



Committee: Directly to Council
Committee Review: N/A
Staff: Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst
Purpose: Receive briefing and have discussion – no vote expected
Keywords: #WMATA, Randy Clarke

AGENDA ITEM #3
September 20, 2022
Discussion

SUBJECT

Discussion with Randy Clarke, WMATA General Manager and Chief Executive Officer

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

Randy Clarke, GM and CEO, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)
Charles Scott, Maryland Government Liaison, WMATA

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

In May the WMATA Board of Directors announced the appointment of Randy Clarke as the new General Manager and Chief Executive Officer, replacing Paul Wiedefeld, who resigned in May. Mr. Clarke's first day on the job was July 25.

This session is an opportunity for Mr. Clarke to introduce himself to the Council and to share his short-term objectives and middle-term goals for improving WMATA safety and service. It is also the opportunity for Councilmembers to share their concerns directly with the new GM and CEO.

This report contains:

Summary of Mr. Clarke's experience	© 1
WMATA press release	© 2-3
Washington Post article	© 4-7

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Metro General Manager and Chief Executive Office Randy Clarke



Randy Clarke joined the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) as General Manager and CEO in July 2022. He's not just Metro's GM/CEO; he's also a customer who uses the service every day. The insight Randy gets from his daily rides helps him lead Metro to innovate and improve on behalf of customers.

Before joining Metro, Randy served more than four years as President and CEO of Capital Metro in Austin, Texas, where he helped secure one of the country's largest voter-approved transit referendums in US history. The initiative, called Project Connect, resulted in a multi-billion-dollar infusion for CapMetro's capital program.

Prior to his work in Austin, Randy held key leadership positions in public transportation around the country. He served as the Vice President of Operations and Member Services for the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) in Washington DC from 2016 to 2018.

Randy also spent more than six years in various positions with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) in Boston, including Deputy Chief Operating Officer and Assistant General Manager of Engineering, Maintenance and Preparedness, and Senior Director of Security.

Originally from Nova Scotia, Canada, Randy holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science and History from Acadia University and a master's degree in Public Policy from the University of Southern Maine. He lives in Washington DC with his wife Kimberley (they met in Boston while riding the subway to a Red Sox game) and their two dogs.

You can follow Randy on Twitter [@wmataGM](https://twitter.com/wmataGM).

WMATA's Board of Directors is excited to announce the selection of its new General Manager/CEO who will transform the agency and redefine how Metro continues to be an integrated part of the region's success. Randy Clarke, the current President and CEO of Capital Metro (CapMetro) in Austin, TX, will begin his new position at WMATA late summer and was selected following an exhaustive nationwide search, which included important stakeholder and public input.



Mr. Clarke has served as President and CEO of CapMetro since March 2018 and led the successful effort of securing one of the country's largest financial voter-approved referendums in history for a transit expansion. The initiative, called Project Connect, resulted in a multi-billion-dollar infusion for the organization's capital program. Mr. Clarke also worked at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) for six years beginning in 2009 in several roles including Deputy Chief Operating Officer. He also served as the Chief Safety Officer, responsible for the organization's safety oversight and Director of Security and Emergency Management at MBTA. Beginning in 2016, Mr. Clarke served as Vice President of Operations and Member Services at the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) for two years leading safety audits and industry peer reviews throughout the country.

"With the current challenges facing Metro, we knew we needed to find an accomplished and innovative executive who has a track record of effective leadership," said WMATA's Board Chair Paul C. Smedberg. "It was obvious to the Board that Mr. Clarke was clearly the one candidate who most demonstrated his ability to be a transformative, strategic thinker who would redefine how the organization moves forward over the next several decades, ensuring Metro's important role in driving future regional mobility."

"I am honored to be selected as the next GM/CEO of Metro and want to thank the WMATA Board for their confidence in me to help lead this amazing organization through a critical time in its future," said Mr. Clarke. "As a fellow transit customer, I will be focused on delivering the safe, reliable, and customer centric transit service that this region deserves. I look forward to meeting with staff, customers, stakeholders and community members to learn more about how we can collectively build a bright future together."

Lastly, CapMetro is leading the industry in its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion program, with specific focus on collaboration with labor partners and community groups. Mr. Clarke plans to continue that focus at WMATA.

Metro's current General Manager/CEO Paul Wiedefeld announced in January his decision to retire from the agency on June 30 following six years of successful service. Mr. Wiedefeld joined the organization in November of 2015 and is widely credited with leading the agency through some of its most challenging times including the Covid-19 pandemic and rail safety and reliability concerns.

"Without question, Mr. Wiedefeld was the right General Manager/CEO for Metro for the last six years," said Smedberg. "We are appreciative of Paul's commitment to the Authority and his ability to put programs in place to improve safety, service reliability and financial management."

New WMATA General Manager/CEO Term Details:

- Annual salary \$485,000
- Late summer 2022 start date (specific date to be decided)
- Five-year agreement
- Relocation benefit package includes \$4,000 per month temporary housing allowance for the earlier of (i) the date that GM/CEO closes on a house or signs a 12-month or longer lease or (ii) six months from start date
- Annual bonus eligibility of up to 10% of base salary at Board discretion, based on performance against defined goals
- Standard WMATA benefits (annual leave WMATA-paid Deferred Compensation, WMATA Defined Contribution Retirement Plan, etc.)
- Standard provisions for termination with or without cause by either party with defined severance payments under certain conditions

TRANSPORTATION

New Metro GM faces safety, financial challenges on first day

Randy Clarke's arrival comes as Metro is struggling to lure back riders amid a pandemic that devastated transit agency budgets

By Gaya Gupta and Justin George

New Metro General Manager Randy Clarke began his role at the transit agency Monday, marking the end of a leadership vacuum that was created during a tumultuous spring. Metro's top two executives resigned in May after the transit agency revealed that nearly half of its train operators had not been recertified as part of standard training and testing requirements. Clarke was expected to join Metro later this summer but last month [announced a July start](#) as the agency also struggles through a rail car suspension, service delays and a federal safety investigation.

Clarke will seek to steer the nation's third-largest transit agency through its biggest crisis [since 2015](#). Metro is struggling to lure back riders amid a pandemic that devastated transit agency budgets across the country as more people have [shifted to telework](#).

Clarke on Monday said his priorities will be improving service frequency and ensuring customer safety ahead of addressing longer-term goals, such as finances and the agency's business model.

"Crawl, walk, run," he said while beginning his commute at the Foggy Bottom station en route to Metro's headquarters at L'Enfant Plaza. "We've got to get service back to a reliable, frequent level that everyone can rely on and be really proud of."

Clarke spent his first day meeting with front-line Metro employees and elected leaders before ending the day taking questions from riders at L'Enfant Plaza.

His arrival comes less than two weeks after an [internal investigation](#) showed a Metro training and recertification lapse involving train operators occurred, in part, because the agency's former chief operating officer prioritized service levels over safety requirements. The findings found that Metro's operational leaders granted waivers for multiple employees because of pandemic-related health concerns, then issued subsequent extensions and halted trainings without consulting other department leaders.

The discovery of the lapses among 257 train operators resulted in Metro pulling 72 of its most delinquent operators from work for retraining, creating an employee shortage that slowed rail service. The slowdown became a regional flash point, coming as Metro

already was running reduced service during a rail car suspension now in its ninth month.

The agency's 7000-series cars — which make up 60 percent of Metro's fleet — were pulled in October after a defect was found in the wheels of several cars, an issue federal investigators say was known among some employees.

The recertification lapse prompted elected officials, including D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D), to question Metro's management. Paul J. Wiedefeld, the agency's general manager for six years, had planned to retire June 30 but [resigned in May](#) amid the wave of criticism. Joseph Leader, who was Metro's chief operating officer, also stepped down.

Around the same time, the commission that regulates Metrorail safety [issued an order](#) limiting Metro's ability to turn track power on and off because of repeated instances of failing to follow safety guidelines. Max Smith, spokesman for the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission, said Monday that the agency is looking forward to working with Metro's new leader, who is "ultimately accountable for the safety of riders and workers and others."

On Monday, Clarke cited customer concerns he has heard in recent weeks that he plans to address, including those about public safety, fares and cleanliness. He noted Metro's history of prioritizing service over safety, despite the concerns of regulatory agencies and regional leaders, who have urged Metro to develop a stronger safety culture. "You're not going to hear me differentiate a lot between service and safety," Clarke said. "I'm a fundamental believer that if we are delivering service, it is safe. That's not a choice."

Looming in the months ahead is a projected funding gap of more than \$300 million next year — the result of sinking fare revenue. The financial hole was plugged for two years by \$2.4 billion in federal coronavirus stimulus money, but that money will start to run out in July 2023.

Clarke will oversee the opening of the Silver Line's second phase. Metro took control of the rail extension last month from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, a milestone that raised the possibility that passenger service could begin this fall. Once open, the rail line will extend Metrorail into Loudoun County and include a stop at Dulles International Airport.

Clarke also must console disappointed riders and leaders who say Metro's train shortage and reduced service levels are hurting a regional economy that is trying to recover from the pandemic. Metrorail ridership is about 42 percent of pre-pandemic levels.

"We know you are frustrated," Kate Mattice, executive director of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, [told](#) the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board last week. "We are frustrated. Our board members are frustrated."

The commission, which represents Northern Virginia communities that fund Metro, is working on a report for release this fall intended to help the transit agency survive the funding shortage. Mattice said the report will recommend ways to boost safety, win back public trust, create a viable strategy for fare evasion, raise more non-fare revenue and rethink Metro's fare structure.

The commission also plans to review the role of Metrobus in Northern Virginia and look for places where suburban bus systems, such as Alexandria's DASH and Fairfax Connector, could replace Metrobus service to save the agency money.

"NVTC will be pressing Metro to examine and identify ways to right-size labor costs," Mattice said. "Are there better ways to fund Metro?"

While Metro officials have said little publicly about the agency's funding woes, former board members and elected leaders say the agency has four options available: cut service, ask for more subsidies, raise fares or try to pass a sales tax for Metro. Any solution also could include a combination of those options.

In Maryland, Montgomery County Council Vice President Evan Glass (D-At Large) also urged Clarke to reexamine Metro's fares.

"We need to turn the system around and encourage more ridership — which might require rethinking the basic business model and fare structure," Glass wrote in a text message. "Transit riders need service that is safe, reliable and affordable. Those need to be the top priorities for Mr. Clarke and the board."

Metro board members have said Clarke, 45, is well-suited for the challenges that lie ahead. Board Chairman Paul C. Smedberg said in a statement Monday that Clarke's "thoughtfulness and expertise paired with his enthusiasm and desire to improve service is the combination we need to make real change."

Paula Edelen, a 52-year-old office manager who commutes to her office in Virginia, said Monday that she hopes Clarke will work to improve wait times for trains, which she said are "ridiculous because it makes you late for work even if you're on time." She said she also hopes to see improvements in public safety — especially while waiting for trains — and cleaner stations. "I just want him to address the immediate problems right now ... and then we can move down further to something else," she said. "I just want safety all around."

Clarke arrives in Washington after serving as chief executive of the Austin-based Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority. He previously served in various transportation-related roles over more than two decades — including at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority in Boston, where he was chief safety officer, and at the American Public Transportation Association in Washington.

In Texas, Clarke shepherded Project Connect, a \$7 billion expansion of Austin's bus and rail service through a voter-approved referendum. Smedberg cited Clarke's experience with the project when announcing he would become Metro's next leader.

Clarke will receive an annual salary of \$485,000, which is nearly \$100,000 more than what Wiedefeld earned when he became general manager in 2015. Wiedefeld was earning \$527,000 annually when he left earlier this year.

Clarke's five-year contract includes an annual bonus eligibility of up to 10 percent of his base salary — awarded at the Metro board's discretion based on his performance of executing goals — and a monthly housing allowance of \$4,000 for up to six months. Clarke [tweeted a photo](#) of himself Friday riding a 2000-series train, the agency's oldest model of rail car still in use. Several cars in the series, introduced in 1982, have returned to the system in recent months to replace the sidelined 7000-series cars.

Clarke said Monday that his priority will be the return of more customers as Metro tries to regain its footing in the pandemic era.

"All I can tell the customers is this: I want you back, our staff wants you back, our community needs you back," he said.