



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

March 26, 2009

Chairman Graham and Members of the Board of Directors:

I am pleased to present you with the Riders' Advisory Council report for March 2009.

FY2010 Budget and Cuts in Service:

As representatives of the riding public, members of the Council are, of course, aware of the need for the Board and the Authority to balance the FY2010 Operating Budget. WMATA is not alone in facing financial hardship – it is a time for everyone to do more with less. We are also aware that, along with other options for reducing operating costs and seeking additional sources of revenue or jurisdictional subsidy, the Board is considering service adjustments for FY2010. Members of the R.A.C. ask that the Authority, the Board and the member jurisdictions search for additional cost savings and sources of revenue, work to improve efficiency, develop a better understanding of the quantitative and qualitative benefits of the system, strongly consider additional, targeted subsidy increases, and aggressively pursue alternative funding before reducing service. In the event that service adjustments are unavoidable, the Council put forward a resolution outlining principles for the Board, the Authority and member jurisdictions to use in decision-making on service adjustments. A copy of the resolution is attached for your information.

If the Board authorizes public hearings on these potential reductions at its meeting today, we ask that you ensure that information about the hearings and any proposed service adjustments or other proposals which will be the subject of these hearings be clearly communicated to the public. Given the critical importance Metro plays in the Washington region, and especially to its riders, public process must play an integral part in any changes to Metro's service – both through public hearings and in communications to riders about any service changes that are ultimately approved.

NextBus System Rollout:

At its March meeting, the Council received a presentation from Rob Kramer, who is overseeing the efforts to bring NextBus online systemwide for Metro's Information Technology Department. Members of the Council are encouraged that NextBus is on track to be fully launched to the public this summer. Providing access to real-time information to customers about when buses will arrive represents a step forward in improving the rider experience. Members of the Council are also encouraged that Metro staff has indicated a willingness to work with us to solicit rider input prior to the full NextBus launch this summer. We hope that this can happen soon, so that riders will have the opportunity to work with Metro to offer suggestions for improvement and so that the system made available to the public as soon as possible.

The Council's resolution on this matter is attached for your information.

Administrative Changes

Council members agreed to have our names and jurisdictional affiliations indicated on the R.A.C. page of the WMATA website, and we asked that the Authority create a general email address for the R.A.C. Both of these additions to the website have been implemented. The R.A.C. is considering additional administrative changes which we will discuss as a whole in the coming months.

The Council is also continuing to move forward with establishing additional working groups to focus on specific areas to work with and provide input to Metro. I look forward to providing you with further updates on these working groups as they get underway.

Thank you for your time and attention. Please let me know if I can answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Diana Zinkl, Chair

## **WMATA Riders Advisory Council Resolution on Service Adjustments**

*Whereas*, the Riders Advisory Council recognizes the need for WMATA to achieve a balanced budget,

*Whereas*, the Authority, the Board and the member jurisdictions should search for additional cost savings and sources of revenue, work to improve efficiency, develop a better understanding of the quantitative and qualitative benefits of the system, strongly consider additional, targeted subsidy increases, and aggressively pursue alternative funding before reducing service;

*Whereas*, the Advisory Council acknowledges that a balanced budget may require WMATA to achieve cost savings through service adjustments as well as non-service associated cost savings and additional jurisdictional subsidy;

*Whereas*, the Advisory Council believes WMATA should preserve the quality of the rider experience and not sacrifice the goal of maintaining the best ride in the nation and a high level of civility and cleanliness; now, therefore be it

*Resolved*, the Advisory Council adopts the following principles for service adjustments should guide any decisions made by the Board or the Authority:

- maintaining basic transportation—recognition that Metro provides a critical service, 24 hours a day, seven days per week, enabling residents of the region to travel to work, school, personal appointments, entertainment and recreation at all hours of the day and all days of the week.
- customer, employee and public safety—service adjustments should take into account direct effects on safety, such as operator training and work hours, and indirect effects on safety, such as availability, frequency and security of evening and late night service.
- interjurisdictional and intermodal equity—service adjustments should be adopted in a manner that distributes service, adjustments and the burden of those adjustments throughout the region and among modes and types of services provided by the Authority, acknowledging that existing service in some areas may already be limited under current scheduling.
- valuing social equity—providing service based on community need as well as efficiency and demand. Recognize that for transit dependent individuals, even limited service provides opportunities to participate in basic community functions that might be out of reach otherwise.

- maintaining alternatives within transit—seemingly overlapping services may provide needed options, prevent overcrowding and bottlenecks, minimize the impact of service disruptions and are not necessarily “duplicative.”
- sensitivity to “day of week” and “time of day” changes in demand—Metro should consider broader use of targeted service adjustments that reflect time of day and day of week variation in demand and minimize the impact of service adjustments on customers (for example the weekend closure of the 17<sup>th</sup> street entrance to the Farragut West Metro is one example of a “targeted service adjustment”).
- strong communication to the public on service adjustments—
  - transparency at all stages in the development of any and all service adjustments, including detailed information available to the public and open, public, noticed meetings for all discussions of service adjustments, except where directed to do so by the Board.
  - opportunity for public input into service adjustments through public hearings in affected areas for all service reductions.
  - any service adjustments need to be widely and unambiguously communicated to the public to prevent confusion, delay, and maintain strong relationships with the riding public, taking into account regular users, occasional users, tourists and special needs riders.

Approved by the Riders’ Advisory Council – March 4, 2009

## **WMATA Riders Advisory Council Resolution on Real-Time Bus Information**

*Whereas*, the NextBus system allows riders to access real-time information about bus arrivals on the Web and on mobile devices;

*Whereas*, real-time information is extremely valuable to riders, allowing them to better time their actions to catch a bus or make decisions about which bus to choose;

*Whereas*, according to a UK study, real-time information also improves riders' perception of bus reliability and frequency;

*Whereas*, WMATA has been working with NextBus to set up a new and more accurate real-time information system for Metrobus;

*Whereas*, some Metrobus riders have been using NextBus at their own risk for several months, and many have found it useful despite its limitations; now, therefore be it

*Resolved*, the Riders' Advisory Council urges WMATA to work with NextBus to complete and officially release the system as soon as practical, and

*Resolved*, the Riders' Advisory Council requests that WMATA explore opportunities for RAC members and interested members of the public to start using the NextBus system in a "beta test" before it is officially launched, and as soon as possible, to receive feedback and benefit riders.

*Approved by the Riders' Advisory Council - March 4, 2009*