Riders' Advisory Council
October 7, 2026

Members Present:
William Way, Chair, Virginia
Solomon Chen, Virginia
Eli Craveiro Frankel, At-Large/District of Columbia
Brian Meyer, Virginia
Patrick Sheehan, At-Large/AAC Representative
Thomas Shepard, At-Large/District of Columbia
Cole Staudt, District of Columbia
Irene Stephens, District of Columbia

Metro Staff Present:
Brian Anderson, Acting Director, Customer Experience Strategic Initiatives
Chum Chancharadeth, Director, Operations Technology
John Pasek, Deputy Board Affairs Officers
José Reyes, Board Program Manager
Bonnie Sullivan, Director of Special Projects, Customer Experience
Anthony Q. Thomas, Director, Customer Experience Programs
Spring Worth, Alternate Director/Board Liaison to the Riders' Advisory Council, Metro Board of Directors

Other Individuals Present:
Ra Amin, Vice Chair, MWCOG Transportation Planning Board Community Advisory Committee
Laura Bachle, Transportation Planner, MWCOG

Call to Order:
Mr. Way called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m.

Approval of Agenda:
The agenda was approved as presented, with the deletion of the approval of minutes from September 2, 2026.

Public Comment:
Mr. Meyer asked that the two comments provided to the RAC via email be captured in the meeting minutes.

- Kathryn Steinberg requested that Metro add back in cardinal directions (North, South, East, West) to station signage and noted that removing that information has made it more difficult for her to know where she's going.
- Zach McCray expressed concerns about fare evasion on Metrorail and the impact it's having on riders. He said that he doesn't think that the current system provides an

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adequate deterrent to fare evasion and suggested that Metro should take the following steps before asking riders to pay more through a fare increase:

- Increased MTPD presence at stations with high levels of fare evasion;
- Changes to gates that make it more difficult for multiple individuals to pass through at one time;
- Better measurement and reporting of fare evasion levels.

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments/Community Advisory Council Recruitment

Laura Bachle from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) and Ra Amin, the MWCOG Community Advisory Council (CAC) Vice Chair, joined the meeting to discuss recruitment for the MWCOG CAC. She explained that the recruitment period is open until November 15th and provided information on what the CAC does as well as a link to to apply or share that application information with others. Mr. Amin noted that involvement on the CAC involves doing work both on a regional level and within members' communities.

In response to a question from Mr. Way, Ms. Bachle noted that there are 24 members on the CAC – five members from each of the states and the remainder at-large. She noted that current members are encouraged to re-apply and that MWCOG tries to ensure a diversity of members on the CAC. She explained that a term on the CAC is for two years.

Mr. Staudt asked what are the most important transit-related issues that the CAC is working on. Mr. Amin responded that *DMVMoves* transit funding initiative, along with issues such as micromobility, were topics of discussion by the CAC, but that the group covers a wide range of additional topics, including land use and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure, depending on members' interests.

MetroPulse and wmata.com Update:

Anthony Q. Thomas, Director of Customer Experience Programs, informed members that he was attending to provide updates on the MetroPulse application, the wmata.com website project and the BusETA legacy product. He noted that his colleague Mr. Chancharadeth was also in attendance to provide updates on improving bus data quality, since that topic had come up at previous RAC meetings.

MetroPulse

Mr. Thomas told members that Metro would soon be launching an update to the MetroPulse app (Version 2.1), which would build on the redesigned app (Version 2.0) launched in May 2026. He said that the updated app would include new features such as push notifications, redesigned customer forms, improved presentation of elevator/escalator status, live parking availability and the option to use the app in dark mode. He added that Metro is continually working on updates to the app, and subsequent app versions (2.2 and later) would provide improved service information, including detours and cancelled trips; a refined map

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interface; five additional language options beyond English/Spanish; as well as starting the process to support fare payment within the MetroPulse app.

Mr. Meyer asked how push notifications will work in the app. Mr. Thomas said that users will receive push notifications when alerts are issued for any routes/stops that they have favorited. As a follow-up, Mr. Meyer asked about the criteria to generate an alert. Mr. Thomas responded that the operations control center sets the criteria for what generates an alert; Mr. Meyer suggested that it would be good for the RAC to get a copy of these criteria.

Mr. Meyer noted that MetroPulse has competition from other transit apps and asked whether there was a campaign or any outreach on Metro's part to get riders to download the MetroPulse app. Mr. Thomas responded that whatever app gets individuals to use transit, whether it's MetroPulse or another app (Transit, Moovit, Google maps, etc.) is what he'd want riders to use. He said that the team is also focused on providing value-adds within the MetroPulse app, such as information on parking availability or expanded language access, that will make people want to use it. He added that his team is working with Metro's marketing department to get the word out about the app, including putting ads for MetroPulse in stations and throughout the Metro network. Lastly, in response to a question from Mr. Meyer, Mr. Thomas said that public reception to the app since the major update in May has been good, and that customer feedback is helping staff to prioritize which upgrades and fixes should be made next. Mr. Anderson noted that one of MetroPulse's value adds is that provides a direct connection to Metro Customer Service, which is something that third-party apps can't do.

Mr. Shepard noted that he sometimes had issues with the maps when using MetroPulse. He also said that when MetroPulse was initially launched, it provided systemwide performance data, and that he's noticed that information is now less prominent on the app. Mr. Thomas noted that the initial purpose of the app was to provide that kind of systemwide status information, but that it has evolved to provide additional information for things like arrival times and trip planning, and that staff is trying to figure out the best balance to providing these two different types of information.

Mr. Shepard asked whether it would be for Metro to provide real-time arrival information for other service providers like RideOn and DASH bus since customers often use those services. Mr. Thomas explained that this feature has been discussed by Metro staff, but there are questions of data reliability when using other operators' real-time date. He noted that trip planning information, such as schedules, is currently available for other regional transit systems through the MetroPulse app.

Mr. Way asked whether there was a concern that adding so many features and so much information to the app would make it slow to load and respond. Mr. Thomas said that the speed of the app was less of a concern than its usability if it was overloaded with options and features.

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In response to a question from Mr. Way about "ghost buses," or scheduled buses that show up on real-time arrivals even though they're not physically present, Mr. Chancharadeth said that Metro only shows buses that are tracking in real time, meaning that "ghost buses" will not appear.

Mr. Anderson added that there are a lot of factors that affect an app's performance, including app features, operating system updates and phone age. He said that Metro uses customer feedback to balance features and usability for the widest cross-section of users.

Mr. Chancharadeth added that Metro now polls bus location data every five seconds versus every thirty seconds previously, which provides more accurate real-time prediction information.

Mr. Simone, a member of the public, asked whether a missed trip on a bus with a 30-minute headway would generate a customer alert. Mr. Anderson said that staff is working to figure out the best way to quickly communicate service status information to customers in enough time for the information to be useful.

wmata.com

Mr. Thomas then provided information on updates and improvements to the wmata.com website, including providing total walking time summaries as part of the trip planning; allowing individual itineraries to be printed directly from the trip planner function; and accessibility updates. He added that Metro is also working on modernizing the online Smart Trip experience, with an anticipated launch in spring 2027, as well as other planned updates in the coming year.

Mr. Anderson expressed his appreciation for all of the work that Mr. Thomas and his team are doing, as well as appreciate for the feedback that Metro has gotten from the RAC and other advisory groups. He explained that Metro is working to improve the technology that these programs run on so that it can more nimbly put improvements into production.

Ms. Stephens asked where Metro posted the link to recruit volunteers for usability testing. Mr. Thomas said that he would check with the Customer Research team to see where they posted that information and whether it can be shared more broadly.

Mr. Shepard asked whether Metro had considered adding station entrances to its trip planning directions. Mr. Thomas said that he believed that current trip planning instructions send riders to specific entrances/exits and, as Metro expands its wayfinding program and labels more station entrances/exits, that information will also be included in trip planning information.

busETA

Mr. Thomas explained that the technology on which BusETA runs is no longer supported by its vendor. He told members that because Metro has expanded its other rider tools and

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MetroPulse to provide additional real-time tracking options for riders, Metro has decided to transition away from BusETA. He said that he understands that it will be a difficult transition and staff will be working on a communications plan for customers as well as a plan to redirect users to other customer tools to find the information they need once BusETA is retired in early January 2027. He explained that customers can use Rider Tools on wmata.com as well as MetroPulse to access real-time information.

Mr. Chancharadeth added that Metro is focused on improving the accuracy of its information, including using Artificial Intelligence tools both to clean up data as well and to improve maintenance to keep more buses on the road.

Outreach/Member Report Out:
Ms. Stephens told the group that she attended a Ward 5 community meeting on transportation and environmental concerns, where several people made comments regarding bus service, including comments on service reliability and frequency, bus stops and shelters, and requests for bus lanes. She also asked about MetroAccess staff's responsibility for escorting riders to and from the front door of their origin/destination. Mr. Sheehan said that MetroAccess is designed as a door-to-door service and provided information on ways for users to provide feedback or get their questions answered.

Ms. Stephens also told members she attended a recent RFK community meeting and asked whether a summary of that meeting would be available.

Mr. Shepard told members that the Red Line has been unreliable over the past month and that he has encountered gaps in service and bunching, as well as incidents that suspended service. He said that he understood that there were long-term plans to improve reliability as part of Metro's rail modernization program, but there also needed to be shorter-term fixes. He said that bus reliability has been good, either, citing examples of gaps and bunching on the D20 and D80.

Mr. Meyer said that he had gotten questions about the 8000-series railcar procurement and its timeline and that it may be time for the RAC to get an informational update on this project and its current progress.

Mr. Staudt said that he has seen a lot of comments on Metro's wayfinding initiative and would be interested to hear from Metro staff if they've made any changes to signage based on recent feedback. He added that he's also heard comments on Metro's proposed fare increase for the coming fiscal year and would like to have staff come discuss proposals and Metro's budget outlook.

Mr. Craveiro Frankel told members that the RAC's GreaterGreater Washington editorial on the RAC's annual report is still in progress. He also described a situation where a friend's husband was attacked in Chinatown and the Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) responded, accompanied by federal agents, including FBI and ICE agents. He said that MTPD

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took the victim to the hospital and, after he was provided first aid, MTPD handed the victim over to ICE and he is now in immigration detention. He noted that this and other incidents show that MTPD is collaborating with ICE and federal agents and that federal agents are allowed to operate within the Metro system. He said that this is a major concern for the community and it demonstrates that MTPD is not prioritizing the safety of all community members. He said that this issue is something that the RAC should look into, especially given that Metro is in the process of recruiting a new police chief.

Mr. Sheehan told the group that Metro's Customer Experience office has been providing the AAC with feedback that it's received on the new signage and wayfinding pilot from customers. He noted that both the RAC and AAC had provided feedback on this issue. Mr. Way said that he arrived to the meeting early so he hung out at the L'Enfant Plaza station to see customers' reaction to the new signage, as well as talked with some members of the National Guard who were in the station.

Recruitment:
Mr. Pasek noted that the RAC members' terms are for two years and that several members' terms will be expiring at the end of December. He said that he would be reaching out to members whose terms were expiring to see if they would be interested in applying for reappointment, as well as conducting recruitment outreach in late October/early November.

New Business:
Mr. Meyer noted that Metro is considering fare increases as part of the coming year's budget and said that he wanted to find out how members of the RAC want to proceed in terms of giving feedback on these proposed increases. Mr. Pasek said that the Board would be talking about those proposals at its public Finance and Capital meeting tomorrow and then staff could come present to the RAC at its November meeting. This would allow the RAC to provide feedback to the Board in advance of the Board's authorization for public hearings, which is expected to happen in December. He noted that once public hearings are authorized, the RAC will then have the opportunity to listen to public input throughout the public hearing process and then come back to the Board with recommendations.

There was further discussion among members on the timing of budget discussions at the RAC, as well as the process by which the Board authorizes fare proposals for hearings. Mr. Sheehan said that he would also ask for staff to present on the proposed fare increase at the AAC's November meeting so that the RAC and the AAC could coordinate their comments and input.

Adjournment:
Mr. Way thanked everyone for their participation and for good discussions on the various topics on the agenda. The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

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