



600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-962-2891

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Chair Hudgins and Members of the Metro Board:

The Riders' Advisory Council has reviewed the proposed increases in fares and fees as put forward in Metro docket B12-01 and offers the following comments:

The Council would like to first recognize that, while fare increases are not its first choice for closing Metro's Operating Budget gap, these increases may be a necessary component of budget balancing strategies. Placing any additional financial burden on system users, especially considering our fragile economy, will be a burden that, if all possible, should be avoided or limited. That said, the Council understands the need for fares to increase to prevent drastic reductions in already stretched service and to help balance Metro's budget. We appreciate that the baselines for the proposed increases follow the Board-approved guidelines by increasing fares by approximately the biennial Consumer Price Index (CPI). We also understand and appreciate that the jurisdictions are being asked to increase their support of Metro, certainly not an easy task in the current economy.

We continue to encourage Metro Leadership to work towards a long-term budget and funding plan that is sufficiently stable to prevent the annual conversation about "how to close this year's gap," and applaud Metro's steps to develop a multi-year budget framework.

Below is a list of proposed fare increases from the docket and the Council's position:

- **Peak-of-the-Peak Surcharge:** While it didn't achieve its policy goal of shifting ridership outside of peak commute times, the Council prefers the retention of the Peak-of-the-Peak 20¢ surcharge. The \$12 million in revenue that the surcharge provides constitutes a significant portion of Metro's revenue and should not be eliminated at this time.
- **Rush Hour/After Midnight Fare Increase by CPI:** The Council prefers increases in the fare charged during rush hour and after midnight periods by the biennial Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 5.7%, including increases to the max fare of approximately 5.7% to \$5.30.
- **Increase Max Fare to \$6.00:** The Council does not support an increase in the maximum fare to \$6.00, which would represent a 20% increase over the current max fare.
- **Increase Off-Peak Fares to 75% of Peak:** The Council can accept an increase in the Off-Peak fares, as well as changes to the way off-peak fares are calculated, which would result in off-peak fares more closely tracking peak fares. However, given the current limitations on off-peak service due to Metro's capital rebuilding program, constraints which are expected to continue for the foreseeable future, the Council would prefer a smaller raise in off-peak fares – to 65-70% of peak fares, and/or a lower off-peak cap than the currently-proposed \$3.50.
- **Paper Farecard \$4/\$6 Time-Based Flat Fare:** The Council prefers the implementation of a flat fare system for paper farecards for peak/off-peak fares, rather than the "zone-based" flat-fare proposal. However, if Metro's aim is to move riders to SmarTrip cards, it

must increase the cards' availability and clearly explain to riders the benefits of using them before implementing such a fare structure. SmarTrip cards have been in use for thirteen years now – it is simply unacceptable that less than half of stations offer SmarTrip cards for sale. Further, reloading SmarTrip cards at private retailers continues to disappoint; the Council strongly encourages the Authority to redouble efforts to sign and expand agreements with large and small retailers to allow for convenient SmarTrip loading.

- **Bus Fare Increase by CPI:** The Council prefers increasing the local bus fare by the CPI to \$1.60 and the increase in a 7-day pass to \$16.
- **Cash Bus Fare Increase to \$2.00/\$4.00:** The Council prefers increasing the cash bus fare to \$2.00 for local buses and \$4.00 for express buses. This increase, however, needs to be accompanied by an increase in the number of outlets that sell and reload SmarTrip cards, both to encourage SmarTrip card use and to discourage reloading onboard buses.
- **Parking Fee Increase by 25¢:** The Council prefers increasing parking rates at Metro-operated lots by 25¢ and allowing Metro to better adjust reserved parking spaces to match demand. The Council reminds the Board that demand at some lots continues to outpace capacity – indicating that parking fees could, and should, be increased if elasticity exists.
- **Unlimited Use Rail Passes:** The Council supports the creation of unlimited-use monthly passes as provided for in the public hearing docket. In order for these passes to provide a convenient option for riders, they must be available on SmarTrip® and should be available for purchase using funds from riders' SmartBenefits accounts.

We appreciate the Board's willingness to consider the feedback provided by this Council, the general public during the public hearings, and comments submitted to the record. If riders are to bear the weight of this fare increase, they must begin to see the Authority start to perform at a long-sought professional level: improved customer service, better communications, and a redoubled effort to revitalize aging assets, advocate for long-term stable funding, and operate safely.

Further, at the conclusion of the discussion of this year's budget, the Council requests that Metro staff review the full range of its findings from the Fare Structure Model study which was undertaken in late 2011. As Metro's fare structure grows increasingly complex, funding shortfalls continue, and service remains below riders' expectations, this Council encourages the Board and staff to begin expanding their mindset about how to approach about WMATA's future to ensure this Authority, and regions, success – even if those questions have hard answers.

We remain at the service of the rider, Board, and Authority, and are happy to answer any questions about this correspondence or any other issue that may arise.

Sincerely,

Kelsi Bracmort, Chair