

# Some Metro Station Names Are Becoming a Mouthful

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New signs and maps that will soon hang throughout the subway system will appear a bit more cramped than older versions after Metro officials voted last week to lengthen the names of three stations.

The yet-to-be-opened New York Avenue Station on the Red Line will now be called the New York Avenue-Florida Avenue-Gallaudet U. Station.

The Rhode Island Avenue Station has been reborn as the Rhode Island Avenue-Brentwood Station, and the Archives-Navy Memorial stop will henceforth be called the Archives-Navy Memorial-Penn Quarter Station.

All this verbiage disturbs Chris Zimmerman, Arlington County Board member and representative to the Metro board. "If you've got more than one hyphen, it's probably too long," said Zimmerman, the only Metro board member to voice opposition to the new names.

In recent years, Metro has added names to the Vienna, Dunn Loring, West Falls Church, Ballston, Grosvenor, Woodley Park, U Street, Waterfront and Mount Vernon Square stations. GMU, shorthand for George Mason University, was added to two Virginia stations.

Bulked-up names might please directors of war memorials and universities, but they annoy plenty of taxpayers and transit riders.

"College students who do not know which station to use without seeing their college's name embedded in the station name should not be going to college," said Michael Schade, a District activist who recently took a swipe at Metro in his electronic newsletter about development. ". . . People do not use long names."

Indeed, said S.B. Master, who runs a California firm that helps clients such as Disney come up with names and brands. "When names get too long, they cease to be useful," she said. "People will find a way not to use these names. . . . They'll use shorthand or initials, or it will evolve back to what it was before, so very little or nothing will be accomplished except money spent on new signage."

A good name is useful and memorable, Master said. "It has to be something that is going to resonate with people's reality," she said. "You don't want to create something new and make people learn it. When they hear it, you don't want them to scratch their

head and say 'Huh?' "

To change a station name, the local jurisdiction in which the station sits must petition the Metro board and pay for the new signs and maps. In the case of the name changes for the three D.C. stations, the city is paying \$211,000.

Transit officials say politics has fueled the trend toward longer names. Business interests and District officials have dubbed the area around Seventh Street NW and Constitution Avenue the "Penn Quarter" and lobbied to add the name to the Archives-Navy Memorial Station. The president of Gallaudet University campaigned to add the school's name to the New York Avenue Station.

"It's purely a political decision," said Robert J. Smith, Maryland's representative to the Metro board of directors. "My personal preference is that we don't make these changes.

"If it were coming out of our budget, I wouldn't have made it. But it's the District's local prerogative, and it's their money."

D.C. Council member Jim Graham (D-Ward 1), who represents the District on the Metro board, called the pattern of beefing up station names "local empowerment."

Graham sponsored the change that created the longest station name in the system: U Street-Cardozo-African American Civil War Memorial Station, which has to be abbreviated to fit on station signs.

That's a mouthful, but it's not in the league of Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch, the name of a Welsh village that is among the longest on record.

At 58 letters, it translates to "St. Mary's church in the hollow of the white hazel near a rapid whirlpool and the church of St. Tysilio of the red cave" and was created in the 19th century as a way to lure tourists to the town.

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