



National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board

February 3, 2017

The Honorable Jack Evans
Chair, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)
Board of Directors
600 5th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Re: TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee Comments on WMATA's Proposed FY2018 Budget and Restrictions in Metrorail Operating Hours

Dear Chairman Evans:

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the metropolitan Washington region, established the Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA) in 2001 to advise the TPB on issues and services important to traditionally-disadvantaged communities, including low-income communities, minority communities, people with limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, and older adults.

The TPB is transmitting the attached comments from the Access for All Advisory Committee on the Proposed FY2018 Budget (Public Hearing Docket B17-01) and the reduction of late-night service on Metrorail from its Access for All Advisory Committee.

Should you have any questions on the matter please feel free to contact to the AFA Chairman, Mr. Charles Allen, also the TPB's First Vice Chairman, at (202)724-8072, or Mr. Kanti Srikanth, the TPB Staff Director, at (202) 962-3257.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bridget Donnell Newton".

Bridget Donnell Newton
TPB Chairman

Enclosure



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Charles Allen, Chair, Access for All Advisory Committee
TPB First Vice Chair
SUBJECT: Comments from the Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee on Proposals to Reduce Metro Service
DATE: February 3, 2017

The TPB's Access for All (AFA) Advisory committee met on December 15, 2016 and discussed WMATA's proposals for Metro's FY2018 budget. The Access for All Advisory Committee has advised the TPB since 2001 on issues and services important to traditionally-disadvantaged communities. In 2016, the committee was restructured and now represents not only low-income populations, minority communities, people with disabilities, but also those with limited-English skills and older adults. The AFA committee has a long-standing practice of commenting on major transit changes that would negatively affect the communities the committee represents, and it's for this reason that the AFA requested that the following comments be sent to WMATA as part of the public comment period which closes on February 6, 2017.

The AFA is concerned about the reductions in Metrorail, Metrobus and MetroAccess services being proposed by WMATA as part of the FY2018 budget discussions.

WMATA has proposed in its FY2018 budget significant service adjustments to address declining ridership and revenue, and the need for additional funding to operate and maintain the Metrorail and Metrobus system. The public docket materials describe WMATA's proposed region-wide reductions in Metrobus, Metrorail and MetroAccess, and include the following:

- Over 25 bus routes would be eliminated;
- Service would be reduced on another 20 bus routes;
- Metrorail service would be decreased with less frequent trains for both peak and off-peak service;
- MetroAccess service would be eliminated for some customers;
- Metrobus fares would increase by 25 cents, Metrorail fares would increase between 10 and 25 cents, and MetroAccess fares would increase by 50 cents.

The bus service reductions will cause service reductions in MetroAccess since the MetroAccess service area would decrease as a result. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that MetroAccess provide service to areas within a $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile surrounding bus and rail lines. WMATA estimated 65 customers would lose service when only 14 bus lines were proposed to be eliminated, but that number would be greater if over 25 bus lines are eliminated.

Committee members recognize that low-income individuals rely heavily on bus services, and that these proposed reductions in “life line” bus service and higher bus fares, could have a compounding inequitable impact on low-income populations.

The AFA requests that WMATA consider the unique needs of low-income populations and those with disabilities when making service reductions; these groups are more dependent and transit than other groups and have the least ability to pay for alternatives.

AFA members were very disappointed with the decision to reduce Metrorail operating hours and questioned the data used to guide that decision.

The new operating hours for Metrorail to address the need for additional track maintenance time will not only reduce late-night service but also reduce early morning service on weekends. The AFA is deeply concerned about the impact these service reductions will have on low-wage shift workers who rely on Metrorail to get to and from employment sites at non-traditional hours. Non-profit organizations who support people with disabilities will also be impacted because their employees will have difficulty covering late-night and early-morning shifts. The people who can least afford alternatives, such as taxi or Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) Uber-or Lyft -type services, are the people who will bear the brunt of the service reduction. Furthermore, these alternatives may not be wheelchair-accessible. ***The AFA wanted WMATA to commit to equity in terms of wheelchair-accessible vehicles as part of the AbilitiesRide program*** that WMATA is starting in Maryland, utilizing Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Uber or Lyft, as an alternative to MetroAccess.

The AFA also questioned the validity of a survey of 16,000 riders conducted by WMATA to inform the decision to reduce late-night operation hours because of concerns the survey did not include a representative sampling of customers who utilize late-night service. When WMATA re-examines the decision on Metrorail hours of operation in two years, ***the AFA urges that WMATA’s analysis include a representative sample of riders who use late-night service, and consider the disproportionate impacts of such service reductions for those with low-incomes, minority communities, limited English-speakers and persons with disabilities.***

The AFA stresses that the proposals would have wide- ranging negative impacts on transit-dependent populations.

In summary, the AFA is writing to bring awareness to its concerns that the proposed Metro service reductions would disproportionately impact the communities that the AFA represents: minority communities, low-income populations, persons with disabilities, older adults and people with limited English skills. ***The AFA hopes that WMATA will have a continuing dialogue with these communities that will be the most affected.***

Recognizing that WMATA faces a severe funding shortfall, declining ridership and significant maintenance needs, ***the AFA also reiterates its support for a sustainable funding source for critical Metro services.***