

Riders' Advisory Council
October 3, 2012

I. Call to Order:

Dr. Bracmort called the October 2012 meeting of the Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:35 p.m.

The following members were present:

Kelsi Bracmort, Chair, District of Columbia
Carl Seip, District of Columbia Vice Chair
Lorraine Silva, Virginia Vice Chair, Arlington County
Ben Ball, District of Columbia
Frank DeBernardo, Prince George's County
Chris Farrell, Montgomery County
Joseph Kitchen, Prince George's County
Kara Merrigan, Arlington County
Patricia King-Adams, District of Columbia
Deborah Titus, Fairfax County
Carol Carter Walker, District of Columbia
Ron Whiting, Montgomery County
Victoria Wilder, Montgomery County

Other individuals present:

John Pasek, Council staff coordinator
Denise Mitchell, Office of Labor Relations, Metro
Jennifer Green, Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing Planning, Metro

Chris Barnes, member of the public
Brian Calvary, member of the public
Kurt Raschke, member of the public

II. Public Comment Period:

Chris Barnes told the Council that he thought the group was a failure and that it fails to represent Metro riders by not demanding riders from the Authority and by not reaching out to riders. He noted that each member on the Council represents 55,000 riders. Mr. Barnes called on Dr. Bracmort to resign as chair.

Approved January 9, 2013

Kurt Raschke noted that this is his 22nd consecutive Council meeting. He said that the Council does not do adequate follow-up on issues. He provided as examples Metro's bag search program, which Metro is still engaged in, despite riders' concerns and the planned emergency response forum that the Council is working with the Board on that he felt will be useless to riders because it will be held in the middle of the day and will not provide any new information. He added that he agreed with Mr. Barnes' previous comments about the Council's effectiveness.

Brian Calvary said that he was a rush hour Metro rider and that Rush+ has greatly affected his commute (King Street to Farragut West). He said that he often sees empty Orange line trains pass him by when waiting for a Blue line train. Mr. Calvary said that Metro had provided him with suggestions to either take the Yellow line or to use bus service between Crystal City and Rosslyn, neither of which helps with his commute. He said that he hoped that the Council could put pressure on Metro to come up with better alternatives since it speaks to Metro on riders' behalf.

Dr. Bracmort said that staff from Metro will be talking about Rush+ later in the meeting, so they may have additional information to address Mr. Calvary's concerns.

Dr. Bracmort told the Council that Mr. Guruswamy had resigned his position on the Council and thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve.

III. Approval of Agenda:

Mr. Ball moved approval of the agenda as presented. This motion was seconded by Mr. Farrell.

In favor: Dr. Bracmort, Mr. Seip, Ms. Silva, Mr. Ball, Mr. DeBernardo, Mr. Farrell, Ms. Merrigan, Ms. King-Adams, Ms. Titus, Ms. Walker, Mr. Whiting, Ms. Wilder

Opposed: Mr. Kitchen

The agenda was approved as presented.

IV. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Kitchen moved approval of the meeting minutes from April 4, 2012, July 11, 2012 and August 1, 2012. This motion was seconded by Mr. Ball. Without objection, the past meeting minutes were approved, with Mr. DeBernardo abstaining.

V. Overview of Unions' Roles at Metro:

Denise Mitchell, from Metro's Office of Labor Relations (LABR), provided an overview of Metro's employee unions and their roles in representing employees.

Ms. Mitchell explained that Metro has five separate unions that represent different employees:

- Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689 – represents most employees at Metro, including bus and train operators and mechanics
- ATU Local 922 – representing employees that work at Metro’s Landover Division garage;
- International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 639 – represents Metro Special Police Officers;
- Fraternal Order of Police – represents Metro Transit Police officers; and
- (Office and Professional Employees Union) Local 2 – represents certain professional employees at Metro.

She noted that Metro also has employees that are not represented by any union.

Ms. Mitchell noted that approximately 85% of the employees at Metro were union employees, and explained that her office, the Office of Labor Relations, is responsible for the negotiation and application of all contracts with unions, as well as for grievances and contract interpretation. She said that if a represented employee is terminated, he has the opportunity to file a grievance. Ms. Mitchell then provided the Council with an overview of the employee grievance and arbitration process.

Regarding the presence of union employees at Metro, Ms. Mitchell explained that Metro’s Compact, which functions as the Authority’s charter, explicitly allows for union employees. She told the Council that members of Local 689 comprise somewhere between 7700 – 8000 of Metro’s 11,000 employees.

Ms. Mitchell also provided the Council with an overview of Metro’s contract negotiation process and explained that it is generally a long process.

Dr. Bracmort thanked Ms. Mitchell for her presentation and said that one of the Council’s responsibilities is to learn about all aspects of Metro, even if it doesn’t directly relate to the delivery of service. She then opened the floor to any members of the public who had comments.

Mr. Raschke asked about employee pension contributions, specifically how much employees in the various unions contribute to their retirement funds. Ms. Mitchell said that she would have to provide that information offline. She said that as a non-represented employee she contributes to her own retirement and that it is not a defined-benefits plan.

Mr. Barnes said that it would be great if members of the public could better understand how they could participate in the arbitration process and have the opportunity to let union members know their feelings regarding employee behavior.

Mr. Seip asked if most cases that go to arbitration end up with employees being reinstated. Ms. Mitchell said that she first wanted to follow up on Mr. Barnes' comment and noted the Office of Labor Relations welcomes the riding public to contact Metro to let it know about incidents. She said that since Metro may need customer witnesses as part of the arbitration process to all it to present the best possible case, and added that LABR does, in fact, ask members of the public to testify as part of that process. In response to Mr. Seip's question, she said that that Metro doesn't discuss specific arbitration cases or the overall disposition of cases since the cases are often complex and involve a great deal of evidence and documentation that cannot be easily summarized.

Ms. Silva asked how long the arbitration process takes and what happens to employees during the process. Ms. Mitchell responded that the length of time varies from case to case. She noted that if an employee is terminated, he or she remains terminated unless/until reinstated by the arbitrator. She added that for Local 689 employees, management has twenty working days to take action against an employee after an incident and an employee has a set period during which he or she can file a grievance.

Mr. Ball noted that during the last round of fare increases, riders were told that one of the reasons for the fare increase was to pay for increased health care costs and asked Ms. Mitchell if she could explain that further. Ms. Mitchell noted that since Metro is in the middle of contract negotiations, she cannot make any comments, but added that Metro always tries to look for cost containment opportunities as part of the contract negotiation process.

Ms. Mitchell then provided the status of each union's contract:

- Local 689 – currently in negotiations
- Local 922 – contract concluded.
- Fraternal Order of Police – contract expired; currently in negotiations.
- Special Police – contract concluded.
- OPEIU Local 2 – being decided by a federal judge.

Mr. Farrell asked about the length of each union's contract. Ms. Mitchell said that contract lengths are all open to negotiation and that she would have to get back to him with specific information, though she noted that Local 689's contract is a four-year contract and that the Metro Transit Police and Special Police have three-year contracts.

In response to a question from Ms. Titus, Ms. Mitchell said that all of Metro's unions have a no-strike clause in their contracts.

Ms. Silva asked about the process for riders to report an incident. Ms. Mitchell suggested that riders contact Metro via its customer service department. She added that a customer wouldn't know that their contact had initiated a disciplinary proceeding unless the grievance process gets to a certain step (Step 4), at which point LABR would reach out to the customer to ask for their testimony. She explained that, depending on the nature of the incident, riders could also contact Metro via the police. Ms. Mitchell added that if a customer contacted Metro anonymously, he or she would not be contacted for involvement in a disciplinary proceeding.

VI. Rush+ Update:

Jennifer Green, from Metro's Office of Strategic Communications provided the Council an overview of Metro's Rush+ service. She explained that Rush+ launched on June 18th and added service on the Yellow and Orange lines. She noted that Metro implemented Rush+ service as a transition to the launch of the Silver line, which will begin operating next year. She noted that there were capacity issues at the Rosslyn tunnel that required this realignment in service.

Ms. Green said that prior to the implementation of Rush+ service, the Blue line had around 4800 riders/hour during the peak period at Rosslyn and the Orange line had around 11,000 riders/hour during the same period. She said that Metro took a phased approach and shifted some service from the Blue to the Orange line in advance of the Silver line's opening to address crowding issues.

Ms. Green explained that since the launch of Rush+, Metro has been monitoring passenger loads at the busiest stations, and that its monitoring has shown a slight decrease in crowding on the Orange and Yellow lines. She added that the front cars of the trains are generally the least crowded. Ms. Green explained that on the Blue line, passenger loads were somewhat unbalanced, with approximately 86-98 passengers per railcar in the mornings and 96-120 passengers per railcar during the afternoon peak period. She said that some of this imbalance could be caused by alternating headways on the Blue line. She noted that Metro had conducted a rider survey at the end of July which showed that 14% of Blue line riders had shifted to riding the Yellow line. She said that those who didn't shift their travel patterns explained that they didn't want to transfer or that riding the Yellow line would take them longer to complete their trip.

Ms. Green then provided an overview of the actions Metro has taken to address Blue line crowding. She noted that Metro had added an eight-car train to the Blue line, is encouraging riders to spread out along the full length of the platform and launched the "Hello Yellow!" campaign, which provided riders incentives for trying the Yellow line for their commute. She said that around 140 riders participated in "Hello Yellow!" She told Council members that Metro will be conducting another round of passenger counts in October to get a more complete picture of ridership.

Ms. Green said that Metro is hoping to get additional riders to shift away from the Blue line and would like the Council's suggestions on how it might encourage riders to do that. She provided the example of showing different information on the train arrival signs that would let riders know how long until the next Blue line train arrived, even if it wasn't one of the next three trains scheduled, that might encourage riders to instead board a Yellow line train.

Dr. Bracmort then opened the floor for comments from members of the public present.

Mr. Calvary said that a lot of riders won't change to the Yellow line because the Blue line is quicker, even with an extended wait for the train. He suggested that Metro look at spacing trains more evenly to address crowding.

Mr. Barnes said that aside from Rush+ being a misinterpreted campaign, people aren't going to change their commuting habits. He added that the 12-minute gap between some Blue line trains is what is really irritating riders and noted that everyone would like to see more eight-car trains being operated.

Graham Jenkins, another member of the public in attendance, said that Rush+ was portrayed as an improvement. He said that Metro should treat its riders like adults and explain that it had to realign service to prepare for the Silver line, and that if it did so, riders would be more understanding. He added that he avoids riding in the front cars of the train, even if they are less crowded, because they are further from escalators and station exits.

Dr. Bracmort then opened the floor to comments from members of the Council.

Mr. Farrell said that predictability in terms of the arrival times of trains would help build ridership.

In response to a question from Ms. Wilder, Ms. Green explained the various travel and transfer options for Blue and Yellow line riders under the Rush+ service pattern.

Mr. Ball suggested that Metro publicly release its initial study and survey data. He said that he thought members of the public would appreciate having this information. Mr. Ball said that he noticed that several Yellow line trains are still terminating at Mt. Vernon Square, which he didn't think was supposed to happen anymore as part of Rush+. He also asked whether Metro had the option of switching its operating plan back to what it was prior to the implementation of Rush+.

Mr. Kitchen said that if Metro were to put out more information and documentation about ridership patterns, it might restore riders' confidence in the system. He also noted that Rush+

hasn't brought any additional trains to the east side of the Orange and Blue lines, but has made the system more confusing because Orange line trains now have multiple eastern destinations – New Carrollton and Largo.

Ms. Silva said that the new Metro maps aren't helpful for tourists and infrequent riders who aren't already familiar with the Metro system. She added that many people who want to take Blue line trains aren't able to board the train when it arrives due to crowding. She suggested that Metro make all Blue line trains eight-car trains.

Mr. Seip asked whether riders were familiar with what Rush+ entailed and was supposed to achieve. Ms. Green said that the survey showed that a fairly high percentage of riders were familiar with Rush+ but that she would have to get back to the Council with the exact numbers. Mr. Seip said that he wasn't entirely sure that the information provided as part of the Rush+ roll-out materials was fully understood by riders.

In response to a question from Ms. King-Adams, Ms. Green said that she thought that riders with SmarTrip® cards were the subject of the survey, but that she would have to confirm that.

Ms. Hermanson told Ms. Green that even though she rides the Metro from the Pentagon, she hadn't heard about the "Hello Yellow!" campaign. She also noted that riders need more information from the PIDS to make effective choices and that riders will often choose to avoid a trip that involves a transfer because they don't know what the crowds will be like at transfer stations. She added that taking two trains, rather than one, also doubles a rider's chance of encountering a problem. Ms. Hermanson said that the crowds at L'Enfant Plaza on Nationals baseball game days also discourages riders from travelling through that station. She added that she would also be interested in seeing the results of Metro's Rush+ surveys.

Ms. Titus asked if Metro could post the survey results. She also asked Metro to have monitors placed on the platforms to monitor the quality of service during rush hour. Ms. Green replied that Metro is placing monitors on platforms to do exactly that – it did so over the summer and will be doing so again in October.

Regarding Metro's efforts to encourage riders to use the less-crowded cars at the front of trains, Mr. Ball noted that regular riders generally know which train car they need to board so that they're in the right location to exit when they reach their destination or transfer point. He noted that it's never at the front of the train.

Mr. Ball also asked whether Metro now has any extra space in its schedule following the Rush+ realignment that it could use to operate additional trains in advance of the Silver line's opening. Ms. Green said that Metro is maxed out in terms of track capacity; the slots from the Blue line

trains that were switched to being Yellow line trains were taken by additional Orange line trains at Rosslyn. Ms. Green said that Metro is still evaluating the Silver line operating plan. Mr. Ball said that, by definition, Metro will have to reduce service on the Orange and Blue lines and that it should begin preparing riders for this eventuality now.

Mr. Kitchen asked Ms. Green if she were the person that the Council should ask for survey information. Ms. Green responded that she would take the Council's request to the staff members who actually collect the data.

Mr. Seip noted that part of the issues with crowding will be to get riders to spread out along the full length of the platform and asked whether Metro is looking at strategies to get riders to do this. He noted the crowding issues at the Gallery Place Red line platform caused by riders that don't use the full length of the platform. Mr. Seip said that he hoped that Metro would employ the lessons it learned from Rush+ surveying to help with crowding issues throughout the system.

Ms. Hermanson suggested that better platform signage may help with this issue of getting riders to spread out along the platform. Mr. Seip added that many people don't recognize that the PIDS display train lengths. He suggested that signage at Gallery Place direct riders to board at six-car train locations, since all trains will have at least six cars.

Ms. Titus asked whether it would be possible to have staff on station platforms, especially during rush hours. She said that these staff members could help with issues such as crowding and crime. Ms. Merrigan added that these should be more than just the already-assigned station managers.

Mr. Kitchen noted that several Council members had asked Metro for information from the rider surveys and said that he hoped that the Council wouldn't have to formally request the information from Metro. Mr. Seip suggested that the Council wait two weeks to see if Metro responds to members' requests from this meeting before submitting a more formal request. He then submitted this suggestion as a motion for the Council to consider. The motion was seconded by Ms. Silva. Without objection, the Council approved Mr. Seip's motion.

VII. Board/RAC Leadership Meeting:

Dr. Bracmort gave an overview of the Council leadership's quarterly meeting with Board leadership that occurred the previous week. She explained that much of the discussion was focused on the upcoming incident communications panel that will take place on October 11th, and that it will serve the Council well to check in regularly with the Board.

Mr. Kitchen asked whether the Board provided a response to the Council's suggestions on communications that it provided in May. Mr. Pasek said that he would have to check on the status of a response.

Ms. Hermanson said that she was surprised that Council members and Board members didn't meet more frequently. Dr. Bracmort said that the Council has other opportunities to interact with the Board, but noted that the establishment of these quarterly meetings, while it may seem small, was, in fact, a big step forward in strengthening the relationship between the Board and Council. She said that she didn't think that the Board would object to meeting with Council members more frequently if there were issues to discuss.

VIII. Incident Communications Panel:

Mr. Seip told members of the Council that as part of the leadership team's quarterly meeting with the Metro Board's leadership they focused on how to have a productive discussion on incident communications. He noted that the Council leadership reiterated to the Board its concerns about holding a meeting in the middle of the day during the week. He said that the Board wants to have more than this one meeting and that the panel discussion on October 11th would function as more of a scoping meeting to identify issues. He said that the goal for tonight's Council meeting is to come up with questions that members would like to see addressed as part of the panel discussion and what the follow ups from this meeting would be. He noted that the Council leadership also expressed to the Board its strong desire to ensure that the public as part of any follow up actions from this meeting.

Mr. Seip then opened the floor for comments.

Mr. Raschke said that he didn't think that the proposal for the panel, as presented, was useful and said that he supported Mr. Seip's call for additional public participation. He noted that customers are concerned about not being killed or maimed when riding Metro.

Mr. Barnes asked how outreach for this meeting will be conducted, and whether the public will be allowed to attend. Mr. Pasek said that, like, every other Board and Board committee meeting, it will be open to the public. He said that he would be meeting with Metro Media Relations staff tomorrow to discuss publicity for this meeting. He noted that this meeting will be livestreamed over the internet and a video of the discussion will be produced. Mr. Barnes said that since this meeting would be occurring during the workday, he appreciated the extra effort to ensure that members of the public who wouldn't be able to attend can view or listen to the proceedings.

Another member of the audience suggested that the goal of better preparing customers for incidents highlights the fact that Metro has incidents. He added that Metro's problem is with follow-up. He noted that Metro is only now implementing recommendations from the 2009 accident. He said that while he understands that Metro's first priority is to respond to an incident, it is also important for Metro to follow up on incidents to determine what went wrong

and keep the public informed that it is addressing the issues raised. He suggested Metro keep the public updated on the status of incident investigations.

Ms. Titus suggested that the video of the presentation should be captioned.

Ms. Merrigan asked whether this meeting is a “warm-up” to the main event. Mr. Seip said that this is an initial meeting and that the Council hoped to come away with a list of topics that the Board would like to see the Council address through additional public outreach.

Ms. Merrigan also asked what, specifically falls under the definition of an “incident.” Mr. Kitchen said that the Council discussed this at its previous meeting. Dr. Bracmort said that the Board said that the incidents would be more massive scale. Mr. Pasek clarified that the incidents discussed involved service disruptions – events like suspicious packages, train breakdowns or derailments or other things that affect the delivery of service, not issues of crime and personal safety.

Mr. Seip said that the Board was open to having a discussion on personal safety and security, but that it was wary of including it in this panel, since it would be too much to address.

Mr. Kitchen said that he was disappointed in the proposal before the Council, especially regarding the amount of public participation in the panel discussion and that there might not be opportunities for additional follow up meetings.

Mr. Seip responded that while the proposal isn’t exactly what the Council had hoped for, it’s what it has to work with, and that the panel is an opportunity to kick off a larger discussion on safety and incident communications. He said that, as a participant in the panel, it would be helpful to have a discussion about the kind of things that riders want to see going forward from the panel.

Mr. Kitchen said that he was concerned that the Council’s participation in the panel would give Metro cover for rider participation in a public safety forum. Mr. Seip said that he would be more than happy to express that riders want additional input into the process beyond the October 11th panel discussion.

Mr. Ball suggested that Mr. Seip ask about a lack of announcements either on signs or audio announcements in stations during incidents.

Ms. Walker said that she was concerned that the Council was listed as a co-host of this panel discussion, but that the meeting would be run as part of the Safety and Security Committee. She

added that it also needed to be clear in any outreach about this meeting that it is an initial, information-gathering meeting, and clear on the type of incidents that will be covered.

Mr. Whiting said that that employee roles and responsibilities need to be clearly provided, in writing, prior to this discussion. He also asked that Mr. Seip inquire about the training employees get to respond to incidents, whether that training is being improved and how riders can know who is in charge during an emergency situation.

Mr. Kitchen asked that any outreach regarding the panel discussion be clear that opportunities for the public to participate in the discussion will be limited.

Mr. Seip said that a mechanism should be set up to allow members of the public to submit questions or comments in advance of the panel discussion.

Ms. King-Adams asked whether members will be able to see the questions that the Council will be asking as part of the panel. Mr. Seip said that he thought that something should be circulated in advance of the meeting and asked that any questions that aren't able to be asked be submitted for the record. He said that part of the purpose of the current discussion was to determine what those questions would be.

Dr. Bracmort suggested that if members have additional comments or questions for the discussion on October 11th that they should send them to Mr. Seip or Mr. Pasek and those can be circulated to the full Council in advance of the panel discussion.

IX. Subcommittee Report:

Mr. Ball provided an overview of the Airport Access Subcommittee's meeting with representatives from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA). He said that the meeting changed his view of the Airports Authority and said that he didn't feel like MWAA had thought much about transit access to its facilities.

Mr. Ball said that he planned two more meetings for this subcommittee – one with the Maryland Department of Transportation and one with the D.C. Tourism Board. He said that he hoped to circulate a draft prior to the next Council meeting.

In response to a question from Ms. Wilder, Mr. Ball said that most of the recommendations focus on Dulles and BWI airports, though the report covers all three of the region's airports.

X. Questions/Comments on RAC and AAC Chair Reports:

Mr. Ball noted that the RAC Chair report suggested that there would be follow up on the proposed rail service standards. Mr. Pasek said that he had tried to set up a meeting with

interested members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee and was unable to do so in the previous month. He said that he would try and set something up in the coming month, if RAC members will still interested in providing feedback.

XI. Open Mic/Community Meetings:

Ms. Titus announced an upcoming Fairfax County earthquake drill scheduled for October 18th. Mr. Ball noted that it was a regional drill. Mr. Pasek said that he would circulate information on this drill to Council members.

Dr. Bracmort reminded members to spread the word to their contacts about Council and Council working group meetings that are open to the public. She also noted that the Council has open positions and was accepting applications.

Dr. Bracmort also told members that the Council would be holding elections at the beginning of 2013 and encouraged members to think about who they wanted to see in Council leadership positions, both in terms of running the Council's meetings and representing the Council to the Metro Board of Directors.

Mr. Ball said that, after hearing from Metro's Labor Relations staff regarding union issues, he would be interested in hearing a representative from the union address the Council on the same topic. Dr. Bracmort noted that the Council had initially invited a union representative to speak but that no one responded to the Council's invitation. She said that she would take his suggestion under advisement for a future meeting.

Mr. Ball also noted that he had encountered several cars with non-functioning air conditioning over the summer and now has come across several buses with non-working GPS systems and asked how a customer should report those issues to Metro.

Mr. Seip noted that the Board's Customer Service Committee would be discussing HVAC issues at its next meeting.

Dr. Bracmort suggested reporting items through Metro's online customer service form. Mr. Ball said that he wasn't sure that information reported through that was acted upon. He said that he would talk with Mr. Seip further about this issue offline.

Mr. Pasek told members of the Council that metro would be holding public hearings on proposed bus service changes at the end of October. He also noted that there were also drafts of Metro's new bus service maps at the side of the room for members' review and comment.

XII. Adjournment:

Without objection, Dr. Bracmort adjourned the meeting at 8:31 p.m.