Summary Minutes MARC Advisory Council Meeting
Thursday November 19, 2009, 4:30 P.M.
Union Station Acela First-Class Lounge
50 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

Attendees:

MARC Advisory Council

Andrea Richardson, Brunswick--Present
Carol Oberdorfer, Brunswick--Present
Chikwe Njoku, Penn & Camden--Absent
Christopher Field, Penn--Present
David Frederick, Brunswick--Present
Hameed Ahmed, Camden--Absent
Juan Calvo, Penn--Absent
Laurence Gross—Absent—Excused
Lynda Clarke, Penn--Present
Makeda Scott, Penn--Absent
Mark Dysart, Brunswick--Absent
Rafael Guroian, Penn & Camden--Present
Scott Minos, Brunswick--Absent
Steve Chan, Penn—Absent—Excused

Staff:

John Hovatter—MTA Director of MARC Train & Commuter Bus Services
Dave Johnson—MARC Trainmaster
Jim Knighton—MTA Director of External Affairs
Ira Silverman—MTA Manager of Transit Policy Development
Donna Walsh—MTA MARC and Commuter Bus Customer Service Superintendant

Guests:

Debbie Benham, Amtrak
Jeff Crooks
Michael Ditkoff
Sasha Puyans
Miriam Schoenbaum
Three other guests

Call to Order—The meeting was called to order at 4:30 PM by Chairman Rafi Guroian.

Guest Speaker: Debbie Benham—Ms. Benham explained her function with Amtrak, supporting operations and customer service for MARC and VRE. She is Amtrak's contact person for issues relating to crowd control and station fixtures at Union Station. She and John Hovatter discussed in depth specific issues relating to the timeliness and

accuracy of information posted on the Passenger Information Display (PID) equipment in the passenger waiting areas. Carol Oberdorfer suggested that each MARC line have a separate PID to display service information just for that line. Ms. Benham also described the process of communications between train crews and dispatchers. Rafi Guroian asked that Ms. Benham keep the Advisory Council in mind as a resource for resolving passenger service issues and feedback.

Rafi Guroian asked a question about recycling of trash that is removed from MARC trains. Ira Silverman mentioned that recycling of this type of trash had been tried in the past but there was not a large enough quantity to make the program feasible. John Hovatter mentioned that certain stations in the MARC system have recycling bins.

October 1, 2009 Incident at Union Station—John Hovatter mentioned that there had been some interest in discussing this incident further, and he introduced MARC Trainmaster Dave Johnson who had been at Union Station during the incident. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Hovatter both described the challenges that arise in a situation in which many people are involved in an incident but no one person has authority to make a decision. Miriam Schoenbaum mentioned that Amtrak or MARC should have standard procedures for dealing with such incidents. Mr. Hovatter responded that such procedures do exist, but their implementation can be hindered depending on where personnel and equipment are deployed at any given time. Andrea Richardson and Miriam Schoenbaum commented that significant delays still exist in communicating information via email, and asked whether MARC could use Twitter. Dave Johnson responded that under current policies implemented by the Maryland Department of Information Technology, State agencies are prohibited from using Twitter, Facebook, and similar applications.

Penn Line Improvements—John Hovatter mentioned that work has begun at Halethorpe station and that bids are being solicited for window replacement and HVAC upgrades at Penn Station in Baltimore.

Update on Quick-Trak Ticket Machines—Rafi Guroian mentioned that customers on the Brunswick Line have been charged the $3 on-board purchase fee even when ticket machines in their stations are not operational. John Hovatter mentioned that the conductors have no way of knowing when machines in a given station are not working, and they are required to charge the $3 fee. Customers can request a refund of that fee. Carol Oberdorfer mentioned that the machines currently do not allow customers to purchase tickets from stations other than the station at which the customer is buying the ticket.

New Member Recruitment—Rafi Guroian mentioned that new members will be nominated in December for election at the January meeting.

Discussion of Council Fund—Rafi Guroian mentioned that this fund could be used for outreach events for riders, such as an annual "town hall"-style meeting. John Hovatter mentioned that he would investigate providing a small budget for these types of events, and Rafi and Steve Chan would meet to discuss the idea in greater detail.

Council Website—Rafi Guroian asked Council members to contact him with ideas to improve the Council's web page.

Fall 2009 Security Checks—John Hovatter mentioned that there had been a few customer complaints regarding the random security checks. He also mentioned that the program had been undertaken as a pilot program with funding from a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grant; since there is no regular funding source, the checks would not be ongoing.

Next Meeting—The next meeting of the MARC Riders Advisory Council will be on Thursday December 17, 2009.

Adjournment—The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 PM Thursday November 19, 2009.