

Riders' Advisory Council Meeting
March 7, 2007

I. Roll Call:

Mr. Snyder called the March meeting of the Metro Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:35 p.m. He noted that the RAC did not have a quorum for this meeting. Mr. Snyder then took roll.

Present:

Justin Chittams, District of Columbia
Pat Daniels, District of Columbia
Sharon Conn, Maryland
Kaiya Sandler, Maryland
Cesar Maxit, Maryland
Pedro Erviti, Virginia
Nancy Iacomini, Virginia
Dennis Jaffe, District of Columbia(arrived 6:37 p.m.)
Armando Cortinez, At-Large/District of Columbia (arrived 6:41 p.m.)
Kelsi Bracmort, District of Columbia (arrived 7:13 p.m.)
Michael Snyder, Maryland

Not Present:

Mary Blyther, Virginia
Denise Brown, Maryland
Steve Cerny, Virginia
Katy Chang, D.C.
Susan Holland, Maryland
Nardra Johnson, Maryland
Kevin Moore, At-Large/D.C.
Patrick Sheehan, At-Large/E&D
Aline Stone, Virginia
Lillian White, Virginia

Mr. Jaffe (District of Columbia) arrived at 6:37 p.m.

II. Public Comment:

Mr. Snyder then called for comments from members of the public; there were no comments from the public. He also introduced Cali Ence, a graduate student from George Washington University who is doing her capstone project on the RAC and was in attendance at the meeting.

Mr. Cortinez arrived at 6:41 p.m.

III. Approval of February 7, 2007 Minutes:

Mr. Snyder noted that the minutes had been passed out; he suggested waiting until the next meeting for the RAC to approve these minutes due to the fact that they were passed out late.

IV. Safety Initiatives, Fred Goodine:

Mr. Snyder introduced Fred Goodine, Metro's Assistant General Manager for System Safety and Risk Management. Mr. Snyder noted that he has had several meetings with Mr. Goodine and said that, because safety is "Metro's #1 priority," he asked him to come address the RAC. He said that he is particularly interested in pedestrian safety, and that he expected Mr. Goodine to discuss this and a variety of other safety initiatives underway at Metro.

Mr. Goodine thanked Mr. Snyder for the opportunity to speak and said that he doesn't always get the opportunity to discuss some of the proactive things that Metro is doing in terms of safety along with things that it has done in the past and things that it plans to do in the future.

Mr. Goodine said that pedestrian incidents have hit Metro hard recently. He noted that a Metrobus operator is facing charges for negligent homicide. He said that Metro is working on bringing the number of accidents down to zero.

Mr. Goodine said that according to the Washington Post there were 300 pedestrian accidents resulting in 85 fatalities occurring in the metropolitan Washington region last year. He said that he believes that pedestrian safety is a two-way street: Metrobus operators should operate safely, drive defensively and expect the unexpected, and that pedestrians should obey the laws and "walk defensively." He said that pedestrians need to be alert when walking.

Mr. Goodine explained that there are three "buckets" or areas of emphasis which Metro has been and is currently working on to improve safety:

- Education – for employees and the public;
- Engineering – vehicle technology to improve safety;
- Education.

He then discussed the factors that contribute to pedestrian accidents:

- road design and characteristics;
- operational characteristic – traffic flow, lighting;
- position/placement of bus stops;
- shelters – whether they are adequate for current passenger loads;

Mr. Goodine provided an example of a fatal accident last year in Fairfax County which was attributable to inadequate and shelter/bus stop. He noted that Metro doesn't control bus stops and shelters and that it needs to work with local jurisdictions to reassess shelters and stops.

Mr. Goodine continued listing the factors contributing to accidents:

- pedestrian and operator error;
- weather (passengers often hurry to catch buses to get out of inclement weather);
- time of day.

He said that strategies to mitigate the frequency and severity of such incidents include changes to roadway design and traffic control devices, such as pre-emptive traffic signal for buses. He noted that this would also help with bus bunching. Mr. Goodine added that bus operator training is also a strategy to make improvements.

Mr. Goodine told RAC members that WMATA uses the “Smith” method of training, and that this method is the most effective type of driver training. He said that the issue is retraining drivers. He told RAC members there will be a meeting later this month to allow bus operators, working with the General Manager and training instructors, to have input into the retraining process.

Mr. Goodine continued by saying that vehicle design can also help reduce accidents and noted that bus technology has improved since he drove buses 30 years ago. He added that many improvements have been made to buses during this time such as additional mirrors, larger windows, better brakes, etc., and that distractions and hazards which drivers used to have to deal with, such as changing destination signs and making change for passengers, have been eliminated. He also noted that pedestrian traffic was greater in the past because fewer people owned cars. However, he said, that there are new challenges that bus operators face, such as in-line skaters, pedestrians on cell phones or using iPods, etc.

He said that public outreach can also be used to mitigate accidents. Mr. Goodine asked RAC members whether of them had ever jaywalked. Mr. Erviti mentioned that he had gotten a ticket for jaywalking in 1980. Mr. Goodine noted that London, for example, has railings that direct pedestrians to crosswalks. He added that Boston installed fences to keep people off trolley tracks, but often college students would cut the fences to take shortcuts across the tracks. He said that the colleges in Boston have since added transit safety education as part of their orientations with the result that there have not been any student fatalities since these education programs have begun.

Mr. Goodine then read some highlights of what Metro is doing for safety:

- New recertification program for bus operators. Mr. Goodine said that this program was previously offered to operators once every two years and that the new General Manager has committed to having this program offered annually;
- Hiring more full-time operators (vs. part-time operators) which would improve the pool of applicants for operator positions;

Dr. Conn asked Mr. Goodine what percentage of drivers are part-time. Mr. Goodine responded that about 10% of drivers are part-time, largely due to the attrition rate. He

noted that a large portion of Metro's employees are eligible for retirement. Mr. Snyder said that bus drivers must start in part-time positions when hired by the Authority. Mr. Goodine continued by listing additional safety initiatives that Metro is working on:

- Developing a bus safety outreach program – working with Terry Lynch, Cluster of Downtown Congregations – including rolling out new signage;
- Installing strobe lights on buses to alert pedestrians. He said that Metro has received approval from the District to do this and is working with Maryland and Virginia to see if strobe lights can legally be put on transit buses in those jurisdictions;
- Installing a collision avoidance system on some buses. He said that this system warns operators when their bus is too close to an object. He noted that the system doesn't always identify pedestrians, as people aren't "dense" enough to be detected.

Mr. Erviti noted that some of the safety signs encourage people not to run for buses – however, in some cases, passengers run because they would otherwise have to wait 50 minutes for the next bus. Mr. Goodine said that better information, such as PIDS at station mezzanines could prevent passengers from running to catch their trains if they know that another train is coming shortly and that real-time information about next bus arrivals may also help.

Mr. Goodine then handed out pedestrian flashers, flashing lights that can be worn by people waiting at bus stops to make them more visible. He noted that Metro handed them out to members of the public in October. He also discussed possibility of lighting bus stops using solar-powered lighting. He said that Metro is looking to partner with corporate sponsors to fund these lights.

He said that Metro is working with a task force in D.C. on high-accident locations. Mr. Goodine noted that the intersection of 7th and Pennsylvania, where the accident involving the FTC employees, is not even in WMATA's "Top 10" in terms of litigation costs. Dr. Conn noted that this intersection is very poorly lit after dark.

Mr. Goodine noted WMATA and the District Department of Transportation are working together to address safety issues. He said that Metro generates a list of "high-accident locations" and the various departments of transportation also generate "high-accident" lists; Metro then works with the appropriate agencies to make changes.

Dr. Conn noted the bus stop at 15th and H Sts. that she had removed. She said that she was bothered that no one had taken the time to report this location prior to her doing so. She asked whether or not people look at these issues when installing bus stops. Mr. Goodine described this as "risk management" – that Metro should look at these kind of risk factors in the establishment of new bus routes. Mr. Goodine then described some of the challenges involved with meeting customer expectations while still operating safely.

Mr. Goodine noted that the responsibilities for streets and intersections lie with the jurisdiction. He added that, in light of the recent accidents, the District and WMATA will undertake a safety review of existing bus stops.

He said that Metro lodges its concerns with local jurisdictions but that Metro can only stop its buses at bus stop locations designated by the various local jurisdictions. He said that Metro is working diligently on this issue and that there are a lot of studies underway on how to make improvements, by such agencies as the Transportation Research Board (TRB) and the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP).

Dr. Bracmort arrived at 7:13 p.m.

He said that all of the efforts described fell into one of the three categories – education, engineering or enforcement. Mr. Goodine said that he would add another “E” for “evaluation” to see if programs put in place are working.

Mr. Goodine noted that Metro has asked Aeon, its insurance company, to do a comprehensive ergonomic assessment of its buses. He told RAC members that assessments have been done on specific aspects (mirrors, etc.) but not for the entire bus and all of its systems.

He also said that Metro is working on an enforcement campaign – people are out at high-volume locations watching buses, recording their speeds, etc. He said that Channel 7 did a report which showed Metrobus operators speeding through traffic signals. He also noted that Terry Lynch of the Downtown Cluster of Congregations is meeting with Mayor Fenty to ask for increased traffic enforcement downtown.

Dr. Conn asked if the meeting on March 24th will be a closed meeting. Mr. Goodine responded that, yes, it’s a meeting for Metro staff. She noted that there are a number of items that could be beneficial to discuss, and said that she feels that a large portion of what has happened recently is the result of a lack of focus on customer service skills. She said that she doesn’t think that the problem is with the buses, but rather with operators’ customer service skills. Mr. Goodine responded that he sees the customer service piece is a *part* of the problem, but it’s also an issue of operating skills. He noted that turnover and having new operators can be beneficial because these new operators are enthusiastic about their new jobs and committed to providing better service.

Ms. Daniels noted that bus drivers are not held accountable, which contributes to the problem. Mr. Goodine agreed and said that Metro will be introducing random checks of operators – he said that bus drivers’ jobs, by their nature, are very autonomous. Mr. Snyder noted that bus drivers need to take “pride of ownership” in their buses.

Mr. Snyder asked Dr. Conn to put together recommendations at the next Bus Subcommittee meeting so that these can be given to Mr. Requa and Mr. Goodine and put forward at the March 24th meeting.

Mr. Jaffe noted that he hopes to hear something from the agency about holding operators accountable, specifically related to follow-up from the anti-gay slur incident. He said that he had read through the document that Mr. Goodine had handed out and said that he felt it listed a number of beneficial actions. He also expressed his concern about the creation of the pedestrian/vehicle accident database and said he thinks that it's possible that INOVA Hospital or the Transportation Planning Board may already have such a database, or, if such a database doesn't exist, may be more appropriate to create such a database, especially if transit collisions are not its primary focus.

Mr. Goodine responded that he will need to look and see what INOVA and the TPB have done and why this information hasn't been shared with WMATA and other entities. Mr. Goodine added that hospitals don't track information on fender-benders. There was discussion between Mr. Jaffe and Mr. Goodine as to whether this database is a "primary mission" of the authority. Mr. Jaffe said that the data from INOVA and the TPB is presented at an annual meeting where WMATA has representatives present. Mr. Goodine said the information collected by agencies is not necessarily put together in a relational way.

Mr. Snyder then asked Mr. Jaffe if he could continue his discussion with Mr. Goodine offline as this item had run past its allotted time.

V. Federal Transit Benefit Legislation:

Mr. Jaffe told RAC members that Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass) is getting ready to draft legislation to increase the pre-tax transit benefit from the \$110/month to \$215/month to match the benefit allowed for parking expenses. He noted that the disparity between transit and parking benefits does not encourage transit usage.

He moved that the RAC support legislation which would increase the pre-tax transit benefit from \$110/month to \$215/month, equal to the amount allowed for parking benefits. Mr. Snyder noted that the RAC does not have a quorum this evening, and so cannot vote to support this item.

Mr. Snyder asked whether parking and transit would still be considered two separate accounts – one for parking and one for transit. Mr. Jaffe said that it was his understanding that benefits would be administered as they are currently – only the amounts would change.

Ms. Iacomini said that at certain federal agencies, such as the Senate, one can only receive the transit benefit or the parking benefit, but not both. Mr. Snyder explained that the legislation would affect the amount one can have deducted pre-tax, not the amount of money an employee can receive directly. There was further discussion among RAC members about the exact meaning of pre-tax transit benefits and how these programs work. Mr. Jaffe said that this legislation only affects employees' taxable income amounts. He said that he isn't sure if the current law allows employees to have both the \$215

(parking) and the \$110 (transit) deducted or only one, but that the legislation would continue the existing policy.

Dr. Conn noted that, since this is legislation amends a current federal regulation, the current law should be able to be researched by the RAC.

Ms. Iacomini said that she feels it that it would be more helpful to wait to endorse legislation until it is filed and has a bill number and has language to review. She said that, with Congress' schedule, there is time for the RAC to consider the legislation before it's voted on.

Mr. Jaffe noted that there is an event associated with the APTA Legislative Conference next week on March 13th.

Ms. Iacomini said that the RAC can't be sure of what the legislation says because it has not been filed and the RAC hasn't seen the legislation. Mr. Snyder asked that the legislation's language be distributed to RAC members.

VI. RAC Chair Report:

Mr. Snyder thanked those who assisted in preparing last month's report to the Board of Directors. He said that he has spoken with Charlie Deegan, the Metro Board Chair, about adding non-RAC members to RAC Committees. Mr. Snyder said that Mr. Deegan said that he didn't have any problem with the RAC doing this, but asked that the RAC vet proposed appointees through the Board. Mr. Snyder noted that, since the RAC doesn't have a quorum this evening, it cannot vote on whether or not Mr. Elin can participate on Committees, but that Mr. Deegan was supportive of his participation.

Mr. Snyder said that he also spoke about quorums for RAC meetings with Mr. Deegan. He said that Mr. Deegan was supportive of the RAC changing its quorum to five members. Mr. Snyder noted that Mr. Deegan implemented changes to the Board of Directors' Committee structure and quorums, with Metro Board Committees now being committees of the whole and having a quorum of five. Mr. Snyder said that the RAC cannot vote at this meeting to request that the Board change the RAC's bylaws because there isn't a quorum present. Mr. Jaffe said that he wasn't sure that having Board committees as committees of the whole with five-person quorums was a good thing. Mr. Erviti said that, if agendas were distributed prior to meetings, interested members could show up to meetings depending on items being discussed, providing great flexibility. Mr. Jaffe said that having quorums of less than 50% is generally not seen as positive by those who promote members' full participation.

Mr. Snyder noted that he circulated the list of RAC initiatives and has presented them to the Board of Directors. He said that the RAC wanted to track these initiatives to find out where they are. He noted that many of the initiatives were presented to the Board of Directors last year, while others haven't been pursued. He said that the initiatives are broken down by committee and encouraged RAC members to "take ownership" of items

that are important to them and monitor the initiatives to move them forward. Mr. Snyder noted that there are a fair number of initiatives associated with Metrobus safety, and if something from the Metrobus Subcommittee could be sent to Mr. Goodine, it's possible they would be included in the safety meeting he will be attending on March 24th.

Mr. Elin asked what the numbers associated with the initiatives are. Mr. Snyder responded that these were originally priorities, but the resolutions haven't been formally prioritized. He said that the RAC needs to recognize that some initiatives are multi-year initiatives while others could be "quick fixes", that others may require funding and that some may need to be included in Metro's capital budget. He said that ultimately he would like to see the initiatives written up and hopes that this would be something that the George Washington students could work on.

Mr. Snyder said that he went to Martha Schoenborn's funeral – she was one of the FTC employees struck by a Metrobus last month. He said that there was no local service for Ms. McGee. He said that he has also asked to be notified when services are held for the woman struck and killed in Capitol Heights. He encouraged other RAC members to attend services as well.

VII. Communications Subcommittee Report

Ms. Stone, the chair of the Communications Subcommittee was not in attendance. Mr. Snyder asked if any RAC members would like to provide a brief summary of the meeting.

Mr. Chittams left the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Mr. Snyder then gave a brief overview of Communications Subcommittee meeting. He said that Murray Bond, Metro's Director of Marketing, gave a presentation on advertising, along with other non-fare revenue, such as ATMs in stations. Mr. Snyder said that advertising was discussed at the Budget Committee workshops and he is hoping to put together advertising guidelines for Metro, such as how many ads should be allowed in stations or on buses, where banners should be allowed, etc. He said that he hoped the Communications Subcommittee would work with Mr. Bond to provide recommendations.

Mr. Jaffe noted that Mr. Bond actually gave his presentation at the previous month's RAC meeting, and that Lendy Castillo from Metro's Office of Customer Service was present at the Communications Subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Snyder said that, at the Communications Subcommittee meeting, Mr. Castillo offered to give committee members a tour of the Metro's Customer Service Center in Silver Spring. He noted that the committee discussed Ms. Johnson's incident on the Y-line bus and Customer Service's response.

Mr. Jaffe added that, at the Communications Subcommittee meeting, the committee identified some priorities such as asking customers for feedback on their interaction with

Metro's customer service, making improvements to the online trip planner, and providing electronic sign-up for notification of public meetings, along with others.

Mr. Maxit raised a concern with the calendar displays for RAC meetings. He noted that items have not been appearing on the calendar and asked who was responsible for updating the calendar. Mr. Maxit asked that Committee Chairs monitor the calendar to make sure that meetings are showing up on the calendar. Mr. Snyder noted that there were some technical problems with the calendar last week that Metro has fixed. Mr. Snyder suggested that Mr. Maxit keep an eye on the calendar and report any problems.

Mr. Jaffe asked that the agendas for meetings be consistently hyperlinked in the "Upcoming Meetings" section of the RAC's page.

Dr. Conn said that she thinks that Metro should run banners across its website and also that someone should reexamine the entire site's front page to add banners and provide additional information disseminated about meetings.

VIII. Budget Committee Report:

Mr. Snyder noted that the budget committee meetings were well-publicized and received press coverage in a variety of places, but not many members of the public showed up at the Budget Committee's February meeting or at the first workshop. Mr. Snyder said that he was concerned by the turnout. He said that it is his sense that the public, having received assurances from Councilman Graham and Mr. Catoe that a fare increase would be a "last-resort," they are not as concerned about the FY08 budget.

Mr. Snyder described the workshop, how it was structured this past Saturday and how it will be structured on Saturday to evaluate/critique the ideas put forward from the workshops.

Dr. Bracmort asked about the timing of the workshops. Mr. Snyder clarified the timing of the workshops and mentioned that additional work on the recommendations would also take place at the next Budget Subcommittee meeting. Dr. Bracmort also asked how RAC members can voice their comments during meetings. Mr. Snyder told her to get his attention during the meetings when she wanted to make comments.

Ms. Daniels noted that there were some items listed as recommendations from the workshop that she didn't agree with, such as eliminating the senior discount, but is unable to attend the next workshop. Mr. Snyder recommended that she send her comments to the RAC staff coordinator to include in the next workshop.

Mr. Jaffe asked when the recommendations could be voted on by the full RAC. Mr. Snyder responded that he hoped to have a draft report at the next RAC meeting and to have meeting summaries from the workshops distributed prior to then.

IX. Bus Subcommittee Report:

Dr. Conn noted that the February Bus Subcommittee meeting was cancelled. She said that the Committee meeting would cover the same items as were planned for February, along with a discussion of bus safety and items related to the ongoing trial of the Metrobus operator involved in the February 14th accident. Dr. Conn said that she would try to follow the trial of the accident as it progresses.

Dr. Conn also said that she thought that it would be a good idea for the RAC to formally send condolences to family members of individuals involved in accidents that have fatalities or serious injuries. Mr. Snyder said that he agreed with this idea and mentioned that he had send condolences to Mr. Schoenborn. Dr. Conn also thanked Mr. Jaffe for offering to chair the February Bus Subcommittee meeting in her absence, even though the meeting was cancelled.

Dr. Conn said that she wished that the safety meeting to be held on March 24th were open to the public. She said that she thinks that it's important for staff to hear what the public has to say.

Dr. Conn said that she was frustrated by the slow pace of change and that she isn't seeing the changes that are being suggested by the RAC. Mr. Snyder said that he had received positive feedback from Mr. Catoe on Dr. Conn's participation in the bus ride-along, and would be working to see that she was able to participate in the March 24th meeting. Ms. Daniels asked whether Metro staff will be riding bus lines with problems so that they can see what's going on. Mr. Snyder said that Mr. Deegan the new Board Chair has ridden every rail line and is working on riding every bus line as well. He said that Mr. Goodine is trying to get out as well, and this message will resonate with other Metro management. Dr. Bracmort suggested that the RAC communicate to Metro and suggest that there be some kind of monitoring to ensure that Metro staff are complying with Mr. Catoe's orders to ride transit.

Dr. Conn added that, when Mr. Catoe came to the RAC, he said that he would monitor his staff and increase the goal for their ridership. She noted that at a recent Town Hall meeting participants were frustrated when they learned of the number of WMATA staff who do not regularly ride the bus. Dr. Bracmort commented that the only way staff can make improvements to the system is to ride the system.

X. Rail Subcommittee Report:

There was no report from the Rail Subcommittee due to Ms. White's absence. Mr. Snyder noted that the Rail Subcommittee did not meet in February.

Dr. Bracmort mentioned that she was caught in the delay on the Blue and Orange Line delay last week and said that there weren't any employees advising passengers of the delays or providing any information. She said that she isn't sure how to voice this

concern to Metro. Mr. Snyder said that he thinks that this problem is similar to the problem of station managers not taking ownership of their stations. He gave the example of debris on the tracks causing fires.

Mr. Jaffe said that he spoke with Mr. Catoe about this incident, and said that he told them that when there is an incident where trains aren't operating, that staff should give customers this information when they enter the station. Mr. Jaffe said that he asked a station employee to do this during last week's delay, she replied that she couldn't do that because that wasn't what she was told to do. He said that employees are not empowered by management.

Mr. Maxit said that this could also be a safety issue by preventing riders from entering a station where there is a dangerous situation. Mr. Snyder mentioned the new displays that Metro is installing at some stations may be able to display this information.

Dr. Conn said that Metro staff should be allowed to deviate from standard procedures in the name of common sense.

Mr. Erviti noted that some bus drivers have been taking the concept of "ownership" of their buses to extremes, setting the heat at 85° which was uncomfortable for passengers.

Ms. Daniels brought up a service disruption that occurred on the 42 Line recently and asked for suggestions on how to report such incidents. Mr. Snyder suggested letting him or Dr. Conn, as Bus Subcommittee Chair, know about these incidents so that they can report them.

Mr. Jaffe suggested that, for major service disruptions, Metro use other types of signage than the electronic PIDS signs, since passengers do not always look at these displays when entering stations. He suggested large banners that could be used to alert passengers to major delays or other unforeseen incidents.

Following Mr. Jaffe's comments, Mr. Snyder adjourned the meeting at 8:58 p.m.