

Metro Riders' Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

October 2, 2013

I. Call to Order:

Mr. Ball called the October 2013 meeting of the Riders' Advisory Council to order at 6:31 p.m.

The following members were present:

Ben Ball, Chair, District of Columbia

Barbara Hermanson, Virginia Vice Chair, City of Alexandria

Carol Carter Walker, District of Columbia Vice Chair, At-Large

James Wright, Maryland Vice Chair, Prince George's County

Frank DeBernardo, Prince George's County

Pat Jackson, Fairfax County

Karen Lynch, Prince George's County

Patrick Sheehan, At-Large/Accessibility Advisory Committee Chair

Lorraine Silva, Arlington County

Deborah Titus, Fairfax County

Fred Walker, Fairfax County

Candice Walsh, District of Columbia

Etta-Cheri Washington, District of Columbia

Mary Ann Zimmerman, Montgomery County

The following member was not present for any portion of the meeting:

Patricia King-Adams, District of Columbia

II. Public Comment Period

There were no comments from members of the public.

III. Approval of Agenda

Without objection, the agenda was approved as amended.

Mr. Ball noted that a quorum was not yet present at the meeting and deferred the approval of the past meeting minutes until such a time as one was present.

IV. Metro Fare Policy and FY2015 Budget

Mr. Ball then introduced Mark Schofield from Metro's Office of Management and Budget Services, who provided an overview of Metro's budget process and timeline. He noted that, per Board-approved policy, Metro can consider fare increases in every other budget cycle, and that the FY2015 budget, which takes effect July 1, 2014, could contain a fare increase.

Mr. Ball asked how Metro balances the amount of increased costs that are passed on to customers through a fare increase versus the increase that is passed on to jurisdictions through an increased subsidy. Mr. Schofield said that the Board has said that the increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) should be a benchmark for fare increases. He noted, however, that there isn't a hard-and-fast rule on this, but rather, it's more context-dependent, and is also influenced by the financial situation of the various jurisdictions. He explained that there is a need to balance between increasing fares, increasing subsidies and finding cost efficiencies within Metro, along with avoiding cuts to service, which is a last resort.

Mr. Walker said that it was his understanding that if a rider didn't use his or her SmarTrip® card for more than two weeks, the money disappears from the card. He added that, in his opinion, Metro has missed out on a lot of revenue because its parking fees are too low. He said that if it wants to optimize revenue, it needs to look at these fees. Mr. Schofield said that he is learning that parking revenue is a more nuanced issue than he originally thought. He explained that Metro is looking for ways to use its assets, including its parking facilities, more effectively and that it is trying to even out the utilization rates of its various parking lots.

Ms. Zimmerman noted that many of the parking lots around her home station of Silver Spring are privately operated, and asked what impact these parking lots have on Metro. Mr. Schofield responded that he wasn't really sure of the effect that these private facilities have on Metro's revenues. Ms. Zimmerman also asked how Metro coordinates with transit providers in the region that it doesn't have transfer agreements with.

Ms. Walsh asked whether she had missed any discussion of a possible bus fare increase. Mr. Schofield explained that if the Board decides on any kind of fare change, it would take effect on July 1, 2014 as part of the FY2015 budget.

Ms. Walker noted that, previously, there was a great attempt made to optimize the MetroAccess fare structure to bring down the costs for that service. She asked if, based on the difference in cost recovery between the various modes (bus, rail and MetroAccess), there was tension around increasing the bus fare to generate additional revenue. Mr. Schofield said that, with regard to bus fares, of greater interest is that Metro's peer transit agencies generally have higher bus fares of between \$2-2.50, versus Metro's \$1.60 bus fare.

Mr. Sheehan told the Council that representatives from the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) met with Carol Kissal, Metro's Chief Financial Officer, and Christian Kent, Metro's AGM of Access Services. The AAC asked them to look at three actions: 1) to look at the fare calculator, to see what the effect has been on revenue, and the distribution between the jurisdictions, 2) to consider a less than two-times multiple for the trips that are generated by the Ride Guide, and 3) to look at the less expensive disability fare as the means for calculating the MetroAccess fare.

Mr. Wright asked that Metro not raise fares arbitrarily and should instead quantify why Metro is raising fares. He also reiterated Mr. Ball's comment that Metro use the RAC as a resource in terms of advocating for riders.

Ms. Silva commented that Metro needs to do more to help customers determine their fare easily, especially visitors.

Ms. Jackson asked that when Metro considers fare increases, to please consider people on the Blue line who will only have train service every 12 minutes whether it is a rush hour or not, adding that a fare increase would be a bitter pill to swallow for these riders. She also noted that people who use the parking lot at the Largo station but who are not attending the game at nearby FedEx Field often get overcharged. Mr. Schofield noted that here is a policy that if you ride the rail, you should only get charged regular parking rate – and if that didn't occur, it was a mistake.

Ms. Titus asked that, with regard to the fourth fare policy principle ("Establish equitable fares and ensure compliance with federal regulations."), what options Metro had to use federal funding. Mr. Schofield explained that federal grants could only be used for capital expenses, but offered to look into using federal funds for Title VI compliance.

VI. Silver Line Marketing Plan

Lynn Bowersox, Assistant General Manager of Customer Service, Communication and Marketing, gave a presentation on the Silver line marketing plan, during which she indicated only 45% of Metro riders were aware of the Silver line and shared strategies for planned outreach and showed the RAC Metro's website about the Silver line, www.silverlinemetro.com.

Mr. Ball asked how Metro planned to communicate with Blue line riders that would lose service due to the Silver line. Ms. Bowersox responded that Metro had maintained as frequent service as it could, given the infrastructure constraints of the system, and that from a communications standpoint, there would be considerable effort in communicating to riders all aspects of the service, for the Silver line and the Momentum plan. In consideration of the time, Mr. Ball asked that any further questions be directed to Mr. Pasek for follow-up.

VII. Customer Pledge Discussion

Lynn Bowersox shared focus group responses to the Council's draft of Metro's Pledge to Customers. She said that the general themes that emerged from Metro's customer research on this topic were that customers are not as engaged in this as Metro and the Council are, and that any customer pledge developed should be concise. She noted that customers told Metro that safety, security, customer service, and cleanliness were their top areas of concern. She added that many focus group participants felt that any sort of pledge statement was more directed at Metro employees than at customers.

Ms. Bowersox then presented a draft Customer Pledge based on the Council's draft that also incorporated feedback from the focus groups. She explained that there would be one to two months to get the RAC's and Accessibility Advisory Committee's comments on this draft before going back to customers and then, ultimately presenting it to the Board's Customer Service and Operations Committee.

Mr. Walker asked if this would be or had been tested with Metro employees and management, as this is something that will drive their work. He noted that the pledge is more aimed at behavior generated *towards* customers. Ms. Bowersox assured him that the revised version of the draft had been vetted through the heads of Metro's operating departments – rail, bus and MetroAccess.

Ms. Zimmerman asked how Metro would use this document. Ms. Bowersox explained that the General Manager had presented his business plan last month, and that the values statement would be incorporated as part of Metro's customer care plan.

Ms. Walker referred back to the Silver line outreach and suggested that staff include schools in "sneak previews," since area children were probably not familiar with the system. Ms. Bowersox agreed that was a good idea. Ms. Walker then asked how the new stations would be staffed. Ms. Bowersox said there would be extra staff on hand in the first days and weeks after the opening of these stations.

Ms. Hermanson noted that current Blue and Orange line riders are probably most interested in learning more about the Silver line. Ms. Bowersox responded that she views the 45% awareness of the Silver line as a starting point and also noted that, as Metro is a regional system, the Silver line will help enhance regional connections.

Ms. Hermanson added that riders are sensitive about seeing money spent and, while noting the need for outreach about the Silver line, expressed concern about the appearance of dollars spent on advertising so closely to a proposed fare increase. Ms. Bowersox appreciated her sensitivity and shared that Metro is looking for business partners, such as actively seeking sponsors for

commemorative SmarTrip® cards. Ms. Washington noted that this outreach was an opportunity to reach out to riders on other lines.

Regarding the Pledge, Ms. Washington said that she preferred the word “commitment” over “pledge”, and agreed that it should be kept short. She said that the feedback she had received from those she spoke with was, “Get me there safely, get me there on time, make sure no bodily harm comes to me, and give me an avenue for my voice to be heard.”

Ms. Lynch asked about the stakeholder coordination meetings for the Silver line. Ms. Bowersox explained that these meetings were ongoing but not open to the public, as they were working meetings. Ms. Lynch also asked about the outreach around Largo, noting that there needs to be more outreach about the changes to the Blue line when the Silver line opens, particularly in Prince George’s County.

VIII. Customer Pledge Discussion – Council Draft:

Mr. Ball thanked Ms. Bowersox for her presentation and then moved on to discussion of the Council’s draft pledge, beginning with a discussion of whether or not to include a “chapeau” statement, which would outline the overarching principles that the pledge document supports. He then explained the process that had gotten the Council to where it was at this meeting and noted that some Council members had gotten the previous week to develop a “clean” version that was what was before the Council for consideration.

Mr. Ball explained that there would be three votes on the draft pledge, as presented, as part of its ultimate approval:

- First, a vote on whether or not to include the “chapeau” statement as suggested by Ms. Zimmerman;
- Second, on any stylistic (not substantive) changes to the document; and
- Finally, a final vote on the document, as amended.

Mr. Ball noted that, ultimately, Board will decide how it wants to proceed on this issue.

“Chapeau” Statement Discussion and Motion:

Mr. Ball then moved approval to include the “chapeau” statement as proposed by Ms. Zimmerman, which reads *“Metro provides a safe, reliable, accessible and courteous transit experience to all customers through the following:”* This motion was seconded by Ms. Zimmerman.

Mr. Ball then opened the floor to discussion on his motion.

Ms. Hermanson said that the word “courteous” doesn’t fit in the statement because so much of the courtesy comes largely from other riders.

Mr. DeBernardo said that he thinks that top statement seems redundant. Ms. Zimmerman responded that in looking at other agencies’ customer commitment documents, they had overall statement with subsequent details.

Ms. Silva suggested that maybe the Metro draft could be considered an “executive summary” of a more detailed customer pledge.

Ms. Walsh told the Council that it had heard, based on customer research, that people want things short and simple; she noted that the group should be taking things out, rather than adding them in.

Ms. Washington noted that this pledge should reflect Metro’s mission statement.

Ms. Walker said that she feels that there should be overarching, one-sentence statement and that she would be in favor of for putting more detail into the “chapeau” statement.

Mr. Walker said that he felt that the “chapeau” statement, as proposed, captures everyone’s thoughts and suggestions.

Mr. Walker then moved to close debate on the motion to approve inclusion of a “chapeau” statement. This motion was seconded by Ms. Silva. Without objection, debate on this motion was closed.

Mr. Ball then called for a vote on the motion to include a “chapeau” statement.

In favor: Mr. Ball, Ms. Jackson, Ms. Lynch, Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Silva, Ms. Walker, Mr. Walker, Ms. Walsh, Ms. Washington, Mr. Wright and Ms. Zimmerman

Opposed: Mr. DeBernardo, Ms. Hermanson

Abstaining: Ms. Titus, Ms. Walsh, Ms. Washington

This motion was approved.

Motion on Stylistic Changes:

Mr. Ball moved that the Council adopt the following stylistic changes to the document:

- To change the tense from future to present tense; and
- To replace the words “riders” and “passengers” with the word “customers” throughout the document for consistency.

This motion was seconded by Ms. Walker.

Without objection, this motion was approved.

Motion on Customer Service Paragraph:

Ms. Zimmerman moved to change the last sentence in the second bullet point (concerning customer service) as follows:

“For any issue that cannot be immediately resolved, Metro will provide an acknowledgment & response within one business day and keep customers updated until the issue is addressed.”

After discussion, Mr. Walker moved to close debate on this motion. This was seconded by Mr. DeBernardo. Without objection, debate was closed on the proposed change to the second bullet point. Mr. Ball then called for a vote on this motion.

In favor: Ms. Hermanson, Ms. Jackson, Ms. Lynch, Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Silva, Ms. Titus, Ms. Walsh, Ms. Washington, Mr. Wright, Ms. Zimmerman
Opposed: Mr. Ball, Mr. DeBernardo, Ms. Walker
Abstaining: Mr. Walker

This motion was approved.

Motion on Customer Security Paragraph:

Ms. Zimmerman then moved to change the paragraph on “customer security” in the draft pledge presented as follows:

“Metro Transit Police ~~constantly~~ works with law enforcement officials across jurisdictions to prevent crime throughout the Metro system. If you are a victim of crime on Metro property or within ~~while in~~ the Metro system, Metro Transit Police will work to provide timely and effective resolution.

After discussion, Mr. Walker moved to close debate on this motion. The motion to close debate was seconded by Mr. DeBernardo. Without objection, debate was closed on the proposed change to the paragraph concerning customer security. Mr. Ball then called for a vote on this motion.

In favor: Mr. Ball, Mr. DeBernardo, Ms. Hermanson, Ms. Jackson, Ms. Lynch, Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Silva, Ms. Titus, Ms. Walker, Ms. Walsh, Ms. Washington, Ms. Zimmerman
Opposed: Mr. Walker, Mr. Wright
Abstaining: Ms. Walsh

This motion was approved.

Motion on “Actively Engaging Communities” text:

Ms. Zimmerman then moved to take the sentence that read “*Metro actively engages communities and responds to their needs,*” from the end of the paragraph that deals with agency transparency (final paragraph) to the end of the paragraph that addressed accessible environment (third-to-last paragraph). This motion was seconded by Ms. Walker.

After discussion, Mr. Walker moved to close debate on this motion. The motion to close debate died for the lack of a second.

After further discussion, Mr. Walker again moved to close debate on this motion. This motion to close debate was seconded by Ms. Walsh. The motion to close debate was approved, with Mr. DeBernardo opposed to closing debate.

Mr. Ball then called for a vote on this motion.

In favor: Mr. Ball, Ms. Hermanson, Ms. Lynch, Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Walker, Mr. Wright, Ms. Zimmerman
Opposed: Mr. DeBernardo, Ms. Titus, Mr. Walker, Ms. Washington
Abstaining: Ms. Jackson, Ms. Silva, Ms. Walsh

This motion was approved.

Motion on Grammatical Correction:

Without objection, the Council approved changing the sentence that read in the paragraph on customer security from “*Metro transit police works with law enforcement officials....*” to read “*Metro transit police work with law enforcement officials...*”

Motion to Shorten “Chapeau” Statement:

Ms. Walker then moved to shorten the “chapeau” statement as follows:

“*Metro provides a safe, reliable, accessible and courteous transit experience to all customers through the following:*”

This motion was seconded by Ms. Hermanson.

Ms. Hermanson moved to close debate on this motion, which was seconded by Ms. Zimmerman. Without objection, debate was closed on the motion to change the “chapeau” statement.

Mr. Ball then called for a vote on this motion. Without objection, the motion to shorten the “chapeau” statement was approved.

Motion on Changing Title to “Commitment to Customers:”

Ms. Hermanson then moved to change the title of the document from a “Pledge to Customers” to a “Commitment to Customers.” This motion was seconded by Ms. Walker.

After discussion Ms. Hermanson moved to close debate on this motion. The motion to close debate was seconded by Ms. Walker and was approved without objection.

Mr. Ball then called for a vote on the motion to change the title of the document to a “Commitment to Customers.”

In favor: Mr. Ball, Ms. Hernamson, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Silva, Ms. Titus, Ms. Walker, Ms. Walsh, Ms. Washington, Ms. Zimmerman

Opposed: Mr. DeBernardo, Ms. Lynch, Mr. Wright

Abstaining: none

The motion to change the document’s title to a “Commitment to Customers” was approved.

Final Vote on Document as Amended:

Ms. Walker then moved approval of the full “Commitment to Customers” document, as amended. This motion was seconded by Ms. Zimmerman.

Ms. Hermanson then moved to close debate on this motion. The motion to close debate was seconded by Ms. Walker. Without objection, debate was closed on the motion to approve the final document, as amended.

Mr. Ball then called for a vote on the final “Commitment to Customers” document, as amended. Without objection, the document was approved.

Mr. Ball thanked the Council members for all of their work on this document and told them that he would draft a letter to the Board to transmit the “Commitment to Customers” document.

IX. Bus Public Hearings Recap

Mr. Ball referred the Council members to the written summaries of the six bus service public hearings Metro held September 16-19, 2013 contained in their meeting packets.

X. RAC Recruitment

Mr. Pasek gave the Council a summary of the current vacancies and a quick overview of the upcoming outreach plan to fill those vacancies as well as to recruit members for the positions on the Council that would be up for appointment or reappointment at the end of the calendar year. He noted that he had contacted Council members whose terms were scheduled to end in December 2013 to let them know about their opportunity to apply to be reappointed for another term on the Council.

Ms. Walker noted that, at its previous meeting, the Council had voted to ask the Board to terminate three Council members for non-attendance. She explained that two of these members had since resigned and the third member had pledge to improve her attendance at Council meetings. In light of these developments, Ms. Walker moved to rescind the Council's previous motion to ask the Board to terminate these members. Without objection, this motion was approved.

XI. Upcoming Meetings:

Mr. Ball told the Council that the Maryland "Listening Session" would be scheduled soon, and that staff is working on finalizing a date and location.

The following Council committees were scheduled to meet in October:

- Safety and Security – October 9th – Will not meet
- Operations and Communications – October 16th – Will meet at 6:30 p.m.

Ms. Walker then moved approval of three sets of past Council meeting minutes – April 2013, August 2013 and September 2013. Without objection, these were approved as presented.

Without objection, the Council meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.