

Riders' Advisory Council

April 3, 2019

Members Present:

Lorraine Silva, Vice Chair, Virginia
Clarence Flanders, Vice Chair, At-Large
Rob Cavese, At-Large
Valerie Cook, District of Columbia*
Andrew Kierig, Virginia
Rebekah Mason, Maryland*
Colin Reusch, District of Columbia
Patrick Sheehan, At-Large/Accessibility Advisory Committee Representative
Yvette Washington, Maryland
Wil White, At-Large

Other Individuals Present:

Christian Dorsey, Metro Board Member*
John Pasek, Assistant Board Secretary, Metro
Morgan Bassford, Communications Specialist, Metro
Marc Bowman, Communications Specialist, Metro
Jim Hamre, Director, Office of Bus Planning and Scheduling, Metro
Jeff Stoll, Project Construction Manager, Parsons
Michael Weinberger, Project Manager, Office of Bus Planning and Scheduling

* - Participated via telephone

Call to Order:

Ms. Silva called the April 2019 meeting of the Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

The December 5, 2018 meeting minutes were approved as corrected, with Ms. Silva, Mr. Kierig and Mr. Cavese abstaining.

The March 6, 2019 meeting minutes were approved as presented.

Approval of Agenda:

The agenda was approved as presented.

Blue/Yellow Line Platform Reconstruction Project:

Jim Hamre, provided an overview of the Blue/Yellow Line platform reconstruction project, which will close all Metrorail stations south of National Airport from May 25 – September 2, 2019, with some additional work continuing after Labor Day that may affect, but not shut down service. His presentation reviewed the need to reconstruct the platforms at these stations, regional coordination on developing transportation alternatives during the closure, and the communications plan to advise riders of both the closure and alternate travel options. Mr. Hamre noted that an additional shuttle, operating express from Landmark Mall to the Pentagon, has been added to the service plan.

Ms. Silva then opened the floor to questions from members of the Council.

Mr. Reusch said that it appears that Metro has learned lessons from previous shutdowns. He asked whether there were efforts underway to provide riders information on the rail schedule and ensure that trains maintain their schedules and headways during the closure. He said that during trackwork, the platform displays don't always show when trains are arriving. Mr. Hamre said that Metro will be working with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) to inform airport travelers about the closure. He noted that he can't make promises about the accuracy of the PIDS (Passenger Information Display Signs) in displaying train arrival information, but he noted that National Airport is a three-track station, which will allow Metro to maintain regular service and headways (every four minutes during rush hour and every six minutes off-peak) north of the station.

Mr. Weinberger added that he meets regularly with rail scheduling staff and have brought similar concerns to their attention. He added that he has started meeting with staff that trains station managers so that they will be able to provide information to customers. He said that Metro will be running shuttle service on the weekend of May 4-5, which will allow for training of street supervisors, who will oversee bus operations, and that he has brought potential operational issues to the attention of RAIL staff.

Mr. Kierig noted that the Summer 2018 Red Line closure was required to fix issues from previous SafeTrack work and asked what kind of Quality Assurance (QA) strategies Metro has in place for this work to ensure that any work that's completed as part of the shutdown won't need to be redone later on. Mr. Hamre said that the 2018 Red Line work was not a redo of previous projects, but rather was work in addition to what was completed during SafeTrack., and that Metro has added QA staff, as well as conducting upper-level management meetings to review the scope of the project to ensure that all work is completed correctly. Mr. Stoll noted that the contractor is required to put a QA plan in place as part of the contract, and has added staff to address quality issues.

Mr. Keirig asked whether there were any other improvements that Metro would be undertaking, in addition to the platform reconstruction, during the summer shutdown. Mr. Stoll noted that Metro will be working on elevator improvements and is also trying to include escalator improvements during the shutdown period, though those are not included in the

current project scope. Mr. Hamre added that Metro will also be installing no-skid tiles, new windscreens that have the capability to support additional customer information and replacement of bus shelters at the stations' bus loops. He noted that there will also be projects that deal with lighting improvements at the closed stations.

Mr. Keirig also asked about the difference between the capacity of the planned shuttle buses and the number of riders who currently use the rail service. Mr. Hamre noted that, based on experience from previous shutdowns, about 30-50% of rail customers are expected to use a different method to reach their destinations, and that the planned shuttle capacity, along with enhancements to regular bus service, will amount to approximately 60% of normal rail ridership. He noted that Metro will have the ability to add "surge capacity" for the first days of the shutdown and on days when it rains. Mr. Hamre added that the design for the shuttle service assumed that each bus would be approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ full; he said that if each bus carried a standing load, metro would be able to accommodate almost 100% of regular rail ridership.

Mr. Wienberger discussed the reporting and quality assurance checks that will be compiled as part of the project. In response to a question from Mr. Reusch, Mr. Hamre said that these reports will be publicly available as a way to reassure customers in advance of later shutdowns.

Mr. White asked when street teams will be distributing information on the shutdown to riders. Ms. Bassford responded that the plan is to have street teams distribute information on the project and alternative transportation at each station at least five times for customer notification, over different times of day (morning, midday, evening, weekend). She added that street teams will also be on hand at each station from 5 a.m. until 8 p.m. during the first several days of the project. Mr. Hamre added that Metrobus will also have supervisors on hand during all periods of the shutdown monitoring shuttle operations, and they will also be able to provide customer information. Mr. Bowman provided additional information about signage during the duration of the project. Mr. Hamre said that Metro received feedback from the Accessibility Advisory Committee on signage and will be incorporating accessible features into the signage.

Mr. White asked whether Metro will also have project information at other stations outside of the shutdown zone, including Metro Center. Ms. Bassford said that Metro will have information at all stations served by the Blue and Yellow lines, which will be installed in early May. Ms. Bassford said that Metro is looking at providing information in railcars, and notification at station manager kiosks. Mr. Hamre added that Metro will be providing whiteboards to display additional information, which was another suggestion from the AAC.

Mr. Sheehan said that, based on the presentation that the Accessibility Advisory Committee received earlier in the week, he felt that members of the disability community would be well taken care of during the shutdown. He added that in-person assistance is especially helpful in providing assistance to individuals with disabilities, along with everyone else. Mr. Hamre noted that Metro had learned lessons from other shutdowns and will have specific vehicles on-hand to accommodate larger mobility devices that could not be accommodated on regular shuttles.

Ms. Mason said that she appreciated that Metro was incorporating lessons learned from earlier project and that it had created an alternative trip planner to help riders figure out how to get around the shutdown. She asked what percentage of street teams that will have members who are fluent in other languages and in what languages will printed materials be available. Ms. Mason also asked about the number of accessible buses available for the shuttles and about parking for riders at the closed stations.

Mr. Bowman said that bilingual (Spanish/English) staff will be available at all times, and that Metro is also looking into other language needs, specifically noting the large number of Amharic-speaking riders that use the King Street station. He added that all brochures and printed material will be available in English and Spanish, and that Metro is working with local governments to determine whether there any other languages that may require printed materials, and that brochures will include phone numbers where individuals can get information in other languages. Ms. Bassford added that signage will be placed at Fort Totten.

Mr. Hamre added that, during peak times, there will be up to 116 buses in service, and there will be ADA-accommodation buses at each station (6). He said that roughly half of the buses on the Yellow Line shuttle will be low-floor transit buses, and that DASH will be using transit buses for the Blue Line shuttle, which it will operate. Mr. Wienberger said that the parking fees will be waived at the closed stations for the duration of the project, and Metro is working through the policy for each station regarding long-term parking. He noted the specific challenges with regard to the Huntington station, which will have shuttles running between the two station entrances. Mr. Wienberger also provided information about the planning involved to ensure that facilities and shuttle bus stops would be ADA-accessible during the shutdown.

Ms. Mason said that she appreciated staff being open to producing materials in other languages and discussed the District of Columbia's language access requirements in the context of Metro providing materials in other languages for riders.

Mr. Hamre provided additional information about parking availability and said that Metro will be suspending the non-rider free for parking at station parking facilities in the construction zone and is looking at possibly reducing parking charges further to encourage people to park at stations and use the shuttle service.

In response to a question regarding the start of construction, Mr. Hamre explained that Metro will be relocating Kiss n'Ride facilities at the stations beginning in April, leading up to construction beginning in May.

Ms. Silva asked whether the buses will be run on headways or if they will wait to fill up before leaving each station. Mr. Hamre said that during peak periods, buses will run every at least every five minutes, if not more frequently, and added that the shuttle bus operation will be mostly headway-based.

Ms. Silva also asked why additional buses are not being added to regular bus routes within the project area outside of peak periods. Mr. Hamre responded that Metro will add midday service on some routes, but that staff is confident that there is sufficient capacity on Route 10A during off-peak and weekend times to accommodate riders. He noted that Metro will be running additional service on Metroway during the weekends (every 15 minutes vs. every 20 minutes)

Mr. Sheehan asked whether Metro is also planning for a Red Line shutdown this summer to accommodate Purple Line construction. Mr. Hamre said that there will not be a Red Line shutdown during summer 2019 to accommodate Purple Line construction, but that may be coming later.

Mr. Keirig asked about the availability of shuttle schedules on Metro's online trip planner and whether shuttle information would also be made available on transit apps. He also asked questions that had been submitted by individuals listening to the livestream of the meeting:

- Why wasn't ongoing escalator replacement work at Huntington Van Dorn Street postponed until the shutdown to minimize customer inconvenience?
- Whether shuttle buses will be using the dedicated bus lanes on Route 1?

Mr. Weinberger said that Metro is currently working on building the GTFS feed for the shuttle services. He said that Metro is working to ensure that shuttle information is available on Apple and Google maps, and that the information will also be made available through Metro's data stream. He added that

Mr. Stoll said that the Huntington and Van Dorn escalator work is being coordinated with the shutdown and will finish prior to the shutdown. He noted that the escalator work is part of a separate contract, but that some elevator work will be integrated into the platform reconstruction project. Mr. Hamre noted that demolition work on the Huntington South garage will need to take place after the platform reconstruction project.

Mr. Hamre said that the shuttle buses will not use the busway along Route 1 because it would not provide a travel time benefit and shuttle bus operators are not trained to operate in the busway. He noted that Metro also didn't want to disrupt existing Metroway operations by introducing shuttle buses into the busway, especially since additional Metroway service will be operating during the shutdown.

Dan Palmeri, a member of the public, express his concern that shuttle buses will be full by the time they reach Braddock Road station and suggested that Metro should start some buses from Braddock Road to ensure that riders there can be accommodated. Mr. Hamre suggested that riders have the option of using Metroway service, which begins at Braddock Road, but that in reviewing shuttle demand, Metro doesn't expect buses will be full by the time they reach Braddock Road. He also noted that having shuttles with multiple starting/ending points increases complexity for operators and riders.

Mr. Palmeri also expressed his concerns about the shuttle service based on his experience during the Veterans' Day Blue/Yellow line shutdown, when he and other riders were stranded at Pentagon City waiting for buses. Mr. Hamre noted that Metro had used its experience from the Veterans' Day shutdown to plan for the summer shuttles and noted that it had established two separate shuttle routes – one to/from Crystal City and one to/from National Airport – as a way to mitigate traffic impacts such as the ones that affected shuttle service over the Veterans' Day weekend.

Bus Transformation Project Update:

Mr. White provided an update on the Bus Transformation Project. He explained that there are many entities involved in the development of the plan, which has made it difficult to put a plan together. He said that the study planners are taking information from previous studies and from study participants to synthesize into an overall plan and expected that staff would come back to study participants by May 1st with a draft plan. He noted that any recommendations would need to be smaller-scale to begin with, due to the complexity involved, and would need to scale up from there.

Mr. Sheehan said that, based on participation from AAC members on the study, he expects to have a draft report on May 6th, with final recommendations to be provided in September. Mr. White said that he agreed with Mr. Sheehan's timeline regarding the release of the draft report and said he will keep the group informed about the study's progress to the extent that he is able.

2019-2020 Council Officer Elections:

Ms. Silva said that the next item on the agenda was the election of officers for the coming year and asked whether there were any candidates. She explained that elections would first be held for Council chair, and then, depending on the jurisdiction of his/her residence, elections would be held for the two vice chair positions. She added that members appointed at-large were eligible to run for office and would represent the jurisdiction where he or she lived.

Council Chair:

Ms. Silva then nominated Mr. Reusch for the position of chair; Ms. Cook seconded this nomination. Mr. Reusch said that he didn't feel that his schedule would allow him to meaningfully carry out the duties of chair. There was further discussion about the roles and responsibilities of the chair position.

Ms. Mason said that she had planned to nominate Mr. Flanders for the chair position. Mr. Flanders said that he could not accept the nomination due to other obligations.

Mr. Kierig said that he wanted to nominate Ms. Silva for the chair position. Ms. Silva said that, since she will be stepping down from the RAC at the end of December, she wouldn't be able to serve a full term and therefore would need to decline the nomination.

Mr. Reusch agreed to accept the nomination to be the Council's new chair and was elected unanimously to the position.

Ms. Silva explained that since Mr. Reusch is from the District of Columbia, the Council would need to elect vice chairs from Maryland and Virginia.

Maryland Vice Chair:

Mr. Sheehan nominated Mr. White to the position of Maryland vice chair, with Mr. Kierig seconding the nomination. Mr. White accepted the nomination and was elected unanimously to the position.

Virginia Vice Chair:

After discussion about Ms. Silva's ability to complete a full term as the Virginia vice chair, Ms. Mason nominated Mr. Kierig to the position. This nomination was seconded by Ms. Washington. Mr. Kierig accepted the nomination and was elected unanimously to the position.

Announcements:

Mr. Pasek said that Mr. Dorsey has asked how RAC members to consider how they could amplify communications efforts that Metro will be undertaking as part of the upcoming Blue/Yellow line shutdown. He also announced an upcoming emergency drill on April 28th at Friendship Heights and said that he would send members information via email about participating.

There was further discussion about the process for developing the Council's monthly report to the Board.

Adjournment:

Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.