

American Restroom Association

March 17, 2006

Metrorail Station Restroom Update

In 2003, per a request from Virginia State Senator Toddy Puller, Virginia's State Building Code Administrator confirmed that Metrorail had to provide restrooms to customers. Fairfax County Supervisor Dana Kauffman, and Arlington County's Chris Zimmerman, both members of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Board, used the State Code requirement as ammunition to help successfully convince fellow Board members to vote to open the restrooms. WMATA put up signs at the station kiosk and instructed the station managers to honor rider's requests. Things worked well for about a year but then they began 'locking' the already locked restrooms and at many stations the signs were removed. It was learned that after the Board vote directing staff to honor customer restroom requests, WMATA quietly published a policy that made the problem worse. For example, when there are train delays, stations become crowded and the need to use the restrooms increases. This new policy allows station managers to close the restrooms at this time, a time when some waiting riders may experience the greatest need.

It appeared, that left to WMATA, Metrorail riders, on any given ride, would never be certain a request to use the station restrooms would be honored. To address the problem the Fairfax County based Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations (MVCCA) passed a resolution that recognized the problem and asked that the restrooms mandated by States Building Codes be made available and that the Code requirement be enforced, at least in Fairfax County. At the January 2006 Fairfax County Board of Supervisor meeting, the Board unanimously agreed to task the County Executive for recommendation on a course of action. As a first step, the matter was referred to the County Attorney Office who recently confirmed that the State Codes are applicable and that Fairfax has the authority to enforce them.

Supervisor Kauffman recently told activists that based on the County Attorney's Office report he plans on asking his fellow Board members to vote to have Fairfax Code officials take action to resolve the problem at the 5 stations in their jurisdiction. Since no one on the Board is opposed to having, in their words, 'the applicable rules and regulations regarding restrooms' enforced, Dana expects passage.

For additional information visit
<http://americanrestroom.org/metrorail/>

Or feel free to contact

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"America's advocate for the availability of clean, safe, well designed public restrooms"