

**Metro Riders' Advisory Council
Minutes**

August 7, 2013

I. Call to Order:

Mr. Ball called the August 2013 meeting of the Metro Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:41 p.m.

The following members were present:

Ben Ball, Chair, District of Columbia
Barbara Hermanson, Virginia Vice Chair, City of Alexandria
Carol Walker, District of Columbia Vice Chair, At-Large
James Wright, Maryland Vice Chair, Prince George's County
Pat King-Adams, District of Columbia
Karen Lynch, Prince George's County
Patrick Sheehan, At-Large/Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair
Lorraine Silva, Arlington County
Deborah Titus, Fairfax County
Fred Walker, Fairfax County
Mary Ann Zimmerman, Montgomery County

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

Italo Cruz, District of Columbia
Frank DeBernardo, Prince George's County
Pat Jackson, Fairfax County
Alex Parcan, Montgomery County
Candice Walsh, District of Columbia
Etta-Cheri Washington, District of Columbia

II. Public Comment Period:

Michael Adams told Council members that he was tired of other Metro riders' poor behavior and provided examples of times that riders haven't displayed the sufficient courtesy. He specifically cited riders rushing to catch their trains who bump into other riders and those who don't make seats available for other riders with disabilities. He said that he had Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) concerns about how Metro handles these situations. Ms. King-Adams said that she would coordinate following up with Mr. Adams.

Approved October 2, 2013

Stu Whitaker told the Council that he had attended their Listening Session in Alexandria back in April and provided the Council with information on how to “green” their meetings, which asks organizations and individual to be aware of transit access when planning their meetings and to choose meeting locations and times that enable individuals using public transit to attend. Mr. Whitaker brought some brochures, which Mr. Ball asked him to leave with Mr. Pasek to distribute.

III. Approval of Agenda:

Without objection, the agenda was approved as presented.

IV. Airport Bus Service:

Steve Strauss from the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT) introduced himself and explained to the Council that he was the primary staffer responsible for Metro policy at DDOT. He said that DDOT was looking at the possibility for improvements to transit service to Dulles Airport, and had the following goals:

- To reduce riders’ waiting time as part of the total trip;
- To keep the total fare as close to the current fare as possible;
- To reduce travel time;
- To have SmarTrip® cards accepted for payment on the Washington Flyer bus service;
- To encourage the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) to publicize transit access to Dulles Airport.

Mr. Strauss said that when the first phase of the Silver Line opens, there may be different options available to improve transit service to Dulles Airport, which is why this item was included in the docket of proposals that will be going to public hearings in September. He noted, however, that there are several unknowns with the possible options, such as what the schedule would be if Metro rerouted its existing 5A (L’Enfant – Dulles) to serve the new Wiehle Avenue station and the Washington Flyer’s plans for its bus service when the first phase of the Silver Line opens. He said that he wanted to get the Council’s feedback on this issue, especially since the Council had studied this issue previously.

Mr. Ball thanked Mr. Strauss for asking for the RAC’s feedback said that what he learned from the Council’s study was that riders are looking for are multiple options for getting to the airport because of factors such as trackwork or traffic that could delay one mode of the other. He also explained that there isn’t currently much transit infrastructure at Dulles Airport and noted that he was told that MWAA is constrained in its ability to post wayfinding signage or SmarTrip® dispensers or other transit infrastructure at the airport. Mr. Ball asked whether the changes being proposed for the 5A is the first step in discontinuing the route altogether. Mr. Strauss said that

there would have to be a hearing on any changes to the route, so including the options in the public hearing docket is a way to force discussion on this issue.

Mr. Ball added that no one lives at L'Enfant Plaza, the current origin of the 5A service. He suggested that it might make more sense to start the bus from a location where people actually live.

Mr. Wright said that he wanted to commend DDOT for its work on airports access. He noted that the area around Dulles Airport is growing significantly and said that additional transit service, on top of the Silver Line, may be needed for that area.

Ms. King-Adams asked whether Mr. Strauss was involved with the "MoveDC" committee, and he said that he was only slightly involved with its work. With regard to the 5A route, Mr. Strauss noted that this would be a long-term solution, at least for the several year period until the second phase of the Silver Line reaches the airport.

Ms. Zimmerman asked whether, under the proposal, all buses would start/end at the Wiehle Avenue station as opposed to travelling further into town. Mr. Strauss explained that, at present, the 5A travels from L'Enfant Plaza to Rosslyn to Dulles Airport, and the proposal being considered would be to either shorten the 5A to run between Wiehle Avenue and Dulles Airport only; or, if the Washington Flyer and Fairfax Connector are able to provide sufficient service between Wiehle Avenue station and Dulles, for Metro to quit operating service to Dulles altogether.

Ms. Zimmerman said that any service to the airport needs to serve the people who work at the airport, and that they would be more likely to use the 5A than the Washington Flyer. She noted that, on weekends when Metro doesn't open until later in the morning, it would be difficult for riders to get to Wiehle Avenue to catch a bus to the airport. She added that riders also want to avoid transfers, which are especially difficult for people with luggage or riders with disabilities.

Mr. Strauss also told the Council that DDOT needs to look at the interface between the last train times and the time of the last bus of the night, especially with the new Silver Line service, since the currently-scheduled last bus of the evening wouldn't make it to Wiehle Avenue to connect with the last Silver Line train to D.C. Mr. Ball noted that for flights that arrive after the last bus departs Dulles Airport heading back into D.C., travelers have no other options but to take a taxi.

Ms. Titus asked whether Mr. Strauss had checked with SuperShuttle or other providers about their service levels. She also suggested that he do a survey of riders to get their feedback on which providers offer the best service at various times of the day.

Ms. Silva said that, originally, the 5A used to leave from Metro Center, rather than L'Enfant Plaza, which made it more convenient to many hotels and provided riders with direct access to the Red Line. Mr. Strauss commented that perhaps late night/early morning service to Metro Center could work because traffic downtown isn't that much of an issue at those times of the day.

Mr. Walker said that he often does daytrips out of Dulles Airport, departing around 6 a.m. and returning around midnight. He noted that transit wouldn't be an option for these trips. He added that many riders have a lot of luggage and there is no place to put luggage on a Metrobus, and suggested that Metro look at procuring different types of buses for this route. He also noted that he thought the proposed travel time of 33 minutes for the Silver Line to go from Wiehle Avenue to Metro Center was optimistic.

Ms. Walker said that Metro has as much of a responsibility to help airport workers get to work at Dulles as it does to get travelers to/from the airport. She added that the current 5A route is well-known and that she would be in favor of looking more carefully of the retention of the 5A in its present configuration.

Ms. Hermanson said that she supports the goals that Mr. Strauss outlined at the beginning of the discussion and that she also supports earlier/late hours for transit service to Dulles Airport. She explained that her reluctance to using the 5A is its unreliability – rail service is more reliable because it doesn't have to share the road with traffic. Mr. Strauss noted that in his general experience with airport shuttles, the goal is to keep riders on the rail service for as much of the trip as possible, but the 5A is somewhat different because of the limited-access highways it has available for its route.

Mr. Ball noted that Dulles is a major airport for foreign travelers and that they are used to using public transit to get to or from the airport. He said that if DDOT needs further support, feedback or advocacy on this issue, to please let him, know. Mr. Strauss told Mr. Ball and the Council that he was working to set up a meeting with MWAA to find out more about their plans for any changes to Washington Flyer service after the first phase of the Silver Line opens.

Mr. Ball thanked Mr. Strauss for his presentation and coming to talk with the Council.

V. Customer Expectations:

Mr. Ball said that the Council is looking to produce some kind of customer pledge document that is somewhere between what riders expect and what Metro is able to provide. He noted that examples of other transit agencies' pledges were included in members' meeting packets. He said that, for this meeting, he would like the Council to come up with the main points that riders want Metro to commit to.

Mr. Ball then turned the floor over to Ms. Zimmerman and Ms. Walker to report on the discussion from the July subcommittee meeting.

Ms. Zimmerman said that the committees had a good discussion but that it was difficult to come up with a good framework for a document. She said that at the end of the meeting, the group suggested two actions to help move the discussion forward:

1. To analyze other agencies' pledges;
2. To review and analyze what Metro already pledges to do, and to identify areas where customers have expectations that are different from existing Metro policy.

Ms. Zimmerman said that she looked at the sample customer pledges and did some analysis of them, asking the following questions:

- How easy were they to find on an agency's homepage;
- How were items prioritized in each pledge;
- What were the categories that each pledge covered; and
- Where could one go from the customer pledge, either to find more information or to contact the agency directly.

She said that she drew the following conclusions:

- Most agencies don't have pledges;
- Only one agency (Toronto) had the pledge linked directly from its homepage;
- Four of the five agencies listed safety as the first item;
- Some agencies linked to other documents from their customer pledge, while others did not. Ms. Zimmerman said that how well a pledge was linked to other agency webpages served as an indicator of how well it was integrated into the agency's mission.
- The words to describe each element implied the degree to which it is actionable or not.

Ms. Zimmerman said that, if Metro does end up having a pledge, it needs to be visible, easy to find and be linked to the agency's missions, goals and objectives, and actionable.

Ms. Walker said that she wanted to thank Karen Lynch for her help in framing this issue in terms of integrating it with Metro's mission. She said that she reviewed the draft metrics for a customer pledge, which was on pages nine and ten of members' packets, and explained that the type in red were current Metro targets and performance. She noted that for some items from the draft, there is not a corresponding Metro standard. These include the need for there to be sufficient advance notice when Metro will extend its hours for a special event, the need for a way for communities to request later service, and the need for planning for elevator/escalator repairs

to take into account the needs of riders with limited mobility. Ms. Walker noted that the pledge needs to be written in understandable, customer-friendly language.

Ms. Walker explained that they also inserted language about customer feedback and about employee customer service training, as well as for communication in the event of emergencies or other unplanned disruptions. She noted that the one thing missing from this draft is any discussion of fares, and suggested that the draft may need to call for a clear customer understanding of the need for fare increases or changes.

Ms. Zimmerman said that she tried to come up with a listing of what customers wanted, specifically:

- Safety and security;
- Dependability and reliability;
- Clear, timely and accurate two-way communications;
- Standards and consequences for not meeting them;

Ms. Zimmerman said that one additional need in refining the customer pledge is to identify concepts in the draft that are consistent with items that Metro already tracks, so that it can be used to report on progress. . She said that there needs to be identification of existing measures that link to the concepts in the pledge and identify any gaps that may exist..

Mr. Ball said that he would like to go bullet by bullet to discuss the draft document and provide feedback. He said that between this meeting and the next Council meeting, the Leadership Team would meet to refine the pledge language and send that to Metro staff for feedback. He said that after that, the Council could vote on a final version.

Ms. King-Adams congratulated the drafters of the pledge on their work. She asked whether any other agencies in the area had a customer pledge. Ms. Walker said that MARC has a pledge but that it is different because MARC service is very different than Metro service. Ms. King-Adams also suggested that whatever is ultimately adopted be made available in various formats to reach as broad an audience as possible, including individuals with disabilities or those who don't speak English. She added that the pledge should also include something similar to the quarterly progress report that is in the Toronto Transit Commission's customer charter.

Mr. Ball then led the Council through a worksheet put together by Ms. Zimmerman and Ms. Walker to get members comments.

Under the heading "*We (the customer) want safety and security*" members offered the following comments:

Ms. Titus suggested that safety should be everyone's number one job.

Ms. Hermanson said that the pledge should define a reasonable response time for when a safety issue surfaces, and that it should call for demonstrated year over year improvements in that measure. In response to a question from Ms. King-Adams, Mr. Ball said that the document is defining safety as relates to injuries or accidents, and security, which is more focused on crime. Mr. Ball said that he like the terms "operational safety" and "personal safety" that had been suggested.

Mr. Ball suggested that the pledge include language that Metro is committed to passenger security and that, if they are the victim of a crime, riders have the right to file a report with the Transit Police, who will treat them courteously and professionally. Ms. Walker said that the pledge needs to talk about Metro to making every effort to reduce crime in the system.

Mr. Walker said that the pledge should include something about how passenger and employee safety is everyone's primary job. In response to a question from Ms. Walker, Mr. Walker said that this is aimed at everyone, but especially at Metro employees.

Ms. Hermanson asked whether there needed to be anything in the pledge that laid out reasonable expectations for riders when it comes to safety.

Ms. Silva said that the pledge needed to contain some language about the timeliness of the responses by the Transit Police.

Comments from members of the public:

Michael Lewis said that educational awareness is necessary for safety to be Metro's top priority, both for customers and for employees. He related an experience from his career and said that educating employees and customers

Ms. Walker said that there needed to be something in the pledge that addressed both day-to-day safety as well as safety during incidents.

Under the heading of "*We want dependability and reliability,*" members offered the following comments:

Ms. Titus said that she thought that dependability and reliability were very similar things and suggested that the pledge may need to more clearly explain how these concepts differ from one another.

Ms. Hermanson noted information on what Metro is doing to meet these expectations can be pulled from its' Vital Signs report. Mr. Ball also suggested that the pledge around dependability and reliability include language about Metro headways as well as about the dependability of the ride – how frequently trains or buses break down, etc.

Mr. Walker said that he would like for Metro to pledge to have independent auditors verify how well it is meeting its operating goals and metrics. He also suggested that the pledge needs to contain something about whether or not Metro meets its deadlines on construction projects and trackwork.

Mr. Sheehan noted that part of the issue around dependability has to do with clearly communicating what expectations should be. He explained that since people don't know what Metro's schedule is for completing trackwork, they cannot know if that work is being accomplished in a timely fashion. He noted that any communication on this topic would need to be in a format that is accessible to everyone.

Mr. Wright said that there needed to be something in the draft that calls on Metro to ensure that its trains and buses arrive and depart in a timely fashion and that it will work diligently to ensure that passengers and employees can expect their experience to be reliable.

Mr. Ball said that there should be a maximum wait time of 20 minutes between trains enumerated in the pledge.

Mr. Walker said that it appears to him that there are two parts to this document – an “aspirational” part, that outlines what riders would like to see, and another section that lays out metrics. He said the Council should keep this document aspirational, in terms of laying out what customers would like to see, rather than spelling out consequences for Metro not meeting its targets.

Ms. Zimmerman said that there needs to be some discussion of reliability around Metro's elevators and escalators and that measurement needs to take into account more than just whether or not something is functioning, but whether it is functioning in the way that riders expect.

Comments from members of the public:

Kurt Raschke said that he hoped that if this document contains metrics, that those are derived from Metro's peer agencies. He also suggested that these metrics could then be used to apply pressure to Metro's Office of Performance. He noted that the Council isn't an oversight or enforcement body, but rather what the RAC can do is ensure that the statistics accurately reflect riders' experience, so that when Metro assesses its performance, its assessment is in line with what riders see.

Under the heading of “*We want clear, timely, two-way communications*” members offered the following comments:

Ms. Silva suggested that riders stranded on a train should receive updates at least every ten minutes. She also suggested that, in the event of a disruption, if a rider enters and exits the same station within 30 minutes, he or she should not be charged.

Ms. King-Adams suggested adding the language, “Metro will ensure that, within a reasonable time, passengers will be notified of a delay or emergency. Metro will make every attempt to provide information as it becomes available.”

Mr. Wright proposed the following language:

“Metro will use various media to communicate to passengers in a timely manner;” and “Passengers should notify Metro staff of their concerns expediently, using various methods.” He said that passengers need to be empowered to bring their concerns to Metro staff.

Ms. Titus asked what the new cars for the Silver Line will look like and whether riders with hearing loss would be able to get information. She also suggested defining four different levels of emergency – advisory, alert, warning and watch.

Mr. Walker suggested adding something about “well-maintained communication systems” in this section. Ms. Walker said that this highlights one of the difficulties of producing an aspirational document – that there can be different definitions of words like “reasonable” and each side will interpret those to its own advantage. She said that this is why there should be some metrics included in this document.

Ms. Hermanson said that there are communications standards for everyday situations as well as for incidents. She also suggested that this document could include the suggestion of expanding Metro’s customer call center hours so that someone is available any time there are buses or trains running.

Ms. Walker provided information about MTA Maryland’s “Rate Your Ride” program, which allows for riders to share specific information about their trips. Mr. Sheehan said that, with smartphones, riders are able to give feedback on their service almost instantly.

Mr. Ball suggested the following language regarding communications: “Metro will provide timely, useful information to customer during unplanned service interruptions. When service is delayed due to an incident, Metro will let passengers know within two minutes. Information on delays will be available to rail passengers through systemwide audio announcements along with alerts on platform displays and station kiosk displays. Information on delays will also be available for rail and bus passengers through wmata.com, social media and automated text message alert systems. Metro will update incident information at least every five minutes until normal operations resume.”

Ms. Zimmerman noted that websites of other transit agencies, specifically Boston, have a listing of about twenty languages into which they can be translated. She said that she isn’t sure if Metro has something similar, but that it could help with getting information out to customers.

Comments from members of the public:

Michael Lewis discussed a situation where he was stuck on a train and did not receive timely updates from the operator.

Under the heading of “*We want standards and consequences for not meeting them*” members offered the following comments:

Mr. Wright offered the following language for this section of the pledge:

- WMATA will take appropriate measures to remedy crisis situations as expediently as possible.
- WMATA will fairly investigate incidents, and/or personnel, behavior, and will take appropriate action which includes discipline.

Ms. Silva suggested that Metro make disciplinary actions public.

Ms. Hermanson said that this is a good place to incorporate Mr. Raschke’s suggestion about applying industry standards to Metro’s performance metrics. Mr. Ball also suggested that language about the “stewardship of public resources” be included as well.

There was discussion about the various audits and oversight that Metro is subject to, such as the FTA’s triennial audit and oversight by the NTSB and its Inspector General.

Mr. Ball said that, when something goes wrong, he wants information. He said that he would suggest including something about “proactive release of information.” Ms. Walker told the Council that this kind of information is included in the Vital Signs report – the report includes information on why Metro did or did not meet its targets and what they are doing to improve their performance.

Mr. Walker asked whether Metro had a mission statement; this was shared with Council members.

Mr. Ball asked Ms. Zimmerman if there were additional points that she wanted to consider. Ms. Zimmerman said that the last point was included as a way to ensure that the nothing was left out.

Mr. Ball noted that this draft does not address how Metro responds to customers. Ms. Zimmerman said that the language about “clear, timely, two-way communication” is intended for that.

Mr. Walker said that the best customer pledge that he has seen is from Johnson & Johnson. He suggested that members review this pledge.

Mr. Ball asked members if there was anything that wasn’t captured in this discussion. Ms. Walker said that she felt that there needed to be something about fares, though she didn’t have specific language. Ms. Hermanson said that there needed to be something about financial issues/ stewardship.

Ms. Zimmerman said that she would like to suggest a meeting on August 14th to incorporate the information received tonight and putting it into a draft. There was then discussion of the timeline for the Board's consideration of this issue.

VI. Committee Updates:

Ms. Zimmerman said that the Safety and Security Committee met and prioritized its workplan items as follows:

1. Incident communications workshop follow-up;
2. Vital Signs safety indicators;
3. Metro crime;
4. Youth and safety;
5. Metro station redesign;
6. Sexual harassment campaign.

Ms. Lynch told the Council that, at the most recent Operations and Communications committee meeting, the group received a briefing from a contractor that is working with the District Department of Transportation on a study of non-regional bus routes. She added that the committee is also working on a customer comment initiative and hoped to bring something to the full Council at a subsequent meeting. She noted that there was a lot of public discussion at the last meeting.

Ms. Walker said that she sent out notice of this meeting to Councilmember Muriel Bowser and to various community groups in Wards 4 and 5. She urged other members to pass along notice of RAC meetings as well.

Mr. Ball said that the next Council Listening Session would be in Maryland and that he will have more information at the next meeting.

Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.