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Ms. Hewlett and Members of the Board of Directors:

I am pleased to present you with the January report of the Riders' Advisory Council. I'd like to first take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Nancy Iacomini, and I am the newly-elected Chairman of the Riders' Advisory Council. This will be my third year serving on the RAC representing Arlington County

Ms. Kelsi Bracmort from the District of Columbia was elected the RAC's First Vice-Chair and Mr. Patrick Sheehan, who serves on the RAC representing Metro's Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee, was elected Second Vice-Chair and he is from Maryland.

As Metro moves forward from last year's discussion about fare increases, we have the opportunity -- Metro and the RAC together -- to focus our goals for 2008 on service quality and on how to make meaningful improvements to the passenger experience.

I'd like to briefly touch on a few of the items that, as Chairman of the RAC, I would like the RAC to focus on over the coming year. Please note that at this time these are only my ideas and I have not yet discussed them with the full RAC membership. RAC members are a thoughtful group and will no doubt come up with some projects of their own.

First -- I'd like to point out that the RAC continues to be a good, ready-made focus group for passenger issues. Many of the concerns with customer service we raised to the Board in the previous two years were echoed by those who testified during the recent fare increase public hearings. While the hearings were not to be about customer service issues per se, they certainly elicited a great deal of comment on that topic. Clearly Metro needs to move forward in addressing the concerns raised and the RAC would like to work with customers, the Board and WMATA staff to make the Metro system a better experience for everyone from seasoned rider to tourists.

Some areas in which RAC might be helpful are:

### **Customer Expectation Plan and Performance Measures**

At this month's Board committee meetings, there was substantial discussion about Metro's performance measures -- how to improve the actual numbers Metro achieves as well as how to ensure that what is reported accurately reflects customers' experience while riding the system. Being composed of riders, the RAC is in a unique position to help Metro ensure that the measures that it evaluates are a meaningful evaluation of the service it provides -- and that the measures focus on the areas of most concern to riders.

We would also like to work with Mr. Catoe and his staff as they prepare a Customer Expectation Plan – which was also mentioned during this month’s committee meetings. This may take the form of staff/RAC work sessions, or perhaps the convening of town hall meetings hosted jointly by the RAC and WMATA. The meetings would not be general – but instead focus on specific service issues and perhaps examine how they relate to the formation of the upcoming FY2009 Budget.

### **SmarTrip:**

As part of the fare increase that took effect earlier this month, Metro began offering an incentive for bus customers to use SmarTrip cards rather than cash to pay their fares. It is said within the next year, SmarTrip’s capabilities will expand significantly, allowing it to be used to pay for different kinds of fares.

The RAC would like to ensure that the transition to increased SmarTrip usage is seamless and is structured in such a way as to be convenient for riders in both the use of the cards as well as obtaining and reloading them.

I believe RAC could be very helpful in identifying additional locations for the purchase and reloading of the Smartrip cards by either cash or credit. RAC members have raised the concern, among others, that those adding cash on the bus to their required Smartrip cards will create lines for those waiting to board the bus. A solution to this would be to locate add fare locations near busy bus stops – and make sure the add fare machines there take cash. We look forward to working with the Board and Metro staff as the transition to Smartrip moves forward.

### **Passenger Communications:**

WMATA has identified the need to improve communications with the riding public. This is a particular need during emergencies and service disruptions. Passengers need clear, easy-to-understand information about the cause of delays, their anticipated durations and options for alternative service. There had been discussion in 2007 about Metro’s plans to improve this incident-driven communication, and the RAC would like to partner with Metro as it moves forward to develop and implement plans for better communication – be it announcements on buses, in stations, or over the email alert system.

RAC would also like to work with WMATA staff on other passenger communications issues. There are many unrealized opportunities, we feel, to get feedback from riders. Some examples would be the placement of signs in the newly outfitted 6000 series cars saying: You’re in a newly reconfigured car! Tell us what you think about it...email us at [newcar@wmata.org](mailto:newcar@wmata.org) or call us at..... Such interactions with riders would be relatively simple to implement and would give the customer a direct way to comment to WMATA.

### **Bus Corridor Studies:**

The RAC was pleased to be involved in the recently-concluded study of the Wisconsin/Pennsylvania bus lines (the 30’s), and encourages Metro to continue this type of multi-step, conversational public engagement process as it considers service improvements elsewhere throughout the system. Over the coming year, the RAC would like to work with Metro on such studies as they move forward to increase the public’s engagement participation in the service-planning process.

**Railcar Design:**

During the meeting of the Planning, Development and Real Estate Committee earlier this month, Board members received a briefing from Dave Kubicek concerning design of the next generation of rail car. It was clear that the plans for these new cars needs to be addressed sooner rather than later, as funding sources may require the initial order for new cars be made soon.

In 2006, WMATA staff began gathering public input on ideas for the 7000 rail cars. Staff was proactive in seeking this input – and held some workshops for WMATA staff and RAC representatives in October, 2006. The RAC appreciates the opportunity that its members have had to offer suggestions as part of the design process and would like to ensure that there are additional opportunities for riders to provide input as staff prepares a draft proposal for the Board on the design of the new cars.

The RAC hopes that as Metro evaluates these and other changes which would affect the customer experience, it keeps the lines of communication open with its customers and RAC to outline its expectations for these changes and to solicit their feedback.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Nancy Iacomini, Chairman  
Riders' Advisory Council

Cc: RAC members