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Paul Wiedefeld  
General Manager  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Jack Evans  
Chairman, WMATA Board of Directors

Corbett Price  
Tom Bulger  
Jeff Marootian  
District of Columbia Representatives to the WMATA Board of Directors

December 4, 2017

Dear Mr. Wiedefeld, Chairman Evans, and members of the board:

DC Sustainable Transportation (DCST) is a coalition of business, advocacy, and government entities in the District of Columbia and Arlington County who work together on shared transportation priorities. The health and success of our region's bus system is of paramount importance to all our organizations, whose employees, customers, visitors, and members use it to get around our region.

We have had guest presentations over the past year from Chairman Jack Evans, DC CFO Jeff DeWitt, DDOT Acting Director Jeff Marootian, and many others, and would like to extend an invitation for you to speak with the group at one of our upcoming monthly coalition meetings.

Also, we understand that a comprehensive study which may redesign the bus network to be more efficient, cost-effective, and attract more riders is under consideration. We are enthusiastic about the potential for such efforts to make our buses more convenient, reliable, attractive, and useful to more people. While the rail system is the most visible and most talked-about form of transit in our region, buses are extremely important as well.

Other cities such as Baltimore and Houston have undergone bus network redesigns aimed at enhancing service in areas with high or potentially high transit ridership; providing frequencies that permit convenient transfers; and balancing the various constituencies for bus service. We agree there are significant opportunities to grow bus ridership and fare revenue in the Washington region.

We ask that any network redesign or “bus reset” closely coordinate with stakeholders such as our constituent organizations, local DOTs, elected officials, riders, and many others from the beginning. This is a process that will affect a great many people, and the best path for devising a successful outcome is to open up dialogue early and often. We are eager to help ensure this process is a success and build support among the elected leaders, advocates, businesses, and the public.

A successful bus network redesign begins with setting goals, defining values, and establishing parameters for the project. In Houston, the only council members who opposed the redesign plan were those not involved in setting goals at the start. Using the process to develop a common understanding of the region’s values for its bus service is a critical step.

DCST members have a deep understanding of the transit needs and issues in their neighborhoods and substantial expertise with transportation, and we look forward to assisting you in defining and championing this project.

We have a few specific recommendations at this time:

- The recent roll-back of late-night Metrorail hours, while perhaps necessary for the safety and maintenance of the system, nevertheless has created hardship for many businesses and workers in DC and Arlington job centers, particularly in the entertainment and hospitality sectors. Bus service represents the best opportunity to provide late-night transit in place of Metrorail, and we ask that a network redesign effort aim to restore transit accessibility during periods formerly served by Metrorail.
- We also urge that this effort start with a principle that the total quantity of bus service should not be decreased. It may be that moving buses from some lines, streets, times of day, or days of the week to others would improve the bus system, but this should be done with an eye toward attracting more riders (and consequently, more fare revenue) for the same investment rather than decreasing the total investment in bus transit.

- Better rationalizing the mix of service between WMATA and local jurisdictions could be valuable, both for financial reasons and to reduce rider confusion. Certainly any such step must be the result of extensive discussions with transportation officials and elected leaders in those jurisdictions.
- It would also be valuable to set clearer standards for regional versus non-regional (and jurisdictionally operated) bus routes. WMATA should define, and provide, a standard level of regional bus service region-wide. In addition, individual jurisdictions should have the opportunity to buy “add-on” service upgrades. If one jurisdiction wishes to have, and pay for, bus service that does not meet the regional standard, that should be possible.
- If jurisdictions do purchase additional service, it should not be counted against a 3% annual or other cost cap, such as the one you proposed in your plan earlier this year. Further, such add-ons should be tracked and measured separately. For instance, when reporting a farebox recovery ratio, the ratio for the base regional service is the most important number to use in comparing Metrobus to peer systems; add-on additional service at lower recovery ratios may well be the right decision for an individual jurisdiction, but that should be then tracked in reports like the Vital Signs Report as such.

We look forward to speaking with you further about the current status of this project and working together as it moves forward to help it successfully create significant improvements in bus service and win new riders.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Alpert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Alpert" clearly distinguishable.

David Alpert  
Executive Director  
DC Sustainable Transportation