

Riders' Advisory Council  
Meeting Minutes  
November 7, 2007

I. Call to Order/Roll Call

Mr. Snyder called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. The following members of the Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) were in attendance:

Michael Snyder, Chair, Montgomery County  
Jennifer Barozie, City of Alexandria  
Dr. Kelsi Bracmort, District of Columbia (arrived 6:44 p.m.)  
Steve Cerny, Fairfax County  
Justin Chittams, District of Columbia  
Penelope Everline, Arlington County  
Nancy Iacomini, Arlington County  
Nardra Johnson, Montgomery County (arrived 6:42 p.m.)  
Cesar Maxit, District of Columbia  
Kaiya Sandler, Montgomery County  
Patrick Sheehan, At-Large/Elderly and Disabled Committee (arrived 6:42 p.m.)  
Aline Stone, District of Columbia (arrived 6:37 p.m.)  
Lillian White, City of Alexandria  
Robin White, Fairfax County (arrived 7:00 p.m.)

The following members were not present for any portion of the meeting:

Denise Brown, Prince George's County  
Dr. Sharon Conn, Prince George's County  
Armando Cortinez, At-Large/District of Columbia  
Patricia Daniels, District of Columbia  
Susan Holland, Prince George's County  
Dennis Jaffe, District of Columbia  
Kevin Moore, At-Large/District of Columbia

II. Public Comment Period:

Mr. Snyder then invited any members of the public who wished to provide comments to the RAC to come forward.

Mr. Leroy Morgan said that he wanted to give Metro an "A-" for running Metrorail on a modified Saturday schedule on Columbus Day. He said that he would give Metro an "A+" if they charged a weekday fare. Mr. Snyder said that the Board has noticed that Metro ridership on holidays such as Columbus Day wasn't what they had initially anticipated and made modifications to its service, though he isn't sure what happened with the fares. Mr. Morgan added that he gave Metrobus a "B" for operating on a weekday schedule and recommended that they run the buses on a modified holiday schedule rather than a weekday schedule.

Mr. Morgan said that he recommended that Metrorail operate on a modified Saturday schedule for the upcoming Veterans' Day holiday and that Metrobus operate on a modified weekday schedule on that day. He also made recommendations about the type of service Metro should provide on the Friday after Thanksgiving, based on decreased ridership on that day.

Lastly, Mr. Morgan presented a Metro safety vest that he had found on the 300 block of Galloway St. NE, and noted that he had concerns about this vest falling into the wrong hands. He said that unauthorized persons could use the vest for terrorist activities.

Mr. Morgan also mentioned that Metro is interested in developing its land at the Brookland Metro station and that they didn't have his support for this project. In response to a question from Ms. White as to why he didn't support the project, Mr. Morgan said that the area is already in use as bus bays and would also remove greenspace and develop a project over the railroad tracks.

Mr. Snyder said that the RAC would try to get back to Mr. Morgan with information about Metro's holiday schedules.

Sally Thurston from Hyattsville said that she lives near the Prince George's Plaza Metrorail station and noted that there has been significant commercial development around this station. She said that, because of this development, access to the station has been restricted and that she has concerns about the effect that this has on pedestrians and buses trying to access the station.

Mr. Sheehan and Ms. Johnson arrived at 6:42 p.m.

Ms. Thurston said that her concern with Metro service is that it does not "interface" its trains and buses – that there aren't timed connections between modes or lines. She described her commute, which involves taking the R4 bus to Prince George's Plaza, the Green Line to L'Enfant Plaza and then a bus towards Prince George's Community College. Ms. Thurston said that she is concerned with Metro getting away with fare increases without giving improved service. She noted concerns about non-functioning escalators at the L'Enfant Plaza and Prince George's Plaza stations.

Ms. Thurston also noted that she always pays ½ of the rush-hour fare, regardless of whether or not it's rush hour or not, and that Metro hasn't adequately explained this policy to her.

Dr. Bracmort arrived at 6:44 p.m.

Ms. Thurston continued by saying that Metro is wasting money and will continue to waste money. She said that Metro has sold land at Prince George's Plaza, and is looking to sell off land at West Hyattsville and Takoma Stations. Ms. Thurston said that Metro

needs to provide better service, and, if it's going to charge rush hour fares beginning at 5 a.m., it needs to provide that level of service.

Ms. Thurston also noted that the ongoing construction around the Prince George's Plaza Metro station has made it difficult for buses to negotiate the area. She said that her concern is with the fact that Metro doesn't schedule its trains to connect with other trains and the headways between trains are over ten minutes. Ms. Thurston described her recent experiences with missing connecting trains and having to wait significant periods for the next train, even during rush hour periods. In response to a question from Mr. Snyder, Ms. Thurston said that she can't rely on a schedule for trains because Metro doesn't publish a schedule for train service during rush hours. She noted that other subway systems publish schedules.

Mr. Snyder thanked Ms. Thurston for her testimony and encouraged her to attend the public hearings on the proposed fare increases.

III. Approval of October 3, 2007 Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Cerny moved approval of the October 3, 2007 meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Johnson seconded this motion. Mr. Snyder noted that individuals not present at the October 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting should abstain from voting on the minutes.

In favor: Mr. Snyder, Dr. Bracmort, Mr. Cerny, Mr. Chittams, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Sandler, Mr. Sheehan and Ms. White

Opposed: None

Abstentions: Ms. Barozie, Ms. Everline, Ms. Iacomini, Mr. Maxit, Ms. Stone

This motion passed (8-0-5).

IV. Approval of Agenda:

Mr. Snyder noted that he was unable to secure a guest speaker for this evening's meeting, but that there is plenty on the agenda for the RAC to discuss. The agenda was approved without objection.

V. Introduction of New Members:

Mr. Snyder noted that the RAC has three new members, two of whom were in attendance at that evening's meeting, with the third member on her way.

Mr. Snyder had members do another roll call and asked the new members to provide the group with some information about themselves.

Ms. Barozie said that she is a government employee and rides Metrobus and Metrorail every day. She said that she has some concerns about how the system is operated and, rather than complaining, she chose to be active and do something about it.

Ms. Everline said that she from Arlington and is a frequent bus and rail rider because she doesn't drive due to a visual impairment. She also noted that she works for Easter Seals' "Project Action" that works on accessible transportation issues.

Ms. White noted that new members were welcome to join the RAC's Rail Subcommittee and gave them information on the subcommittee's meeting time.

VI. Subcommittees:

Mr. Snyder thanked Ms. White for her mention of the RAC's subcommittees and said that it was a good segue into the next item on the agenda. He noted that the RAC has recently had some problems with meeting quorum at its Subcommittee meetings and said that he wanted to reconfirm members' participation in the various Subcommittees. He explained that the RAC's bylaws also determine the quorum for Subcommittee meetings and that quorum requires 50% + 1 a subcommittee's membership, the same as the RAC. He said that he would ask the chairs to talk about their respective Subcommittee and would then reconfirm which RAC members are on which subcommittees.

He thanked Ms. White for her previous overview of the Rail Subcommittee and said that he had the following members listed as belonging to this subcommittee: Lillian White, Justin Chittams, Denise Brown, Kaiya Sandler, Michael Snyder, Steve Cerny, Nancy Iacomini, Armando Cortinez, Aline Stone and Pat Sheehan. He asked if he had missed any members on his list or if anyone would like to step down from the committee because he or she is unable to attend. Ms. Stone said that she had asked to be removed from the committee early on but that this may not have been reflected in Mr. Snyder's listing.

Mr. Snyder said that, because of the public hearings happening next week, RAC Subcommittee meetings would be cancelled or postponed to allow members to attend the hearings.

Mr. Chittams said that he has missed meetings because he was unsure of their scheduled starting times. Mr. Snyder said that, on evenings with two meetings, the first meeting generally begins at 6:00 p.m. and the second meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Robin White arrived at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Snyder asked Ms. White to introduce herself and why she joined the RAC. Ms. (Robin) White said that she recently moved to Northern Virginia and works at the Library of Congress. She said that she is privileged to represent Fairfax County. Mr. Snyder noted that Ms. White was appointed for a two-month term but hopes that she will reapply for a full term which would begin in January. He added that new RAC members let him know if they would like to join any of the subcommittees as a vote by the RAC would be required.

Mr. Snyder then asked Ms. Stone to describe the function of the Communications and Customer Information Subcommittee; she said that they deal with all issues related to Communications and Customer Service, such as Metro's advertising policy, the publications and materials it gives to its riders, such as brochures and timetables, and Metro's customer service. There was then discussion as to when the subcommittee

would meet in November and whether that meeting date would be affected by the scheduled public hearings on the fare increase. It was determined that the Communications and Customer Information Subcommittee is scheduled to meet on Tuesday, November 20. Mr. Snyder read the names of the individuals who are on the committee: Aline Stone (chair), Denise Brown, Sharon Conn, Patricia Daniels, Susan Holland, Nardra Johnson, Kevin Moore, Armando Cortinez and Kevin Moore. Dr. Bracmort noted that she is also on the Communications Subcommittee.

Mr. Snyder described the Budget Committee in Mr. Moore's absence and said that covers budget issues and hosted workshops at the beginning of 2007 to help Metro work through issues of how to defray service cuts and fare increases. Mr. Snyder then listed the members of the Budget Subcommittee: Kevin Moore (chair), Kelsi Bracmort, Dennis Jaffe, Cesar Maxit, Kaiya Sandler, Michael Snyder, Aline Stone and Lillian White. Ms. Sandler noted that she had requested to be removed from the Budget Subcommittee.

Mr. Snyder then listed the members of the Bus Subcommittee: Sharon Conn (chair), Kelsi Bracmort, Justin Chittams, Patricia Daniels, Dennis Jaffe, Cesar Maxit, Steve Cerny, Kevin Moore and Rodney Elin. Dr. Bracmort said that she had requested that her name be removed from membership on this committee.

Mr. Cerny noted that the Bus Subcommittee focuses on issues related to the Metrobus system. He said the biggest issue that the Bus Subcommittee has been working on has been advising Metro on its public outreach as part of the 30-Line study project. He said that Metro is looking at ways to improve the service on this line and described what Metro is doing and noted that the Subcommittee provided advice on how to reach out to the public.

Mr. Cerny and other RAC member talked about other issues that the committee has worked on during the past two years including improving bus drivers' customer service, getting maps and correct schedules on buses and the NextBus program. There was then discussion about the status of the NextBus project and its current suspension. Ms. (Lillian) White said that she hoped that the RAC would take up this issue. Mr. Snyder said that he had discussed the issue with Metro's Chief Information Officer and that she said that the system was designed as a pilot and unable to handle the load of tracking all Metrobus routes. He said that he did note the RAC's concern about the system suspension in his latest report to the Board of Directors.

Ms. White said that NextBus did provide a service to Metro's customers and that it was a surprise when Metro announced that it was still in the pilot stage. Mr. Snyder said that Board members also didn't seem to be under the impression that NextBus was still a pilot.

In response to a question from Mr. Sheehan, Mr. Snyder said that both Pats – Mr. Sheehan and Ms. Daniels – are on the Bus Subcommittee.

Mr. Snyder noted that the RAC also has a Personnel, Rules and Administration Committee that deals with by-laws issues, disciplinary actions and the evaluation of the staff coordinator. He said that the members of this committee are the chairs of the various RAC subcommittees, the RAC's 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> vice-chairs, and the current and immediate past RAC chairs.

The new RAC members said that they were still deciding whether or not to join any of the subcommittees and may attend their next meetings before committing to join any of the committees.

VII. Fare Increase Proposal:

Mr. Snyder described some of the specifics of the revised fare increase proposal that the Board of Directors has approved to take to public hearings. He said that the Board had a very heated debate at the meeting where they approved holding hearings on the proposed increase. Mr. Snyder explained that the proposal put forward was a modified version of something drafted by Councilman Graham from the District of Columbia. He explained that, after conducting several votes at this meeting, all of which failed, it appeared that Metro would not be able to take any proposal out to public hearings. Mr. Snyder said that at that point in the meeting, Mr. Kauffman asked Mr. Catoe for an estimate of the increase in subsidy that jurisdictions would have to pay in FY2009 if fares were not raised, and following Mr. Kauffman's question, Board members seemed much more willing to find a compromise proposal that would allow them to hold public hearings on a fare increase. Mr. Snyder said that the Board went into closed session and then came back to approve a proposal which would allow for a 10¢ increase in the cash bus fare, a 10¢ decrease in the proposed parking rate (to \$1.15) and a maximum rail fare increase of 80¢.

Mr. Snyder said that, following the meeting, it was determined that the proposal approved by the Board to go to public hearing was still \$20 million short of the amount Metro says it needs for FY2009.

Mr. Snyder then gave the date and location for the public hearings and, in response to a question from Mr. Sheehan, said that it is anticipated for the fare increase to go into effect on January 6, 2008. Mr. Snyder said that the Board would vote on the proposed increases at its meeting on December 13<sup>th</sup>.

Dr. Bracmort asked how people could submit testimony if they were unable to attend any of the public hearings. Mr. Snyder said that there is an email address ([public-hearing-testimony@wmata.com](mailto:public-hearing-testimony@wmata.com)) that can be used for comments.

Ms. White asked how the hearings have been advertised to the public. Mr. Pasek said that Metro has issued a press release, put notices in buses and rail cars and run ads in the Washington Post, as required by the WMATA Compact, along with the Washington City Paper, El Tiempo Latino, the Washington Hispanic, the Washington Informer and India Today and possibly one other publication. Ms. White suggested that Metro do broadcast advertisement, such as public service announcements on places like Channel 8.

Mr. Snyder said that he was concerned because the Washington Post hadn't run any articles about the upcoming hearings except for an article that only appeared in the online version. He also said that he had concerns about the placement of the advertisements on the railcars.

Mr. Snyder said that he wrote a letter to the Metro Board Chair, with copies to Mr. Catoe and Metro's Community Relations staff outlining his concerns about the advertisement of the public hearings. He asked that this letter be distributed to RAC members. Mr. Snyder said that he was also in contact with the Washington Examiner to urge them to mention the upcoming hearings and that he also wrote in to the Washington Post's "Roads and Rails" online chat and a letter he had written ran in the Post's "Letters to the Editor" section. Mr. Snyder added that Lena Sun, the reporter who covers Metro issues for the Post, told him that Metro would be running a feature next Sunday about the hearings.

Ms. White said that the RAC needs to voice its concerns about the outreach Metro conducted for the hearings.

Ms. Johnson said that she was concerned about the timing of the hearings – several hearings over only a few days, some occurring concurrently. She asked if Metro would hold any hearings on Saturday. Mr. Snyder responded that the hearings shown were the only hearings that Metro would be holding on the proposed fare increases because of time constraints.

Ms. Bracmort asked Mr. Pasek to send out the information on the public hearings, including the email address to send public comments. She said that she would send this information on to neighborhood listservs.

Mr. Snyder encouraged RAC members to attend the public hearings so that they would have the opportunity to hear riders' testimony on the proposed increases. He said he'd also be interested in learning how many people attend the hearings. Mr. Snyder also encouraged RAC members to notify riders about the upcoming hearings.

Mr. Sheehan asked the RAC's position on the fare increase and whether RAC members could give the RAC's position at these hearings.

Mr. Snyder said that the RAC hadn't taken a position on the proposal that was being taken to public hearing and expected that the RAC would do so at its December meeting, after it has the opportunity to hear the public's testimony. He added that the RAC is on the record opposing a mid-year fare increase as well as expressing its concern about Metro implementing an indexed fare increase policy at this time. He encouraged RAC members to testify as individuals, rather than RAC members, because the RAC hadn't taken a position on the proposed increase.

Ms. White said that the RAC had passed positions on the fare increase, and read those positions from the October meeting minutes. She said that anyone testifying on behalf of the RAC should follow the RAC's position.

Mr. Sheehan asked whether RAC members were authorized to testify on behalf of the RAC. Mr. Snyder replied that members weren't authorized to testify on behalf of the RAC and that he suggested that, if they testified, members wait until the end of the hearings, after members of the public have had a chance to speak. He said that the RAC's will have an opportunity to have its position heard through its report to the Board of Directors. He added that if RAC members do testify, they should identify themselves as a member of the RAC and note that their testimony is as an individual, not representing the RAC.

Mr. Snyder then went through the list of hearings to see which RAC members would be attending which hearings.

Mr. Pasek noted that Metro will be holding an open house prior to the hearings and, if the RAC wanted to have a table at these open houses to talk to members of the public about the RAC. Mr. Snyder and other members of the RAC said that they would be interested in having such a table at the hearings they would be attending.

Ms. Iacomini asked if Mr. Pasek could ask staff to put sandwich board signs at Metro stations and bus transfer areas announcing the hearings. Mr. Snyder said that he has concerns that no notices have been posted in any stations. Mr. Pasek explained that it may take too long to print large signs and have them ready prior to the public hearings.

Ms. White asked that Mr. Pasek check that staff was ensuring that the notices placed in the railcars were in place when the cars were sent out for service each day. Dr. Bracmort suggested that notice could be placed in the Express or Examiner newspapers to reach riders.

Mr. Snyder said that Metro isn't advertising the hearings because it is in its best interest to have less people at the hearings. Ms. White said that Metro is obligated to advertise the hearings, whether it wants to or not, and if a public hearing isn't properly advertised in the City of Alexandria it is postponed. Mr. Snyder suggested that Ms. White come up with a motion for the December RAC meeting so that the RAC can comment on how Metro should advertise its public hearings.

#### VIII. Bus Subcommittee Report:

Mr. Snyder then asked if there was a report from the Bus Subcommittee in Dr. Conn's absence. He said that many issues, such as the 30's study and NextBus had been discussed previously during the meeting.

Ms. Stone asked why Metro suspended NextBus service while it's being fixed. Mr. Snyder said that he had heard that the system was only 80% reliable, which wasn't up to Metro's standard, and that Metro's CIO described NextBus as a "pilot." He said that he wasn't sure why it would take 18-months to fix the system. There was discussion among RAC members about their concerns with the NextBus suspension.



Mr. Sheehan said that, at Monday's E&D Subcommittee meeting, the Committee received a presentation by Kristin Haldeman on the regional bus stop inventory. He suggested that the RAC or the Bus Subcommittee may be interested in learning more about this. Mr. Snyder suggested that this go on the Bus Subcommittee agenda. He said that the Bus Subcommittee may also want to look at the effects of construction at Metro stations on buses and bus passengers, noting Ms. Thurston's earlier testimony and testimony from a public hearing in Columbia Heights earlier this year. Mr. Snyder said that Mr. Catoe said, at the hearing in Columbia Heights, that Metro needed to improve its procedures for access to transit during construction projects, and Ms. Thurston's testimony was evidence that it wasn't doing that.

Mr. Sheehan suggested that Metro look at the Maryland State Highway Administration's language regarding that contractors maintain access during construction projects.

Dr. Bracmort mentioned that she had concerns about the relocation of bus stops at L'Enfant Plaza (7<sup>th</sup> and D Sts. SW) and the lack of notification given to passengers about changes made. She said that Metro needs to rethink its procedures to provide information to passengers in a convenient fashion.

Ms. Johnson added her concerns about construction at the Glenmont station and the effect that this construction is having on bus traffic patterns.

Mr. Snyder suggested that someone might want to craft a motion to suggest that Metro make changes to its procedures to maintain transit access during construction projects, noting that the RAC has heard concerns from several individuals about this issue. There was additional discussion about the factors that would need to be addressed by such a resolution.

Ms. Everline asked if there were any transportation demand management (TDM) plans for these projects. Ms. Iacomini discussed how TDMs work. She also noted that Arlington has significant site plan requirements that address issues during construction. She noted that there is a project coming up at Rosslyn that may impact bus service and pedestrian access to the station.

Mr. Snyder asked if perhaps the RAC needs another subcommittee or working group to address this issue because it is too complex to be addressed only by a resolution. Ms. Iacomini said that these decisions may be best left to people who live nearest the station because they have a better idea of the local conditions.

Mr. Sheehan said that it doesn't seem like Metro has a basic understanding of what is needed to address passengers needs during construction and suggested that this issue could be discussed over email. Mr. Snyder said that the RAC will need to raise this issue repeatedly with Metro for them to make changes.

Ms. Johnson described some of the concerns that residents have about development occurring around the Takoma station and the effect that development may have on access to the station.

Mr. Cerny said that there are two separate issues – ongoing construction versus long-range land-use planning issues. Mr. Snyder said that the land-use issues will eventually become construction projects and Metro needs to learn from its experience with such projects. Ms. White suggested language to bring the matter to Metro's attention.

Dr. Bracmort said that this is a communication issue that may need to be taken up at the next Communication Subcommittee meeting and doesn't require another committee.

Ms. White said that Metro needs to do a better job of planning for construction projects.

Mr. Snyder suggested that this be looked into further at the Communications Subcommittee meeting.

IX. Rail Subcommittee Report:

Ms. White gave a report on the speakers who attended the last Rail Subcommittee meeting – Tim Aiken from Congressman Moran's office, who talked about Metro from a federal perspective and the service managers from the Red Line (B.J. Jones) and Yellow/Green Lines (Rita Davis). Ms. White expanded some of the other topics that Mr. Aiken discussed, such as federal and dedicated funding for Metro and the fact that Congressmen often act as ombudsmen for passenger concerns.

Mr. Snyder said that, based on the Board meeting earlier this month, it was clear that members are primarily concerned with the interests of their respective jurisdictions rather than riders' concerns.

Ms. White added that she invited the line managers to the meeting to discuss station managers' roles because she views them as key personnel. She went over some of the issues covered at the meeting, including the station managers' responsibilities, and her concerns about their performance, staffing decisions, the operation of express trains and trains that skip stations.

Ms. White mentioned that she also went through the rail manual that outlines Metro procedures and told members that she could get them copies if they were interested. She also discussed how Metro determines the number of cars to run on its trains, and said that she was told that Metro employs people to check the loads on its trains and uses this information to allocate railcars.

She asked for RAC members' observations on station managers to help her formulate recommendations.

There was no report from the Communications Subcommittee, as it didn't have a meeting in October. Mr. Snyder said that the RAC had already sufficiently discussed the budget, and so didn't require an additional budget report.

X. New Business:

Ms. White told members about the agenda for the next Rail Subcommittee meeting, which will include a presentation by Gene Garzone from Metro's railcar maintenance staff. Mr. Garzone will discuss Metro's maintenance checklists.

Mr. Snyder asked that Mr. Pasek send out the new members' email addresses to RAC members and also asked that, if members have any subjects they would like to discuss at the December meeting, that they email him with those suggestions.

In response to a question from Ms. Iacomini, it was determined after discussion that the Rail Subcommittee meeting would start at 6:30 p.m. on November 28<sup>th</sup>. Ms. White noted that all members are invited to attend the meeting.

XI. Adjournment:

Mr. Snyder adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.