

Metro Riders' Advisory Council
March 13, 2013

I. Call to Order:

Mr. Ball called the March 2013 meeting of the Metro Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:39 p.m. The following members were present:

Ben Ball, Chair, District of Columbia
Barbara Hermanson, Virginia Vice Chair, City of Alexandria
Carol Carter Walker, D.C. Vice Chair, At-Large
James Wright, Maryland Vice Chair, Prince George's County
Thais Austin, District of Columbia
Patrick Delaney, Montgomery County
Pat Jackson, Fairfax County
Karen Lynch, Prince George's County
Kara Merrigan, Arlington County
Carl Seip, At-Large
Lorraine Silva, Arlington County
Deborah Titus, Fairfax County
Candice Walsh, District of Columbia
Mary Ann Zimmerman, Montgomery County

Other individuals present:

Brian Anderson, Office of Media Relations, Metro
Jim Hughes, Director of Intermodal Planning, Metro
John Pasek, Riders' Advisory Council Staff Coordinator, Metro
Corinne Remy, Office of Civil Rights, Metro

David Alpert, Member of the Public
Drew Hunter, Member of the Public
Kurt Raschke, Member of the Public

II. Public Comment Period:

Drew Hunter said that he has stopped riding Metro and noted that, based on Metro's recent decline in ridership, he isn't alone. He said that he didn't trust the system and added that he is willing to pay more money for his trips via other modes to feel safer than he would on Metro. Mr. Hunter also criticized Metro for charging rush hour fares for an extra hour after the recent switch to daylight savings time. He noted that every other transit agency in the country has had an increase in ridership with the exception of Metro.

David Alpert said that he had come to the Council in response to some comments at the previous month's meeting about the chair writing opinion articles that were to have appeared on his blog, *Greater Greater Washington* (GGW). He said that there was a precedent for Council members writing articles on GGW as individuals. Mr. Alpert also encouraged members to think of the Council's role as expansively as they can and suggested that the Council proactively advocate for the things that Metro riders need. He added that he hoped that other members of the Council would consider writing articles about topics of interest to appear on his blog.

III. Approval of Agenda:

Without objection, the agenda was approved as presented.

IV. Silver Line – Phase I:

Jim Hughes, Metro's Director of Intermodal Planning, provided the Council with an overview of the Silver Line's operating plan, how service on other Metrorail lines will change once the Silver Line begins operation, planned changes to bus service to support the new Silver Line and the outreach the Metro is conducting to let people know about the planned changes.

Following Mr. Hughes' presentation, Mr. Ball opened the floor to members of the public to make comments.

Public Comments:

Mr. Hunter asked whether Metro had any plans to expand parking at East Falls Church, since it would be a transfer station between the Orange and Silver lines and because there would be less service between Vienna and West Falls Church once the Silver Line opens, meaning that some riders from Vienna, Dunn Loring and West Falls Church would likely opt to drive to East Falls Church, where there will be more frequent service.

Mr. Hughes responded that there were no plans to expand parking at East Falls Church and that the only station on the Silver Line that will have parking is Wiehle Avenue. He explained that trains from Vienna will run every six minutes during the rush hours, and from East Falls Church into downtown, where the Orange and Silver lines run together and where there is currently the most crowding, trains will run every three minutes.

Ms. Jackson expressed concern that the Blue Line will only have service every 12 minutes during the peak period and that Blue Line riders will be paying rush hour fares during the peak period but not getting rush hour levels of service. She asked if Metro had made any plans to ease conditions for Blue Line riders.

Mr. Hughes responded that a rail line's capacity is a combination of two factors – how frequently trains operate and how long those trains are. He explained that Metro will be conducting ridership counts to help it decide how to best deploy railcars. He noted, for example, that Metro could deploy all eight-car trains on the Blue Line to ensure that it has sufficient capacity to address any crowding issues related to its reduced frequency.

Mr. Seip asked whether it was in Metro's long-range capital plans to make changes to the pocket track outside of the Stadium-Armory station to allow Silver Line trains to turn around there, rather than having to run all the way out to Largo, as is currently planned. Mr. Hughes said that Metro is conducting engineering work to provide alternatives to the existing pocket track, but that nothing has yet been put in Metro's capital plan.

Ms. Silva asked whether Metro would provide reduced fares for Blue Line riders, since they would be receiving less service. Mr. Hughes replied that under Metro's policy, fares are based on the distance traveled and the time of day, not the frequency of service. He noted that riders who use Rush+ Yellow Line trains pay the same rush hour fares as other riders, but those trains only come approximately every 20 minutes.

Ms. Titus asked whether Metro is conducting any emergency drills on the Silver Line before it opens. Mr. Hughes responded that as part of its preparations for operating the Silver Line, Metro is making sure that it meets current safety criteria. He said that Metro will be conducting evacuation drills with jurisdictional first responders in the fall, once the line is turned over to Metro by the Airports Authority.

Ms. Zimmerman asked whether there are any changes planned for the 5A (Dulles – L'Enfant Plaza) bus route. Mr. Hughes said that there are no changes planned to the 5A and that it will stay as-is when the Silver Line opens. He noted that the 5A serves a lot of different markets – commuters, airport workers, airport patrons. He also explained that because it would be difficult to route the buses into and out of the Wiehle Avenue station, Metro doesn't plan on having the 5A stop there.

Ms. Merrigan asked when riders would know about the planned bus service changes associated with the Silver Line and how they might affect them. Mr. Hughes explained that in December the Metro Board had approved Metrobus service changes to take effect in conjunction with the opening of the Silver Line. He added that the Fairfax Connector had public meetings on its proposed service changes in February and that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors would be approving changes to Connector bus routes in April. He noted that more detailed information on these proposed changes can be found on the internet, both on Metro's and the Fairfax Connector's website.

Ms. Walsh asked whether the three open houses noted in Mr. Hughes' presentation (in Capital Heights, Reston and Crystal City) were the only ones planned or whether Metro would be holding any meetings in the District of Columbia. Mr. Hughes said that the three meetings referenced in his presentation were all that Metro is currently planning, but as the Silver line opening gets closer, there will be more information for riders made available at Metro stations. He explained that Metro is presently focusing on where there will be the most changes and impacts associated with the Silver line opening, which is in Maryland and in Arlington and Fairfax.

Mr. Wright thanked Metro for coming out to Capitol Heights for the open house that was held there. He noted that everyone in the area is excited about the coming of the Silver line and that it will provide residents of central Prince George's County with more shopping and employment options by providing a direct link to Tysons Corner.

Ms. Hermanson said that she was very concerned about the reaction that Metro would receive from Blue line riders once they understand the implications that the opening of the Silver line will have on their service. She said that Metro needs to make preparations to address riders' reactions. Mr. Hughes responded that Metro knows that there will be reaction from riders and that is one of the reasons that Metro is holding open houses, including the one in Crystal City. He said that Metro is hoping to hear from riders about suggested alternatives.

Mr. Ball noted that running trains all the way to Largo, rather than turning them back at Stadium-Armory will add approximately \$6 million to annual operating costs. He asked whether a fare increase would be necessary to pay for these increased operating costs. Mr. Hughes explained that the costs of operating the Silver line to Largo, including the cost of hiring and training employees for the Silver line are included in Metro's proposed FY2014 budget and that the FY2014 budget doesn't include a fare increase. He also noted that the pocket track outside of Stadium-Armory was built to the engineering standards in effect at the time that it was constructed 30 years ago and that those standards have been updated, which led to the decision to run Silver Line trains to Largo, rather than turning them at Stadium-Armory.

Ms. Titus asked whether Council members could be invited to the Silver line's grand opening ceremonies.

Ms. Merrigan asked how many new riders were expected to use the Silver line once it opened. Mr. Hughes replied that Metro expects approximately 25,000 riders per day on the Silver line, with 17,000 of those riders being new to the rail system and 8,000 riders transferring from existing bus service in the Dulles Corridor.

Ms. Merrigan also asked why the new line was given the name of “Silver Line.” Mr. Hughes said that he didn’t know why the line was named the Silver Line, but that it has been referred to as such for several decades.

Mr. Seip asked if Metro is making any preparations for increased crowding at core stations as a result of increased ridership from the Silver Line. Mr. Hughes said that Metro looked at the impact the Silver Line would have at all of the stations along the line, and that some of the recommendations have been incorporated into *Momentum*, Metro’s strategic plan. He also noted that Metro plans to have additional staff on hand at stations after the Silver Line opens to direct riders, and to monitor and address crowding.

In response to a question from Ms. Hermanson, Mr. Hughes explained that once the Silver Line opens, the Blue Line will run on 12-minute headways during rush hours, with Yellow Line trains from Franconia-Springfield operating every 12 minutes as well for a combined six-minute headway.

Mr. Ball thanked Mr. Hughes for his presentation.

V. Council Op-Eds:

Ms. Walker moved, in light of the Council’s discussion at the previous month’s meeting, to refer this item to the Council’s leadership team to develop a policy that can be discussed at the subsequent month’s meeting. This motion was seconded by Ms. Walsh.

Mr. Wright asked whether, if approved, this motion would prevent individual members from speaking out or writing articles. Mr. Ball clarified that members would still have the opportunity to speak as individuals, but it would mean that, until a policy is approved by the Council, that members couldn’t speak on behalf of the whole group.

Mr. Seip moved to end debate on this motion. Without objection, discussion on this item was concluded.

Mr. Ball then called for a vote on the main motion. Without objection, this motion was approved as presented, with Ms. Walsh abstaining.

VI. Announcements:

Ms. Walker told members of the Council that she planned to attend the Metro Board’s committee meetings on March 14th and the District of Columbia Council’s oversight hearing regarding Metro on Friday, which will be chaired by Metro Board member Muriel Bowser.

Ms. Walker also told Council members that her report from the recent Metro Board Safety and Security Committee meeting concerning January 31, 2013 Green Line incident was included in their meeting packets.

VII. Committee Sessions:

Mr. Ball told members that the Council would adjourn to meet in its committees. He named the following conveners: Karen Lynch would lead the Operations and Communications Committee discussion, Carl Seip would lead the Safety and Security Committee discussion and James Wright would lead the Budget and Finance Committee discussion. He requested that the committees accomplish three things during their meetings:

1. Pick a chair
2. Decide on a meeting day/time
3. Consider possible agenda items from the list of items submitted by staff and Council members.

He said that the full group would come back together at 8:15 p.m.

Mr. Seip asked about the difference between the list of possible agenda topics on page 24 and page 26 of members' meeting packets. Ms. Walker explained that the list that begins on page 24 contains items suggested by Metro Board members and staff, while the list beginning on page 26 contains items suggested by Council members and members of the public.

In response to a question from Ms. Walsh about the document in members' packets titled "The Plan," Mr. Ball explained that it was an overview of the Maryland Governor's proposed transportation funding plan and that the Maryland members would be discussing this issue offline after the meeting.

Mr. Seip moved to adjourn to committees. Without objection, the Council adjourned to the three committees listed above.

Mr. Ball reconvened the Council at 8:19 p.m. He asked the committees to report back on their discussions.

Operations and Communications Committee:

Ms. Lynch said that she would be chairing the Operations and Communications committee and that its members had chosen to meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. She told the Council that the Committee would be considering the following issues:

- How to speed bus entry/exit;
- Addressing concerns about trackwork/lessening its impact on riders;
- Criteria for selecting bus stops to receive improvements;
- Customer complaints;
- How to create a rider community;
- Partnering with Metro staff on outreach;
- Investing in youth riders.

Safety and Security Committee:

Mr. Seip said that he would be the temporary convener of the Safety and Security committee and that it would meet on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m., with its first meeting planned for April 10th. He said that the committee would discuss the Metro staff's proposed follow-up to the October Incident Communications Panel and the January Green Line incident.

Finance and Budget Committee:

Mr. Wright said that he would be the temporary convener of the Finance and Budget committee and that it would meet on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from 7:30 – 8:30 p.m., assuming that time doesn't conflict with the Safety and Security Committee's meeting. He said that the committee wanted Metro's budget director to give an overview of Metro's budget.

VIII. Adjournment:

Mr. Delaney moved to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Ms. Austin. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.