

Riders' Advisory Council

November 7, 2018

Members Present:

Bob Fogel, Vice Chair, Maryland
Valerie Cook, District of Columbia
Rebekah Mason*, Maryland
Debbie MacKenzie*, Virginia
Colin Reusch*, At-Large
Pat Sheehan, Accessibility Advisory Committee Representative
Lorraine Silva, Vice Chair, Virginia
Wil White, Maryland

** - Participated via telephone*

Others Present:

Christian Dorsey, Principal Director, WMATA Board of Directors
Yetunde Olumide, Managing Director, OMBS, WMATA
John Pasek, Assistant Board Secretary, WMATA

Call to Order:

Mr. Fogel called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.

Approval of Agenda:

The agenda was approved without objection.

Approval of Minutes:

The October 3, 2018 minutes were approved without objection, with Ms. Cook abstaining.

GM/CEO's Proposed Fiscal Year 2020 Budget:

Ms. Olumide provided an overview of the General Manager/CEO's Proposed FY2020 budget, including subsidy calculations and new service initiatives designed to attract and increase ridership.

Mr. Reusch said that he thinks some of the budget proposals are a great step forward, especially proposed service improvements designed to increase ridership. He asked whether there were any other improvement alternatives developed that weren't included in the Proposed Budget, such as efforts to mitigate delays from weekend trackwork.

Ms. Olumide explained that Metro's Planning Department is continually reviewing options, and that the four initiatives presented were the ones that rose up to budget-level discussion. She said that she can check with staff about options mentioned, such as short-turning some trains to mitigate delays or reduce headways during trackwork. Mr. Reusch noted that Metro is mostly losing ridership on the

weekends, when there is extensive trackwork, and that reliability and schedule adherence is a large driver of customer choice. He said that he would be interested in seeing the budget analysis of those options alongside the four options put forward. Ms. Olumide said trackwork will need to continue, but that she could follow-up with Metro's Planning Department for more analysis and information about other strategies.

Mr. Sheehan asked whether this presentation had been provided to the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). Ms. Olumide noted that the Board was just presented with the GM/CEO's Proposed Budget last week, so it hasn't been presented to the AAC yet.

In response to a comment from Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Olumide noted that paratransit was presented as a "risk" in the FY2020 budget due to the possibility of higher operating costs. She explained that Metro's FY2019 budget was approved while Metro was still in the middle of negotiations for its paratransit contract, and that the cost of that contract ended up being higher than expected, largely as a reflection of the region's robust economy. She said that Metro ended up having to add \$37 million in subsidy in its paratransit program for FY2019 to reflect these costs and there is a risk those same factors could raise costs in FY2020.

Mr. Sheehan asked whether savings from the AbilitiesRide paratransit program were factored in to the FY2020 budget projections. He also asked, if the cost weekend rail trips were reduced to a flat \$2 fare as proposed in the budget, whether MetroAccess fares would then be capped at \$4 (twice the fare), and whether that fare change was included in the budget projections.

Ms. Olumide explained that the AbilitiesRide program began in FY2019 and was factored into the FY2019 budget, though the program ramped up more slowly than anticipated during FY2019. She said that it is expected that the program will continue into FY2020, and now that the program has had additional time to develop, Metro should see increased savings, which have been included in the FY2020 budget projections.

Ms. Mason said that she feels that the proposed weekend \$2 flat fare is a disservice to riders who purchase passes, such as the SelectPass, and that Metro should instead focus on increased weekend reliability rather than lowering fares. She also asked about the cost of extending all Red Line trains to Glenmont. Ms. Olumide responded that the proposal to extend all Red Line trains to Glenmont is expected to cost approximately \$3.2 million annually, while bringing in around \$2.0 million in new revenue, for a net annual cost of \$1.2 million.

Mr. White said that he understood the idea of extending rush hour until 10 a.m., but asked whether anyone had considered riders who wait to travel after rush hour in order to pay the lower, off-peak fare. Ms. Olumide said that the hours Metro charges peak/off-peak fares would not change, even though there would be an increase in service after the traditional rush hour period. Mr. White also inquired whether Metro had plans to review its budget mid-year, assuming the budget is adopted as presented. Mr. Olumide said that Metro's Planning and Operations departments are looking for ways to enhance ridership and would monitor these initiatives throughout the life of the program. She explained that if a program was either not working as well as intended or even if it was working better than intended, staff would come back to the Board to review it and make any necessary changes. She added that most pilot programs run for approximately six months, though others run for an entire year.

Mr. Fogel asked the amount of increased ridership Metro expected from the four initiatives put forward in the proposed budget. Ms. Olumide responded that each of the proposals had a projected ridership increase associated with it; the total number of new trips for all four initiatives is 3.6 million annual new trips.

In response to an additional question from Mr. Fogel, Ms. Olumide said that she didn't have an exact number of new employees proposed to be added in this budget, but that she could provide that information.

Mr. Fogel also asked about the planned opening of Phase 2 of the Silver Line. Ms. Olumide explained that while Phase 2 of the Silver Line is expected to open for passenger service in FY2021, the FY2020 budget includes start-up costs associated with preparing for the service.

Mr. Sheehan asked whether paratransit service would be extended to Loudoun County once Phase 2 of the Silver Line opens. Ms. Olumide said that Loudoun County hasn't formally requested an extension of paratransit service from Metro at this point, and so the costs shown in the FY2020 budget do not include paratransit costs.

Mr. Sheehan also noted that a section of the Red Line was shut down for an extended period over the summer and asked whether Metro had information on the shutdown's impact to ridership. He noted that there is another planned large-scale shutdown of Metrorail service next summer and inquired whether the ridership projections in the Proposed FY2020 budget factored in this shutdown. Ms. Olumide responded that the proposed budget's ridership projections include the impacts of planned shutdowns in FY2019/FY2020 for platform repair work.

Mr. Fogel thanked Ms. Olumide for her presentation and then turned the floor over to Mr. Dorsey for the next agenda item.

Proposed Revisions to RAC Bylaws:

Mr. Dorsey explained that the Board decided not to move ahead with dissolving the RAC. He told the members that there were some conditions to the Board's continued support of the Council. He said that there was a need to minimize the amount of staff time spent on recruitment, so the proposal that will come before the Board the following week would have the RAC consist of eleven members – two each from Maryland, the District of Columbia and Virginia, four at-large members, and a representative from the Accessibility Advisory Committee. He added that the proposal would also take the RAC away from having a committee structure; instead it would exist as a committee-of-the-whole, meeting monthly, which would allow all members to take part in discussions on all issues.

Mr. Dorsey noted that the proposed Bylaws have not yet been presented to the Board, but explained that they also streamlined other issues, such as rescinding the policies regarding RAC members speaking to the media and rescind the Standards of Conduct. He added that once the Board's RAC liaison is identified, a procedural document, covering items such as communication, will need to be developed.

Mr. Sheehan said that the AAC has two additional subcommittees to help it complete its work and asked whether something similar was possible for the RAC. Mr. Dorsey responded that the proposed was for the RAC to function as a committee-of-the-whole and to meet monthly, and that it would be up to the RAC, in consultation with the Board liaison to determine any different structures.

Ms. Cook thanked Mr. Dorsey for his work on behalf of the RAC. She asked, if the RAC's job is to provide insights to the Board, whether the Board would be better served if currently-serving members resigned so that the Board could appoint new members. Mr. Dorsey replied that the diversity of how the current members use the system is strong. He said that one of the key reasons that the RAC was continued was because the new structure addressed the concerns the amount of staff time required for recruitment, and if RAC members all resigned, this concern would resurface.

Ms. Cook also noted that, for many volunteer boards, the members themselves recruit new members. Mr. Dorsey said that could be a good issue for the RAC to address, if it feels that this issue is within its capacity.

In response to questions from Mr. White, Mr. Dorsey said that the proposed RAC Bylaws are expected to be circulated in the coming week, in advance of Board approval on November 15th, and that he expects the Board to also select a RAC liaison at that meeting. In response to an additional question from Mr. White, Mr. Dorsey said that the proposed Bylaws do not include any language that would change the RAC's start time.

Ms. Mason said that she was concerned about the proposal to reduce membership to eleven and asked whether there would be the possibility to raise the number of members to 16 to allow for attrition or other issues so as not to impede the Council's work. Ms. Mason also expressed her concern about the proposed elimination of subcommittees. She noted that it was at these meetings where the RAC is able to get its work accomplished, which is difficult to do during monthly RAC meetings. Mr. Dorsey explained that the RAC needed to trust that the structure proposed for the RAC is necessary for it to continue, at least at present. He said that while the Board has a better sense of the RAC's purpose now than it did a month ago, it still needs to be convinced that the group can operate effectively and efficiently, and that if there were changes to the proposal, to allow for more members or additional meetings, for example, the Board may reconsider its decision.

Ms. Silva noted that one of the benefits of the RAC's larger size was the diversity of experience and knowledge its members possessed, and asked whether the RAC would be able to invite individuals with specific expertise to participate. Mr. Dorsey responded that there wasn't any reason that someone with specific expertise couldn't be invited to participate in discussions on specific topics. He added that if there is an individual with a specific competency that the RAC could recommend for membership, especially as an at-large member, that would be something that the Board would consider. He noted that what the Board needs from the RAC is not for its members to be experts, but rather, it needs the RAC to have members who are living the experience of riding the Metro system.

Ms. MacKenzie said that she agreed with Mr. Dorsey's recommendation that the RAC should look at the current elimination of its committees as a way to ensure its long-term survival. She said she was also interested in learning the cost for RAC staff support. Mr. Dorsey said that he also thought that was a good idea.

In response to Ms. MacKenzie's comments, Mr. Dorsey noted that RAC committee meetings require public notice and meeting staffing, and explained that just because the group won't have subcommittees, that doesn't mean that the RAC is prohibited from doing any work between its meetings. He noted that one of the issues in the discussion of retaining the RAC was the lack of clear data about the RAC's benefits and costs, and that the simplified structure will make this information

clearer. He noted the value of the insights that the RAC provides as part of its discussions and talked about how the RAC's discussions could be used as a clear argument of the RAC's value.

Mr. Reusch said that he understood the terms and conditions for the RAC moving forward and that he thought there were ways for the RAC to accomplish its work without a committee structure. He said that there needs to be an assurance that there is robust engagement between the RAC and the Board, and that he has concerns about how the Board values rider feedback in general.

In response to a question from Mr. Sheehan asked the development of a work plan, Mr. Dorsey said that he doesn't think that there are any set expectations from the Board yet regarding a work plan, so this could be developed in coordination with the RAC liaison.

In response to a question from Ms. Mason regarding appointments, Mr. Dorsey and Mr. Pasek explained the proposal for reappointments to be made by the Board in December. Mr. Pasek explained that new members would have two-year terms, and that there was flexibility regarding reappointments and term limits.

Ms. Cook asked whether it would be helpful if the RAC expressed its support for the proposed new Bylaws, and Mr. Dorsey responded that it wouldn't hurt for the group to weigh in with its support.

Ms. Cook then moved that the RAC express its support for the new proposed structure. This motion was seconded by Mr. Sheehan, who noted that the AAC supports the RAC and that the work products that are the combination of both groups' work are valuable. Mr. Fogel said that while he agrees with the idea of expressing support to the Board, he would like to see a final proposal before endorsing it.

Mr. Fogel noted that during his and Ms. Kortum's conversations the previous summer with Mr. Dorsey about the RAC's structure, there was discussion about having committees that would have allowed for committee meetings and a full RAC meeting, if both were to take place on the same evening.

Mr. Fogel noted that during his tenure on the RAC, there had never been a requirement for staff to be present at subcommittee meetings, and he doesn't think that this is necessarily a valid concern. He said that staff should prepare an agenda, develop minutes and attend meetings. He said that there may be other opportunities to address the staff support issue.

Mr. Fogel continued that there needs to be specific reassurance that the RAC gets feedback on its recommendations that that needs to be memorialized somewhere. Mr. Dorsey said that he didn't think that the Bylaws were the appropriate place to memorialize such an agreement, and that it was a topic best addressed by the Board liaison, once he is appointed, so that he can agree to it and be responsible for it.

Mr. Dorsey also discussed the requirements for staffing RAC meetings, and explained that the more meetings the RAC has, and the impact that has on the staff coordinator's other work, the more likely it would jeopardize the effort to retain the RAC.

Mr. Fogel said that the proposed Bylaws would reduce the overall size of the RAC from twenty-one to eleven, and, while he isn't sure the best number of members for the RAC to be viable, he has concerns about the viability of a smaller group, especially if not all members attend meetings. Mr. Dorsey said that many people believe that smaller is better, which is one of the reasons behind the reduction in size.

In response to a question from Mr. Fogel, Mr. Dorsey said that everyone currently on the RAC would have the option to be reappointed to new terms.

There was further discussion about recruitment and the size the of the RAC. Mr. Dorsey suggested that the RAC recruit not only for current vacancies, but also have prospective appointees identified so that any vacancies can be filled quickly.

In response to a question from Mr. White about the RAC chair's monthly report to the Board, Mr. Dorsey said that this issue has been given some thought. He noted that when Ms. Kortum delivers the report to the Board, she often doesn't get questions from members. He said that, if the Board liaison were to deliver the report, the Board would have some forethought into the issue that the RAC is addressing.

Ms. Silva noted that Mr. Goldman had requested that the RAC provide input on a couple discrete topics, and asked what would happen to these requests. Mr. Dorsey said that these requests should filter through the Board liaison.

Mr. Dorsey then laid out a process for the adoption of the proposed RAC Bylaws, in which a draft copy would be provided to the Board and its feedback would be collected within the next 48 hours, and then a draft copy would be provided to RAC members before the weekend. He explained that there may need to be amendments to the proposal made at the Board meeting, depending on the feedback received, though he doesn't expect significant issues, given the changes.

Mr. Fogel asked whether the current chair would continue her term if she continue to serve. Mr. Dorsey said that he wouldn't have any objection to that.

Mr. Dorsey thanked members for their patience throughout the review process.

Mr. Sheehan then moved to table discussion on Ms. Cook's motion. Without objection, this motion was approved. Ms. Cook noted that this means that this proposal will go to the Board without the RAC's endorsement. Mr. Fogel said that he will be attending the Board meeting to pass along the RAC's comments; Mr. Reusch noted that Mr. Dorsey will also be able to pass along the RAC's thoughts and comments.

Ms. Mason asked if Mr. Fogel could share his statement to the Board in advance of the meeting. Mr. Fogel agreed to do so.

Adjournment:

Mr. Fogel adjourned the meeting at 8:38 p.m.