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Dear Chairman Zimmerman and Members of the Board of Directors:

It is my pleasure to present to you the Riders' Advisory Council's report for November 2008.

Elimination of Paper Transfers:

As a follow-up to the over-view presentation on the elimination of paper transfers we received in September, this month the Council was informed about Metro's planned outreach and advertising campaign to alert riders to their pending elimination. The Council is encouraged Metro staff is endeavoring to use a multiplicity of methods and media to alert riders to this change, including signage both inside and on the exterior of Metrobuses, notices on bus fare boxes and transfer machines in rail stations. RAC did ask about signage in bus shelters and was told that it could not be placed in all shelters as WMATA does not own all of them. However, we would ask the Board to ask the JCC to see about putting notices in all the shelters in their respective jurisdictions.

The RAC remains concerned the planned information campaign isn't moving rapidly enough. In recent days I have been told riders have seen the "hanger" cards on buses. But, I personally have yet to see any notice on the transfer machine at the rail stations I frequent. I also haven't seen any signage in the same stations concerning elimination of paper transfers and urging riders to purchase and use SmarTrip cards. (But I certainly have noted that every one of the small free-standing sign holders has a notice that my bag may be searched at any moment and they appeared the day after the program was announced. And I recall that notices about changes in amounts on fare cards went up on fare card machines very quickly after some fraud was discovered earlier this year.)

The thrust of the presentation was "will be," and not "is being done" and that's a worry. This campaign is being launched around the holiday season when customers often change their patterns of riding and are also not focusing necessarily on issues concerning their commute. The longer it takes to bring the full proposed campaign out to the public, the less successful it will be.

RAC members also noted the printed materials shown to us (specifically the handout cards or "grip cards") incorporate too much text to be easily read and understood by riders. They also noted that in addition to printed materials, Metro staff must be made widely available during the transition to help answer riders' questions and provide assistance. While Metrobus operators will, by the nature of their jobs, be on hand, Metro cannot rely exclusively on its bus operators to reach out to its customers – operators must devote their primary attention to the safe and reliable operation of their buses. We hope that Metro will deploy additional staff, especially to popular bus transfer locations and provide training to station managers and other frontline

employees to help them assist riders. Metro Station Managers also need training and encouragement to be out and about from their kiosks at this critical time.

The Council also remains concerned about the delay in rolling out additional locations for riders to reload their SmarTrip cards. The item on your agenda today which will allow 187 CVS stores in the Metropolitan Washington area to sell the cards is a big step forward. However, these locations will only allow riders to purchase cards – something they will hopefully only have to do once – not reload them, which riders will need to do numerous times over the life of their card. I am hopeful staff is pursuing with CVS and other businesses convenient to bus routes the type of machines that will allow riders to add fares to their SmarTrip cards using credit and debit cards as well as cash.

And, while not explicitly stated in the Board item, I certainly hope that these CVS locations will also sell Senior SmarTrip cards and signage will be up that lets folks know Senior SmarTrip cards are the most economical option for senior citizen customers, as these cards will automatically calculate discounted fares.

The RAC continues to express its concern at the \$5 cost of the SmarTrip card. Of the ten largest transit agencies in the United States, five have fully-active smartcard programs (WMATA, MBTA in Boston, CTA in Chicago, MARTA in Atlanta, and MTA in Los Angeles). Of these five agencies, only Metro and MARTA charge for their cards, and MARTA allows riders to purchase temporary cards for a modest 50¢. On behalf of the Council, I was encouraged by the Board's direction at the Customer Service, Operations and Safety Committee for Metro to investigate reducing the cost of the cards to customers. I note, however, that the only information provided at this meeting still reflects a \$5 cost for the card. Metro stands to gain significant additional revenue with the elimination of paper transfers and the RAC hopes that the Authority will set aside some funds to increase the number of SmarTrip cards in circulation, especially among senior citizens and other individuals who may have difficulty affording a card but who are not clients of area social service agencies.

We are also encouraged that Metro, at the Board's direction, will be implementing the "balanced transfer" as part of the January changes.

While it appears that paper transfers will, in fact, be eliminated in January 2009, there remains a great deal of work to be done between now and then to ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible. It is also clear that the Board needs to continue to be vigilant in making sure that the promised enhancements to SmarTrip are realized in a timely fashion – perhaps even more quickly than currently anticipated.

Blue Line Realignment:

The Council also received a presentation on the proposed realignment of some rush hour Blue Line trains that would run from Franconia-Springfield to Greenbelt over the so-called Yellow Line Bridge. The presentation provided additional information about Metro's data gathering and customer research methods, as well as information about the data that Metro is using as it plans for this service change.

The general consensus of the RAC was that this proposal is not yet ready for implementation. There were several questions raised, especially about the proposed timeline for

implementation. The ridership data shown did not decisively point to the need to implement this realignment in advance of the changes that would come with the start of Silver Line service. Questions were also raised about the possibility of phasing in the new service to minimize disruption to existing Blue Line customers.

We appreciate the planning and research that has gone into this proposal thus far and would expect that Metro do additional public outreach as it moves forward with this proposal. Members noted that while quantitative research had been done, “qualitative” research, such as holding a public listening session on the proposal, had not been done. While some hearings on service changes (and fare increases) are mandated by the compact, not all reach that level. This change will have great meaning for those on the Orange, Blue, Yellow, and Green lines and so RAC suggested strongly at least one or two public “hearings” be held near stations that would be most affected. Public hearings often bring to light alternatives or “tweaks” that have not yet been thought of and can be very helpful.

RAC also wanted some options explored that might help mitigate the service to Blue Line riders going north, if this proposal is implemented. Suggestions of express bus service paralleling the northern route was mentioned as a possibility.

Some RAC members also wondered if studies had been done at stations that would see an increase in the number of riders transferring at the stations because of this proposed change. As we know, not all stations were built with the same number of escalators and elevators and stairways. We need to know, in some way, the affect this realignment would have on passenger flow at transfer stations such as L’Enfant Plaza, Gallery Place and Fort Totten.

Speaking as an Orange Line rider, I can certainly see the merits in this proposal. I can also understand the need to use all capacity – especially river crossings – to their capacity. But, in our estimation, more questions remain to be answered before this can be considered ready for implementation.

RAC Subcommittees:

The Council does not have any subcommittee meetings scheduled for this month and next. We will, in fact, be exploring a change to our meeting structure and schedule to encourage maximum member participation as well as adequate time for discussion and deliberation of the Council’s positions on the issues brought before it.

I thank you for your time and attention and welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Nancy Iacomini, Chairman