

Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee

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May 10, 2006

Kendl P. Philbrick, Secretary
Maryland Dept. of the Environment
1800 Washington Blvd.
Baltimore, MD 21230

Dear Secretary Philbrick:

I am writing on behalf of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) to urge your support for dedicated funding for Metro, the transit system operated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). The District of Columbia has recently taken action to establish dedicated revenue for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. Representative Thomas M. Davis III has introduced legislation that would provide federal matching funds if Maryland, Virginia, and the District provide dedicated funding. MWAQC commends the District of Columbia for its action and urges Virginia and Maryland to fully support dedicated funding for WMATA's transit system.

As you know, MWAQC is certified by the governors of Maryland and Virginia and the mayor of the District of Columbia to develop regional ground-level ozone and PM_{2.5} strategies for the Washington, DC-MD-VA non-attainment area. Air pollution is a public health issue; it causes respiratory problems among those who work or exercise outdoors regularly and especially among young children, the elderly, and those with chronic respiratory diseases.

There is a strong case for the contribution of public transportation to air quality. According to a report entitled "Conserving Energy and Preserving the Air We Breathe" by the American Public Transportation Association: "for every passenger mile traveled, public transportation is twice as fuel efficient as private automobiles." The report also states: "public transportation produces 92% fewer volatile organic compounds and nearly half as much nitrogen oxides (NOx) - for every passenger mile traveled."

MWAQC believes that funding Metro is one important step the region can take to do more to improve air quality. This region expects 1.2 million new jobs and 1.6 million more people living here by 2030. We are concerned that without dedicated funding, WMATA will not be able to meet the demands of increasing ridership after 2010. The public transportation provided by WMATA will be critical to meeting both the transportation needs of our residents and better air quality for our region.

We urge you to support dedicated revenue for Metro in order to enable our region to meet its economic and environmental goals in the coming decades.

Sincerely,



Phil Mendelson, Chair
Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee