

**Metro Riders' Advisory Council**  
**November 4, 2009**

I. Call to Order/Roll Call:

Ms. Zinkl called the November meeting of the Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:34 p.m.

The following members were present:

Diana Zinkl, Chair, District of Columbia

David Alpert, District of Columbia

Kelsi Bracmort, District of Columbia\*

Sharon Conn, Prince George's County

Penny Everline, Arlington County

Chris Farrell, Montgomery County

Dharm Guruswamy, At-Large

Carl Seip, At-Large

Lorraine Silva, Arlington County

Carol Carter Walker, District of Columbia

Lillian White, City of Alexandria

Ron Whiting, Montgomery County

The following members were not present for any portion of the meeting and had provided advance notice of their absence:

Patricia Daniels, District of Columbia

Kenneth DeGraff, District of Columbia

Frank DeBernardo, Prince George's County

Susan Holland, Prince George's County

Evelyn Tomaszewski, Fairfax County

Victoria Wilder, Montgomery County

The following member was not present for the meeting:

Patrick Sheehan, At-Large/Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair

Ms. Zinkl explained that the Riders' Advisory Council meetings are conducted under Robert's Rules of Order and that the meeting is run primarily for the benefit of the public. She added that meeting materials are available on the Council's website and also noted that members need to be recognized by the chair in order to be given the floor. Ms. Zinkl

also reminded the group that the Council is largely a consensus group and asked members to keep the discussion respectful and to remain cognizant of other members' perspectives and needs.

II. Public Comment Period:

Michael Ball commented about the study that West Virginia University is conducting on behalf of Metro to evaluate bus fuel options. He asked whether this study needs to account for pending cap-and-trade legislation in Congress regarding carbon dioxide emissions. Mr. Ball also discussed future global fuel supply, specifically as it relates to the price of diesel fuel and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and the infrastructure requirements if Metro were to choose CNG fuel for its future needs.

Mr. Ball said that, from his research, he has determined that CNG would be the best fueling option for Metrobus, but he added that additional research may be necessary. He proposed that RAC undertake its own study of bus fuel options to compare and contrast that study with the one being undertaken by West Virginia University.

Ms. Zinkl asked if Mr. Ball would be able to provide a written copy of his statement. She also encouraged Mr. Ball to continue moving forward with his efforts.

There were no other comments from members of the public.

III. Approval of Agenda:

Ms Zinkl asked if any members had changes to the agenda. Mr. Seip moved that the agenda be adopted as presented. This motion was seconded by Ms. Everline. Without objection, the agenda was approved as presented.

IV. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes:

Ms. Zinkl then continued to the approval of past meeting minutes.

A. *Approval of October 7, 2009 Meeting Minutes:*

Mr. Alpert moved the approval of the October 7, 2009 meeting minutes as presented. This motion was seconded by Mr. Seip. Without objection, the October 7, 2009 meeting minutes were approved as presented.

B. *Approval of October 20, 2009 Special Meeting Minutes*

Dr. Conn asked whether the approval of minutes from a special meeting were customarily reviewed and approved by the Council. Ms. Zinkl noted that since the October 20 meeting was a special meeting of the Council, rather than a meeting of a

subcommittee or working group, that these minutes should therefore be approved by the Council.

Mr. Seip moved approval of the October 20, 2009 special meeting minutes as presented. This motion was seconded by Dr. Conn. Without objection, the October 20, 2009 special meeting minutes were approved as presented.

V. Reports:

A. *Report by Chair:*

Ms. Zinkl provided the Chair's report.

She reported that she and the Council's two vice-chairs, Penny Everline and Patrick Sheehan, attended Metro's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) meeting and discussed ways to strengthen the relationship between the Council and Metro and how to structure the presentation of information to the Council for Metro to receive the most useful feedback. She said that she felt that the meeting was productive. Ms. Zinkl also noted that Chief Taborn has offered to schedule ride-alongs with Metro Transit Police for Council members if any are interested.

Ms. Everline added that the meeting was very brief but provided the opportunity to give Metro staff a quick overview of the Council.

Ms. Zinkl also informed members that the Council received a response from the General Services Administration to the letter that it sent in September regarding federal appointments to the Metro Board of Directors. She said that a copy of this letter would be circulated for members to review.

Ms. Zinkl then provided an overview of the recent town hall meetings that Metro held to discuss its FY2011 budget with members of the public. She said that Metro held two meetings – one in the District of Columbia and one in Virginia and that she was a panelist at the D.C. meeting. She noted that the meeting quickly moved beyond strictly budget-related issues into a discussion of Metro service issues, but that it was still helpful to help make Metro management aware of issues from riders' perspectives. She added that she was hopeful that Metro would have more of these meetings in the future.

Ms. Everline gave an overview of the meeting held in Virginia and noted that Ms. White also attended this meeting. She reported that there were attendees from all over Northern Virginia at the meeting, including a large number of individuals from the disability community who expressed concerns about possible changes to paratransit

service. She said that there were concerns expressed about potential cuts to service and that some attendees advanced the option of increasing fares to avoid cuts in transit service, along with constructive suggestions about the potential options for cost-savings or raising additional revenue.

Ms. White said that one of the attendees at the meeting raised the idea of corporate sponsorship of rail stations to raise revenue and that she had brought up the issue of Metro leaving the lights on during the day at rail stations, and the need for Metro to address this issue to reduce electricity costs. She added that one of the elected officials brought up the issue of pension funding as one possibility to achieve cost savings.

Mr. Alpert, who had also attended the D.C. meeting, noted that the attendees provided some interesting suggestions on ways for Metro to address its budget shortfall, along with expressing concerns about service quality issues.

Ms. White added that Metro didn't provide any information about how possible legal settlements would affect its budget.

Ms. Zinkl noted that the Council had a new member – Lorraine Silva, from Arlington County. For Ms. Silva's benefit, the members of the Council who were present introduced themselves and shared information about how they use the Metro system.

Mr. Farrell provided the group with an overview of the Metro budget public meeting that was held the previous evening in Montgomery County. He noted that the two Metro Board members from Montgomery County attended this meeting, and about fifteen members of the public spoke. He reported that the overriding theme of people's comments was that transit service should be maintained and added that members of the Transit First! Coalition advocated that paratransit service should be funded not only by Metro but by a broader segment of the population. Mr. Farrell noted that there were also representatives from Metro's union in attendance. He said that he was somewhat disappointed by the turnout at the meeting. Ms. Zinkl said that the Maryland meeting was probably better-attended than the meeting in D.C. and that she was interested in what the attendance will be for the Prince George's County budget information meeting which will be held on November 18<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Zinkl explained that the terms of seven members of the Council were ending in December and that they were eligible to be reappointed. She said that there is an abbreviated application form that will be sent around to these members if they wish to apply to be reappointed to the Council.

Ms. Zinkl added that the year is drawing to a close and that members should start thinking about possible officer positions for the coming year. She said that she would gladly answer any questions members had about the position of chair. She also encouraged members who were interested in running for an office on the Council to make a statement of candidacy sooner rather than later.

Ms. Zinkl said that she would also like to work with the incoming chair to set up an orientation session for members in January. She said that she would prefer this meeting to be restricted to Council members only. Ms. White said that she wasn't sure whether or not the Council could have a meeting that wasn't open to the public. Ms. Zinkl responded that the Council would probably be spending a lot of time in January and February discussing the budget and may not want to devote the time at a regular meeting to orientation discussions. Mr. Pasek said that he would check with Metro's Office of Counsel about whether or not the Council was able to hold meetings that were not open to the public.

Dr. Bracmort arrived at 7:02 p.m.

*B. Report by Accessibility Advisory Committee:*

Ms. Zinkl noted that the Accessibility Advisory Committee's representative on the R.A.C. was not present and therefore there would not be a report by the Accessibility Advisory Committee at this meeting.

VI. New Business

*A. SmarTrip® Update:*

Ms. Zinkl welcomed Cyndi Zieman, the director of Metro's SmarTrip® office, to the meeting. Ms. Zieman introduced the other Metro staff members that accompanied her to the Council meeting:

Lorraine Taylor

Charlie Hunter

Mike Russo

Ramon Abromovitch

Ms. Zieman said that these individuals would be assisting her in answering questions that may come up during the course of the meeting.

Ms. Zieman reviewed the questions that she was had been provided by the Council and that she would address as part of her presentation. She reviewed with the Council a handout that showed the usage of SmarTrip® as a percentage of the total fares paid on Metrobus, Metrorail and other regional bus systems. She said that, since the

elimination of paper transfers in January 2009, there has been an increase in SmarTrip® usage.

Ms. Zinkl asked if staff knew what the other methods of payment were on bus. Staff responded that the other methods of payment were cash and flash passes, noting that Metro sells approximately 30,000 flash passes each week.

Ms. Zieman explained to the Council that Metro is still planning on enabling pass products and autoloading features on SmarTrip®, but that these features were pushed back until 2010 because Metro needed to focus on complying with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) mandate about separating parking and transit benefits that takes effect in January 2010. She noted that Metro had five different systems that needed to be converted into one system and that Metro needed to devote its resources to converting these systems while not jeopardizing the current fare collection system. She added that staff has encountered some bugs when testing the new software and that Metro and contractor engineers have been working on fixing these bugs as part of the testing process.

In response to a question from Ms. Zinkl, Ms. Zieman explained the upcoming change in IRS requirements means that benefits offered to pay for transit fare and parking fees will need to be kept separate on smartcards. Ms. Zieman provided further clarification about how unused transit benefits would be credited back to employers and noted that under the current system, unclaimed benefits are credited back to employers.

Mr. Seip asked when this particular change in requirements was announced by the IRS. Ms. Zieman said that these changes were announced in 2006. Responding to additional questions from Mr. Seip about the timeline of Metro's contract for upgrades to the SmarTrip® system, Ms. Zinkl said that there had been a realignment of the contract deliverables approximately one year ago and that the most recent changes to that schedule occurred this fall. She noted that there has been a great deal of progress made with the contract since the realignment of the contract deliverables in the fall of 2008, but this progress isn't apparent to the general public.

Mr. Alpert asked staff when realized that there would be delays to the timeline that called for pass products and autoloading features to be functional in late 2009. Ms. Zieman said that staff recognized that there were going to be a delay in these deliverables in late August/early September 2009 and that staff then looked at rearranging projects tasks so that it would not miss the January 2010 IRS deadline.

Ms. Zinkl reviewed previous timelines for planned upgrades to SmarTrip® features, noting that there had been upgrades planned for September 2008 which had been pushed back to 2009 and asked for the current timeline for these enhanced features.

Ms. Zieman said that staff is planning on summer 2010 at the earliest for these features to be rolled out. Mr. Alpert asked if Ms. Zieman could clarify if the summer 2010 date was for all features mentioned, or just some of them.

Ms. Zieman clarified that by the end of 2009, riders should have the ability to view their transactions and card balance online. She added that the online capabilities will be enhanced in 2010 with an autoloading feature, which would automatically draw funds from a customer's credit card or bank account once the value on the SmarTrip® card dropped below a certain level, similar to a feature currently offered with E-Z Pass. She added that Metro plans for pass products to be available on SmarTrip® in summer 2010. Ms. Zieman added that while the system may be technically capable of supporting pass products sooner than summer 2010, there are other changes, such as adjustments to tariff and fare policies, that need to be made before this feature can be activated.

Mr. Seip asked if there were any penalties in the contract for missing deliverables deadlines. Ms. Zieman responded that the contracts do have liquidated damage provisions for not meeting specific milestones. She noted, however, that Metro was the party that made changes to the contract, which were not the fault of the contractor and could not therefore hold the contractor responsible for these delays.

Mr. Seip asked whether features such as pass products would be available presently if Metro did not have to devote energy to complying with the IRS ruling. Staff responded that Metro could have focused more on implementing enhancements such as pass products if it hadn't been working to meet IRS requirements.

Mr. Seip also asked what penalties Metro would face if it didn't comply with the IRS deadline. Ms. Zieman responded that there were no specific penalties to Metro for not meeting the IRS deadline, but that Metro is working with employers who administer the transit benefit programs to make sure that they meet IRS requirements.

Mr. Alpert reviewed the timeline of the most recent contract modifications and asked whether the latest modification (which was finalized in January 2009) still would have allowed for pass products and other enhancements to be offered on SmarTrip® in 2009. Ms. Zieman responded that with the 2009 modification, the system would have been technically able to offer pass products on SmarTrip®, but that additional

coordination with regional partners, along with any necessary tariff changes, would have still been required, and those could take several months.

Ms. Zieman said that the current upgrade would allow for pass products to be offered on SmarTrip®, along with options for additional fare structures, but that these changes would still require Board and other approvals.

Ms. Everline said that she had gotten a lot of questions from riders about the implications of the change in IRS requirements, and asked what Metro is doing to educate riders about the upcoming changes. Ms. Zieman said that there is a public outreach campaign that was begun in early October to inform employers of the upcoming changes. She said that Metro has issued new releases, is meeting with individual employers, producing “take-one” brochures and bus advertisements. Ms. Everline noted that her employer is based in Chicago and isn’t doing the best job of communicating info to employees.

Ms. Zieman said that Metro is working with employers and encouraging them to communicate to their employees about the upcoming changes. She said that Metro is also working on getting the information out to the media so that it can get to individual riders. In response to a question from Ms. Everline, Ms. Zieman said that Metro working to develop an FAQ section about the upcoming changes for its website. Ms. Zinkl suggested that Metro send out emails to all registered SmarTrip® users. She noted that not all cardholders participate in transit benefit programs, but individuals that do participate in the programs will be profoundly affected by these changes and this would be an additional way to get information to those individuals.

Dr. Bracmort said that she has received communication this about these changes in three different ways, but that the communication was unclear, especially the information provided about how funds will be allocated to separate “purses” on the SmarTrip card. Ms. Taylor clarified that any funds on an individual’s SmarTrip® at the end of 2009 would reside in the personal “purse.” She said that subsequent outreach materials would make this clear.

Mr. Guruswamy asked when additional fare structures would be available. Ms. Zieman said that these would be available in the summer of 2010, which would also allow time for testing.

There was then discussion between Ms. Zieman and Council members regarding of the Regional SmarTrip Partners working group and the agencies that participate in that group. Ms. Zinkl asked if this group had a website or if its meeting were open to

the public. Ms. Taylor explained that the group does not have a website and Ms. Zieman added that she does not believe that its meetings are open to the public. In response to a question from Mr. Farrell, Ms. Zieman said that VRE and MARC participate in this group.

Mr. Seip asked whether there would be a phase-in process for these changes and whether they would come online all at once or over a longer period. Ms. Zieman said that she wanted to make a distinction between the contract and the changes that riders would see. She said that once the upgrades are completed, tested and accepted, the contract would be completed, but that changes to fare products would be the responsibility of Metro and its regional partners. She said that she thought that there would be a phasing-in period for pass products to be functional on SmarTrip® cards.

Ms. Zinkl asked about the possibility for about limited-use SmarTrip cards and for a “passback” feature for SmarTrip® cards. Ms. Zieman said that Metro is not looking at allowing for a passback feature that would allow multiple riders to use one card to pay their fares if traveling together. Regarding the limited-use SmarTrip® cards, Ms. Zieman mentioned Metro’s Automatic Fare Collection (AFC) strategy meetings and the development of future AFC plans. She noted that the Board approved limited-use smartcards as a fare collection strategy in 2006. She said that Metro still needs additional Board approval to implement limited-use smartcards and that she anticipates that they will be part of Metro’s AFC strategy going forward.

Ms. White asked if it would be possible to send the agenda of the SmarTrip® regional partner meetings to members of the Council so that they could follow-up on items discussed in the meetings. Ms. Zieman said that would be possible.

Mr. Whiting asked if there would be any changes for federal employees. Ms. Taylor said that there weren’t going to be any implications for federal employees who receive transit benefits from their agency. Ms. Zieman clarified that federal employees and others who receive transit fares as a benefit, rather than having them deducted from their salary pre-tax, would not be able to carry-over benefits from month-to-month; any unused benefits would revert to the employer at the end of the month. There was further discussion about how this feature would work after January 1, 2010 and how that will be different from how benefits are currently claimed. Ms. Zieman explained that, unlike presently, transit benefits will not reside on the card, and therefore will not be available to rollover to the next month.

Ms. Zieman noted that employers who provide transit benefits as pre-tax salary deductions have contacted Metro to say that they don’t want any excess funds to

revert to them at the end of the month, but that they would prefer that those funds remain with the employee. She said that Metro is looking at ways to make that possible while still allowing the separation of transit and parking benefits.

Ms. Everline noted that she is being asked questions by coworkers who have transit fares deducted pre-tax and are concerned that they could lose money each month. Ms. Zieman said that Metro is looking at ways to address this issue and noted that approximately 80% of transit benefit recipients receive those benefits directly from their employers, rather than users have those benefits deducted from their paychecks pre-tax. She said that Metro will likely recommend that the pre-tax enrollees remain with the system as it currently functions.

Mr. Alpert asked when the decision was made to return unused transit benefits to the employer. Ms. Zieman said that returning benefits to the employer is the current process, so the system was designed based on that process. Mr. Alpert responded that while the system is staying the same for Metro, from the point of view of the end-user the system is changing in that riders will not be able to carryover their benefits from month-to-month.

Ms. Zinkl noted that the Government Accountability Office did a study on transit benefit usage and found that there was widespread abuse of transit benefits. She noted that employees who do not fully use their benefits and accumulate them over time are actually committing fraud. She said that the GAO's report was released in March of 2008.

Mr. Alpert asked if the changes to the transit benefits program had been previously presented to the R.A.C. or to Metro's Board of Directors. Ms. Zieman said that she wasn't aware that anyone had communicated the design of the system to those groups. Mr. Alpert suggested that Metro communicate information like this earlier in the process.

Mr. Seip said that he was very pleased that Metro has rolled out "recharge stations" at locations around the region where users can add money to their SmarTrip® card at locations like CVS and Giant. He said employees at these sites are often reluctant to help him and suggest that he reload his card at a nearby Metro station. He said that he understood that these are not Metro employees but that he wanted to make Metro aware that this issue exists. Ms. Zieman recommended that Mr. Seip communicate incidents like that to Mr. Pasek so that he can pass the information on to the appropriate Metro staff.

Ms. Zinkl noted that Metro had distributed free SmarTrip® cards on several occasions for use by low-income, disabled or senior citizen riders and asked if it would be possible to get information on how many cards were distributed. Ms. Zieman said that she would be able to get information on the number of cards that Metro distributed to the local jurisdictions, but not information about the number of cards that the jurisdictions then distributed to individuals.

Ms. Zinkl thanked Ms. Zieman and her colleagues for attending.

*B. Council Bylaws Revisions:*

Ms. Zinkl told members that the next item on the agenda was an update to the Council's bylaws. She explained that the Council had been working on this issue since June and had discussed the subject at several meetings. She noted that the Council had received a draft copy of the bylaws the previous month from Metro's Office of General Counsel and that some edits had been made to that draft version over the past month.

Mr. Pasek noted that there were not sufficient members in attendance to satisfy the bylaws' requirement of a two-thirds majority of appointed members to vote on changes to the bylaws. He said that because the Council currently had 19 appointed members, 13 members would need to be present to vote on any changes to the bylaws and only 12 members were present.

Mr. Alpert asked whether it would be possible for a member not in attendance at the meeting to submit his or her vote over the phone. Ms. Zinkl responded that Robert's Rules of Order and the Council's procedures have not allowed for absentee voting of that nature.

Mr. Pasek noted that the bylaws require not only a two-thirds majority of the Council to vote on an issue but also that two-thirds of the membership of the Council, whether present or not, is required to change any part of the bylaws, so even if an additional member would be able to vote at that evening's meeting, all changes would need the approval of 13 members to pass.

Ms. Walker suggested that the Council move on to the next item on the agenda if it was unable to vote on the proposed changes at the meeting. Ms. Zinkl said that she wanted to give members at this meeting the opportunity to raise any concerns that they may have prior to a vote at a subsequent meeting. She provided a brief overview of the proposed changes to the bylaws.

After additional discussion about the requirement for two-thirds of the Council membership to be present in order to vote on bylaws changes, Ms. Walker moved to end discussion of the proposed changes to the bylaws. This was seconded by Dr. Bracmort.

*In favor:* Dr. Bracmot, Dr. Conn, Ms. Everline, Mr. Farrell, Mr. Guruswamy, Mr. Seip, Ms. Silva, Ms. Walker, Ms. White, Mr. Whiting

*Opposed:* none

*Abstentions:* Ms. Zinkl, Mr. Alpert

This motion was approved (10-0-2). Mr. Pasek noted that because this was a motion to end debate, it required a two-thirds majority, which was received.

### *C. FY2011 Budget Development Process*

Ms. Zinkl told members that Metro has held town meetings on its FY2011 budget, which were discussed earlier in the meeting, and the Board had approved guidelines for the development of the FY2011 budget. She said that Mr. Seip had started the discussion of this item earlier and turned the floor over to him to discuss his proposed letter on FY2011 budget issues and suggestions. Ms. Zinkl asked that the discussion on the letter circulated by Mr. Alpert be discussed under the “New Business” section of the agenda.

Mr. Seip said that he had solicited comments from members of the Council and wanted to outline some of the items that he would be including when drafting a letter to the Board for members to review.

He noted that this letter to the Board would:

- Ask that any fare increases not be implemented until July 2010;
- Not endorse any of the specific fare-increase proposals;
- Request the board to have Metro staff review the suggestions from a revenue and operational standpoint;
- Encourage a list of options to be presented to the public for its consideration at any public hearings;

Mr. Seip said that the last point was to address one of his concerns from the last round of public hearings, which was the lack of alternatives presented to the public. He said that he had incorporated the suggestions of members that had emailed him into this outline.

Ms. Zinkl thanked Mr. Seip for taking the lead on putting together this outline and said that she thought it put forward some very good thinking on the issue. She then asked members how they would like to move this item forward and said that she would hope to have a letter ready for approval at the Council's December meeting. Mr. Seip said that he would like to draft a letter and circulate it electronically prior to the meeting so that it could be voted on and sent to the Board in December. He asked members if they had any additional ideas or suggestions to include in this letter.

Ms. Zinkl said that she would like the letter to encourage Metro to upgrade the SmarTrip system to the point where it could handle a more complex fare structure, especially in light of the presentation the Council received at this meeting on SmarTrip. She also suggested that Mr. Seip's letter not use percentages when discussing hypothetical service reductions or fare increases, but rather more general language like "substantial."

Mr. Farrell suggested that Metro look at its capital purchases through the perspective of their future operating costs – i.e. Metro should purchase equipment that would result in operating savings over the long-term.

Dr. Conn said that she would prefer to have specific numbers's and percentages for fare increase options included in the letter because those specific percentages would help riders in figuring out how much more they might be required to pay, should fare increases be enacted. She added that she had some concerns about charging different bus fares during peak periods and its effect on flash pass users.

Ms. Silva suggested that the wording of bus fare "zones" (which are generally geographical) be replaced with fare "periods" (which are time-based).

Mr. Alpert said that he would like to add in the suggestion to raise rates on the Reserved/Guaranteed Parking at Metrorail stations to a level which would eliminate waiting lists for these spots. He suggested that Metro also look at charging more for bicycle lockers at certain stations where there are waiting lists.

Ms. Everline suggested that Mr. Seip look at the letter the Council sent on service reductions in April 2009 for guidance.

Mr. Guruswamy explained that the Board can't make service or fare changes that don't go through the public hearing process. He said that therefore, the letter should explicitly recommend the Board advertise as many options as it can to go to public hearing so that the public will be given options at the hearings. He suggested that Metro also at cutbacks in things that don't directly affect service such as frequency of cleaning and train lengths. He added that Metro should include these in its discussions on the budget (even though

they are not required to hold hearings on those kinds of items) to allow riders to provide feedback.

Mr. Seip said that he had initially planned to focus his letter on fare increases, but said that he is hearing that members want the letter to have a somewhat broader focus to also include cost-reduction measures.

Ms. Walker suggested that Mr. Seip look at the principles that were outlined in the Council's April 2009 letter to the Board on service reductions. She also said that the letter should request the Board look at cost savings from closing station entrances and other operational changes.

Mr. Whiting said that he supported the idea of giving the public options as part of the public hearing process. He also suggested keeping the language in the letter general and asked how the R.A.C. could get Metro's feedback on specific recommendations to see whether or not they're feasible. Ms. Zinkl said that the Council has generally given more general advice on principles, but that there would be an opportunity to work with staff from the Board Secretary's office to obtain more specific information.

Mr. Seip asked Mr. Pasek if it would be possible for the R.A.C. to get feedback or analysis of specific budgetary suggestions from Metro staff. Mr. Pasek said that he could check about getting that kind of information to the Council, though he suggested that the Council ask the Board to direct the General Manager to have his staff provide that information. He said that a lot of information may be included in the initial budget that will be presented to the Board next month.

Ms. Everline said that Metro needs to be very specific with the proposed changes that it brings to the public as part of the public hearing process.

Ms. White said that she is not in favor of any fare increase or reductions in service and would prefer instead to focus on service improvements and cost savings opportunities. She said that she liked the idea of offering options. She also discussed Metro's process for estimating ridership numbers from year to year for budget purposes. She said that she thinks that the Council should wait to see Metro's proposed budget before agreeing the idea of cuts in service or increases in fares.

In response to Ms. White's comments, Mr. Guruswamy said that the earlier the R.A.C. weighs in on the budget, the better chance it has to have its suggestions considered. He noted that the letter clearly states that the Council doesn't endorse any of the suggestions in the letter.

Ms. Zinkl said that she liked the idea of the Council suggesting options for the Board to give the public to consider. She said that last year, the Board didn't provide alternatives to the public, meaning that the only option the public was able to weigh in on one specific list of cuts in service, which was largely opposed.

Mr. Seip said that he would draft a letter within the next week and send it out to members so that they could provide feedback prior to the December meeting. Ms. Zinkl noted that the Council's next meeting was the Wednesday after Thanksgiving and asked that a final version be sent out prior to Thanksgiving.

Mr. Farrell noted that he wanted to make sure that there would be quorum for the December meeting. There was discussion among members about attendance at the December meeting and the requirements for voting on a letter.

Ms. Zinkl noted that it would also be important for the Council to make quorum at its January meeting in order to hold elections. Ms. White asked whether a nominating committee was required for elections. Ms. Zinkl responded that it was not required.

Mr. Alpert said that if the Council approves changes to the bylaws at its December meeting, the Board wouldn't likely vote to approve those changes until its December 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. He said that since the new bylaws would change the number and requirements for Council officers, there may be some last-minute confusion in terms of which members are eligible to hold offices in 2010. Ms. Zinkl noted that no one has yet expressed interest or approached her about running for a leadership position. She provided an overview of the proposed changes for new members. Ms. Zinkl added that she would like to see the jurisdictional vice-chairs become more robust positions.

## VII. Old Business:

### A. *Top Customer Service Complaints:*

Ms. Zinkl noted for members that they were provided with the top customer service complaints last month and a copy of that information was also provided in their packets for tonight's meeting. She said that she would like to work with Metro to see how it uses this information to improve service.

Dr. Conn asked about the source of the information. Mr. Pasek said that he would check with Metro's Office of Customer Service but that he understood that it included both phone calls and emails to Metro. Dr. Conn also expressed concerns about Metro's online customer comment form.

Ms. Walker said that the Council needs to reach out to members in order to ensure that the December meeting makes quorum. There was additional discussion about possible election scenarios for January. Ms. Zinkl noted that jurisdictional vice-chair positions will be effective whether or not the changes to the bylaws, so individuals interested in running for vice-chair positions can begin to consider doing so.

*B. Additional FY2011 Budget Discussion:*

Mr. Alpert told members that he had sent circulated a letter the day before concerning the role that jurisdictions could play in helping Metro address some of its budget issues. He explained that the jurisdictions could contribute more money to Metro, which isn't likely, but that they could also help make bus service more efficient by making roadway improvements which would allow for buses to operate more quickly. He explained that these improvements would include projects such as queue-jump lanes or dedicated bus lanes and that these would produce cost savings by allowing fewer buses to run the same amount of service. He added that the purpose of the letter is to encourage the jurisdictions to make these improvements.

He asked that members consider whether the letter should include the issue of bus stop spacing and consolidating bus stops in the letter. He said that some people have suggested that he include that possibility in the letter and would be interested in hearing members' thoughts on that idea.

Ms. Everline said that increasing stop spacing can have significant impacts on the disability community and noted that some individuals may not be able to use fixed-route transit if they cannot access bus stops.

Dr. Bracmort said that she thinks that bus stop spacing standards should take into account neighborhood characteristics, such as topography.

Ms. Zinkl said that she had some concerns about increasing bus stop spacing, such as the distance that people have to walk to get to the street where bus stop service is located or intersections that are difficult to cross. She added that neighborhood and operating characteristics are different across the region and that needed to be taken into account.

Dr. Conn suggested that union representatives be added to the distribution list for this letter and noted that Metro is working on updating its bus drivers' manual.

Mr. Guruswamy told members that it is ultimately Metro's responsibility to install or remove stops and cited an example from Arlington County. He added that most local roads in Virginia are controlled by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Mr. Alpert asked whether stop spacing should be included in the letter since it isn't under the control of the localities. After discussion, Mr. Alpert said that he would remove the suggestions about stop spacing. He asked members to send him comments and would send out a revised draft to members.

**VIII. Adjournment:**

Without objection, Ms. Zinkl adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.