

Riders' Advisory Council
August 4, 2010

I. Call to Order:

Mr. DeBernardo called the August 2010 meeting of the Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:34 p.m.

The following members of the Council were present:

Frank DeBernardo, Chair, Prince George's County
David Alpert, D. C. Vice Chair, District of Columbia
Dharm Guruswamy, Virginia Vice Chair, At-Large
Victoria Wilder, Maryland Vice Chair, Montgomery County
Kelsi Bracmort, District of Columbia
Sharon Conn, Prince George's County
Patricia Daniels, District of Columbia
Kenneth DeGraff, District of Columbia
Penny Everline, Arlington County
Chris Farrell, Montgomery County
Robert Petrine, Fairfax County
Carl Seip, At-Large
Patrick Sheehan, At-Large/Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair
Lorraine Silva, Arlington County
Carol Carter Walker, District of Columbia
Lillian White, City of Alexandria
Diana Zinkl, District of Columbia

Arrival times of members who arrived during the meeting are noted in the minutes.

II. Public Comment:

Michael Lewis said that he has concerns about Metro's accommodations for customers with disabilities and expressed his concerns about Metro employees, especially with regard to their treatment of riders and riders with disabilities. He cited two incidents in which he felt that Metro employees did not act in a customer-friendly manner towards either himself or other passengers. He said that Metro needs to work on its customer service.

Mr. Sheehan asked if Mr. Lewis could provide a date, time and location for these incidents. Mr. Lewis said that he had called these incidents in to Metro Customer Service. Mr. DeBernardo said that the Council is also hoping to have a presentation on station personnel.

Mr. DeGraff and Ms. Daniels arrived at 6:39.

Bill Orleans noted that the presentation for the evening's meeting would discuss realigning Metrorail service. He suggested reducing the Yellow line to a shuttle service and redirecting the Blue Line to run from Largo to Huntington. He explained that the Yellow line causes confusion for passengers at Greenbelt during early mornings and late nights when some Yellow line trains operate there and that it also causes delays Green line riders when it turns around at Fort Totten. He said that he doesn't see the need for the service, as its stations are served by other lines. He said that Metro could improve service on its other lines by running a shuttle in place of some Yellow line service.

Ms. White responded that several businesses in the City of Alexandria would not support the elimination of Yellow line service, especially those in the Eisenhower Valley area where there are several large office complexes.

Doris Ray, representing the ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia, expressed her concern that riders, including those with disabilities, may experience delays because of the proposed realignment of Blue and Yellow line service. She also noted her concern that the new operating patterns may cause confusion, especially for riders with disabilities. She said that Metro will need to take into consideration signage for everyone, but especially signage to assist riders with various disabilities. Ms. Ray suggested that Metro should make sure that enunciators in the trains are all working before changing and service so that all passengers will be able to identify the correct train. She added that she thought that this will require extra travel training and that Metro will need to install new signage both on platforms and in railcars.

Ms. Ray said that she also wanted to mention her concern about lighting in Metro stations, including some stations that would be affected by this service realignment. She said that it seems that burned-out lights are not being replaced as frequently. Ms. Ray also requested that Metro do an assessment into elevator reliability at certain stations, especially Court House. She said that she specifically mentioned Court House due to its heavy use, regular maintenance problems and the fact that riders at Court House would be affected by this service realignment. Mr. DeBernardo told Ms. Ray that the Council hoped to have a presentation on Metro's elevator and escalator reliability at an upcoming meeting and invited her to attend. Mr. Sheehan said that the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) received a report on elevator and escalator availability, which is something that the AAC regularly monitors.

III. Approval of Agenda:

Without objection, the agenda was approved as submitted.

IV. Approval of Minutes:

Mr. DeBernardo asked for approval of the July 7, 2010 meeting minutes. Several members had changes or corrections to the minutes. Without objection, the July 7, 2010 minutes were approved as revised.

Dr. Bracmort arrived at 6:55 p.m.

V. Blue/Yellow Line Realignment:

Mr. DeBernardo introduced Jim Hughes, Metro's Director of Intermodal Planning. Mr. Hughes gave a presentation on Metro's proposal to reroute some peak-hour Blue line trains over the Yellow line bridge to terminate at Greenbelt. He explained that those Blue line trains would be replaced with Orange line trains operating from West Falls Church to Largo. Mr. Hughes' presentation explained:

- The need to make this service change – congestion at Rosslyn, crowding on the Orange line, preparations for the Dulles Corridor extension;
- The change in ridership patterns to support making this change – growth in ridership to eastern portion of downtown D.C.;
- The pros and cons associated with this change in service – additional service for some riders, less service for some riders.

Mr. DeBernardo then opened the floor for questions.

Ms. White asked what the headway would be for the Blue line between Alexandria and Foggy Bottom under the new service pattern. Mr. Hughes responded that currently there are ten trains per hour, which would be reduced to seven trains per hour. He explained that the headway would be approximately every 9 minutes – but it would not be an even 9-minute headway; the period of time between trains would be in cycles of 6-6-12 minutes. Ms. White also noted the need for more buses to connect people and the need for dedicated bus lanes.

Mr. Farrell asked whether there will be sufficient capacity at Fort Totten; he said that he is concerned that there will be crowding due to this new service pattern. Mr. Hughes said that they have a model for how many passengers will take advantage of each service pattern – for example, how many passengers from Silver Spring heading to National Airport on the Yellow line will transfer at either Fort Totten or, instead at Gallery Place - but Metro cannot know exactly what riders will do because they have a choice. Mr. Hughes said that did not think there would be a problem with crowding at Fort Totten because under the new service pattern, there would be more trains serving Fort Totten.

Mr. Alpert said that he is glad that Metro has hired communications consultants, but that he is concerned that this is being referred to as a “Blue-Yellow Line Realignment” and shows the service as a separate line. He also expressed concern that how this realignment is being referred to does not highlight that the change will provide increased service on the Orange and Yellow lines.

Mr. Alpert also asked whether the consultant Metro would be using to develop communications alternatives for this service realignment would also be looking at the way the Metro currently labels its lines by destination. Mr. Hughes said that such an evaluation was included in the scope of the as part of the request for proposals from consultants. Mr. Alpert added that he thought that the realignment of service would be beneficial to riders.

Mr. DeGraff noted that the proposal will provide extra Orange line service to Largo, which could be touted as an “Orange Line Plus” service. He also asked why Blue line trains' headways couldn't be an even nine minutes under the proposed service pattern, as opposed to the 6-6-12 minute pattern that Mr. Hughes had explained in his earlier response to Ms. White. Mr. Hughes said that because trains must

coordinate their headways with trains on other lines – Blue line trains need to coordinate schedules with Yellow line trains south of the Pentagon and Orange line trains at Rosslyn, and Yellow and Green line trains north of L’Enfant Plaza need to coordinate schedules – there cannot be even headways without scheduling conflicts. He said that while this is not ideal for customers, Metro is constrained in how it schedules its trains.

Ms. Everline asked whether or not this proposed service realignment is a certainty. Mr. Hughes responded that while this proposal still needs formal Board adoption, it has previously been presented to the Board and the Board has not told staff not to move forward with this plan, and so Metro is moving forward with this proposal. Ms. Everline also asked whether Metro has looked into whether this new service pattern would cause an increase MetroAccess ridership because it would increase the complexity of certain trips, such as between north and south Arlington. Mr. Hughes said with regards to MetroAccess riders, this becomes an issue of how to communicate the service patterns to the customer. He said that that all trips made by rail today without transferring could still be made by rail, though noted that passengers may have longer waits.

Ms. Silva asked whether this new service pattern would operate all day or only during peak periods. Mr. Hughes responded that Yellow line trains will still operate between Huntington and Fort Totten and Blue Line trains would operate between Franconia and Largo during off-peak hours. He added that Metro would prefer to terminate off-peak Yellow line trains at Greenbelt, rather than Fort Totten, because turning trains at Fort Totten can create delays, but that Metro does not have the money to pay for extending the Yellow line. He clarified that during the rush hour, trains originating at Huntington would only go as far as Mt. Vernon Square, while trains originating at Franconia would operate to Greenbelt.

Dr. Bracmort asked about the impact this proposal would have on riders on the southern end of the Green Line. Mr. Hughes responded that this new service pattern would have no impact on the southern portion of the Green Line – that it would have the same number of trains as it does at present. He added that Metro’s plan is to run all 8-car trains on the Green Line by 2020/2022 and there even after this proposed service realignment is put in place, there would still be room for up to three more trains/peak hour on the Green line if ridership warrants.

Mr. Seip said that he thought that it was good that Metro is planning this now to address capacity constraints, though asked whether when Dulles service starts, will Metro need to look at revising its service patterns once again. Mr. Hughes said that Metro has an operating plan for the Dulles extension that involves converting some Orange line trains to Dulles trains, including the three additional trains/hour on the Orange line that the currently proposed plan would provide. Mr. Seip asked what would happen after the Dulles line opened and Metro was unable to find additional capacity by revising service.

Mr. Hughes responded that between now and 2025, Metro can make relatively minor adjustments to address capacity issues, such as by realigning service and operating all eight-car trains. He explained that after 2025, the region will need to find additional ways to address capacity issues and will which will ultimately lead to a discussion of how to expand Metro. He added that discussion will have to be led by the region and the Council of Governments, not by Metro.

Ms. Zinkl asked how this plan incorporated the proposed growth in the southern portion of the region, i.e. projects that are planned to bring additional jobs to the Navy Yard and other locations in Southeast DC (on the southern leg of the Green line and Fort Belvoir). Mr. Hughes explained that travelers between “southern” Virginia on the Springfield end of the Blue line and Navy Yard would have three more trains/hour, and service on the Blue and Orange lines through downtown would have the same amount of service as it does now. He added that travelers from existing Green line stations (i.e. Columbia Heights) would have additional trains and direct service to Franconia-Springfield.

Dr. Conn asked whether Metro had decided what it would be calling this new service. Mr. Hughes said Metro had not yet decided on a name for the service or made other communications decisions and that it would be hiring a communications consultant to help it make those decisions.

Dr. Conn also noted that all of the segments where trains would be added, such as between Braddock Road and National Airport only have one track in each direction and asked whether this proposal would increase delays. Mr. Hughes said that Metro doesn’t expect an increase in delays because it will be running the same number of train on the segment Dr. Conn mentioned, they will just be serving different destinations.

Mr. Guruswamy asked whether Metro will be able to add Silver Line trains without diverting additional Blue Line trains to Greenbelt. Mr. Hughes replied that that scenario was possible could, but that Metro commit to it now. He said that Metro will wait and see what ridership is on the Blue Line after this first realignment before making any decisions about service patterns once the Dulles line opens.

Mr. Guruswamy noted that Metro is one of the few subway systems that operates railcars with only three doors per side and that this increases station dwell times, resulting in decreased capacity. He asked whether Metro was looking at changing that with new railcar orders. Mr. Hughes responded that he understood Mr. Guruswamy’s point but that he wasn’t prepared to address railcar design issues as part of his presentation.

Ms. Wilder asked Mr. Hughes what his position as Director of Intermodal Planning entailed. Mr. Hughes explained that he is responsible for coordinating service when more than one mode of service is involved – such as for trackwork requiring bus shuttles, coordinating the implementation of fare increases, and also for longer-term intermodal planning, such as planning for when the District opens its streetcar lines.

Mr. DeBernardo thanked Mr. Hughes for his presentation and said that there seem to be several opportunities for additional input as this project moves forward and looks forward to having Mr. Hughes back to future meetings.

VI. Questions/Comments on RAC and AAC Chair Reports:

Mr. DeBernardo asked if any members had questions on his R.A.C. Chair report or Mr. Sheehan’s A.A.C. Chair report, both of which had been circulated previously. There were no questions from members regarding these reports.

VII. Committee Reports:

Metrobus Committee:

Ms. Everline thanked everyone for their work and input at the previous committee meeting, which communication with bus passengers in the event of planned service disruptions. She said that the group will be getting a report back from staff regarding its suggestions and will schedule that discussion for a future month. Ms. Everline told members that the committee meeting is scheduled for August 16th and will feature a presentation on bus corridor studies and service evaluations.

Long-Term Projects:

Mr. Alpert provided a brief overview of the committee meeting, which was focused on Metro's releasing transparent data sets to be used in developing computer and mobile phone applications using Metro's data. He noted that he had sent around a report earlier via email and that several members of the developer community attended the meeting and provided several good suggestions for staff. He added that later in the meeting the Council would be voting on a letter to send to the Metro Board of Directors on this topic. In response to a question from Ms. White inquiring whether her comments concerning the need for station software upgrades to allow station managers to report problems were included in the letter. Mr. Alpert said that these were included.

In response to a question from Mr. Bernardo, Mr. Alpert said that a topic for the next meeting of the committee had not been identified but that he would let members know when the next meeting was scheduled.

Metro Governance:

Mr. Alpert provided the group with recap of the Riders' Council's Metro Governance Task Force and provided a brief overview of the Council of Governments/Board of Trade (COG/BOT) WMATA Governance Review Task Force. He said that many people at the meeting had concerns about the COG/BOT task force's lack of transparency and that attendees also thought that it made sense for the R.A.C. working group to meet separately and develop its own recommendations on WMATA governance, rather than just commenting on the COG/BOT task force report.

Mr. Alpert moved to send a letter (Attachment I) to the members of the Council of Governments' Board of Directors and to the members of the COG/BOT task force that articulates two points:

1. The Council would like the COG/BOT task force to be more forthcoming with information; and
2. The Riders' Council will also be reviewing Metro governance and may also make its own recommendations on this topic.

This motion was seconded by Ms. White.

Mr. Seip said that the tone of the letter was somewhat confrontational and that it seemed to assert that the Riders' Council report on Metro governance would be superior to the COG/BOT task force's report because the Riders' Council is part of Metro. Mr. Alpert responded that there was a lot of discussion about the tone of the letter and that he tried to strike a balance with the language in the letter.

Ms. Walker said that she was opposed to sending the letter. She said that she disagreed with the tone and that she does not think that it would be successful in getting the task force to share information.

Ms. Zinkl noted that there are different input and information-sharing requirements for different types of public processes, and that the tone of the letter being discussed implies that there is a right to public involvement in the task force and that she isn't sure that there is. She also recommended removing certain sections of the letter to reduce its length and to eliminate sections with negative tone. She also suggested a correction to a date referenced in the letter.

Mr. Seip said that he agreed with Ms. Walker and Ms. Zinkl and that he cannot support the letter.

Mr. Alpert said that he was disappointed that members didn't express their concerns prior to the meeting and noted that he circulated the letter prior to the meeting. He explained that there was a lot of discussion about the content of the letter at the committee meeting and that he made changes to the letter based on that feedback. He said that if the letter needs to be rewritten, the Council may miss its opportunity to have input, given the COG/BOT task force's relatively short meeting schedule. He said that in order for the Council to be effective, it needs to discuss issues and asked that members provide earlier feedback on draft letters to help with that process.

Mr. Alpert said that there are concerns about the Board of Trades's involvement in the task force because it is thought that the Board of Trade has a specific, pre-existing point of view on how Metro governance should be changed. He said that the Council needs to be aware of all of the background issues related to this task force. Mr. Alpert also discussed the public involvement process with this task force and said that the Council of Governments specifically made the point that their involvement task force was supposed to allow for an open public process, which has not happened. He said that he would like to see the Council, as a public body with a responsibility to represent riders, take a position on this issue.

Mr. Guruswamy said that he had similar concerns about the letter as Ms. Zinkl. He said that the reason that the Board of Trade began the process to review Metro governance is because it is broken and there any changes would likely be an improvement. He noted that the task force may not want a great deal of public involvement because its recommendations may end up being not politically popular. He said that in response to Mr. Alpert's comments, he moved is to amend the letter by removing the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th paragraphs. Ms. Zinkl seconded this amendment. Mr. Guruswamy then withdrew his amendment to allow Mr. DeBernardo to make comments.

Mr. DeBernardo said that he thinks that it is outrageous that there is a public task forcing holding closed meetings and that the Council needs to call public officials to account. He added that while there may have been a time for the Riders' Council to participate in the COG/BOT task force process, that time has passed and the Council needs to form its own opinion on the issue. He said that he thought that the letter strikes an appropriate balance between appropriateness and directness and that the background information contained in the fourth through seventh paragraphs helps explain why the Council is taking the actions that it is.

Dr. Bracmort apologized for not looking more closely at the letter until the meeting. She said that she would like the letter to make its point sooner and move the recommendations to the beginning of the letter. She added that she agreed with Mr. DeBernardo about the need for public input as part of the task force.

Ms. Everline said that she struggled with the tone of the letter but that, ultimately, she was concerned about the number of private meetings that the task force was holding and the fact that meeting materials aren't being posted on the internet. She said that she has talked with COG staff members who seem to want to provide more information from the task force and that this letter may help empower them to do so.

Mr. DeGraff said that he wanted to associate himself with Mr. Alpert's comments. He said that he is unsure of what the impact of the task force's final recommendations will be, but that he thinks that it is important that the Council weigh in on this issue and would be prepared to support the letter. Mr. DeGraff asked whether the letter should also be sent to Board of Trade members. Mr. Alpert said that the Board of Trade task force members were included as proposed recipients of the letter.

Ms. Wilder said that she doesn't like that the letter says both that the Council is asking the COG/BOT task force to be more open with its information and also simultaneously that it is forming its own task force on the issue.

Dr. Conn said that she thinks paragraphs five and six should be removed from the letter.

Ms. White expressed her concerns with the task force's closed meetings and said that the Riders' Council should be very concerned about this issue and should send this letter. She said that the COG/BOT task force has had a 'closed door' process with regard to input from groups like the Riders' Council, the Coalition for Smarter Growth and others. She suggested the Riders' Council looks at other transit governance models. Ms. Everline noted that there haven't been many national studies that look at transit governance.

Mr. Alpert modified his original motion to revise the original letter as follows:

1. Move Paragraph 9 to immediately after what is now Paragraph 3;
2. Delete Paragraph 5;
3. Remove the beginning of Paragraph 6.

Dr. Conn asked who the Council will be making recommendations to. Mr. Alpert said that Dr. Conn raised a good question and explained that the COG/BOT task force will be giving its recommendations to members of the public and to local and regional elected officials. Mr. Sheehan said that he thought that the Council's role was to make recommendations to the Metro Board.

Ms. Walker suggested that the letter remain vague on who the Council would be making recommendations to. She said that, officially, the Council's only standing is with the Metro Board of Directors, but that doesn't necessarily limit the Council to making recommendations solely to the Board.

Ms. Wilder said that the letter makes it sound like the Council created its task force only because it was upset with the COG/BOT task force. Mr. Alpert said that was not the point he wanted to convey and there was additional discussion on how to change the language of the letter to reflect that.

Dr. Bracmort asked that the full, official title of the COG/BOT task force be included in the letter.

Ms. Zinkl noted that it is not unusual for groups like this task force to produce reports without a great deal of public input, but what she is hearing a concern that a promise of a public process that did not materialize. She said that the sooner the letter makes the point about the need for a meaningful public process, the better. She added that she was confused about what exactly the Council is planning on doing and agreed with Ms. Wilder that the letter sounds reactive. She said that she did not have any recollection of anyone proposing to form a governance working group to make recommendations on how the Metro Board is structured. Ms. Zinkl said she was also concerned about promising in the letter that the Council would be “producing” something along the lines of an “analysis” or “recommendations” and recommended omitting that language from the letter.

Mr. Sheehan noted that he was not bothered by the public involvement in the COG/BOT task force because he does not feel that this task force has the authority to make recommendations on Metro governance.

Mr. Alpert said that he didn’t think that the COG/BOT task force would change its stance on public involvement much, but sending this letter may give the Council more standing to object to the task force’s ultimate recommendations if it disagrees with them. He said that he could agree to Ms. Zinkl’s suggestion of moving the paragraph about public involvement earlier in the letter along with her other suggested changes.

Ms. Daniels said that she was unsure why the Council wanted to become involved in this particular issue.

Mr. DeGraff said that this is an important issue because these are our elected officials who are choosing to work with one particular group of stakeholders. He said that he couldn’t imagine the task force not including major stakeholders such as the Riders’ Council and other groups in this process and that public input is a necessary part of this process.

Mr. Seip said that he appreciated that members want to be involved with this task force, however, at the end of the day, it will produce a report, nothing more. He said that nowhere in the Council’s charter does it say that it should involve itself in the workings of a private, outside organization that will be issuing a report that will have limited, if any impact.

Mr. Alpert responded that the Council of Governments is not a private organization, but a public body that consists of elected officials that is joining with a private group.

Mr. Petrine said that he thinks the letter may be addressed to the wrong party. He said that at this point, for the Council to get involved with the Task Force may be to the Council’s detriment. He said that he

would offer, instead, to write a letter to the Washington Post on behalf of the Council to bring attention this issue.

Mr. DeBernardo said that this letter and process may represent a new direction for the Council to take. He said that he thinks that it is incumbent upon the Council to weigh in on this issue and that he also thinks that it's naïve to think that the COG/BOT report won't have any kind of impact. He said that he doesn't see riders having a voice in the COG/BOT task force, and said that the only way to have a voice in the "media moment" that will occur when the report is issued only if they make comments now.

Mr. Alpert reviewed the letter, as modified.

Ms. Zinkl left the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

The Council then voted on the letter as revised.

In favor: Mr. DeBernardo, Mr. Alpert, Ms. Wilder, Dr. Bracmort, Dr. Conn, Mr. DeGraff, Ms. Everline, Mr. Farrell, Ms. Silva, Ms. White

Opposed: Ms. Daniels, Mr. Guruswamy, Mr. Petrine, Mr. Seip, Ms. Walker

Abstentions: Mr. Sheehan

The letter was approved, as amended. (10-5-1).

VIII. Letter on Transparent Data Sets:

Mr. Alpert moved approval of the letter to the Board on Transparent Data Sets (attached). Ms. Walker seconded this motion.

Mr. Seip noted that he has concerns with the letter and so will abstain from voting.

Ms. Wilder asked why the Council is sending this letter. Mr. Alpert explained that staff felt it would be beneficial for the Council to provide specific recommendations and would increase the chance that those recommendations would be adopted.

In favor: Mr. DeBernardo, Mr. Alpert, , Dr. Bracmort Dr. Conn, Mr. DeGraff, Ms. Everline, Mr. Farrell, Mr. Petrine, Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Silva, Ms. Walker, Ms. White

Opposed: none

Abstentions: Ms. Daniels, Mr. Guruswamy, Mr. Seip, Ms. Wilder

The letter was approved as presented. (12-0-4)

Mr. DeBernardo noted that the discussion on customer service awards would be postponed until the following meeting.

IX. Adjournment:

Without objection, Mr. DeBernardo adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Attachment I - Letter on WMATA Governance Task Force

- (1) Dear Councilmember Brown and Members of the COG Board of Directors,
- (2) The WMATA Riders' Advisory Council has been advocating for improvements in the operations and governance of WMATA for a number of years.
- (3) We are glad to see the COG Board of Directors take an interest in the issue of WMATA governance. However, we are disappointed that COG chose to explore this important issue through a closed process that excludes transit riders and rider organizations through the Board of Trade's task force, and we ask the COG Board to take steps to further open up the flow of information in and out of this group studying an important issue.
- (4) So far, opportunities for public involvement in this process have been very limited. The task force solicited some public input subject to very restrictive time limits, and has held or is planning four completely closed sessions to hear input on governance issues through July and August.
- (5) Some COG staff and Board members have expressed a belief that since this task force is not concerned with service or operations, riders need not be a part of the discussion. We believe this represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of riders and rider groups. The governance of WMATA affects everyone, especially riders, for the safety, customer service, fares and operations all ultimately flow from that governance.
- (6) As observers of WMATA who have tried to work with the organization and experienced both its best and worst governance qualities, we plan to form our own opinions on governance. We have formed a committee of members from the Riders' Advisory Council to study this issue and make recommendations.
- (7) To make the most intelligent recommendations possible and to enable other riders to consider and weigh in on the issues, however, we also need to hear the best practices from other jurisdictions, complaints about governance issues, and ideas for improvement from public officials and observers – the same information the task force has been soliciting.
- (8) When the task force was created, COG executive director Dave Robertson assured members of the Board and members of the public that COG's participation would allow for public participation in the analysis. COG Chair Kwame Brown expressed similar commitments as well. We ask that you uphold this dedication to public participation and insist upon it from a task force you have officially sanctioned.
- (9) We ask you to request that all task force meetings include a public comment period at the beginning or end, be open for their full length to observers, post advance notice and agendas of

meetings online, including the names of scheduled speakers, and post all presentations and working papers after each meeting. These are all procedures the Riders' Advisory Council, COG Board of Directors, and other public bodies also adhere to, and should be a necessary component of any task forces you officially endorse.

Sincerely,

DRAFT

Attachment II - Letter on Transparent Metro Data Sets

Dear Members of the WMATA Board,

The WMATA Riders' Advisory Council would like to commend Metro on launching the Transparent Metro Data Sets project. We conducted a meeting open to the public to discuss this project, and received many positive comments.

This project has the potential to open up many new opportunities for new tools that help riders find information, make information more accessible to riders with disabilities, and convey the value of our transit system to people across the region.

Metro staff including Jamey Harvey, Bill Rigney, and Suzanne Peck (*and others?*) have clearly taken rider feedback strongly into account when designing this project, and have gone beyond most other transit agencies to provide a wealth of real-time and static information about bus and rail. We are confident that many programmers and others will make use of this data to benefit riders in many ways.

We also appreciate that the legal department has at some point recently modified the Developer License Agreement (http://www.wmata.com/rider_tools/license_agreement.cfm) to remove any requirement of indemnification, which was a sticking point for many individual, private programmers interested in building useful tools on a volunteer basis.

At our meeting, we heard from some open source programmers one suggestion for the license agreement which we encourage Metro to adopt. They pointed out that one paragraph could be problematic for those who wish to present transit data alongside other map data in tools like Open Street Map, who wish to incorporate it into mobile applications, or who wish to present it in alternate formats to riders with vision impairments:

LICENSEE must state in legible bold print on the same page where WMATA Transit Information appears and in close proximity thereto, "WMATA Transit information provided on this site is subject to change without notice. For the most current information, please click here."

While we understand the desire of Metro to ensure that proper credit and a disclaimer is provided, this provision assumes that the data will be displayed on a Web page (hence the use of "page"), and in a visual format that allows for boldfacing and presenting of information in close proximity.

As an alternative, Metro could look to MassDOT (http://www.eot.state.ma.us/developers/downloads/DLA_11-13-09.pdf) which only requires users of the data to "clearly acknowledge MassDOT as the provider of the Data" without specifying the specific format or

location of any disclaimer. Meanwhile, BART's agreement (<http://www.bart.gov/dev/schedules/license.htm>) has no requirement of this nature.

In addition, riders and programmers at our meeting were so enthusiastic about the project that they devised a list of additional types of data that they would like to see added to this project. We understand that Metro must add data feeds step by step, and believe Metro has effectively chosen the top priority data feeds. However, in the future, as resources become available to add additional feeds, we suggest staff consider the following additions:

- Historic bus position data over time periods in the past (useful to generate algorithms to predict bus positions)
- Ridership numbers by stations (ins and outs, and if possible, origin-destination pairs)
- Bus ridership information
- Bus service disruptions
- Rail station information, including:
 - Numbers of bike racks at each station
 - Numbers of reserved bike lockers at each station
 - Numbers of parking spaces at each station
- Whether rail station parking lots/garages are full, or other real-time parking occupancy data for each station, as technology makes it available (useful to direct drivers in real time to a station with availability)
- GPS coordinates of rail station entrances, escalators, and elevators (particularly useful to help riders with disabilities navigate the system)
- PDFs of the layouts of public areas of stations
- The status of cell phone coverage in stations and tunnel segments
- Locations of experimental or future 7000-series trains (which riders may want to go experience for themselves)

Riders also suggested, as future enhancements, implementing a system around the Open 311 protocol so that users of third party tools could easily report problems back to Metro in a structured way. This could make it easier for Metro to get real-time reports of escalator outages, extremely hot stations, railcars in need of cleaning, or other useful information.

There was also a suggestion to work with DDOT to implement QR codes, the two-dimensional mobile barcodes, on bus stops, buses, rail stations and/or train cars to allow riders to scan a code and immediately receive useful rider information.

We hope that the current disruption reports can become more detailed. In particular, current reports of escalator outages do not include information on which escalator is out. It would be helpful to enable station agents to report this information. Another possibility is that better reporting, such as the Open 311 suggestion above, could enable Metro to collect this information through "crowdsourcing" and make it available to riders.

We would also encourage Metro to reach out to other transit agencies in the region to incorporate their data, or at least the data they have such as the schedule information being used in the Trip Planner, into these Transparent Metro Data Sets in the near future.

All of these suggestions are items which could one day enhance the Transparent Metro Data Sets project. However, just launching what Metro has currently proposed is a tremendous step forward. Assuming the launch is completed as planned, we hope you will thank the employees who worked on this for their hard work, their embracing of innovative best practices in the transit industry, and their responsiveness to rider input on this issue.

Sincerely,

DRAFT