

WMATA Riders' Advisory Council

Wednesday, April 1, 2015
6:30 P.M. Regular Meeting

MINUTES

Place: Lower Level Meeting Room, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Headquarters (Jackson Graham Building), 600 Fifth Street NW, Washington, DC

Present: *Members*
Barbara Hermanson, Chair, VA, City of Alexandria
Bob Fogel, Vice-Chair, MD, Montgomery County
Frederick Walker, Vice-Chair, VA, Fairfax County
Jeremiah Bush, VA, Fairfax County
Benjamin Chou, At-Large
Avani Gala, VA, Arlington County
Katherine Kortum, MD, Montgomery County
Debra MacKenzie, At-Large
Ryan Nalty, District of Columbia
Lorraine Silva, VA, Arlington County
Pat Sheehan, At-Large/Accessibility Advisory Committee, Chair
Deborah Titus, VA, Fairfax County
Wil White, MD, Prince George's County
Mary Ann Zimmerman, MD, Montgomery County

Other Individuals

Mr. Shyam Kannan, Managing Director, Office of Strategic Planning
Office of the Chief of Staff, WMATA
Ms. Jennifer Weeks, Planning Manager, Office of Strategic Planning
Office of the Chief of Staff, WMATA
Jennifer Ellison, Board Secretary, WMATA
James N. Jackson, RAC Staff Coordinator, WMATA

Absent: *Members*
Stephanie Beechem, District of Columbia
Pablo Destefanis, District of Columbia
Thaddeus Johnson, District of Columbia
Caroline Kim, District of Columbia
Daniel Turk, Vice-Chair, District of Columbia

Presider: Barbara Hermanson, Chair, VA, City of Alexandria

I. Call to Order:

Ms. Hermanson called the April 2015 meeting of the Metro Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) to order at 6:36 p.m.

II. Public Comment Period:

Ms. Hermanson recognized members of the public who were signed up to speak.

Mr. Jeff Larrimore, thanked the Council for hearing the concerns of Metrorail Blue Line riders. He then spoke regarding the wait time for Metrorail Blue Line customers during peak travel hours. Mr. Larrimore encouraged the RAC adopt a resolution asking WMATA to restore previous service levels to the Blue Line.

Mr. Colin Reusch, discussed reasonable expectations for Metrorail Blue Line service and the cost of fares for such service.

Mr. Ryan Franks, expressed concern about overcrowding on the Metrorail Blue Line. He cited numerous safety concerns due to overcrowding. He requested that the Council look into the development that was occurring in Alexandria, VA that would exacerbate overcrowding in the future. Mr. Franks also commented on the unprofessionalism of the Metrorail conductors.

As there were no other members of the public who were signed up to speak, Ms. Hermanson closed the public comment period.

III. Approval of Agenda:

Without objection, the agenda was approved.

IV. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Nalty moved, seconded by Ms. Kortum, to approve the March 4, 2015 minutes of the Riders' Advisory Council, as amended.

The motion was unanimously approved.

V. Metrorail Silver Line Briefing

Mr. Shyam Kannan, Managing Director, Office of Strategic Planning, WMATA, and Ms. Jennifer Weeks, Planning Manager, Office of Strategic Planning, WMATA were present to discuss changes in Metrorail ridership following the opening of the Metrorail Silver Line on July 26, 2014. He continued saying that the presentation would include information on various trends related to the Metrorail Silver Line, and its impact on other lines of rail service. Mr. Kannan provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled *Silver Line Ridership Analysis*, which consisted of the following slides:

- Silver Line Trends Since Opening
- Silver Line Ridership - September
- Fixing the Blue Line
- General Trends in Rail Ridership

- Where Are Silver Line Riders Going?
- Schedule Shifts to Accommodate Silver
- Trains Per Hour – Silver Line
- Virginia Blue Line Ridership
- 2014 Vital Signs – Passengers Per Car
- Where Are Our Riders
- Rail Customers’ More Favorable of Metro
- Smart Benefits Impact
- Gas Prices
- Contact Information

Referencing slide seven, Mr. Walker asked for an explanation of the graph and data. Mr. Kannan stated that graph compared ridership behavior during an average day in the month of May to overall ridership, thus showing whether ridership was flat, declining or increasing. Mr. Walker then asked how Blue Line Riders were negatively impacted given the graphical data. Mr. Kannan replied stating that the negative impact refers to whether Blue Line customers who encountered extended wait times transferred at L’Enfant Plaza or continued through the system on the next Blue Line train. He continued saying that the query was if negatively impacted customers were in fact leaving the system, and if so were they not riding at a rate that was greater or less than the rest of the Metrorail system.

Mr. Fogel questioned an apparent overestimation of the number of riders on the Metrorail Silver Line. He asked if there were any demographic changes in Northern Virginia that would have explained that occurrence. Mr. Kannan responded that he supported the forecasts for Silver Line ridership as they were reliable. He continued saying that the caveat was the shift in the amount of the economic development from the time that the Silver Line project was conceptualized in the 2004, to the downturn in the economy in 2008. He said that Silver Line ridership was directly related to economic development projects in Tysons Corner, Virginia that are on the rebound in 2015.

Referencing slide three, Ms. Gala commented that it would be helpful to have the same information available for the Metrorail Blue Line, to which Mr. Kannan responded in the affirmative. Referencing slide 8, she then inquired how the data was generated because it appeared to be reduced. Mr. Kannan clarified that the information in the Vital Signs Report was collected and prepared by the Chief Performance Officer. He continued saying that there was a recognized railroad industry standard process for counting the number of passengers per railcar, which he then explained at length. Mr. Kannan also discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the counting process in place.

Referencing slide five, Mr. Nalty asked if the six minute headway during the AM and PM shifts on the Metrorail Silver would remain in place following the phase II rail expansion to Dulles International Airport. Mr. Kannan responded that the operating plan called for continuation of the six minute headway following implementation of phase II. Mr. Nalty then questions how the Blue Line issues would be addressed despite the 26 trains per hour in the Potomac Tunnel. Mr. Kannan stated that the Potomac Tunnel capacity is an operational constraint that was taken in account prior to the opening of the Silver Line. He said that the WMATA Strategic Plan provisions for the Board of Directors and jurisdictional partners to provide capital funding for the Blue Line to build a substation at the Rosslyn Metrorail Station. Doing so would allow WMATA to add an additional five Blue Line trains per hour. However, Mr. Kannan stated that currently, the provision in question was not a funded element of the WMATA Strategic Plan.

With regard to the Metrorail Silver Line, Ms. Zimmerman asked how the data accounted for the “reverse flow” of riders and if they made any difference in the overall performance analysis. Mr. Kannan commented that approximately 10-13 percent of patrons who boarded the Silver Line in Prince George’s County unload the system in Tyson’s Corner, Virginia. He stated that he was unable to quote further statistical data, but directed Council members and the public to the PlanItMetro blog located at www.planitmetro.com for additional information. Mr. Kannan added that weekend off peak exits at Metrorail stations in Tyson’s Corner was in excess of weekday off peak travel, indicative of increased leisure activity in the area.

Mr. White inquired if personnel considered Metrorail cars specifically designated for bicycles only. Mr. Kannan discussed the current WMATA bicycle policy. He said that WMATA was aggressively partnering with bicycle sharing alternatives to provide close proximity to Metrorail stations. Mr. Kannan commented that rail cars designated for bicycles would be feasible if there was a greater supply of railcars. However, WMATA was incorporating comfort features to making using bicycles easier in the system.

Referencing slide 12, Mr. Chou requested that staff forward a copy of the actual survey that was distributed to customers. He also requested data on where customers were traveling on other Metrorail lines, to which Mr. Kannan responded in the affirmative. He then discussed slide ten, with regard to rail ridership trends.

Ms. Kortum asked how passenger car loading data for the Metrorail Blue and Orange Lines compared to the Silver Line at the same stations. Mr. Kannan stated that the numbers where high as the Blue Line was a very crowded segment. He reviewed data from the most recent Vital Signs Report (February 2015).

Ms. Silva commented on the reductions in service on the Metrorail Blue Line. She discussed 30 minute wait times and fares for peak-time services despite the extended wait time. Mr. Kannan expressed his agreement.

Ms. Titus inquired if Council members could work with staff conduct additional surveying of customers in order to attain additional information related to the number of passengers per railcar. Mr. Kannan thanked Ms. Titus for volunteering her time and stated that staff would consider the feasibility of individuals assisting with the passenger count process.

Ms. Hermanson commented that it would be helpful to have ranges in addition to the averaged data that was provided. Mr. Kannan responded in the affirmative and stated that a new reporting tool was in development. Referencing slide four, Ms. Hermanson also requested information regarding the destinations of Metrorail Blue Line riders.

Ms. Hermanson opened the floor for public comment.

Mr. Jeff Larrimore, inquired when all eight-car trains would begin on the Metrorail Blue Line. Referencing slides 12 and 13, questioned the number of cars that would be provided per hour on the Metrorail Orange and Silver Lines.

Joshua [Last Name Not Given], asked if staff considered increasing the headways on Metrorail Blue and Silver Line trains leaving Franconia-Springfield due to customer complaints on social media.

Mr. Colin Reusch, asked if data similar to the data used in the presentation, could be made available to the public regularly. He also inquired about “rail incidents” on the Metrorail Blue Line (i.e. equipment problems and train malfunctions).

Mr. Tom Spensic, suggested that staff encourage riders to board the first rail car to alleviate crowding on the Metrorail Blue Line. He then asked if WMATA was able to sustain the demand for ridership given the plans for a Metrorail station at Potomac Yard.

Mr. Bush questioned the feasibility of reporting the actual headways of Metrorail trains versus what was forecasted. Mr. Kannan stated that staff was working on a system to track customer’s “tap in and tap out” points within the system to track total travel time. He continued saying that an average trip time would be established and analyze trips that were within or outside the standard deviation.

Ms. Hermanson thanked Mr. Kannan and Ms. Weeks for their presentation.

VI. Committee Reports

- Chair’s Report to WMATA Board of Directors (March 2015) – Ms. Hermanson

Ms. Hermanson stated that the Chair’s Report for the month of March 2015 was included in the agenda package for review.

- Chair’s Report from March 26th WMATA Committee Meetings – Ms. Hermanson

Ms. Hermanson informed the Council that the system’s first 7000-series train will enter passenger service Tuesday, April 14, on the Metrorail Blue Line. She also discussed that the Board of Directors approved a staff request to hold a public hearing for the Potomac Yard Metrorail station project. She noted that if the project were approved, that the Potomac Yard Station would be the second “infill” Metrorail station within the history of WMATA. With regard to the Customer Service and Operations Committee meeting, Ms. Hermanson stated that there was a MetroAccess study update that included the long-term sustainability of MetroAccess. She continued saying that the Safety and Security Committee received an update on safety and security incidents. The Committee also received a presentation recommending the launch of a pilot program to conduct a special 90-day fare enforcement campaign at key stations and bus routes beginning on April 27, 2015. The purpose of the program is to enhance employee and customer safety, improve customer service, and make fare collection more equitable. Lastly, Ms. Hermanson discussed the RAC Leadership Quarterly Meeting with WMATA Board of Directors.

The Council then viewed the new safety preparedness videos that were unveiled during the March 26th Safety and Security Committee meeting.

Mr. Walker commented that the videos contained false information that needed to be revised.

Mr. Nalty expressed concern that the video may not be received by customers who do not own televisions. He suggested that the video be used in conjunction with simple advertisements and/or safety reminders inside Metrorail stations.

Mr. White questioned the sufficiency of the instructions for the emergency call box.

Mr. Sheehan noted that the video did not account for customers with disabilities, wheelchairs, et cetera.

Mr. Chou expressed concern regarding the intercom system and non-English speaking customers. Ms. Hermanson noted that the video was produced in English and Spanish.

Ms. Kortum stated that the videos relied on the assumption that in the event of an emergency the Metrorail conductor would provide clear and understandable instructions in any given rail car.

Ms. MacKenzie commented that the video did not include provisions or instructions for children.

Ms. Titus questioned if the video would be available with closed captioning. Mr. Sheehan concurred. Mr. James Jackson, RAC Coordinator noted that the video viewed by the Council was downloaded from YouTube and the closed captioning feature was not utilized.

- Budget and Finance Committee – Mr. Bush

Mr. Bush stated that the agenda for the next scheduled meeting would consist of establishing a timeline to work on fare simplification recommendations. He questioned the date or timeframe that the Board of Directors would like to receive the deliverable. Ms. Hermanson replied that she would seek clarification from staff.

Mr. Sheehan questioned the date of the FY2016 Budget Information Session and Public Hearing. Ms. Jennifer Ellison, Board Corporate Secretary, confirmed that the date was April 7, 2015 at WMATA Headquarters in the Lower Level Board Room. Mr. Sheehan stated that the Accessibility Advisory Committee would be present at the public hearing to speak against fare increases, and recommended that the RAC was also present.

The Council discussed various issues on the docket for the scheduled public hearing.

- Customer Service Committee – Mr. Fogel

Mr. Fogel stated that the Customer Committee had four priorities and reviewed each briefly:

1. Improve Communications: Clarity, Timeliness, Accuracy (Specifically related to incidents delays and safety)
2. Metrorail Silver Line and Blue Line Ridership
3. Stations Operations: Role of the Station Manager
4. Improve Trip Planning Information for Metrobus Customers

Mr. Fogel announced that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee would include Ms. Rita Davis, Director of Rail Infrastructure Support Services.

- Programs, Projects and Planning Committee – Mr. Turk

Mr. Nalty provided a brief report in Mr. Turk's absence. Mr. Nalty stated that the Programs, Projects Committee (PPP) held a joint meeting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on March 16, 2015. He stated that the Committee met as a work group to discuss priority seating for disabled customers.

He continued saying that the Committee then held a regular session meeting following the work group to discuss social media and cellular phone applications. Mr. Brian Anderson, Digital Communications Manager, WMATA was present to discuss the various social media platforms that WMATA used to conduct outreach.

VII. Announcements

Ms. Hermanson announced that there were two documents included in the agenda packet for review: *RAC Committee Roles and Expectations* and *Committee Work Plan Worksheet*.

She then announced that the RAC had been asked to provide input on the selection the next WMATA CEO/General Manager. Ms. Hermanson requested that Council members forward to her any thoughts and/or suggestions regarding the hiring of the CEO/General Manager.

Ms. Hermanson announced that the Council had been invited to celebrate the arrival of Metro's first 7000-series train on Monday, April 13, 2015 at 1:00 p.m. at the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport Metrorail station.

Lastly, Ms. Hermanson announced that Karen Lynch (MD-Prince George's County) and Deborah Christian (MD-Prince George's County) resigned from the RAC effective April 1, 2015.

Ms. Gala expressed concern the PPP Committee was unable to obtain information from riders outside of the Council. She suggested that the Committee have a Twitter account, not to

disseminate information, but to receive information and ask questions for the benefit of the Council.

Mr. Chou questioned the oversight of AECOM, a technology corporation involved with the revision of Metrobus lines. Ms. Ellison responded that AECOM is a company contracted through WMATA to provide services and that the RAC is welcome to be involved in revisions to Metrobus lines through the WMATA Public Participation Plan.

VIII. Adjournment

Without objection, Ms. Hermanson adjourned the regular session meeting at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

James N. Jackson
Riders' Advisory Council Coordinator

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