barbara, and ask it this way: Are there plans now being developed to remove seats?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: I'll do that one.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Yeah.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: I think, unfortunately, a lot of the reporting on this was a little bit sensational and said things to the effect that the board had already decided to do this, and it was going to happen. What the board has decided to do is study it and, unlike previous times when in fact seating was reduced--the earliest rail cars of 80 seats--the later one have 68 and then 64 seats--that we'd actually let our customers have some input into whatever decision's made about future configuration of the rail calls so that what's going on now is really just a

gathering of baseline data about how the existing cars work, and then a pilot is planned in which we will try some different configurations which could involve fewer seats in some cars but also other differences in the way the cars will be set up in a handful of cars.

I mean we have 900 cars that's on the fleet; we're talking about, you know, maybe 16 cars being outfitted differently so people can try them and get their comments.

There are a lot of issues, though. It's not simply a matter of the number of seats. Many people have commented, people who use the system every day but also people that come and observe. Interestingly enough, the purer view panel that came from out of town, headed up by the general manager in Boston, specifically noted this: In observing our system it's kind of hard to get on and off Metro rail cars.

One of the things that I hear a lot from people is that, you know, when it gets crowded, people tend to be clustered around doors and the area right there in the center. They don't move farther into the train, so you're not getting all the use of the space, but at the same time they don't do that because they're afraid of not being able

to get out when they get to their stop. And the question has arisen a number of times, you know, do we really have our hand holds and other things--the bars, the poles--in the right place.

A lot for people suspect, for instance, that the sort of center pole nearest the door is not the best place to have a pole. It, basically, you know, attracts people like a magnet, and the you can't get in and out up and down the aisle. So what we want to do is really look at that and look at how the interior movement on the train works and see if we can't make it easier for people for a number of reasons.

One is the quicker you get people on and off, the faster you can move the whole system. And one of the things that has been suggested may be slowing our system down is how long it take, how long the train has to be at the platform because of the time it takes getting on and off. And a few seconds here or a few seconds there adds up all the way down the line. So can we improve the efficiency of that?

Another is simply when you're on the train, just being comfortable on the train, and, you know, remember,

every one of us would probably prefer to sit--there are times it's fun to stand, but, you know, most of us, if it's a long ride especially, would like to sit.

The reality is right now in rush hour on a rail car most of the people are standing because even with all the seats you have now, if we have--you know, if you have 64 seats, and if there's 150 people on the train, 130 people on the train, most of them are standing. Are they standing comfortably? Many of them the answer is no because we don't have, you know--we're not configured in a way.

If we get enough rail cars so that basically everybody could get a seat, that would be best. Is that going to happen? Is the money there for that? I mean that's one of the questions. We need to know how to move people most efficiently and what's the optimum level?

I mean you could look at it the other way, too: Should we go back to putting 80 seats on rail cars, like the first 300 cars, the oldest cars, the ones that have the 1000 numbers have. We need to really study this, and that's really all that's going on right now. We're trying to study exactly how something nobody's really done before in our

system: What actually goes on as people move on and off the train? What are the flows like? And how are they affected by the way we have them configured? Should we have more perimeter seating as opposed to transfer seating and so on?

So what we're doing now is simply a period of time of looking that, analyzing that, and we're going to be asking customers directly what they think about different alternatives when we get a chance to actually see them, use them, ride on a rail car that's set up differently. And, you know, that'll be a fairly extended process of discussion before we would make any actual decisions about what to do for the future.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thanks, Mr. Zimmerman. Mr. White?

MR. WHITE: Yeah, I think to help, hopefully, calm people's worst fears down as to how they interpret what it is we're trying to examine, there's an outstanding information booth right out here. So if this is a key issue to you, please, before you leave, go over to that information booth. We'll have Metro staff there to show you what the configuration of our new rail car is that we're in the process of buying and bringing into the system right now

which has many of the same features that we would look at in terms of redesigning our existing fleet.

The problem is we have 950 cars, and they're configured the way they're configured, and they're not going to be replaced for, you know, a long time. And we've got new ones that are coming in that are going to be, you know, very differently designed to help open up the entrance to the car to make it easier to get on and off, but I don't think in a way that you would consider to be taking away and otherwise compromising the basis features of the rail car that you think are important to you.

So go take a look at that. There's some still pictures, there's some nice DBD shots there to show you exactly what it will look like and the kinds of things that we're talking about doing, testing in a very limited basis with reconfiguring some of our existing cars.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Anyone else care to comment?  
Dan, yes?

MR. TANGHERLINI: Real quick, as a daily rider on, certainly, the Red line, and then on the Green line, I've been going to take the Green line a little more. A seat for me, rush hour, is a mere concept. It's a construct. I've

heard of them, I don't know what they look like or feel like. I do know what it's like to see a train go by, or two trains go by. And so I think we need to work, as we've been talking about, really diligently at striking that balance between having access to a train at all, as well as having access to a seat.

MODERATOR LEVEY: You had a comment, ma'am?

MS. HUDGINS: I thank Barbara for her comment because I think what she's conveying is--is--is the concern, of course, of the discussion, but also she conveyed something else. I think she said the system was great--

MODERATOR LEVEY: Yes.

MS. HUDGINS: --she enjoyed using it. And so she's conveying that there is something that she gets a great deal of pleasure out of the efficiency of the system so that as we look at this, she's given us a good piece of information to consider in the midst of this. And as both Dan and Chris have said, we are just looking at it at this point.

And I think it's the board's opportunity to hear from the community and try and make the system work as



efficiently as possible, but keeping in mind what does the system mean to the various diverse users that we have. If you have to travel from--I think Mr. Deegan did the entire Orange line--so it might be a real question for him whether or not it was morning, daytime, or rush hour whether or not he was going to get a seat and how he might handle that.

So those are the things that we need to keep in mind in doing that.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you. Any more comments on this one? Okay.

Next question from Roger Diedrich of Fairfax. Roger asks: "What is the status of planning the routes linking the spokes of the system?" I assume that Roger means the Purple line around or inside the beltway.

Who wants a swing at that one? Yes?

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: I'll just start, and hello, Roger, wherever you are here tonight. Ah, there you are.

One of the things that we have to be seriously about doing--we've begun a series of studies--is the way the metro system is designed was to bring people from the suburbs into the capital-free world. Well, there have been a number of changes since then. We've certainly seen

Fairfax become an employment center of its own and other parts of the region become employment centers of their own. So how do you get between the various lines? And, certainly, I for one, as one member of the County of Fairfax board and one member of this Metro board, would love to see a connection between the Yellow line along the Richmond Highway corridor, the Blue line of Franconia-Springfield, and the Orange line, see him more easily move between those stations. And we've done some initial analysis of that.

Frankly, there's a limit to the extent you continue to go further and further out westward before, frankly, it's better served by commuter rail than it is by metro heavy rail.

MODERATOR LEVEY: More comments on this one, anybody? Yes?

MR. SMITH: Well, like anything that we want to build, it costs a lot of money. And on the Purple line in particular, which crosses from Silver Spring into Bethesda and in some dreams beyond there, we're talking about several billion dollars at this point, whether you take a shorter version that's a billion-seven, or a longer version that's \$4.5 billion it really doesn't matter, because there's not

that amount of money available in the transportation universe at this point in time to construct it.

I think there are significant numbers of people who would agree that from a planning perspective, were the money available or to be found available in the future, the clearly linking the spokes of the system makes all the sense in the world. In fact, you should know that in spite of the little segment within plans, there are those who were involved with the system from the beginning who have put the dream on paper, as it were, that the way the spokes are completely linked in a circle outside around the city. And there are gentlemen who were involved in the original planning of the system who continue to advocate that.

Now, that price tag might be upwards of \$26-to-\$30 billion at this point to build, and we're all pursuing new means of revenue, but I don't think that's in the cards in the near term for many of us. Thank you.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Yes, Dick?

MR. WHITE: I would just add that I think it is an issue that's going to have to be probed, probably by people who see us who sit at this table, but, you know, the fact of the matter is there'll be at some point in time where our

metro rail capacity, this \$9 billion investment that we made that's worth \$24 billion in today's dollars, we will have used up all the capacity of that investment. And the most cost-effective way to do that is that we're doing now, which is to ramp ourselves up to eight-car trains, and that is our future, and that's where we're heading.

Somewhere, more than 20 years from now depending upon growth rates in the region, that would be tapped out, and there will be no other way to put people on this metro system, certainly at least during the peak period, as long as we change--unless we change all of our habits on how we want to use the service because we are a very peak-oriented service. There is going to have to be some understanding that the only way to unlock that in the future is through some kind of circumferential connection where we can connect nodes of the system and reduce travel through the throat of the system.

So it's not something that we're going to necessarily have to deal with today, but we certainly should be thinking down the road, and we should be, you know, progressing, obviously, on the cost-effectiveness of moving

to eight-car trains but wondering what, you know, all of our children and our children's children are going to have to think about.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Mr. Smith had a comment.

MR. SMITH: Yes, to follow up on that, too, and to continue, I guess, is to say that we need to think in terms of more cost-effective approaches to some degree. And as we construct roads or think in terms of roads that are being developed in our region, we need to think of them concurrently with the notion of developing lanes that are available to buses only, and in that way we would develop bus rapid transit, as it were. So that way we actually have bus vehicles in their own paths unobstructed by the traffic that currently encumbers them in the daily rush hour. And that configuration can put them on the headways that Mr. White was talking about a second ago on a fairly consistent basis, such that you wouldn't be left 25, 30 minutes behind because of the accident that's up the road a half mile.

And if we think in those terms, the economics of the whole equation become a lot more manageable. But it is a function at this time of planning for where those right-of-ways would be held. I know the District is doing that on

K Street right now in terms of the planning for dedicated busways, that it's a whole lot more cost-effective than building heavy rail.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Okay. Yes, sir?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: I don't want to miss the opportunity to piggy-back on that to hear Mr. Smith advocating for transit lanes. I think that he's exactly right on that point. That's one of the most cost-effective things that we can do in the region, and I think that it's something that, unfortunately, we haven't really planned for.

Unfortunately, bus service is run by one organization in any place, public transportation, metro, other services like Fairfax's; generally, not the same people that run roads. And the people who build roads and operate roads have tended to see themselves as serving other vehicles and transit services being something separate. But I believe there are a number of opportunities throughout the region where we could dedicate lanes, or get a few jumpers for buses at intersections where you could really provide a lot more capacity than we have right now which might have benefits for car traffic as well, because the extent to

which you could provide a really good transit service that somebody otherwise wouldn't have that they're not going to get because we're not willing to put the money into rail in a particular car they would say, or in a circumferential situation.

If you make that available, you might find there's a whole lot of people who suddenly have available to them trains that didn't before. They weren't using it because it wasn't going where they needed to go. But if a bunch of them no have that available, then you're going to take some of the cars off the road. And, long-term, I think that's the only way we're going to deal with the growth in demand, because, ultimately, we can't--we won't build enough rail, and we can't pave our way out of the problems by, you know, simply trying to endlessly provide more space for vehicles. And this is one of the in-between things that can be done if we decide.

But we need to pick a few places and actually try it out, and I think that's the main thing that's missing. I'm excited about what they're doing in the District and planning for K Street, but, you know, out here in places like Northern Virginia there are candidates as well, and I

imagine some in Montgomery County and elsewhere. And that's what we need to do is try to bring together the transit planners and the road folks and see if we can come up with some good pilots.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Mr. Kauffman.

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: The last twist I would just share with you, for the better part of the decade I've seen played out across the region this question: Which is a better public sector investment, money for roads or money for transit? And a lot of heavy-weight intellectuals play the argument out, and our commuters answered it. They said: "Guys, you need both." And you know now that we've solved for X, we don't have enough money to effectively do either. So take that away.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Dan, last word.

MR. TANGHERLINI: Real quick, in the District of Columbia the roads and the transit, it's the same thing. The last time I checked the bus drive on the road. And we have to--we run into the problem that we can't widen any of our roads. We don't have these options, so we need to start getting busy right now to bring out ways that we not simply move the most vehicles per square foot per hour, we move the



most people per square foot per hour, and we find ways that the work in developing options.

Transit lanes, we're excited about the possibility of light rail or streetcars, finding out ways to fill in all the gaps between the different systems between the different lines, and building an entire web network that serves everyone as easily and conveniently as some of their other options.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you.

Next question from Dan Shyne, who doesn't list an address. Dan made me smile. He said: "Signage on the buses is," driving him crazy. "Get rid of 'Good morning. Have a nice day. Thanks for riding Metro,' and replace these with useful information," underscored.

Thoughts?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: I agree. It got my vote.

MODERATOR LEVEY: "It got my vote," he says.

Anybody else over here care to comment?

MR. TANGHERLINI: Have a nice day.

[Laughter.]

MR. WHITE: Those are things that we can change and we are changing, and we need to continue to change. I

mean there is no doubt. I mean we can't sit here and say we do a great job in providing information to our bus customers. We know that's not the case, and we have a focus on it. We have done a lot of analysis, we know some of the kinds of things that we need to do. We are in the process of implementing them. They can range as simple as just change your electronic bus destination sign to delete message, you know. That's a programming change that can be done to making sure that we, you know, get our bus information cases replaced and modernized with current information, providing information that's real-time information for people from both their home and from their bus stop location.

These are all things that we need to do. They're in various stages of implementation. I think there needs to be more continued energy inside of our organization to stay with this issue. I think it's got the right attention that it needs to have now. I think we clearly know what we need to do: Now we need to persevere. I know the board is very focused on this issue. They understand that there needs to be a lot of improvement in this, and that's what their expectation is. And the management needs to continue to

work with the board and stakeholders and riders of the system to keep on doing what we're doing and to probe ideas that perhaps we haven't evaluated yet. So we're working on it. We know we need to do it.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Okay. Dan, I wish you'd been with me the other night. I was walking along Connecticut Avenue. And a bus came by me that said, "Have a nice day." It was 11:40 p.m. Maybe he meant tomorrow, getting ready. Okay, getting ready.

Douglas Stewart is next from Fairfax. He writes: "I've almost always enjoyed excellent service on metro, yet almost every news story I read or hear about metro is negative. I don't believe metro service is nearly as bad as the media represents it. Why such a big discrepancy between the reality and the public representation? Why is Metro having such difficult time communicating it's merited value to the public at large? Could Metro do a better job of explaining why things go wrong when they do go wrong?"

Who would like a swing at that one?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: Steve Ginsburg left I think.

MODERATOR LEVEY: He did leave.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: Maybe for him the poster program.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Anybody? Yes, Mr. Kauffman.

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: Well, certainly, by having forums like this, we're trying to get the word out on how successful we are and what we're doing to make it even better. Dick, I think, very well captured for us members of the board here not too long ago, when you look at our on-time reliability, you look at the aggregate service it's 97 percent on time. If you look at a recent Washington Post survey of the riders, they found that 88 percent rated it good or excellent, and there isn't a politician among us up here who wouldn't die for those type of numbers. As a matter of fact, we'll never get those type of numbers.

But even at that, if you're at 97 percent, if you assume that everybody who makes one trip one way, takes it back the other, at 97 percent that's still 8,000 folks who might have a concern. So we're trying to minimize that every say, that that is a key focus.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Yes, Mr. Smith?

MR. SMITH: It is an interesting conundrum because just recently, when we had a--we requested a peer review of our agency from other agencies, and it consisted of a panel with people from London, Toronto, Boston, major systems

around the world. And the peer review panel came back, and they had several recommendations or suggestions on things we could improve upon. And in that discussion I immediately asked the gentleman heading the panel, I said, "Okay. Well, can you step back in your recommendations through the list of about 17 or so, and you've seen systems all around the world and around the nation. How would you characterize us in that--in that arena?"

And without blinking he said, "Oh, you're the best. You're the apple of our eye. You're the best in the country." These are just things we think, you know, they can be improved upon. And it was interesting because just about every media organization in town actually was fairly fair on that topic except one ran above-the-fold front-page piece about the fact that Metro had 17 things that they had to correct immediately. And it's interesting how, you know, in print you see it, it suddenly becomes real, and you don't ask the second question behind it.

And, unfortunately, I think that is the situation we have to deal with and continue to try to put our message out. And I think we're doing that. That was one of the reasons that last year we began doing these public forums,

for one reason because we can come directly to people and explain some of these situations that, unfortunately, in the print media don't get all the detail they would usually have.

Additionally, it seems that the negative stories that come out--I've noticed this phenomenon--that they seem to get reiterated in every negative story. There's a negative story in half the article, and the other half of the article reiterates the other seven negative stories that just past the event. But never do you see the positive story reiterated; it usually gets a one-day play.

So we really need people to keep perspective, and we're going to continue to go out directly to people to try to explain our side of the coin.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Mr. White?

MR. WHITE: I heard another part to Douglas' question kind of at the tail end there, and I think it is one of the keys because people, quite frankly, they really don't understand, and they don't understand because we haven't, I think, taken the time to explain it to them. It's really amazing how little people understand how the

system is designed and what it's design tolerances are, and how it can perform, and what the limits of the system are. And, quite frankly, we're now beginning to feel the distress of the system because of the loads that are in the system right now and what we're doing.

And I think where we can provide a better education for the citizens of the region, and, quite frankly, this is where the media can be of assistance, the extent to which, you know, they want to take the time to understand it. And my great hope is that at least that'll be one thing that'll eventually be written about us of all the other things that may be coming to be written about it. But the one thing that can be said is, is to educate people.

You know, the amount of service that we're running today compared to eight years ago is just mind-boggling. It is about 40 percent more. You know, we have 1500 trains running every day, 35,000 station stops every day, 1.2 million times a day that our doors open and close and take people on and off--lots of opportunity for mechanical failure, and if there is a mechanical failure the cascading effect of what it means to the person who's in the train behind it or on that train is enormous. And people don't

think of that in those terms because they say, well, you have your own right-of-way, you should have no problem.

And we try and tell people, you know, you got-- this is the equivalent of a system that's like an interstate highway, you know. We're running at interstate highway standards but we're a two-land country road, and we have no breakdown lanes and limited off ramps. That's the kind of think that we're dealing with here in terms of this is the go-right system, and it has to perform at an extremely high level to keep the trains running through the system to sustain through-put.

To make a long story short, I think this is a story that we can tell better to help people understand this issue because I know people scratch their head because I've seen it happen and saying, well, why did that train turn around over there? And now it's going in that direction, and I don't understand what you're doing.

Well, we're doing something called "service recovery." And that's where we can do a better job of helping, you know, educate people about that.

MODERATOR LEVEY: More comments on this issue, anybody?



[No response.]

Thank you.

Next question from Laurel Sonnenschein of Arlington. I'm going to abbreviate it, slightly, Lauren. "I recently lost an item on a bus," she says, "but because I had not noted the bus number, despite knowing the bus route number, where it was traveling to and the time and the place I got on and off, it was impossible to submit a trackable lost and found request, as is possible with the train. Isn't there something that can be done to track buses without having to memorize the bus number?"

Comments, panel?

MR. WHITE: Well, I mean whether she has the-- whether the person has the specific information about the specific bus, it certainly is very helpful in our recovery. But the fact of the matter is, you know, whatever is left on the bus I think, you know, generally, is, you know, is rounded up at the end of a run by our operators and is sent to our lost and found operation in Silver Spring. And I think sometimes people might not think that if I don't have the specific information that perhaps, you know, I have no

hope of ever retrieving this information--retrieving whatever was lost.

So I would encourage people, if you've lost something, you know, if you don't even have the specific information, don't give up because it's amazing what's ever there in lost and found. I mean it is amazing what is over there. And it's amazing what gets retrieved. And a lot of stuff does get retrieved. So call.

Call our basic number 637-7000. You can contact us, you know, through our--electronically, through our website, and any number of ways. And we have very diligent employees. They try pretty hard to find the rightful owner of something that's left behind, and I think they really do take pride in that, and I would encourage that you just call or contact us, and we'll do our best. Maybe we do have it.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Anybody else on the question of lost and found? Okay. Yes? Sorry.

MR. DEEGAN: I'll just add one thing. Mrs. Hudgins and I took a tour of that lost and found facility, and it's really remarkable the job that they do there. And Joe is--is Joe Galialis (ph) still here? I saw him around. He does a

fan--he's here somewhere--but they do a fantastic job. You go through there, it's just remarkable to see how they catalog every little thing on the day it came in. So if it gets turned in, there's a real good chance you're going to get it back.

MODERATOR LEVEY: So that's a point that needs to be emphasized: It may not have gotten turned in. And so, Laurel, it's possible that whatever you left on the train didn't even make it to the next stop.

Next question from Ana Pradus of Springfield. Ana writes: "One big concern I have for Northern Virginia is that due to the funding problems trains will get even more crowded, and people will go back to driving, and this will worsen traffic and air pollution. What should Northern Virginia be doing to secure a dedicated source of funding for Metro?" Political question. Politicians.

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: Well, I'll start it off because, certainly, that's been one of the key--and issues of this board is please pass on to your members of Congress how we have been getting some support from Congressman Tom Davis and others. But this is the key--if you'll pardon the

term--"the linch pin" for the future of this system working.

We've already reached that, to use an economic term, the elasticity. Folks aren't walking away from metro back onto the interstate; folks are seeing the metro system, this viable lifeline that was once a nice option to have that's now come to be the key part of any solution to keeping this region moving.

We've also identified, frankly, that 47 percent of the folks who are using this system during the peak of the rush are federal employees. So there's certainly a key interest in the reason for our congressional friends to step up and help us make the stable and reliable issue something that gets solved within the next two years.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Other comments? Yes, sir? Push your microphone, please.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: Okay. The congressional part is one part of it. The other part is your state. Do write your state legislators, write other people's state legislators, call your friends and have them write their state legislators. There is also this little thing called the gubernatorial campaign this fall. In fact, all hundred members of the House of Delegates are up, and the governor,

and the candidates for lieutenant government and attorney general. Let them all hear that it's one of the things we need in Northern Virginia. We need to have a solution to this problem or all the other problems are going to get more difficult. This is the opportunity, you know, to let them hear from people out there, and this is when they are paying attention.

So, you know, I hear politicians sometimes in the course of election listen to issues like that. I hear. So you know, this is the time, and that's the most important thing that can be done right now is get it out there.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Okay, thank you very much.

Good follow-up question here, same topic in a way from Katie Shinnors of Washington. She says: "Do you members of the board support the recommendation of the Blue Ribbon panel to implement a regional revenue source like a sales tax to provide a dedicated source of funding?" That sounds like a Prince George's question, doesn't it?

MR. SOLOMON: Thank you, Mr. Levey. It's like Dana said, we're trying to get all of the local politicians involved in testing the pulse of the citizens who sometime run the fever when they hear about taxes, new taxes. Part

of the Blue Ribbon panel was some sales tax or some component of some other type of taxes that would generate this revenue source. So we have to make certain that all of you, or at least a majority, is interested in that idea.

Mr. Johnson, the county executive from Prince George's County, has been advocating this issue and, hopefully, it will take on some steam, and we will get that dedicated funding source. Thank you.

MODERATOR LEVEY: More comments about dedicated funding? Yes, ma'am?

MS. HUDGINS: I--I think also we have to keep making sure that we are educating the community. And if we look at the bond referendum in Virginia, Northern Virginia, last year, there was the overwhelming support for that. I think because we made it clear as to how the funds were going to be used and the ability for the locality to be in charge of those funds, when we think about this opportunity in order for people to understand that as good as this system is, it does not rely upon that, it's our job to continue to not only educate the elected officials but to educate the public so that they can have that political support due it.

And I think you hear it more and more as the result of what has been said around the board. Will it be one particular source? I'm not sure, but I think the idea is that, jurisdictionally, we all have a source that we can count on.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Mm-hmm.

MS. HUDGINS: And having that support is going to be critical.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Okay. Mr. Kauffman, do you have a comment?

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: Just very briefly. The main thing that is a take-away from the Blue Ribbon panel is they got in technicolor the exact problem we are facing. There's no walking away from reality as they presented it, and we are going to be having a summit this summer where we put all those ideas out to the regions' leaders. And if we can coalesce on a single source grate, if we can find a way that as individual participants we can realize the necessary figure, grate, but the bottom line is, is we've talked about this quite frankly since I was a senior in college. And I'm rapidly heading toward being a senior citizen. We now have to quit talking about it and start doing it.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: I do support the--I do support the recommendations, the recommendations of--we still have a number of different levels. So it's not only one way that is proposed, but I would frankly support almost any of them, and I'd note that the number of bodies around the region on which elected officials serve have already endorsed it: the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, the Transportation Planning Board, the National Capitol region have all passed resolutions of support.

Some of the local governments have. My own county board has a resolution before it at our next meeting next week, which I am optimistic will pass, unanimously. So there is a lot of support out there, but it really has to, you know, build and turn into some actual legislation.

Unfortunately, at the local level in Virginia, we can't do very much about it other than say we're for it because we have the Dillon Rule (ph), and we have a state government that, you know, makes the decision about whether or not we get to even tax ourselves. And so that's the challenge.



We had a resolution that was presented by a Northern Virginia legislator, from Arlington actually, Senator Mary Margaret Whipole, that would--supported the Blue Ribbon panel findings just as a statement of support like these others, and, you know, that wound up getting stuck in some House committee, I think it was, and never coming out again. And that's the problem, is that we really have to get a lot of state legislators interested in doing something about this or it will never get out of Richmond, and the local communities don't get the option to make their own decision about what they want to do.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Yes, Dan?

MR. TANGHERLINI: I know--I know my boss, the Mayor, is very interested in participating in the summit this summer, and the city council, the D.C. City Council, is having a hearing the first week of May to talk about this issue and figure out what the implications are. We're very interested in some idea of, you know, rethinking the way we fund Metro, looking at regional sources, looking at additional federal sources with 48 percent of the peak riders being federal employees and them relying so heavily on that system.

And the reason why is we're running out of options, there is no extra space on the 14th Street Bridge for someone to switch out of the R (ph) in trying to get into. Our entire region is beginning to look at this issue, to stare down the sights of this, this broader issue that's facing our regional economy. If we can't keep our people moving, maybe people will move.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Okay. Other comments on this issue? Yes, sir?

MR. DEEGAN: I'll make one. As a citizen member of this board and not a politician, I think it's incumbent upon the Metro board to be good stewards of the money that we are receiving through fares and the subsidies that our jurisdictions are providing. If we can show the politicians that we are good stewards of that, and we're doing our fiduciary responsibility here, that funding will eventually come.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you, everybody. Just 15 minutes left in the evening. If you haven't submitted a question and you would like to, here's how: Blank yellow cards at either end of the hall.

Again from Marilyn Hennessey of Annandale who writes--well, this question has been thrown at Mr. White about 4 million times, here it comes: "Why are the escalators always breaking down? Dunn Loring was down for a six-week stretch, up for one week, and down for another six."

Well, that makes 12 of 13 that it was down. Mr. White?

MR. WHITE: I don't know the Dunn Loring answer off the top of my head, but it may very well be it was programmed to be down because we were making a capital investment in the escalators. And, quite frankly, we don't do a good enough job of telling people if something is out for an extended period of time it's out because we're making a modernization to it to make it better.

I mean this is a huge piece of the physical plant. It's very evident to people. So many of our customers transfer from one line to another so they go through a major transfer station, and with 900 or 1,000 pieces of what we call vertical transportation equipment, escalators and elevators, the chances are they're going to come across in

their trip experiencing one or more times this situation is happening.

I believe that we fell behind the curve there for a while in terms of the effect of under investment. We didn't quite get, I think, the business model right on how to do this. I feel very confident that we've now got the right business model, we've got the money lined up. It's a matter of just keeping our shoulder to the wheel and kind of grinding out what is a multiyear process of taking capital money, which takes a long time to rehabilitate an escalator, and to bring it up to a modern standard while at the same time making sure that we have enough manpower through both WMATA employees and people that we contract to act as our surrogates until we have enough qualified WMATA staff people to make sure that they're properly maintained.

We're putting canopies over all of our--well, most--as many of our escalators as money will provide. One of the great architectural splendors of the system was something that says let's not have an obtrusive thing that our customers see when they see the grander, spectacular architectural grandeur, and the surrounding grandeur of the community that our stations serve, but a

little simple problem with that, water and escalators don't mix very well, never mind keeping--getting customers wet.

So we've recently worked with the board, and in this community the Fine Arts Commission and everybody else that's got something to say about what the system looks like, to create a canopy which will weather-protect the vast majority of our external escalators. So, together with this multiyear improvement program of upgrading and modernizing the equipment, putting canopies over it to weather-protect them, making sure that we have the right trains and right number of staff people to adequately maintain something that we fell behind the curve on, we're in the process of implementing all of that.

I think people just need to be patient. I think the proof is in the numbers when we--when we go out there and we show the board this is what's happened in the last six-month period, and this is how it compares to what was done in the past, we show the improvement. It is very clear every time we modernize a piece of equipment how it performs afterwards is substantially better than how it performed beforehand.

I can't deny that people see it happening regularly, and I think--and I can't tell you you're not going to continue to see it happening regularly for some extended period of time. But I do agree that certainly there is one thing we can do a better job on is keeping people adequately informed about why a piece of equipment is down and when it's going to come back to service.

A recent improvement that we've just put forward starting, I think, in Silver Spring with the first modernization program there is it drives people crazy, and this may very well be the answer to Dunn Loring, and Dave Lacoss (ph) can perhaps answer that off the top of head. They go and they see a piece of equipment down and say, "Oh, schwoo, wow, it's finally back up and working," but, you know, a week later the next escalator is down. Well, that's programmed. It's intentional to do it that way, but if you use that station, you don't have a clue that that's what the plan is. And now we're starting to put up in the stations kind of a comprehensive picture of what people can see that says it's going to take, you know, maybe the next six months, and we're going to tackle each of these escalators in the following time table, but be patient because at the

end of this extended period you're going to get the benefit of that, and we're now getting that kind of comprehensive picture painted for people so they don't get kind of nickeled and dimed with this one's down and then three--you know, two months later that one's down.

Dave, do you have some answers on Dunn Loring off the top of your head?

DAVE: [Off mike.] Off the top of my head--[off mike.]--major repair--[off mike.]

MR. WHITE: Okay. So you think that--we will follow up with the person who wrote that question on the specifics of Dunn Loring and try you any more information we can about escalators.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you very much. Mr. Kauffman?

CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN: To a certain extent, escalators will always be an Achilles heel of the system, because, remember, years ago the decision was made to go deep under the earth to avoid impacting a lot of the monuments and the innercore. But something you should know about, particularly given the number of Orange line riders here this evening, that a short couple of weeks ago Linda

Smith had Dick White, Dr. Gridlock and I for a ride-through, an experience which you experience in rush hour on the Orange line. And one thing she was emphatic about as we go about the next iteration of the Vienna station is we need some stairs there.

And so let me assure you that we'll be working to make that happen because, certainly, folks coming home in the evening you need a quicker way to get out of the station and to move through it. That's really--Chris touched on this with the rail cars, the escalator issue. We're just really trying to move people as quickly and safely through the system as we can.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Okay, further comments, anybody?

[No response.]

From Terry Young: "Why are some stations so dark and filthy? Additionally, why do janitors use the same mop that they clean the floors with to clean the benches where we sit?"

Don't all answer at once. Mr. White.

MR. WHITE: Let me step out there and ask Paul Gillam, who's also here from our plant department to kind of supplement the answer.



We--generally speaking, we recognize, I think it's become quite clear, that the overall appearance of the station is getting darker and dingier. It's a product of an aging process; it's a product of a utilization process. And what we are doing in recognition of that is to say the resources that we have out there today just basically aren't keeping pace with what needs to be done.

There is a budget request in the pending budget that has gone to our board of directors, and they have made a tentative recommendation to move the recommended budget out to our jurisdictions for them to comment on. And then the board will then take those comments and adopt a budget by June of this year.

There is a lot of additional resource in there for special and additional efforts of special project crews to go through and to do some additional cleanup supplement, the kind of cleanups that are taking place in our stations. There is what is called a "relamping" program, you know, changing the bulbs in our stations, including the train arrival lights. You know, a lot of them are dark. Sometimes they don't always flash, and that's a product of the aging process as well.

So we recognize that the level of resources and efforts that have been used today aren't always keeping pace with the wear and tear that's going on in the system, and I'm hopeful that there will be a favorable response so that we can kind of get a shot in the arm to try and supplement some of the things that we're doing because we do see it. You know, we see what our customers see, we recognize that there needs to be some improvement put in there to kind of bring it up to what the original standards were.

Paul, do you have anything to say about the actual mixtures of cleaning compounds and things that we use?

MR. GILLAM: [Off mike.] No, but we try to keep them just as clean as possible--[off mike.] We have 80-some rail stations--[off mike.]--I will tell you, then I'll acknowledge therefore what we know not to clean where you sit with a mop--[off mike.]--but I'll tell you this: If you think about what we have, if you think about our system, there's not a finer system or a cleaner system anywhere in this world than the resources that we allocate out there on daily basis--[off mike.]--do an awful lot for a very small crew, and, you know, we can always do better.

One of the things that we've done is we've implemented--[off mike.]--come in there and clean and do all the things to try to take the station back to an almost new position--[off mike.]--excellent program. But you have to understand--[off-mike.].

MODERATOR LEVEY: Thank you. Any other comments on this one? Yes, sir?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: I'm going to mention, the trash cans are coming back, and that's coming soon, and maybe he could give us the timetable, but there will be trash cans in the system again.

MR. WHITE: Yeah, and one of the first things that our customers told us in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 is, "I'm scared that somebody's going to dump something in that trash can, an explosive. I feel insecure, get them out."

Well, we did that, and we put some bomb resistant trash cans in the mezzanines, and then we watched, particularly with the proliferation of daily newspapers, free handout daily newspapers, that they're back into the system and blowing all over the place, and that we just made a recommendation that the board has asked us to fast track to bring them back into platforms, and we're going to start

receiving them by the beginning of the summer and throughout the rest of this year so that all of our platform locations in our stations where you can't find a trash can today, you'll be able to find one that's specially designed to have the mind of the post 9/11 world that we live in.

So we did go in one direction, but I think it was at that--right at that moment in time the right thing to do with the circumstances that we were facing. We've now found that, you know, there is debris growing in--inside of the system and that we need to do something about it, and we're taking steps to do that.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Other comments?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: If I could follow up--

MODERATOR LEVEY: Yes, please.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: --and underscore something else that Mr. White said that, what you call "relamping" which that was a new word for me. I'm the one in charge of relamping in my household, generally, but what's behind that is a little bit more than just changing a lightbulb. And I think that that's something that is going to have a real noticeable effect that, you know, as I think the original question noted: that, you know, some of the stations really

do seem kind of dark and dingy. And, you know, what's the optimum level of light in those places? I think a lot of people would like to see it a little bit brighter.

And there is new technology available. I mean there are things available now to illuminate in much more efficient ways than was the case 30 years ago. And there are some specific technical proposals coming forward that will, I should think, make a big difference as we move through the system which will take some time. But I believe people will notice the difference when they see the kind of new lighting system that will make them, you know, just that much brighter. And this is one of the small things that's going to take some time to implement. But I think over, you know, the next few years you'll see more and more of that in the system and that it will make--will make a difference.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Okay. Anyone else? Hearing none.

Marilyn Hennetty again: "Why don't we have notice before paying our fares to help us know if the line is shut down, if delays occur, if elevators are out, et cetera? If a train is approaching, this would be helpful information as well."

Comments?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: Yup.

MODERATOR LEVEY: "Yup," he says. I told you they'd keep it under two minutes. Mr. White.

MR. WHITE: Yeah, I mean we recognize that. There are some steps that have been taken. There clearly needs to be more steps taken. We really, you know, we don't have enough signs, you know, in the what we call the free area of the station to be able--we have them in some locations. In some instances you can actually get some information before you pay a fare and get in. I think we need to, you know, figure out how we can broaden that, put more of them in there and even put them at the top before you actually start walking down to get into the station so that you can get the information so that you can make a choice.

And I know a lot of people just say, "I just need to be able to make a choice here. I got to know whether your best guess is it's 10 minutes, you know, it's 30 minutes, and let me make a choice, and give me the information before I pay my fare and get into the system."

We're trying to be--we're trying to be sensitive to that, and I think it goes beyond just putting the--having

the physical signs in more places where people can get that information so they can make the choice. We are trying to, if somebody gets trapped in the system and finds out that, "Oh, my god, something's going on and it's bigger than I can tolerate, I need to leave," well, we're trying to work inside of the organization to determine whether we can make a programming--a good programming change that doesn't open us up to other exposure where we can let you out.

If it happens within a certain amount of time and you've decided, "Oh, my god, I'm not going to use your right now," or, "I'm not going to use you today," the worst thing we can do is charge you a full fare when you change your mind to get out of there. So we're trying to do that.

And we're also trying to expand what has had I think only certain limited success today, but, you know, in our world of technology there's so many more opportunities to do that with all these PDA, personal digital display devices that everybody has, and they all come in different forms and fashions, there are these subscription services that people can sign up to that can give you shotgun instant messaging based upon what your individual preferences are, to say, "I want information on delays on the Orange line. I

want information on delay on escalators that are not working."

We have some of these things in effect. There are a limited number of population of people that are using them. I heard feedback that, you know, they have varying degrees of success or unsuccess with how good the information is and whether it's fast enough for people to make that decision. I, personally, think there's a lot more to scratch the surface there.

And we live in one of the most, you know, hi-tech communities in America, and we really, I don't think, in our industry have been lax in this and, certainly, in our community taking advantage of trying to partner with the private sector with people who haven't really looked at our marketplace, perhaps, with bringing technology in here. And for some reason because we're such, I think, a small business on the national scale, we're always the last to receive the benefits of technology.

We're hoping to make a recommendation to the board on a technology initiative where we kind of open ourselves up and say we're open for business. We want to partner with people who perhaps have not thought of us as a partner to



experiment with different kinds of technologies, and come one, come all. We want to hear what you have to say. We want to find out what your deals are. We want to partner with you with the consumer to see if we can work with you to get more use of technology in the hands of people and get reliable information to people faster, because we know information is power. And I think we're just scratching the surface right now.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Finale comments from anybody on that point? Yes, Dan?

MR. TANGHERLINI: Real quick. I know I love the enunciator down on the platform. I love the fact that I can see now the three trains or whatever the next trains are and carrying that out into the free area, and then carrying more information about the system status.

Certainly, a 9/11 in the core of the city, if we just had something out there that said, yes, we're open, that would have really helped us out a lot in getting better messages out about connecting, then. Connectivity of what your options are on metro bus if that rail line isn't working. That's something that the board has supported is getting better bus maps that relate to the metro rails so

that we can, you know, you can provide to you information about the entire system.

MODERATOR LEVEY: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much. That's going to conclude tonight's panel.

Panelists, thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you. I want to be sure you know that WMATA will conduct future meetings of this kind in September in Maryland, and then in November in the District. And for those of you who say Metro never did anything for you, wrong. Here is a free parking pass good for tonight only if you parked in any metro parking lot anywhere in the system. Must be used tonight, available at either end of the room in the same place that the yellow cards were available.

Thank you again. Travel safely.

(Whereupon, at 8:59 p.m.. the meeting concluded.)