

Metro Riders' Advisory Council

February 12, 2014

I. Call to Order:

Ms. Walker called the February 2014 meeting of the Metro Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:35 p.m.

The following members were present:

Carol Carter Walker, Chair, At-Large

Barbara Hermanson, Virginia Vice Chair, City of Alexandria

Karen Lynch, Maryland Vice Chair, Prince George's County

Candice Walsh, District of Columbia Vice Chair

Ben Ball, District of Columbia

Frank DeBernardo, Prince George's County

Thomas Draths, At-Large

Aldea Meary-Miller, Arlington County

Robert Pappas, Fairfax County

Lorraine Silva, Arlington County

Deborah Titus, Fairfax County

Daniel Turk, District of Columbia

Fred Walker, Fairfax County

Dexter Williams, District of Columbia

Mary Ann Zimmerman, Montgomery County

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

José Morales, District of Columbia

Katherine Kortum, Montgomery County

Pat Sheehan, At-Large/Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair

Etta-Cheri Washington, District of Columbia

James Wright, Prince George's County

Other individuals present:

Katherine Filardo, Foursquare

Aaron Overman, Senior Planner, Office of Bus Planning, Scheduling and Cust. Facilities, Metro

John Pasek, Assistant Board Secretary and Acting RAC Staff Coordinator, Metro

Loyda Sequeira, Board Secretary, Metro

II. Public Comment Period:

Ms. Walker opened the floor for comments from members of the public. There were no public comments.

III. Approval of Agenda:

Without objection, the agenda was approved as presented. Ms. Walker noted that, because of the impending snowstorm, the meeting may need to conclude early, which would cut the orientation item short.

IV. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes:

Ms. Walsh moved the approval of the November 6, 2013 and January 8, 2014 meeting minutes *en bloc*, as presented. This motion was seconded by Mr. Williams. Without objection, the November 6, 2013 and January 8, 2014 meeting minutes were approved as presented.

V. Bus Livability Grant:

Ms. Walker introduced Aaron Overman, a Senior Planner with Metro’s Office of Bus Planning, Scheduling and Customer Facilities to discuss Metro’s activities as the recipient of a federal grant for improvements at its bus stops.

Mr. Overman provided an overview of the grant that Metro received through the Federal Transit Administration’s “Bus Livability” program, including:

- Background information on the grant and its objectives;
- A summary of outreach activities Metro conducted to find out about customer preferences for bus stop improvements;
- Findings from the customer outreach conducted, including a breakdown by jurisdiction of the amenities most requested by customers.

Ms. Walker then opened the floor to questions and comments from members of the Council.

Ms. Silva suggested that as Metro develops possible designs for its bus stops, that it look at Arlington County’s recently-constructed “super stop” for examples of what not to do, especially in terms of placement of real-time information signs and the design of the bus shelter.

Mr. Ball noted that real-time information signs are supposed to be installed in bus shelters and asked Mr. Overman where these signs would be installed and what the timeline is for their installation. He also asked whether real-time information will be incorporated into existing advertising screens that are installed at bus shelters.

Mr. Overman explained that the real-time information signs are being funded by a federal TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grant, and will be standalone signs featuring bus information. Mr. Pasek noted that the bus shelters with advertising are not owned by Metro, so there may be complications in terms of putting bus arrival information on those advertising signs. Mr. Overman said that he would follow up with more information to respond to Mr. Ball's question.

Ms. Zimmerman noted that the preferences for bus stop amenities cited by respondents from Montgomery County differed from those of other jurisdictions' residents and suggested that existing conditions may influence riders' preferences.

Mr. Turk put forward that different amenities have different costs and asked Mr. Overman how Metro will determine cost-vs.-benefits of certain amenities as it moves forward with this project. He also asked whether riders had the opportunity to suggest improvements at specific bus stops.

Ms. Filardo said that there was an open-ended question at the end of the survey that provided respondents with the opportunity to name specific bus stops that needed additional amenities. Mr. Overman added that Metro collects data on the condition of and amenities of its bus stops from several different sources, including from Metro's Accessibility Office and from the jurisdictions who own the bus stops.

Ms. Walsh noted that none of the "pop-up" outreach events took place on Metro's busy bus corridors along 14th Street NW, 16th Street NW or Georgia Avenue NW asked whether the viewpoints of those riders were being taken into consideration. Mr. Overman said that the pop-up events were chosen based on both population characteristics and were located at existing bus hubs. Ms. Filardo said that the locations of pop-up events were carefully chosen after looking at census data to ensure that the outreach captured responses from low-income and minority populations. She added that bus cards helped provide notice to riders in locations where there weren't pop-up events or other specific events. Mr. Overman added that social media helped get the word out about to a broader reach of riders, both to make them aware of ongoing events and to let them know about the opportunity to fill out the survey online.

Ms. Titus asked whether there were any responses to the survey from individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. Mr. Overman said that the in-person surveys didn't have the opportunity to engage with any individuals who were deaf or hard-of-hearing, but that the online survey was available in seven different languages and was fully accessible for individuals with disabilities.

Mr. DeBernardo noted that the information collected as part of the survey would be shared with the jurisdictions and asked whether that information would also be shared with other departments at Metro. Mr. Overman said that the information would be shared, and noted that the majority of

bus stops are not located on Metro property, so we need to make sure that the jurisdictions, as property owners at bus stops, have the necessary information to make improvements.

Mr. Draths said that many of the people who provided comments during the latest round of Metro public hearings raised concerns about updated and reliable bus information being provided at bus stops. He asked whether Mr. Overman was sharing the survey information with Metro staff responsible for maintaining route and schedule information. Mr. Overman said that Metro is already working to improve the quality of information on its Priority Corridor Network routes and the TIGER grant funds will also focus improvements on PCN routes. He noted that this grant funding would allow for improvements to other Metrobus routes.

Ms. Hermanson said that she thought it was great that Metro was able to get so many to complete surveys as part of the pop-up events and asked where Metro got the staff to conduct the outreach events for this project. Mr. Overman explained that staff from Foursquare, the company that Mr. Filardo works for, was responsible for conducting the outreach. Ms. Filardo noted that Foursquare also hired additional staffers to conduct outreach and that for events with radio stations, the radio stations also had staff on hand to conduct outreach activities.

Ms. Walker thanked Mr. Overman and Ms. Filardo for their presentation and asked that if members have any additional questions to direct those through Mr. Pasek.

VI. Metro – FY2015 Budget Development:

Ms. Walker noted that summaries of the six budget hearings had been circulated prior to the meeting. She said that if any member wanted to bring up highlights of the hearing that he or she attended, she would welcome their comments.

Mr. Ball said that he thinks there is an opportunity for the Council to comment on the format of the public hearings. He explained that the hearings featured very minimal interaction between Board members and the public, and said that there might be a way to suggest that greater interaction between the two groups might be more useful.

Ms. Meary-Miller said that she agreed with Mr. Ball's point. She added that she expected to hear more comments at the hearings about the fare increases, but, instead there were more complaints about Metro's communications. She said the fact that these riders couldn't get answers to their questions at these hearings underscored Mr. Ball's point about the structure of the hearings.

Ms. Hermanson thanked all of the members who attended the hearings and for putting together recaps.

Ms. Titus said that she didn't realize that the hearings were one-way conversations – from members of the public to the Board, and added that she would be interested in the idea of having a Riders' Council member up on the panel, listening to testimony.

Mr. Draths said that he found it interesting that he didn't see any news articles about the hearings except for one small article. He noted that while social media around Metro can sometimes be hostile, but said that it seemed like there was a lack of information concerning these meetings on Twitter or Metro's other social media platforms and that this represented a missed opportunity to engage the public on what Metro is doing to reach out to the public.

Ms. Lynch gave a brief overview of the hearing in Greenbelt that she attended and highlighted comments from one of the individuals who testified who was a Metro employee.

Mr. Walker said that she thinks the Council should take a position regarding the format of the hearings as well as to get more information on what Metro does with comments provided that are not related to the budget.

Ms. Zimmerman noted that the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) was well-represented at all of the hearings and all of the members who testified agreed on a common set of talking points. She noted that those members that testified identified themselves as AAC members, but spoke as members of the public, and that many AAC members went to multiple hearings.

Ms. Sequeira explained that the public hearings are designed to be just that – opportunities to hear from members of the public. She noted that in addition to the hearing, there was an open house prior to the hearing which provided members of the public an opportunity to ask questions of and have a dialogue with Metro staff. She said that if the Council feels there should be a different format, there is an opportunity to make that suggestion, though she noted it may be difficult to have interactive conversations with as many people as who show up for hearings and it would also make it more difficult to capture people's comments.

Mr. Ball said that if people feel like it's a one-way conversation, they may be less likely to actually attend these hearings. He added that there may be an opportunities for the RAC to make suggestions for improvements.

Ms. Hermanson asked whether there were open houses at this latest round of hearings; Ms. Sequeira confirmed that there were. Ms. Hermanson also noted that, having attended a couple of hearings, she noted that there was a wide variation between the different staff presenters and Board members on how their comments are delivered, and this may be contributing to the sense that this is a one-way conversation.

Mr. Ball moved to establish a Council budget committee and to task that committee with creating a “sense of the Council” on the proposals contained in the docket of public hearings prior to the March Riders’ Council meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Williams.

Mr. Turk suggested that any recommendations sent out by the committee should be prioritized. Ms. Lynch noted that the document that Ms. Walker had sent out prior to the meeting described the process for the committee.

Without objection, Mr. Ball’s motion to create a budget committee and assign it a specific task was approved.

Ms. Lynch then called for nominations for the budget committee. The following individuals nominated themselves for membership on the committee:

- Dexter Williams
- Fred Walker
- Aldea Meary-Miller
- Katherine Kortum (Ms. Kortum’s statement was read by Ms. Lynch, as Ms. Kortum was absent from the meeting.)
- Karen Lynch

Ms. Lynch moved to close the nomination period; this motion was seconded by Mr. Ball.

After discussion, it was noted that the currently-proposed committee had two members each from Maryland and Virginia and one member from the District of Columbia. Mr. Ball was nominated to the committee as the second member from D.C.

Ms. Lynch moved to close discussion on nominations for the budget committee. This motion was seconded by Ms. Hermanson. Without objection, the nomination period for this committee was closed.

Ms. Lynch then moved to appoint the six nominated members to the Council’s budget committee. This motion was seconded by Ms. Silva. Without objection, this motion was approved.

Ms. Walker then appointed Mr. Walker as the convener of the budget committee under the Council’s bylaws. She noted that he would convene the committee until such time as it elected a chair. Mr. Walker accepted this position.

Ms. Walker said that she would be interested in having the budget committee explore the AAC members' comments from the hearings about changing the multiplier used to calculate MetroAccess fares or reducing the cap on MetroAccess fares (which is currently \$7).

Mr. Walker asked that the budget presentation from the January RAC meeting be circulated to committee members in advance of its first meeting.

VII. Council Business:

Appointment of Members to Staff Coordinator Hiring Committee:

Ms. Walker explained that, due to Mr. Pasek's selection for the position of Assistant Board Secretary, , a new RAC Staff Coordinator will need to be hired. She noted that, under the Council's bylaws, the RAC may appoint up to three members, one from each jurisdiction, to be part of the Hiring Committee, along with the Board Secretary. A representative from the Human Resources Department will provide technical support. . Ms. Walker asked for the Council's concurrence in appointing the Maryland and Virginia vice chairs (Ms. Lynch and Ms. Hermanson, respectively) and herself representing D.C., as the Council's members of the hiring committee.

Mr. Walker moved to nominate Ms. Walker, Ms. Hermanson and Ms. Lynch as the Council's representatives on the staff coordinator hiring committee. This motion was seconded by Mr. Ball.

Without objection, Mr. Walker's motion was approved.

Cancellation of August Council Meeting:

Ms. Walker said that she wanted to get members' feedback on the idea of cancelling its August meeting. She noted that many committees and groups, including the Metro Board of Directors, don't meet in August and wanted to hear from members whether the RAC should do so, as well.

Mr. Ball said that the Council generally has more business to accomplish than it has meeting time to accomplish its business, so it shouldn't cancel any meetings.

After holding a straw vote on this suggestion, Ms. Walker withdrew her suggestion to consider cancelling the August Council meeting. After further discussion, Ms. Walker said that the Council could reconsider this issue later in the year.

Incident Communications – Next Steps:

Ms. Walker said that, due to the impending snowstorm, Board committee meetings would be cancelled for February 13th. She said that she had sent around an email with background

information and could discuss this matter further once the RAC had established its committees. Mr. Pasek said that he was concerned about the Council missing an opportunity to provide input to the Board on this topic. Ms. Walker said that she would solicit members' comments via email.

VIII. Announcements:

Next Leadership Team Meeting:

Ms. Walker said that the leadership team gets together monthly to plan upcoming meetings and to discuss follow-up actions from previous meetings and other Council business. She told Council members that this is an open meeting and all Council members are welcome. . She said that she would send out information about the meeting to all of the members of the Council before it takes place in case they have any comments or want to participate.

Ms. Walker also said that the RAC's leadership meets quarterly with the Board's Executive Committee and this meeting has been determined by Metro's new General Counsel to be a public meeting, so members are welcome to attend and notice of this meeting would be provided.

Committee Formation:

Ms. Walker then asked to discuss the establishment of workgroups or committees for the Council and how it would develop its workplan for the coming year. She noted that the Accessibility Advisory Committee has a good model for the RAC.

Mr. Williams asked whether it would be more efficient to have the committees decide on their own subcommittees. Ms. Walker clarified her use of the words "subcommittees" and "workgroups." She noted that in 2013 the RAC had a "Safety and Security" committee and a "Customer Service and Operations" committee; she said that the question is whether the RAC wants to repeat that for 2014.

In response to a question from Mr. Turk, Ms. Walker explained that the RAC doesn't have standing committees; the Council's Bylaws state that all committees expire at the end of each calendar year.

In response to a question from Ms. Walker, Mr. Pasek said that he felt that would be difficult to establish workgroups without knowing which issues that the Council wants to work on.

Mr. Ball moved that, prior to the next Riders' Advisory Council meeting the Leadership Team would solicit for whatever committees it deems necessary and the full Council would vote on the membership of those committees in March. This motion was seconded by Mr. Williams.

After discussion, it was suggested that this matter could be discussed via email. Mr. Ball said that his suggestion was that the leadership team could coordinate this process. Mr. DeBernardo said that he would prefer this discussion to take place in person because the group could come up with better ideas working as a group.

Mr. Draths noted that the Council's new members don't know which topics had been suggested previously nor which items had been left unfinished from the previous year and asked that a list of these topics be circulated to the Council. Ms. Walker said that it may be best to focus on deliverables rather than issues.

Ms. Lynch said that it wasn't necessary to spend a great deal of time organizing the committees.

In response to a request from the chair, Mr. Ball restated his motion and called the question on this motion. There was discussion about Mr. Ball's motion to call the question.

Ms. Silva said that she agreed with Ms. Lynch and that the Council needed to make sure that its list of workplan items is realistic; she said that she didn't want the Council to simply create a "wish list" of things it hoped to tackle.

Mr. Ball then moved to close debate on his motion. Without objection, debate on Mr. Ball's motion was closed.

Ms. Walker then called for a vote on Mr. Ball's motion:

This motion passed (7-6-2).

Mr. Pappas said that he is finding it difficult to understand the issues that the RAC should be addressing and feels somewhat "rudderless." He added that members need to get a better understanding of Metro's priorities so that the Council can figure out how to best focus its energy and time.

Ms. Walker said that Mr. Pappas' explanation was helpful and asked members, specifically the newly-appointed members, what kind of information they need to move forward.

Mr. Pappas said that he would like to get a better understanding of Metro's strategic planning and its ongoing major initiatives.

Ms. Meary-Miller said that she would like a better idea of what the RAC's deliverables will be and how those will be used by the Board and Metro.

Mr. Turk said that the more the Council can focus on a smaller number (one to three) of deliverables, the better. He said that it would be helpful to get guidance from members who had served on the Council for a longer period.

In response to Mr. Turk's comment, Ms. Hermanson said that the Board said that it was looking for two specific items from the Council in the coming year:

- Feedback on the FY2015 budget and proposed fares;
- Feedback on Metro's Public Participation Plan that is being developed under Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act.

Ms. Lynch said that she has been pushing for an orientation session to help provide more clarity around the RAC's workplan and to help RAC members understand Metro's priorities for the coming year.

Mr. Ball said that the bylaws are largely responsible for providing guidance on the kinds of topics that the RAC should be addressing.

Adjournment:

Without objection, and in recognition of the deteriorating weather conditions, the meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m.