

Train car delay displeases

Metro Board

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Associated Press

Metro Board members agreed to a new schedule Thursday for the delivery of new rail cars, and said they are unhappy about a nearly yearlong delay in receiving new Metrorail cars.

Metro staff told the agency's Operations Committee that part of the delay comes because Metro changed specifica-

tions on the cars after the order was placed. Metro asked for door threshold extensions, changes to wheels and axles and inter-car barriers.

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority also has rejected some of the 5000 series cars because of quality issues ranging from lumpy seat cushions to mechanical problems.

CAF, the Spanish manufacturer building 192 train cars, has delivered 76

cars so far. Forty are undergoing safety checks and 36 are available for use.

"The contractor knows we are disappointed," said Metro General Manager Richard White.

The contractor normally would charge extra to add the new features Metro asked for, and the contractor normally would face significant penalties for being so late.

Instead, Metro and CAF have bal-

anced some of those charges and set a new schedule that would deliver the new cars by April 2003, instead of this June.

CAF also would face \$2 million in penalties if it sticks to the schedule of delivering 14 cars a month until next April 2003. To meet the contract, the manufacturer plans to open a new plant in Elmira, N.Y., by July to produce six cars each month.

Board members say the crowded rail

system desperately needs new cars.

"It is contributing to the pain of customers as we do not have cars we needed yesterday," said member John Davey, who represents Prince George's County, Md.

Metro plans to more than double the size of its fleet in the next 10 to 20 years. It received three bids for the new 6000 series rail cars this week.