

Riders' Advisory Council

January 7, 2026

Members Present:

Cole Staudt, Chair, District of Columbia
William Way, Vice Chair, Virginia
Solomon Chen, Virginia
Eli Craveiro Frankel, At-Large/District of Columbia
Lucas Habosky, At-Large/District of Columbia
Alex Mendelsohn, At-Large/Virginia
Patrick Sheehan, At-Large/AAC Representative
Thomas Shepard, At-Large/District of Columbia
Irene Stephens, District of Columbia
Hendeke Tafesse, Virginia
Brandon Wu, District of Columbia

Metro Staff Present:

Brian Anderson, Director, Digital and Customer Innovation
Sarah Meyer, EVP and Chief Customer Officer
John Pasek, Deputy Board Secretary
José Reyes, Board Program Manager
Sam Serebin Project Manager, Wayfinding and Service Information

Call to Order:

Mr. Staudt called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

Approval of Agenda:

The agenda was approved without objection, with the removal of the "Approval of Meeting Minutes" item.

Public Comment

There were no comments from members of the public.

Metro Wayfinding and Customer Information

Mr. Serebin provided an overview of Metro's wayfinding and signage history. He noted that as the Metro system has grown, along with the growth in requirements for signage, the number of signs in the Metro system has increased dramatically. He also noted that Metro's

passenger profile has changed since the system opened – customers are more likely to use multiple modes and speak languages other than English.

Mr. Serebin noted that Metro has had several signage pilots throughout the years, including programs at L'Enfant Plaza, Rosslyn, Metro Center, Gallery Place and Capitol South within the previous three years. He explained that customers have liked features such as labeled exits, information about points of interest, station ahead maps and clarity and consistency of signage. He told the RAC that Metro has recently assembled a team with varied design experience to update Metro's wayfinding and signage.

Mr. Serebin said that Metro is aiming to maintain Metro's design legacy while incorporating modern patterns that riders today are more used to and better understand. He added that Metro will soon be formalizing its design guidelines with a new installation of signage at L'Enfant Plaza station that aims to reduce visual noise, make information easier to read and provide a consistent design and delivery system for wayfinding information. He added that this updated signage would then roll out across the 98-station Metro system over the next five years. He asked members whether there were any design features that they've seen in other transit systems that they thought worked well or whether there were any challenges they've experienced while navigating through the Metro system.

Mr. Staudt asked whether there were certain design elements in the pilots that customers didn't like or found challenging. Mr. Serebin said that station ahead maps can be complex because of the amount of information they deliver. He said that riders didn't like that some stations were omitted from these maps in order to simplify them and noted that all stations would be included in future iterations of station ahead maps.

In response to a question from Mr. Way, Mr. Anderson explained that the impetus for the project was the fact that the Metro system has changed significantly over time, including changes to service and to station names. He noted that Metro's current management has been more customer-focused recognized that it was time to try to address signage and wayfinding challenges. Mr. Anderson noted that this has provided an opportunity to take a comprehensive look at signage and create new standards.

Mr. Staudt said that he appreciated the "bottom-up" feature of the new station ahead signage since it mimics the format of app-based navigation systems like Apple maps or Google maps.

In response to a comment from Mr. Staudt, Mr. Anderson noted that Metro has different "families" of digital signage, with some signs more focused on providing customer information, while others are primarily dedicated to advertising. He noted that stations that have had construction over the past six or seven years as part of the Platform Improvement Project have received digital screens focused on customer information. Mr. Anderson added that Metro has decided on single-letter identification discs for its rail lines and making updates to signage as signs and other communications materials are replaced.

Mr. Craveiro Frankel said that he thinks that it is helpful to list jurisdictional boundaries on the station ahead maps. He also asked whether there were any opportunities to allow for split-screen information on legacy digital signage that would allow train arrival information to remain displayed, even when additional information, such as elevator outages, is shown. Mr. Anderson noted that the legacy PIDS (Passenger Information Display System) signs are a challenge due to their limited space to display information. He said that it's a balance between providing arrival information along with other customer information where there is limited space to display information, such as on those legacy signs.

Mr. Shepard said that he has noticed many of the signage changes while riding the system and has found them helpful. He asked whether there were opportunities to add real-time information at transfer stations or on vehicles to give riders information about services they may be transferring to. Mr. Anderson explained that Metro understands this challenge and is working to make upgrades, though he noted that the best opportunity for those kinds of upgrades is when Metro get new equipment, such as the new 8000-series railcars. He reminded members that Metro's 7000-series railcars are already decade old and the technology in them is even older since they were the product of a multi-year design and construction process.

Ms. Stephens commented on the new wall signage that she noticed at U Street and said that the smaller signs have been installed on the station wall there, which could be difficult to see from the train, especially during rush hour or when trains are crowded. She asked whether it would be possible to keep the larger wall signage in place. Mr. Serebin explained that the signage at U Street represents the implementation of a new type of wall signage that provides station information, but not service information. He said that Metro is moving away from providing service information on wall-mounted signs because service information can change and those signs are difficult and expensive to replace, since they require crews to stop train traffic to do their work. He told the group that Metro is moving to put service information on signs that are mounted on the platform and can be more easily updated when there are changes to service. He noted that the U Street signage is a work in progress – Metro has removed the service information on the wall signage and is working to replace that service information on the platform following the completion of the L'Enfant pilot. He said that will allow Metro to update service information more quickly and more cheaply.

Mr. Serebin added that Metro is also planning to standardize the size of wall-mounted signs at 18" high except for transfer stations. This standardization will allow Metro to replace and re-fabricate signs more quickly. He noted that signs at transfer stations will be 24" tall because they need to deliver more information.

Mr. Wu said that he felt that lettering station exits has been very helpful and would like that system to be installed in other stations with multiple exits, like Dupont Circle. He also noted that it would be helpful for signage at transfer stations to guide riders along the right path, such as by directing them to specific escalators or elevators. He also asked whether there is a plan to do outreach to the general public as part of the wayfinding updates. Mr. Serebin

responded that Metro will be testing aspects such as iconography, amounts of information and organization of information with the general public both through 3D models and as part of the pilot at L'Enfant Plaza. He added that he appreciated Mr. Wu's comments about the escalator signage as well as the positive feedback regarding station exit naming. He said that Metro intends to always label the ADA exit for each station as "Exit A" for consistency.

Mr. Mendelsohn asked what would be supplementing PIDS to provide rider information when wall signage is updated to remove service information. Mr. Serebin said that station ahead maps would be a key part of the information provided. He noted that he and his team are thinking about different ways to provide information, such as possible iconography to direct riders to locations like airports or downtown DC. He said that the goal is to provide a lot more information that is physically closer to riders waiting for trains.

Mr. Craveiro Frankel asked what kind of information will be maintained on station wall signage. Mr. Serebin said that those signs will be used to provide information about infrastructure – i.e. things that won't change, such as the location of exits, escalators and elevators, along with the station name.

Mr. Staudt noted the need for more platform signage to inform riders where the end of six-car trains stop. He said these signs are especially needed at airport stations and other stations that have a lot of infrequent riders, because they often wait for trains past the point where they stop and crowd the last door on the train trying to board, slowing down service.

Mr. Simone, a member of the public, asked about Metro's plans to replace the legacy real-time signage at rail stations and bus stops and said that it would be helpful to provide real-time bus information inside rail stations outside the faregates. Mr. Anderson said that Metro's goal is to replace all of the legacy PIDS, but the cost of doing so is high, but Metro hopes to upgrade screens as part of larger capital projects. Mr. Anderson noted that Metro is looking at options to make upgrades that don't involve replacing the entire infrastructure for those signs while still improving the passenger information provided and being good stewards of public funds. Mr. Anderson added that in stations where Metro has the new digital PIDS, which accounts for about one-third of Metro stations, real-time bus information is provided in the station, as shown in the presentation. He explained that Metro has recently rolled out a more consistent design for real-time signage to make the information more clear.

Mr. Shepard asked whether Metro has plans to make changes to the maps posted at bus bays. He said that, while the maps posted in stations that show the location of bus stops for each of the routes are helpful, the maps posted at the actual bus bays show all of the bus routes in a wide area, which makes it difficult to decipher destination and other information about a specific route. Mr. Serebin said that once Metro completes the pilot at L'Enfant Plaza, it will turn its attention to updating maps.

Mr. Mendelsohn said that he also found the maps that show the location of bus stops for individual routes helpful, especially in dense locations served by multiple routes that may

stop on different streets. He added that he thought it would also be helpful to include information on station ahead signage telling riders how many minutes travel time to reach subsequent stations.

Mr. Staudt thanked Mr. Anderson and Mr. Serebin for their presentation and said he looked forward to continuing to work with them as the wayfinding pilot progressed.

FY2027 Budget Public Hearings

Mr. Pasek provided the schedule for the planned public hearings on Metro's Proposed FY2027 that are scheduled for early February. He said that Metro would be holding one in-person hearing and two virtual hearings and said that RAC members were welcome to attend the hearing to listen to testimony and talk with riders in attendance. Ms. Meyer noted that Metro is also soliciting input through an online survey, which allows riders to provide comments without needing to attend a hearing. She encouraged RAC members to help Metro share information about the survey with stakeholders to increase the number of respondents.

Annual Report Committee Update

Mr. Staudt noted that the RAC's Annual Report Committee would be beginning data collection soon. He explained that every year, the RAC surveys riders to get their feedback on Metro service and noted that around 200 people responded last year and that he hoped to get a larger number of responses this year.

Mr. Shepard reviewed the proposed survey questions with the group. He said that he hoped to get a greater geographic diversity of respondents this year, especially more responses from Maryland residents. He asked members if they had any suggestions for changes or additions.

Mr. Craveiro Frankel suggested adding a question to ask respondents what networks they were a part of to help broaden the RAC's reach.

Mr. Way suggested keeping the survey relatively brief to ensure that riders would complete the whole survey and not stop partway through.

In response to a question from Ms. Stephens, Mr. Staudt said he expected the survey to be ready to be distributed very soon, within the next week.

There was further discussion among members about ensuring that the questions were neutral and not requiring respondents to list three concerns with Metro service but rather giving them the option to list up to three, in case respondents only have one or two concerns.

Mr. Simone provided an overview of the survey his group, Friends of Bus Transit, recently conducted. He said they asked specifically about the new bus network and allowed for comments. He added that open-ended comments could be helpful.

Mr. Wu suggested ways to refine the questions to more clearly differentiate between the questions asking about negative and positive feedback on riders' experience.

Mr. Staudt said that he would discuss this feedback with Mr. Shepard and hopefully circulate the final survey questions to members within the coming week. He then asked members to share which of their networks they would be reaching out to as part of the survey process. He added that he would be sending the survey out to groups that he worked with as part of the DMVMoves task force.

Mr. Habosky noted that he is well-connected with the ANCs in his Ward (Ward 5) and would be reaching out to them, along with some ANCs in Ward 6.

Mr. Mendelson said that he had connections to the high school community in Arlington and would be reaching out to them, along with local sustainable mobility advocates.

Mr. Shepard told the group that he could reach out to the Georgetown community, including student clubs and faculty members, as well as his former high school and groups in his Friendship Heights neighborhood.

Mr. Craveiro said that he had connections with various city council members and their staffs, as well as through immigrant advocacy groups. He noted that the RAC may need to translate the survey into Spanish to allow for more survey responses and added that he would be happy to assist with translation.

Mr. Way noted that there is a five-county network of senior citizens in Northern Virginia, and he could send the survey out to that group.

Mr. Wu said that he would share the survey with his neighborhood civic association. He also suggested out to the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, who may be able to help distribute the survey. Mr. Wu said that he would like to get more responses from Wards 7 and 8, in addition to trying to get more responses from Maryland. Mr. Wu also asked whether Mr. Shepard would continue the process of compiling responses via spreadsheet – he noted that the spreadsheet shows which groups RAC members reached out to, which could help encourage members to reach out to similar groups in their networks.

Ms. Stephens said that she would reach out to ANCs in Wards 7 and 8, to a colleague who works on transit equity who may be able to further distribute the survey, to the transit enthusiast community, and to a friend's sorority network in Maryland to get more Maryland responses. Mr. Staudt noted that the transit enthusiast community would be helpful in further distributing the survey, since members also care about Metro and its success. Mr.

Wu suggested that the RAC could provide a message as part of the survey submission encouraging respondents to share the survey with their networks, as well.

Mr. Sheehan said that he would reach out to the disability community via the AAC, as he has done with previous surveys.

Mr. Chen told the group that he would reach out to colleagues on Capitol Hill who likely use Metro to commute to work.

Mr. Craveiro Frankel asked whether the RAC could share information about the survey at the upcoming budget public hearing. Mr. Pasek said that he thought that would be a great idea, so long as the RAC made sure to differentiate itself and its survey from the formal budget feedback survey that Metro was conducting.

Ms. Tafesse said that she could reach out to the George Mason University community, including its transportation department.

Mr. Habosky noted that one of his neighbors works for the Montgomery County Department of Transportation and that he would share the survey with him to help get more responses from Montgomery County, as part of the goal to increase overall responses from Maryland.

Mr. Staudt said that he would also reach out to Board members, since they have networks, and encouraged members to collect email addresses from respondents to build the RAC's contact network for future recruitments and outreach.

New Business:

Mr. Way announced that Arlington County would be holding a community engagement forum on March 16th focused on the importance of transportation for older adults, and has invited a professor from Johns Hopkins University who studies the connection between transportation and health care for older adults.

Mr. Craveiro Frankel noted that some states are upgrading their electronic benefits cards to add computer chips to them, and asked whether that opened up any possibilities in regards to Metro Lift and Metro's recent implementation of contactless fare payment through its Tap.Ride.Go initiative. Mr. Staudt said that he would need to follow up with staff on that topic.

Adjournment:

Mr. Staudt thanked members for a good discussion and noted that the RAC's next meeting would be on February 4th and would be all virtual. The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.