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Board Calls for Plan to Increase Metro Ridership by 5 Percent

(Jan. 26, 2007) The Board voted Thursday to direct the Metro Communications staff to proceed with a plan to achieve a five percent annual ridership increase over the next three years.

The communications staff was directed to develop a budget for the plan that would include the cost of the proposals. Sector governance councils and general managers are expected to provide ideas for the plan.

The plan also must address patron security and safety and include incentives aimed at "enticing youth" to use transit instead of driving. A report on the plan is due this spring.

As proposed to the Board, the plan calls for increasing ridership by realigning existing service through Metro Connections and other programs; adding more "customer-driven" services such as Metro Rapid and Rapid Express lines; and investing more resources in marketing and advertising, especially on TV and with direct mail.

In addition, the plan proposes that Metro maintain the "best fleet on the street" with maintenance programs that would include zero graffiti tolerance; providing customer information through such means as improved signage and 24-hour customer information and improving the "customer environment" with additional amenities.

The plan includes developing positive operator-customer relations, the use of station agents at some rail stations and transit centers and other programs; and eliminating barriers to transit use by promoting the use of the day pass, regional fares and other means.

The report to the Board notes that Metro's ridership grew by 4.5 times the national average in 2005 and that so far this fiscal year ridership has been trending at 4.9 percent growth. Such growth could mean an additional \$8.4 million in annual farebox revenues, the report says.

