

Riders' Advisory Council

February 12, 2025

Members Present:

Cole Staudt, Chair
Matthew Clark
Lucas Habosky
Brian Meyer
Thomas Shepard
Brandon Wu
William Way

Staff Present:

Bryna Helfer, Alternate Board Member/RAC Board Liaison
John Pasek, Deputy Board Secretary

Call to Order/Approval of Agenda:

Mr. Staudt called the February meeting of the Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:06 p.m.

Public Comment:

There were no comments from members of the public.

FY2026 Budget Hearing Recap:

Mr. Staudt said that he and Mr. Way attended the February 4th budget hearing in DC and said that he didn't hear a lot of comments on the budget, rather, comments focused on implementation of the Better Bus network and more aspirational project, such as longer operating hour and other initiatives.

Mr. Shepard said that he attended the February 3rd hearing in Alexandria and that there also weren't a lot of comments on the budget; comments focused on rider behavior issues, MetroAccess service and support for Metro's initiatives such as open payment.

Mr. Way told the group that the hearing was well-organized and had staff available to answer questions. He noted that several members of Metro's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) were in attendance, as well. He added that, in talking to riders in Arlington, safety while on transit is a frequent concern.

Mr. Staudt suggested that it may be a good idea to have someone from MetroAccess come to a future RAC meeting to provide an overview of the service. He noted that, while the AAC

takes the lead on MetroAccess issues, it would be helpful for RAC members to get a better understanding of the service.

Mr. Staudt noted that the RAC would have the opportunity to formalize its comments on Metro's proposed budget at its March meeting.

Annual Report Committee:

Mr. Staudt thanked Mr. Wu for his work thus far on the annual report and turned the floor over to him to discuss further. Mr. Wu thanked members for the outreach that they've already conducted; he said his initial goal was to have 75 contacts for the annual report and he's already received 74, so he may increase his goal number to 100. He said that he planned to wrap up the outreach portion of the report by February 24th and share a summary of the comments and comment themes by the end of that week, and then circulate a draft report around March 10th, which would give the group the remainder of March to discuss the report.

Mr. Wu told the group that he had sent out the outreach form to the ANCs of the two previous neighborhoods where he lived, but hesitated sending the form to the broader Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and the 730dc newsletter since they have such a large audience.

Mr. Staudt said that he supported sending the outreach form out far and wide, and then sorting through the comments after they sent in. He explained that he had sent out the outreach form to several groups, including chambers of commerce, an organization representing restaurant workers, and other groups that were more transit-focused, and that he hoped this would result in comments that capture a broad range of perspectives.

Mr. Way said that he would be sending out the form to groups in Arlington, including those that represent older adults and its Parks and Recreation Department. Mr. Shepard discussed doing outreach to

Mr. Habosky said that when he was compiling the report last year, he tried to balance his outreach – if he reached out to three people in DC, for example, he would reach out to a similar number of people in Maryland and Virginia, as well, and he is planning to use a similar approach this year. Mr. Staudt noted that if everyone reaches out to their own networks, this should result in contacting a broad range of people.

RAC Bylaws Update:

Dr. Helfer told the group that the Board approved the proposed changes to the RAC's Bylaws, including allowing the RAC to hold virtual meetings, allowing an Alternate Director to serve as the RAC's liaison to the Board, and changing the composition of the RAC. Mr. Pasek explained that the change increased the number of jurisdictionally-appointed seats to three per jurisdiction for a total of nine, and one new At-Large seat reserved for a high school student.

Dr. Helfer suggested that members share the application with their networks and encouraged members to think about areas that didn't currently have representation on the RAC. Mr. Pasek told the group that he hoped to conduct outreach in late February and early March, then conduct interviews with the goal of having candidates appointed by the Board at its March meeting, which would allow them to participate in the April in-person RAC meeting and the RAC elections.

In response to a question from Mr. Simone, a member of the public, Mr. Pasek explained that prospective members don't need to be nominated and provided an overview of the application review and interview process. In response to a follow-up question from Mr. Simone, Dr. Helfer noted that the RAC tries to appoint DC members that represent different neighborhoods and use a variety of Metro services.

Outreach/Member Report Out:

Mr. Staudt noted that, during his commute that morning, the bus service that Metro said would be running (Route 62, 63) didn't show up on BusETA or MetroPulse. He said that he hoped to have staff at an upcoming meeting to discuss Metro's snow response.

Mr. Habosky said that he had a similar experience during the previous month's snowstorm. He also noted that he has been going into the office more frequently and riders have noticed and expressed concerns about recent increases in crowding on Metrorail, especially on the Red Line during the morning rush hour.

Mr. Wu said that he had heard riders express a desire for Metrobus to transition to snow service plans earlier to better match advertised service with what's actually being provided. He added that he had received comments from Georgetown students that the schedules for buses service the Georgetown campus don't match up with class times, though he said that he hoped that the implementation of Better Bus would result in more frequent service, making this less of an issue. Lastly, he said that he'd heard requests for Metro's year-end ridership review, "Metro Rewind" to allow riders to show their ridership reflecting the use of multiple SmarTrip® cards, since many riders have multiple cards in order to take advantage of SmartBenefits from their employer.

Mr. Simone asked who was responsible for clearing sidewalks around bus stops after snowstorms. Mr. Staudt said that Metro is only responsible for snow clearing at bus stops that it owns, such as bus stops at Metrorail station bus bays. Mr. Simone asked whether bus stops with shelters and real-time information were maintained by Metro. Mr. Pasek said that he believed those shelters were maintained by the company that has the advertising contract for the shelters, but that he'd need to check further. Mr. Wu noted that he had heard several complaints about the National Park Service not clearing snow from bus stops during the January snowstorm.

Mr. Mendelsohn, another member of the public, said that, based on what he had heard during the most recent snowstorm, decisions to modify or suspend service were being

made on a case-by-case basis, sometimes by individuals operators, but that MetroAlerts didn't provide that level of specificity for customers. He added that there were instances where Metrobuses were stuck in the snow, which suggested that Metro should transition to snow service plans earlier in order to get ahead of the weather.

Mr. Staudt said that these issues could be discuss with staff at the March RAC meeting.

Adjournment:

Without objection, Mr. Staudt adjourned the meeting at 6:49 p.m.

DRAFT