

## Protocol for Riders' Advisory Council Media Relations

The Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) was created by the WMATA Board of Directors to serve in an advisory role and recommend possible solutions to the Board and staff, based on public input so WMATA can effectively address the diverse concerns of the riding public on issues concerning Metrorail, Metrobus and MetroAccess service.

The WMATA Board of Directors has designated its Chairman as its primary spokesman to ensure that the Board speaks with one voice. As advisors to the Board, WMATA RAC members provide input to the Board and its executive committee that is considered in decision-making through its transparent and public Committee process.

As WMATA RAC meetings are open to the public, media coverage or requests for interviews with WMATA RAC Members may arise from time to time. The media may also occasionally seek the view of WMATA RAC Members on matters in the news. However, because the WMATA RAC serves only in an advisory capacity to the Board and the matters it discusses are pre-decisional, it is important that all media inquiries to the WMATA RAC be coordinated with the Board through the Secretary's office, and with advance knowledge of and direction from WMATA's Office of Media Relations (MREL). This is consistent with the Riders' Advisory Council Bylaws, Article VII, Section C2 which states, "No member of the Riders' Council shall be seen as representing any position of Metro to the general public, including the media, without first having been so authorized by the WMATA Board of Directors."

To ensure that the process for WMATA RAC Members conforms with the process used by the WMATA Board of Directors, the protocol for responding to media inquiries is as follows:

- If a WMATA RAC Member receives an inquiry (e.g. email, telephone, etc.) from a representative of the news media or blog requesting that the WMATA RAC Member speak or comment on matters under discussion by the WMATA RAC, or on behalf of WMATA RAC, or if the WMATA RAC Member believes that his or her comments will be construed to have been made on behalf of the Authority, the Member shall notify the Office of Media Relations **prior** to speaking with the reporter, except in those cases when that RAC Member has specific prior authorization from the Office of Media Relations.
- If a RAC Member is officially representing the WMATA RAC at a RAC function (e.g., public hearing, public meeting, special event, etc.) and is approached by a news media representative, the RAC Member shall make every effort to respond to questions concerning that particular event or activity only. The WMATA RAC Member shall make it clear that she/he is speaking for the RAC and not for the Authority. Any questions pertaining to Metro matters, operations or policies, or other unrelated activities or events, should be referred to the Office of Media Relations.
- After answering any media questions, the RAC Member shall notify the Office of Media Relations of the media interaction as soon after the conversation as possible.

The Office of Media Relations maintains a 24-hour media line. During business hours, a Public Information Officer is always available. After normal hours, simply leave a voicemail may be left and an on-call spokesperson will be automatically paged to respond by telephone.