



600 Fifth Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
202-962-2891

December 1, 2010

The WMATA Riders' Advisory Council's Committee on WMATA Governance has reviewed the report prepared by the Board of Trade and Council of Governments' joint task force.

We note that several of the most significant recommendations match those in the Riders' Advisory Council's own report, released in draft form for public comment in early November. Some other recommendations raise important issues and are worth strong consideration, while others we believe are not appropriate to enact and would not address WMATA's problems.

The following recommendations appear in both reports and we urge implementation:

- **Make the chief executive a CEO.** This is the subject of an entire chapter in the RAC report with a number of specific sub-recommendations to make the CEO more effective.
- **Clarify the role of Board members.** The BOT/COG report recommends that a new WMATA Governance Commission perform this task, while the RAC feels that the WMATA Board could effectively address this issue without need for another layer of bureaucracy.
- **Stop automatically rotating the Board chair.**

We concur with the following recommendations from the BOT/COG report:

- **Coordinate policy on compensation of Board members.**
- **Give the Chair a 2-year term.**
- **Create an orientation process for Board members.**

One recommendation from BOT/COG advocates for something that is already both policy and practice:

- **Require a majority vote to change committees and procedures.**

The following recommendations in the RAC report were not addressed in the BOT/COG report, but we urge implementation:

- **The Board should focus on high-level policy and objectives.**
- **The Board should act as a body and staff should respond less to guidance from individual members outside of official action.**
- **Board decision-making should include a clear and accessible public input process.**

The RAC does not agree with the following BOT/COG recommendations:

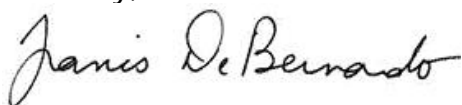
- **Create a new super-Board (Governance Commission) with less local involvement.** The level of local involvement in the WMATA Board, especially in DC and Virginia, is a strength of the current system. Adding another layer of administration is unlikely to improve governance or “accountability” and would diminish the valuable local role in governance.
- **Remove alternates from Board meetings or remove them entirely.** The current size of the Board functions well and alternates provide for representation for more riders.
- **Add more direct executive appointments.** Adding appointees with a weaker connection to local funding sources, local land use decisions, and riders is not an improvement in governance.
- **Give Board members 4-year terms and limit them to two terms.** Board members’ institutional knowledge has often been an asset, not a liability.
- **Give the Chair more control over Board members.** The Chair has sometimes exercised too much control, rather than too little.
- **Make the Chair a separate appointee of the Governance Commission.** This would also diminish local involvement to the detriment of WMATA, not improve governance.
- **Weaken or remove entirely the jurisdictional veto.** As we argued in our report, we do not believe this is practical or in the best interests of the jurisdictions.

The Riders’ Advisory Council believes that improvements to governance are important to restoring quality and public confidence at WMATA. We urge you to focus attention on those reforms that will bring greater quality to WMATA’s chief executive and staff at all levels, improve WMATA’s ability to secure solid sources of funding, and strengthen the connection between local land use decisions and transit service.

We believe that the recommendations in our report, including those which overlap with the BOT/COG report, best address these issues. We believe that enacting these recommendations will take the largest steps toward fixing the problems with WMATA rather than simply reallocating authority between various governmental entities. Therefore, we ask you to support the changes in the RAC report and oppose legislation to create the WMATA Governance Commission or change the WMATA Compact in other ways.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frank DeBernardo".

Frank DeBernardo, Chairman

To: Vincent Gray, Mayor-elect of the District of Columbia  
Kwame Brown, Chairman-elect of the DC Council  
Martin O'Malley, Governor of Maryland  
Speaker/President of the Maryland House and Senate  
Robert McDonnell, Governor of Virginia  
Speaker/President of the Virginia House and Senate

Cc: WMATA Compact Area Congressional Delegation Members  
Members of the DC Council, local MD and VA state legislators  
Members, Metro Board of Directors  
Dave Robertson, Executive Director, MWCOG  
James Dinegar, President of the Greater Washington Board of Trade  
James Dyke, Chairman of the Greater Washington Board of Trade