

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Paul C. Smedberg
Chair, Board of Directors
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
300 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Chair Smedberg:

Since our summer COG Leadership Retreat, area leaders have been laser-focused on addressing WMATA's FY 2025 financial challenges. The good news is the close coordination among officials at COG, our jurisdictions, partner organizations, and WMATA has us on track to avoid major service disruptions and reduce the budget deficit shared by WMATA's General Manager. In addition, this region has seen Metro deliver strong ridership rebounds, service improvements, and enhanced efforts on public safety.

While the recent regional coordination and WMATA's progress have been encouraging, we are still facing some critical decisions that will impact our future and require our thoughtful and decisive leadership. It's often pointed out that WMATA hasn't had sustainable funding since the system's founding in the 1970s. And WMATA is just one part of a regional public transit network that has evolved over time with more than a dozen rail and bus providers offering varying service levels, different technologies and fare policies, as well as an array of funding and governing models that do not always work together for the benefit of our constituents. It should be noted that these providers have also worked hard to modify their operations and address financial challenges in recent years.

If we want to unlock our transit network's full potential and reap the transportation, economic, and environmental benefits it offers, we should seize this opportunity. I propose bringing our boards of directors together immediately to develop a long-term solution that fully addresses the complex transit needs of our region. Let's determine the type of transit network our region wants and needs, how much it will cost, how we'll pay for it, and how to best manage and govern it. On behalf of the COG Board of Directors, I invite WMATA to join us to deliver this initiative over the next year. Our two organizations are uniquely positioned to lead this effort. COG can convene a diverse group of public, private, and civic sector leaders in our role as the region's planning organization and association of area governments. Together, we can ensure all the relevant stakeholders—transit providers, union representatives, businesses, and community groups—have a seat at the table.

World-class regions deserve world-class transit, and it's up to us, as leaders, to advance this vision and ensure a more equitable, prosperous, accessible, livable, and sustainable future. I look forward to your favorable reply and encourage you and the WMATA staff to communicate with Executive Director Clark Mercer at cmerc@mwkog.org.

Sincerely,



Charles Allen
Chair, Board of Directors

April 2, 2024

The Honorable Charles Allen, Chair
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002



Dear Chair Allen:

On behalf of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Board of Directors, thank you for your willingness to partner with the Board and work with Metro leadership to address the real challenges the region, Metro and other transit providers are facing now and in the years ahead. We have been encouraged by the collaboration, conversation, and leadership that COG has shown regarding our fiscal challenges over the last several years.

The commitments made by our regional leaders have helped Metro avoid draconian service cuts that would devastate this region and erase the positive gains you acknowledged in your letter. But we still have much work to do to identify predictable and sustainable investment in WMATA and the region's transit networks.

As the WMATA Board Chair and a long-time transit advocate for this region, I have a vested interest in working towards sustainable solutions to benefit every constituent in and visitors to the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland. I agree no one entity, no matter how well intentioned, can do this alone. We must act together with the sense of urgency you express in your invitation to partner. You are correct – we have momentum on our side, but it will fizzle, and we will find ourselves in the same frustrating position if we do not move from ideas to implementation.

I speak on behalf of the WMATA Board of Directors when I say we graciously accept your invitation to partner and work towards viable solutions in the next year to address our region's transit needs for generations to come.

WMATA plays a critical role in supporting the federal government and it will be important to continue to engage Congressional leaders to ensure their support and involvement in a long-term funding solution.

I look forward to the partnership and work we have ahead in the coming year. I believe this is our region's opportunity to build a long-term vision for a comprehensive, world-class transit system that benefits the National Capital region and serves as a multimodal model for our country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul C. Smedberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chair Paul C. Smedberg
WMATA Board of Directors

cc: WMATA Board of Directors
Randy Clarke, GM/CEO

**Washington
Metropolitan Area
Transit Authority**

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A District of Columbia,
Maryland and Virginia
Transit Partnership