

Rider's Advisory Council (RAC) Review

WMATA Board of Directors (Board) and WMATA staff recently underwent an analysis in determining how the RAC can better serve the Board and WMATA riders. We appreciate this request for analysis regarding opportunities to improve the RAC's ability to advise the Board and WMATA staff (Staff) and to overall improve the WMATA rider experience as we are charged to do as the RAC. We have consulted the SWOT analysis and our bylaws to develop input into how best the RAC and Board and Staff and coordinate to enhance the relationship toward an even better WMATA for all.

RAC SIZE

At this time, we do not propose any changes to the size of the Riders' Advisory Council. However, to prepare for any Board recommended changes, the composition of the RAC should be more flexible. The RAC should eliminate the traditional quota of members from city and county level jurisdictions. Instead we propose that equal proportions of the total geographic representatives come from each of the three state-level jurisdictions without regard to specific county, city, or neighborhood within each jurisdiction.

Second, RAC Bylaws allows for only three at-large RAC members. This may stifle RAC membership as potentially we may have many high-quality members from a single state-level jurisdiction—say the District—while we struggle to recruit members from other states. To address this issue and maintain flexibility, we propose that one-half of the RAC Members be at-large appointees with the remaining one-half remain as state-level representatives. For example, if the RAC ultimately has eighteen members: nine of them would be appointed based on their state-level jurisdiction (three each from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia), eight of them be at-large, and one, the chair of the WMATA Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). This is intended to ensure geographic diversity in the WMATA Transit Zone (as defined in the RAC Bylaws) and maintain flexibility in recruiting new members.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Much of the input and the individual work plans of the RAC originate from its standing committees. We plan to maintain this practice as (a) standing committees can regularly meet with and collaborate with Board and Staff members on relevant issues and (b) standing committee members can gain specialized knowledge within their respective subject matters. However, standing committees regularly suffer from low attendance, which adversely impacts their effectiveness and their ability to attract Board and Staff involvement. To better address this matter, the members of the RAC study group propose several committee specific recommendations.

Number of Standing Committees

Per the Bylaws, the five standing committees of the RAC are currently the Budget and Finance Committee; Customer Service Committee; Safety and Security Committee; Program, Projects and Planning Committee; and RAC Leadership Committee (RAC Bylaws Article V, Section A). We propose maintaining the Customer Service Committee and the Safety and Security Committee and the RAC Leadership Committee and propose merging the Budget and Finance Committee and the Program, Projects and Planning Committee into a single budget and planning

committee. This standing committee will be primarily tasked with advising the Board on capital improvements and budgets and addressing rider concerns on fares and changes to bus and rail service.

Committee Involvement

We propose confirmation that all RAC members shall participate on at least one standing committee. In order to achieve increased involvement and effectiveness, we propose that all members of the RAC shall be required to participate on at least one standing committee and such requirement be added to the other member requirements in Article III of the RAC Bylaws. The chair of the AAC shall be exempt from such requirement.

Committee Duties

Each standing committee shall meet regularly with the WMATA staff liaison and may meet with WMATA personnel as needed and appropriate. Standing committees shall endeavor to coordinate their workplans with their counterpart committees on the Board. Proposals and concerns that are related to the standing committee's subject matter shall also be addressed in person or on social media, and the standing committee shall develop protocols such that rider concerns are effectively addressed in a timely manner.

Below are a list of possible improvements to communication structures between the RAC, Board, and WMATA staff. We recommend exploring the possibility of amendments to the RAC's Bylaws, Board charter, or other written policies to institutionalize any changes needed to adhere to this enhanced communications among Staff, the Board and the RAC.

COMMUNICATIONS

Whenever the RAC sends a letter, memo, or proposal to the Board and requests a reply, the Board should provide a substantive written response within 30 days unless otherwise agreed upon. The RAC shall do the same whenever the Board sends us a communication and requests a response.

Except in emergency situations when an urgent decision is required, the Board must consult the RAC or otherwise allow the RAC to offer its input before voting on any decisions that affect riders, including but not limited to: annual budget changes, fare and payment policies, customer service policies, significant service changes or disruptions, or other rider-facing initiatives that require a Board vote.

The Board shall inform the RAC within a reasonable time in advance about upcoming Board and Staff decisions (of which the Board is aware) and give the RAC a reasonable time to gather and to offer input.

To better align RAC committee work and Board and Staff communication, Board committee agendas and minutes will be shared in full with the corresponding RAC committee every month.

All RAC committee agendas and minutes will be shared with Board committees on a monthly basis as well as with Staff. RAC members should be invited to Board committee meetings and

Board members are encouraged to regularly attend RAC meetings on a whole and RAC committee meetings as possible.

To encourage communication between RAC members and their corresponding Board representatives, the full list of Board member emails shall be shared with RAC. Similarly, the full list of RAC member emails will be shared with the Board. In the interest of privacy, both lists of emails will remain confidential.

Board members and RAC members in corresponding or similarly relevant committee or geographical jurisdictions shall convene by phone or in person at least quarterly to coordinate workplans and touch base on key issues affecting riders.

RAC WORKPLANS

In order to ensure that all WMATA riders have their concerns heard and have a unique opportunity to influence, move and engage with WMATA as WMATA earnestly strives to ‘get back to good’, the RAC, in collaboration with the Board and Staff, will develop a yearly workplan with a number of goals, including goals that the Staff and Board has recommended to the RAC for consideration in developing our work plan.

The RAC workplan will highlight key issue areas the RAC wishes to undertake to influence, improve and innovate. Each issue area proposed for analysis in the annual RAC workplan, will be assigned to one of the RAC committees so each committee’s jurisdiction is uniquely engaged advancing the workplan goals. The workplan will include areas the RAC endeavors to impact but will not exclude or prevent the RAC from taking up issues as they arise which impact WMATA riders.

The RAC workplan is intended solely to ensure the Board and Staff agree and are aware of the goals the RAC seeks to advance but shall not be seen as a limitation on the RAC’s ability to advise and provide input on any other areas affecting WMATA riders.

Upon Board adoption and approval of the yearly RAC workplan, the RAC a whole and in committees, will undertake to develop specific meeting agendas, areas of focus, outreach and social media campaigns, targeted at hearing from riders and engaging with individual riders and those represented by key stakeholder groups with.

RAC OUTREACH

In moving forward, members of the RAC look forward to partnering with stakeholder organizations representing various aspects of WMATA riders across the DC, MD and VA region. These partnerships will allow the RAC to engage with targeted and unique rider populations, to obtain diverse rider perspectives, opinions, concerns, and recommendations about what WMATA can and should do to improve the system for all riders.

Specifically, RAC’s rider engagement will inform how we advise the Board and Staff partners regarding WMATA’s prospective planning and transformative goals specifically, how WMATA can and must align with federal mandates to ensure all riders enjoy equal access to safe and reliable transit.

There are many federal laws and protections as well technical and expert guidance and best practices already in existence which can guide RAC's efforts in leading to the improvement of the WMATA rider experience overall. The RAC, in collaboration with the Staff, aims to rely upon these sources in developing a workplan which will guide and inform the actions we take throughout the year in advising the Board.

We strongly believe that by helping ensure that WMATA improves the rider experience for targeted, vulnerable and protected populations, that every rider can ultimately better enjoy or experience the WMATA system.

It is well known that many of the laws which protect vulnerable populations have over time improved the lives of the entire community as a whole, an example of which is the ADA and other disability advocacy mandates. Specifically, the elevators and escalators which serve people with disabilities in the WMATA system, also improve the rider experience of older riders as well as riders with small children in accessing public transit.

The RAC believes improving the way targeted and protected populations experience WMATA including partnering with stakeholders and riders to look at issues which protected and or vulnerable or traditionally underrepresented classes must be heard on, will ensure the RAC can better inform our recommendations to the Board. The RAC looks forward to getting back to work in committees and as a whole with a more defined and enhanced role in advising the Board toward a better WMATA rider experience.