

**Riders' Advisory Council  
Meeting Minutes  
December 7, 2007**

I. Call to Order/Roll Call:

Mr. Snyder called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. He then proceeded to take role. The following members were present. (Arrival times for members are noted both in the listing below and also in the body of the meeting minutes.)

Michael Snyder, Chair, Montgomery County

Steve Cerny, Fairfax County

Sharon Conn, Prince George's County – arrived 6:37 p.m.

Armando Cortinez, At-Large/District of Columbia – arrived 6:54 p.m.

Pat Daniels, District of Columbia

Penny Everline, Arlington County

Nancy Iacomini, Arlington County

Dennis Jaffe, District of Columbia

Cesar Maxit, District of Columbia

Kaiya Sandler, Montgomery County

Patrick Sheehan, At-Large/Elderly and Disabled Committee – arrived 7:47 p.m.

Aline Stone, District of Columbia

Robin White, Fairfax County – arrived 6:57 p.m.

The following members were not present for any portion of the meeting:

Jennifer Barozie, City of Alexandria

Kelsi Bracmort, District of Columbia

Denise Brown, Prince George's County

Justin Chittams, District of Columbia

Susan Holland, Prince George's County

Nardra Johnson, Montgomery County

Kevin Moore, At-Large/District of Columbia

Lillian White, City of Alexandria

Mr. Snyder noted that a quorum was not yet present for this meeting, so the RAC would move on to the public comment period.

II. Public Comment Period:

Mr. Leroy Morgan said that he had a suggestion that could save Metro money during the upcoming holidays, specifically regarding its service on Christmas Eve. He said that he would recommend that Metro not run any 8-car trains and that Metrorail run 6-car trains during the morning peak period and throughout the day. He also recommended that Metro run 4-car trains in place of 6-car trains during certain times:

Green Line – 10 a.m. - closing

Systemwide – 6 p.m. - closing, every 12-15 minutes

He said that many offices will have reduced staff and Metro should run smaller trains because they will be less crowded, especially in the evening rush hour, as people will be at home. He added that he thinks that Metro should charge regular fares and parking rates. Mr. Snyder asked Mr. Morgan to provide this information to Mr. Pasek.

Mr. Snyder noted that the RAC did not yet have a quorum present, and therefore couldn't take a vote to approve minutes from the November meeting. There was then discussion between Mr. Jaffe and Mr. Snyder as to the exact number required for a quorum and whether sufficient members were present.

III. Approval of Agenda:

Mr. Snyder said that he'd like to add discussion about next month's meeting and about positions that would be coming open on the RAC in January.

Without objection, the agenda was approved.

Mr. Snyder said that January will be the start of a new term for the Riders' Advisory Council, and one of the first orders of business at January's meeting will be to elect a new chair, 1<sup>st</sup> vice chair and 2<sup>nd</sup> vice chair. He noted that the chair would need to come from Virginia, the 1<sup>st</sup> vice chair would need to come from the District of Columbia, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> vice chair from Maryland.

Mr. Snyder added that there are a number of RAC members that would be leaving the RAC at the end of the year and said that he wanted to give them the opportunity to address the RAC, briefly.

Mr. Jaffe noted that he would be moving to California to take a job there and therefore would be resigning the RAC. He said that he didn't have an exact date, but would be finalizing his resignation once that date is determined.

Ms. Stone noted that she will be taking several classes and, rather than skipping RAC meetings, will be leaving the RAC.

Mr. Snyder mentioned the Monday pedestrian death of Tao Sun from Rockville. He said that this was the 6<sup>th</sup> pedestrian fatality since the RAC's formation and wanted to express the RAC's condolences to the family if he is able to attend the memorial service and said that he will also mention this incident in his upcoming comments to the Board of Directors.

IV. Discussion on Metro Fare Increase Proposal:

Mr. Pasek presented information on the testimony received at the public hearings. The information was a summary of the comments that Metro received as part of the public hearings and public comment period on the proposed fare and fee increase. He provided

information on the number and type of comments submitted to Metro. (see attached presentation)

Following the presentation, Mr. Snyder reopened the public comment period to allow an additional member of the public to make comments.

Public Comment (cont'd):

Doris Ray said that she wanted to take the opportunity to speak to the RAC since they will be making recommendations to the Board about fare increases.

She said that she thinks that the rail fare increases will be difficult for low-income individuals and senior citizens because they provide for an automatic increase in senior/disabled fares.

Ms. Ray said that she also wanted to talk about the differential between those who pay cash vs. those who pay with a pass or SmarTrip card. She said that it is her understanding that people paying with cash will pay \$0.10 more. She said that this will be difficult because it will require people to make a special trip to a Metro station or another location to get a card. She said that this is disparate treatment and that this burden shouldn't be placed on low-income people and people with disabilities. She said that she also opposed this proposal because the fareboxes on buses are not accessible to people with disabilities. Ms. Ray added that, until that accessibility issue is addressed, that the disparate treatment of people who use cash is wrong and that she would appreciate the RAC making that statement to the WMATA Board of Directors.

She said that there are other issues for people with disabilities that remain unresolved, specifically lighting in stations, including the new red platform edge lights. She said that she also had concerns about Metro "staggering" its lighting at stations – meaning that only half of the platform edge lights are lit when not flashing. She noted that the West Falls Church station is very dark. She said that platform lighting was considered a supplemental lighting source that allowed Metro to not implement other ADA requirements for platform edge warning.

Mr. Cortinez arrived at 6:54 p.m.

In response to a question from Mr. Snyder, Ms. Ray said that the platform edge lighting was supposed to be a way for individuals with disabilities to identify the platform edge. She said that the red lights, do not provide the same level of contrast that allow individuals to identify the platform edge, and said that when the red lights are "at rest" they are not always visible to individuals with disabilities.

Ms. Iacomini asked if Ms. Ray has made these comments to the E&D Committee. Ms. Ray responded that she had brought this issue up with the E&D Committee some time ago and that Metro staff is studying the issues but that there hasn't been any action taken. Ms.

Iacomini said that she was concerned about getting ahead of the E&D Committee on this issue, but that the RAC would certainly be supportive of encouraging Metro staff to complete the studies which are ongoing. Mr. Snyder echoes Ms. Iacomini's comments.

Ms. (Robin) White arrived at 6:57 p.m.

Mr. Snyder said that the RAC now had quorum, so he would move back to approval of minutes.

V. Approval of November 5, 2007 Meeting Minutes:

Ms. Stone moved approval of the minutes as presented.

Ms. Everline seconded this motion. Mr. Snyder made one correction to page 8, and then called for a vote.

In favor: Mr. Snyder, Mr. Cerny, Ms. Everline, Mr. Maxit, Ms. Sandler, Ms. Stone, Ms. (Robin) White

Opposed: none

Abstentions: Dr. Conn, Mr. Cortinez, Ms. Daniels, Ms. Iacomini, Mr. Jaffe

Discussion on Metro Fare Proposal (cont'd):

Mr. Snyder then opened the floor to discussion on the proposed fare increase.

Dr. Conn said that she attended the public hearings at the Jackson Graham Building and in Largo. She said that one of the underlying themes is that daily riders are affected more than other groups. She said that many of the individuals who spoke were concerned about that particular issue.

Mr. Snyder said that one of the riders brought in information that showed that rail riders will be paying 85% of the cost of the rail system, and likely paying more than the cost of providing the service during rush hours. He said that the leads to rail riders subsidizing service for bus riders, rather than that subsidy being provided by the jurisdictions.

Ms. Iacomini said that rush-hour riders are bearing the brunt of the rate increase. She said that it may be appropriate for the RAC to recommend that the Board look at advertising off-peak fare increase, even though that wasn't part of the proposal that went out to public hearing.

Mr. Cerny asked Mr. Pasek about potential for Board action at the meeting the following week. Mr. Pasek responded that the Board had latitude to approve whatever it wants, so long as that is within the limit of the advertised proposal.

Mr. Cerny said that, while he was initially in favor of a mid-fiscal year fare increase, the

hearings swayed his opinion that Metro shouldn't have a fare increase until it improves its service. He said that the RAC could make that recommendation or provide input for fare increases in July.

Mr. Snyder said that the RAC did present that at its last meeting, but that it could reemphasize this position in its subsequent statement to the Board.

Ms. Sandler said that she thinks that there is consensus that Metro's fare increase shouldn't come solely at the expense of peak rail riders. She said that, while increasing off-peak fares wasn't advertised as part of the public hearings, this action could be taken at a later date. She said that the RAC, along with many of the people who commented at the public hearings, were realistic that fares will increase and need to increase. She said that she thinks that the fare increase will cause many people will drive instead and that Metro needs to make a good-faith effort to reexamine the impact of its decision on commuters.

Mr. Jaffe said that, while he feels that Metro has been poorly run over the past several years, he understand that there is also a need to make responsible budget decisions. He added that he would be opposed to a mid-year fare increase because it establishes a precedent that budgets in future years aren't reliable. He said that this breaks the public's trust that budgets are developed publicly and that budgets are developed with "true and final" figures. Mr. Jaffe also said that he is unsure as to whether the law prevents Metro from going to the jurisdictions for additional monies in the middle of a fiscal year. He noted that, rather than doing this, Metro turned solely to its riders to raise additional revenue.

Mr. Jaffe said that his concern about the differential between cash and SmarTrip is not policy-based, rather that it is based on Metro's lack of marketing of the cards to broader communities, including lower-income communities and communities of color. He said that, rather, what needs to happen is an extensive community outreach effort to encourage people to use SmarTrip.

Mr. Jaffe added, while he didn't disagree with comments made that evening that a fare increase should be more evenly distributed, there is a benefit in that by not increasing off-peak fares, Metro could encourage additional ridership and also shift ridership to off-peak times.

Ms. Iacomini stated that she didn't disagree with Mr. Jaffe about the benefits to keeping off-peak fares low, but that even with some increase, they would still be lower than the peak period fares. She said that the RAC could recommend to the Board not to allow any increases to take effect until the Board examines the effect of increasing the off-peak fare. She added that Metro needs to try a less punitive approach to encourage SmarTrip usage because Metro doesn't have the logistics worked out regarding SmarTrip. She said that the RAC doesn't need to try and match the Board's budget numbers, but rather provide comments and reaction from riders' perspective.

Ms. Stone said that she is concerned with Metro's progress in making SmarTrip more accessible customers and that Metro hasn't made any effort to do so.

Dr. Conn said that the majority of bus ridership doesn't use SmarTrip cards. She said that if Metro wants to reduce cash handling, Metro could make tokens more available. She added that the increases in parking fees and reserved parking costs would hit regular riders substantially. Dr. Conn noted that she was also concerned that, because of the way that the fare increases were advertised, many fare categories couldn't be increased.

Dr. Conn said that she was shocked that Metro was having a fare increase and that she is also concerned by Metro's rush to increase fares mid-year. She said that people feel a great deal of frustration about the proposed increase. She said that Metro's proposal didn't talk about other revenue sources or other improvements that riders would see if the fare increases are enacted. She noted that Metro didn't talk about its pension plan or its overtime situation. Dr. Conn also noted the chart shown to riders at the public hearings didn't take into account that Metro charges distance-based fares.

Dr. Conn said that the RAC, as the voice of riders, needs to send a message to the Board that is representative of what was said at the public hearings. She said that, if a fare increase is warranted, it needs to be justified and applied fairly.

Mr. Snyder noted that New York will not be raising its fare from \$2, and also that Metro has not yet presented a 2009 budget for review, meaning that it hasn't fully explored all of the options that may affect its revenues and expenses for the coming year.

Mr. Snyder asked Ms. Ray if tokens work. He said that he wasn't sure why Metro is proposing eliminating tokens. Ms. Ray said that she thinks that Metro is trying to get rid of cash and coins. She added that people who are infrequent users, especially those that don't use the rail system, shouldn't be penalized.

Mr. Snyder said that Metro has talked about tying SmarTrip to credit/debit cards and asked Ms. Ray if that would be a better solution.

Ms. Iacomini suggested that the discussion should focus on what the RAC will say to the Board. She said that the RAC can suggest to the Board, based on members' experience as riders, that it doesn't support a fare increase at this time and that the Board needs to revisit increases in off-peak fares, lower increases to peak fares and parking rates as proposed and increased emphasis on SmarTrip. Ms. Iacomini said that other businesses reward their frequent customers and the proposed increases do just the opposite.

Mr. Snyder said that one of the comments he heard at the hearings was that the bus fare would no longer be a multiple of \$0.25.

Mr. Cerny said that he thinks that the fare differential should be eliminated altogether for

peak and off-peak. He said that most people ride the system to and from work and they don't have the opportunity to alter their work hours. He said that this would mean that, for those that ride during off-peak hours, their fares would increase, but not as dramatically as they are proposed to increase during peak periods.

Ms. Daniels said that she is concerned that some stores that sell Metro fare media charge extra fees to purchase passes. She said that she ends up purchasing her cards at Metro Center to avoid paying these extra fees.

Mr. Cerny said that he was prepared at the Reston hearing to advocate that people pay market rates for parking, because there isn't any reason that they can't ride the bus, however, after hearing testimony from someone who couldn't take the bus to the station because the bus was unreliable, he said that he has changed his position on this issue. He asked whether or not Metro kept track of the address of people who park at the stations and how close they live to existing bus service. Mr. Pasek responded that studies have been done at certain stations correlating the addresses of people who park at Metro stations with their proximity to existing bus service.

Mr. Cerny said that he would be surprised if Metro raised fares in January, based on the comments it received during the public hearings, however, it would be useful to have such data for future discussions.

Ms. Sandler said that Metro already charges market rate - for example, at White Flint, Metro charges \$7.75 for people who don't ride Metro. Mr. Snyder said that, as part of the proposal, higher parking rates would be charged for anyone who doesn't pay with a SmarTrip card.

Mr. Cerny said that most Metro parking lots, at least in Virginia, are not accessible to other destinations besides the Metro stations that they serve, and so there really isn't a defined "market rate" for these lots.

Ms. Iacomini said that Metro is able to get data on parking use by tracking registered SmarTrip card users and related her experience in seeing such Metro-provided data as part of a citizens' task force looking at the plan for the East Falls Church station area.

Dr. Conn asked whether there are currently any discounts available for SmarTrip cards. She said that it is her understanding that there are no discounted fares, such as passes, available through SmarTrip. Mr. Snyder said that Metro does not currently have that capability.

There was then discussion about using SmarTrip cards for parking and how varying rates are calculated. Dr. Conn said that there are no signs indicating that parking lots are full, which means that patrons who arrive at Metrorail stations later in the day and try to park could encounter a situation where, unable to find parking in the garage, they still have to pay to exit.

Mr. Snyder suggested that the RAC begin to develop the statement it would make to the Board of Directors.

Mr. Sheehan arrived at 7:47 p.m. He apologized for being late and said that the cab in which he had been riding was involved in a minor accident.

Mr. Snyder gave a brief review of the discussion for Mr. Sheehan's benefit, noting that the RAC had concerns about the proposed fare increases being fair to all riders and about implementation of increasing SmarTrip card usage.

Ms. Sandler said that she had put together some proposed language for a motion and read the following:

"In response to public comments on WMATA's fare increase, the RAC strongly recommends that the WMATA Board:

- 1) Not implement a mid-year fare increase;
- 2) Consider an increase or implement an increase on non-peak fares; and
- 3) At this time not implement preferential fares for SmarTrip users on Metrobus.

Ms. Iacomini seconded this motion.

Mr. Jaffe asked whether it would be palatable to change the wording of the second section of the resolution to state that the burden imposed by the fare increases shouldn't rest solely on peak riders. He said that he doesn't want the RAC to be in the position of explicitly advocating any fare increase.

Mr. Jaffe added that he feels that the RAC should recommend increasing accessibility and public awareness of SmarTrip.

Mr. Sheehan asked whether or not the RAC should advocate tying fares to measurable service qualities throughout the system. Ms. Iacomini said that she would hesitate to add this because it's difficult to measure. She added, however, that the RAC should emphasize Metro's customers said that that service quality needs to improve.

Dr. Conn asked whether the RAC is advocating a delay in the fare increase or something else. Mr. Snyder said that the RAC should restate its initial position in opposition to a mid-year fare increase.

Mr. Snyder said that one of the comments he read as part of the public hearing record, stated that while it's certainly appropriate for there to be fares for lower-income individuals, these lower fares should be subsidized by the jurisdictions, not by other types of users of the Metro system.

Mr. Sheehan noted that Metro has half-fares for seniors and individuals with disabilities and that MetroAccess-eligible individuals are able to ride Metrorail and Metrobus for

free.

Mr. Snyder said that the current proposal pits bus riders against rail riders and that this isn't good for public transit.

Dr. Conn said that, last year, at the Regional Bus Conference, Mr. Catoe said that in Los Angeles, the city changed its infrastructure to accommodate bus service. She said that this proposal would force people back into their cars. She said that she doesn't think that the Washington is doing anything to inhibit people from driving into the city and that those types of measures that provide a disincentive for driving into the city also need to be considered in addition to or instead of a fare increase for Metro riders.

Ms. White said that she wanted to concur that the main issues at hand are equity, affordability and service standards. She said that the RAC also has the opportunity to incorporate the concept of reasonableness and communication in the implementation of the fare increases. Ms. White said that the communication about the public hearings was very disorganized and rushed and the RAC can make recommendations as to standards for future hearings. She said that, also, if the fare increase was to take effect in January, people wouldn't have much time to prepare or adjust their budgets to deal with the increased costs. She said that the RAC could perhaps support a standard time period between the approval of the increases and their implementation.

Ms. Sandler said that she made some changes to her motion based on the discussion and reread her motion with those changes incorporated. The motion read:

“In response to public comments on WMATA's proposed fare increase, the RAC strongly recommend that the WMATA Board:

- 1) Not implement a mid-year fare increase;
- 2) Not move forward with a fare increase that solely burdens peak riders;
- 3) Focus on increased access and public awareness of SmarTrip before implementing preferential fares for SmarTrip users;
- 4) Tie any fare increase to measurable benchmarks in implementing service improvements and customer relations.”

Ms. Iacomini said that, based on the discussions, the following points should be added:

- Future fare hearings be well-advertised;
- No increase be implemented within a certain time period after Board approval.

Ms. White said that a 30 – 90 day time period would be an acceptable period between approval of a fare increase and its implementation.

Mr. Jaffe discussed the notice for the recent public hearings.

Ms. Sandler then read the final version of her motion, including the previously-discussed changes.

*(Note: This is the final version and the one that the RAC voted on.)*

“In response to public comments on WMATA’s proposed fare increase, the RAC strongly recommends that the WMATA Board:

- 1) Not implement a mid-year fare increase;
- 2) Not move forward with a fare increase that solely burdens peak riders;
- 3) Focus on increased access and public awareness of SmarTrip before implementing preferential fares for SmarTrip users;
- 4) Tie any fare increase to measurable benchmarks in service improvements and customer relations.
- 5) Ensure future fare hearings are well-advertised
- 6) Not implement any fare increase prior to 60 days following Board approval.”

This motion was seconded by Ms. Iacomini.

Following discussion, Mr. Snyder then called for a vote.

All members present voted in favor of the motion as presented by Ms. Sandler, with no one opposed and no abstentions.

(13-0-0)

VI. Subcommittee Reports:

Mr. Snyder noted that there were no Subcommittee meetings during the month of November so there likely wouldn’t be any reports from Subcommittee chairs.

Dr. Conn noted that there are two upcoming meetings on the 30-Line, noting that these would be the last meetings held as part of the study. Mr. Pasek added that there would be a formal public hearing next year before Metro would implement any service changes.

She also noted that NextBus is on an 18-month hiatus until Metro is able to fix problems with the system. Mr. Sheehan said that the Elderly and Disabled Committee has asked staff to look at other possible systems to use in lieu of NextBus.

VII. New Business:

There was no new business.

VIII. Adjournment:

Without objection, Mr. Snyder adjourned the meeting at 8:21 p.m.