

Metro Riders' Advisory Council
April 3, 2013

I. Call to Order:

Mr. Ball called the April 2013 meeting of the Metro Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:36 p.m.

The following members of the Council were present for the meeting:

Ben Ball, Chair, District of Columbia
Barbara Hermanson, Virginia Vice Chair, City of Alexandria
Carol Carter Walker, District of Columbia Vice Chair, At-Large
James Wright, Maryland Vice Chair, Prince George's County
Patrick Delaney, Montgomery County
Pat Jackson, Fairfax County
Patricia King-Adams, District of Columbia
Karen Lynch, Prince George's County
Alex Parcan, Montgomery County
Carl Seip, At-Large
Patrick Sheehan, At-Large/Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair
Deborah Titus, Fairfax County
Fred Walker, Fairfax County
Etta-Cheri Washington, District of Columbia

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

Thais Austin, District of Columbia
Italo Cruz, District of Columbia
Frank DeBernardo, Prince George's County

Kara Merrigan, Arlington County
Lorraine Silva, Arlington County
Candice Walsh, District of Columbia
Mary Ann Zimmerman, Montgomery County

Additional individuals present:

Lynn Bowersox, Asst. Gen Manager for Cust. Service, Communications and Marketing, Metro
Tom Harrington, Director, Office of Long Range Planning, Metro
Kurt Raschke, member of the public

II. Public Comment Period:

There were no comments from members of the public.

III. Approval of Agenda, Past Meeting Minutes:

Without objection, the meeting agenda and the minutes for the January 9, 2013 and March 6, 2013 Riders' Advisory Council meetings were approved.

IV. Momentum – Metro's Strategic Plan:

Mr. Ball introduced Tom Harrington, the director of Metro's Office of Long-Range Planning to provide the Council with an overview of "Momentum," Metro's Strategic Plan and to seek its endorsement.

Mr. Harrington provided an overview of the comments Metro had received through its public outreach – including public meetings, meetings with various stakeholder groups and through its online tool, MindMixer. He noted that stakeholders were appreciative of the rebuilding work that Metro is doing to fix up the system and that they noted that the quality of information they receive during their trip has a big impact on their impressions of that trip. Mr. Harrington said that stakeholders also highlighted the need for stable funding and also recognized that Metro needs to think about bigger, long-term plans in addition to fixing the existing system.

Mr. Harrington then explained the four goals of Momentum in greater detail:

- Goal 1: Build and Maintain a Premier Safety Culture and System
- Goal 2: Meet or Exceed Customer Expectations by Consistently Delivering Quality Service.
- Goal 3: Improve Regional Mobility and Connect Communities. Mr. Harrington noted that the Washington area is a changing region that has multiple "downtowns" and needs multiple connections between them.
- Goal 4: Ensure Financial Stability and Invest in Our People and Assets.

Mr. Harrington then explained the two phases of Momentum – "Metro 2025," which focuses on priorities that Metro wants to achieve in the next ten years to add capacity, using strategies such as operating 100% 8-car trains, operating trains more frequently, increasing station capacity and completing the Metrobus Priority Corridor Network; and "Metro 2040," which is a longer-term plan that evaluates new Metrorail lines in the region's core, and extensions of existing Metrorail lines and creating and extending high-quality surface transit.

Next, he provided an overview of the funding necessary to support the Momentum plan's goals. He explained that Metro's current capital plan is just under \$1 Billion per year to maintain Metro in a state of good repair. He added that, to complete the projects as part of "Metro 2025," an additional \$500 million per year would be required and to complete the "Metro 2040" projects, an additional \$740 million/year would be needed.

Mr. Harrington asked the Council for its endorsement of the Momentum plan as well as its feedback on the plan as it was currently drafted. He asked Council members for their comments as to whether Metro had identified the right priorities for the next ten years as part of "Metro 2025" and which aspects of the plan Metro should emphasize.

After Mr. Harrington confirmed that he was looking for the Council's endorsement of Momentum, Mr. Ball said that the Council should consider that the motion on the floor for purposes of discussion.

Comments from Council members:

Ms. Walker said that she would like Metro to take a greater role and therefore would like to see stronger language in the plan discussing Metro's role as an economic engine of the region. She added that she would like to see a greater commitment from Metro to drive the region's economy through recruitment and training programs.

Mr. Sheehan mentioned the need for improved lighting at existing Metrorail stations as well as updated lighting policies and standards for new stations when they are added. He added that he would also like to see the plan take into account a similar standard for including accessibility features as part of bus stop construction and upgrades.

Mr. Ball said that he was going to open the floor to comments from members of the public and would then return to comments from Council members.

Comments from members of the public:

Mr. Raschke said that specifically with regard to passenger information systems, transit agencies have historically been beholden to large, proprietary customer information systems, and gave examples of open source data projects that have been used around the country. He urged Metro to explore these options and to engage the development community on this issue, and noted that many of these programs could be deployed in the very near term.

Comments from Council members:

Mr. Delaney said that he didn't see "communicate" or "communications" as part of Momentum's goals. He asked whether the plan would provide the support to Metro's communications team that will allow them to discuss and explain this plan to riders. Mr. Harrington said that

Momentum is a high-level plan, and that the more specific communication items would be contained in departmental business plans.

To follow up on another point that Mr. Delaney made, Mr. Harrington said that Metro needs to invest both in people and staff to ensure that front-line employees have accurate, real-time information that they can share with riders.

Ms. Lynch said that she has noted that Metro has many different plans and said that it is confusing to know what Metro has for milestones for the coming year and also asked how often Metro would be updating this plan. Mr. Harrington said that Metro would update its business plans annually, which are three-year plans, and that Metro's last agency-adopted strategic plan was ten years ago, and that Metro would revisit that every few years. He said that the 10-year horizon is the "2025" component of the Momentum plan. Mr. Harrington explained the "Region Forward" plan is something that was developed by the Council of Governments that lays out how the region might grow over the next several years, and that Metro's effort in developing a "2040 network" is to support what is planned in "Region Forward." He said that Momentum ten-year look ahead is what Metro needs to be doing right now to maximize its existing resources prior to expanding the system.

Mr. Walker discussed the order of bullets in the presentation, and asked whether Metro had a version of the plan that showed the funding available for specific improvements, similar to the Transportation Planning Board's Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP). Mr. Harrington said that the Silver Line is in the CLRP, along with some Metro maintenance money, as well as some other transit projects like the Purple Line, DC Streetcar and the Crystal City – Potomac Yards Transitway. He noted that Metro needs to ensure that it adds capacity in the core of the system, and this should be a priority for the region that should be included in the CLRP.

Ms. Jackson said that she was struck by "100% 8-car trains" being on the 2025 plan and said that she hoped that the Blue Line would have 8-car trains prior to that date. She also asked where escalator/elevator improvements were addressed in the strategic plan. Mr. Harrington said that at a high level, the plan discusses fixing existing infrastructure, and that specific actions to address this would be contained at a more detailed level.

Ms. Titus asked Mr. Harrington to clarify the impact of 100% 8-car trains during rush hour. Mr. Harrington said that running all 8-car trains would be a cost-effective way to add capacity, but that Metro would need to acquire new railcars, provide additional storage space and complete power system upgrades in order to achieve this.

Mr. Parcan said that Metro makes great plans, but that it also needs to take action to solve the problems that everyone knows are coming down the line. He added that Metro also needs to

make improvements that don't cost a lot of money, such as improving employee professionalism and customer service.

Mr. Seip suggested that Metro prioritize and include timelines for the seven goals that are part of the 2025 planning horizon. He said that Metro also needs to be realistic with regards to the resources required to implement its plans and that it also needs to clearly demonstrate how it will responsibly manage the additional capital funds that it is requesting to implement its 2025 plan.

Ms. Washington asked whether there are any plans for expansion to the Fort Belvoir area in this plan. Mr. Harrington said that there are some longer-term plans for transit expansion in the Route 1 corridor and to Fort Belvoir, though there may be some shorter-term improvements by VDOT that would allow for improved bus service in that area.

Ms. Hermanson said that she would like to reiterate Mr. Seip's point about the need to plan ahead and set milestones to give the public a better idea of what they should expect from this effort. She asked Mr. Harrington whether there were any recurring themes expressed during the outreach that Metro wasn't able to incorporate into this plan. He said that the comments were largely around two themes – people urged Metro to think big, in terms of system expansions, and they also urged Metro to focus on fixing its existing infrastructure and improve customer service. He said that people also expressed frustration at the cost and time required for expansion projects. Ms. Hermanson noted that, with recent and upcoming changes to Blue Line service, it would be helpful to clearly spell out when those riders may see improvements.

Mr. Wright said that he was interested in the proposed expansions to Waldorf, Bowie and BWI Airport, and asked whether Metro has had any discussions with Anne Arundel, Howard or Charles Counties about these proposed extensions. Mr. Harrington responded that all of these extensions had been planned previously, and there have been discussions with and studies by the Maryland Department of Transportation about them, but while ridership has been evaluated for these extensions, there haven't been any decisions made about what would be the best mode for them. He noted that Metro has to first fix core capacity before it can extend the system, and added that it may be possible to look at shorter-term improvements to feed the existing service, such as bus rapid transit. Mr. Harrington said that if Metro is extended, there is a need for transit-supportive land use to go along with any extension.

Mr. Ball noted that the plan calls for an additional \$500 million over ten years, which is only \$50 million additional per year, and urged Metro to aim higher, since the plan would get reduced prior to being implemented. Mr. Harrington said that Metro needs to look to other regions, such as Denver, that are engaging in large-scale transit expansions, to see how those can be done and the effect that they have on their respective regions' economies. Mr. Seip clarified that the

“Metro 2025” plan actually calls for an additional \$500 million *per year*, which does represent a significant investment.

Mr. Ball told the Council that there was a need to pass the motion on the floor regarding the Council’s endorsement of Momentum. When it was noted that a motion had not been made, he asked for a motion and a second for this.

Mr. Walker moved that the Council endorse the Momentum plan. This motion was seconded by Mr. Delaney. Mr. Ball then opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Walker said that he was supportive of the plan, but that he had concerns about the specific language used in the presentation. Ms. Walker said that she had similar concerns as Mr. Walker about the presentation language.

Mr. Delaney asked about the timetable for the Council to endorse this plan and, given his colleagues’ concerns about the language, whether the Council needed to take action at this meeting. Mr. Ball noted that this would be coming to the Board soon for approval, so the Council would need to take action before then. Mr. Harrington said that he understood members’ concerns about the language and that he was asking for an endorsement of the Momentum priorities rather than of the specific presentation. Mr. Delaney also said that he was concerned that this was a draft plan, and that it may change later, meaning that the Council would have its endorsement on something different than what was presented.

Mr. Walker reiterated his concern about the presentation’s language and noted that the word “customer” isn’t used anywhere in the presentation. Mr. Harrington said that this could be emphasized more in the presentation.

Ms. Walker asked that the motion be restated. Mr. Ball said that the Council was being asked to endorse the goals of Momentum. Mr. Harrington clarified that the Council would actually be endorsing the strategic priorities in the Momentum plan. He said that this is composed of two main components, the strategic framework and the 2025 priorities.

Mr. Seip moved to end debate on this question. Mr. Parcan seconded this motion. Without objection, debate on this item was ended.

Mr. Ball then called for a vote on the main motion. Without objection, the motion was approved.

Ms. Walker said that she would like to suggest that if anyone had specific suggestions on revised language to send that to Mr. Pasek to forward on to staff.

V. Customer Safety Campaign:

Mr. Ball then turned the floor over to Lynn Bowersox, Metro's Assistant General Manager for Customer Service, Communications and Marketing, to discuss Metro's planned customer safety campaign.

Ms. Bowersox said that she didn't have a presentation for the meeting. She said she hoped to talk a little about this project and then listen to the Council's input. She added that this is part of an ongoing conversation about customer safety.

Ms. Bowersox said that she will be talking with the Board within the next week on the first of two items related to customer safety. This item concerns the most common injuries that customers suffer, which are slips, trips and falls that come from running for trains or buses or falling on escalators. She said that these type of incidents happen often and Metro would like to try and prevent them. Ms. Bowersox explained that Metro wants to create a campaign around customer safety and that Metro has learned from focus groups that any campaign would need to "jar customers out of their comfort zone." She said that the General Manager's goal is to reduce customer injuries by 5%.

Ms. Bowersox said that Metro is also working to address the issue of emergency preparedness for customers. She said that Metro is working to address this issue in terms of improving the emergency instructions provided to customers as well as through revising staff training protocol.

Ms. Bowersox told Council members that one of the lessons Metro learned from the January Green line incident was that riders' fear of being stuck on a train is so great that they would rather risk self-evacuation than remain on the train. She explained that currently, the only evacuation information is located on one panel near a railcar's center doors, and that Metro doesn't think that this is effective. She said that Metro has produced a sign that instructs customers to "Stay on the train unless otherwise instructed" because it's the safest place for them to be during an incident. She said that Metro next wants to redesign its evacuation poster and would like the Council's help in this effort. She added that Metro is also looking to produce a customer information piece to help them prepare for emergencies in advance. Ms. Bowersox noted that this is an opportunity for the Councilmembers' experience as riders can help shape Metro's communications.

Ms. Bowersox said that she would like to open this issue up for discussion to help answer the following questions:

- What are riders' concerns?
- What information should Metro be communicating?
- What would riders want to know if they were in such a situation?

Ms. Hermanson noted that, with regard to slips, trips and falls, customers are causing these incidents. She suggested that it might be helpful for Metro to talk about what it's doing to prevent them. Ms. Hermanson also recommended that Metro develop laminated wallet cards to distribute to customers that would contain very basic instructions on what to do in an emergency.

Mr. Ball then opened the floor to comments from members of the public.

Comments from Members of the Public:

Mr. Raschke said that one of the reasons for the self-evacuation is that riders have lost faith in the system; he said that they genuinely believe that help won't arrive in any reasonable amount of time. He said that a customer charter that told riders what they should expect in terms of timeframe (i.e. "We'll guarantee that we'll evacuate a disabled train after xx minutes."). He said that it's only a matter of time before riders take things into their own hands if they don't believe that assistance will be forthcoming.

Another commenter echoed Mr. Raschke's comments. He said that the new signage is helpful, but the most important thing that customers need is information, which should come from the train operator. He said that, even if the operator doesn't have a lot of information to share, he should still keep customers updated on what is happening, such as if he has to leave the train to check on something.

Comments from Council Members:

Ms. Washington said that it is imperative that Metro be able to communicate. She said that it needs to ensure that intercoms work and provide clearer instructions for riders on how to use them. She also asked whether Metro works with tourism information providers like DestinationDC to distribute safety information to tourists.

Mr. Seip said that he would volunteer the Council's Security and Safety Committee to provide Ms. Bowersox with a more specific response. He said that in a broad sense, some kind of agreement with riders would be helpful, in terms of setting their expectations. He added that riders will also need to have information on what to do if they aren't being provided information by Metro or other on-site personnel. He told Ms. Bowersox that it would be helpful to try and set timeframes for when riders should reasonably expect certain things to happen; without that information they will choose to self-evacuate.

Ms. Bowersox explained that there were two trains involved in the incident on the Green Line: on one train the operator was new and didn't provide good information to the riders, on the other, customers commented that the operator did provide good information throughout the situation. She said that riders self-evacuated on both trains, in a matter of minutes. She said that she is

noting this not to blame passengers for their action, but to underscore the enormity of the problem that Metro faces. She said that there is a lot of good information out there on how other countries deal with these types of issues that may be applicable.

Mr. Seip suggested that Metro may want to provide emergency information on platforms. He noted that riders have time while they are waiting on the platform to read this type of information.

Mr. Parcan said that he wouldn't have thought to self-evacuate, but that Metro needs to do more to inform riders about what is happening. He said that riders' self-evacuations point to a lack of trust in Metro.

Ms. Titus asked whether Metro had thought about conducting emergency drills and including deaf individuals in those drills. She said that Metro needs to have procedures in place that address various situations. Ms. Bowersox suggested that what Metro can do better is to offer instruction that is available to everyone, such as videos available online that would be accessible to everyone.

Ms. Jackson said that many riders run for the train because they don't know when the next one is coming, and that this is an issue of lack of rider trust in Metro. She also said that she sees a lot of bad tourist behavior and that it would be good to focus any campaign on tourists. Ms. Bowersox noted that Metro does provide tourists with information about Metro but has not reached out to them specifically on safety issues.

Mr. Walker suggested that Metro employees need training about how to better communicate messages to passengers, because many passengers tune them out. He said that any messages about safety need to be layered and interesting and that Metro needs to reach out to riders in various formats, and suggested that Metro run a contest to come up with possible designs or messages. He added that the information needs to be presented colorfully and in multiple languages and that, if Metro wants to be prepared to communicate effectively during an actual situation, it needs to practice doing so in advance. Ms. Bowersox said that she especially like the contest idea because it is a great way to engage people around a topic.

Ms. Lynch suggested that Metro conduct quarterly safety outreach campaigns and provide more information on station platforms and via prerecorded messages that play within the rail system. She also suggested that Metro conduct a webinar on "how to stay safe" on the Metro system.

Mr. Delaney said that he liked the idea of video and audio, but that, ultimately, those are just tools to get out information. He said that these messages need to be surrounded with context. He also asked whether Metro could communicate with riders via text message.

Ms. Bowersox noted that recognizing the differences between various audiences and how to reach them is an important point. Mr. Delaney noted that the proposed sign lacks language that provides a personal connection to the people reading it.

Mr. Sheehan said that Metro needs to communicate differently with the disability community and suggested that Christian Kent can provide Ms. Bowersox with background information about accessibility issues.

Ms. Walker suggested that Metro may be able to train non-employee volunteers to help assist other passengers during emergencies. She added that Metro needs to take its message to where people are and to go to special events or other places where people are gathered. She also discussed making information on alternate routes more readily available to riders. Ms. Bowersox thanked Ms. Walker for her comments, especially about planning alternate routes, and noted that Dr. Gridlock has recently also written columns urging riders to know alternate routes for their commute.

Mr. Ball told Ms. Bowersox that the visual information provided in the railcars is all about self-evacuation. He said that, by only providing this information, it tells him, as a rider, to self-evacuate. He added that Metro needs a more memorable emergency number than its present 202-962-2121 police number.

With regard to riders running for trains, Mr. Ball said that riders will always push the boundaries in terms of trying to make a train, but the more information Metro is able to provide riders about train arrivals ahead of their getting to the platform, the less likely they are to run for a train.

Mr. Ball thanked Ms. Bowersox for coming to the Council and said that it would be back in touch with additional safety communications suggestions.

VI. RAC Listening Sessions

Mr. Ball said that the one of the goals of the leadership team is to increase the Council's outreach to riders, and committed to holding "listening sessions" in the three jurisdictions to give a chance for riders to express their views and concerns about Metro to members of the Council. He said that the Council leadership had decided to hold the first session in Virginia, specifically in the area served by the Blue Line. Mr. Pasek said that he was looking at having the event at the Charles Houston Recreation Center in Alexandria, with a tentative date of April 24th, and that he hoped to have that confirmed within the next day or two.

Mr. Ball said that, with regard to format, the leadership team decided on having small group discussions, since that would allow for more detailed conversations. He also reviewed the planned outreach for the session with the Council.

Ms. Walker moved that the Council establish three listening sessions, and agree to hold its first session in Virginia. This motion was seconded by Ms. Washington.

Mr. Seip then moved to cut off debate on this motion. Without objection, Mr. Seip's motion was approved.

The Council then voted on Ms. Walker's motion. Without objection, her motion for the Council to conduct listening sessions in each of the three jurisdictions, Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia, was approved.

VI. Quarterly Meeting with Board Leadership:

Mr. Ball told the Council that its leadership had a productive quarterly meeting with the Board. He said that the Council leadership told the Board that the RAC would like to be brought into discussions earlier on in the decision-making process, and that there was support from the Board and staff on this point. He noted that they talked about several upcoming Board items that will be coming to the RAC.

Mr. Ball said that the group also discussed communications, the RAC's organization, about expectations of RAC members and of moving forward with the next steps from the incident communications panel. He said that the Council leadership also raised the upcoming service cuts to the Blue Line and suggested ways that Metro might mitigate their impact on riders.

Mr. Ball noted that these meetings will be held quarterly, so if any members have items that they would like raised in these meetings to please let him know.

VII. Upcoming Committee Meetings:

Mr. Ball said that the Council would be starting its committee meetings this month, on the following schedule:

Second Wednesday of the month:

- Safety and Security – 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.
- Budget and Finance – 7:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Mr. Pasek noted that because the Board had just passed the budget, a Budget and Finance Committee meeting wasn't planned for April.

Third Wednesday of the month:

- Operations and Communications – 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Walker asked about the possibility of members participating in the meeting by phone, and there was discussion around this topic.

Ms. Walker noted that members have the opportunity to listen to Metro Board and Metro Board Committee meetings online.

Mr. Wright said that he would like to meet briefly with the Maryland Council members after the conclusion of the Council meeting.

Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.