



600 Fifth Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
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December 11, 2009

Dear Mayor Fenty:

The Metro Riders' Advisory Council (R.A.C.) urges you to collaborate with WMATA to identify and implement key features of WMATA's Bus Priority Corridor Network plan, such as dedicated bus lanes, "queue jumper" lanes, revised signal timing, and signal priority technology to reduce bus delays at key bottlenecks. The R.A.C. is a 21-member citizens' advisory group composed of rail, bus, and paratransit riders from the District of Columbia, Maryland (Montgomery and Prince George's Counties), and Virginia (Arlington, Alexandria, and Fairfax).

Transit is a vital component of our region's economy and mobility. WMATA currently faces an estimated \$175 million budget shortfall for Fiscal Year 2011, and the governments of all jurisdictions in the WMATA service area will have to work together to identify solutions to this budget difficulty that preserve choices for residents across the region to travel by public transportation. A part of this shortfall comes from rising costs, including fuel, labor, maintenance and more. Some of these costs are beyond our control, but one cost driver that local governments can help reduce is the rising cost of bus service due to growing delays on a regional roadway network not optimized for bus riders.

WMATA estimates that, when complete, the Authority would save \$40-50 million per year in operating costs and \$50 million in one-time capital costs by adding 3 miles per hour to the average speed of the 25 bus corridors in the priority corridor network. They are currently studying options for achieving that improvement in efficiency. It is possible to implement some of these improvements in time for WMATA's FY2011, while others will take more time. While it is not possible to achieve the full savings for FY2011, we can make a substantial start toward this goal and assist WMATA to close a portion of the budget gap.

Buses are a far more efficient mechanism for moving people than cars along congested roadways. Each bus occupies a small fraction of the space required to transport equal numbers of people in single-passenger vehicles or even carpools. This disparity is especially stark on the highest-ridership bus lines. Since a primary purpose of our roadway network is to provide mobility for a broad range of people, we should be designing roadway elements such as traffic signals and intersections based on the numbers of people they can move, rather than the numbers of vehicles.

Better bus service not only benefits transit riders but drivers as well. Each rider who chooses to use the bus instead of driving takes a car off the road, with the concomitant decline in road congestion. For that reason, a signal retiming or queue jumper lane that optimizes an intersection to move buses benefits the bus riders and also many drivers in the region.

Unfortunately, bus service has become entangled in a vicious cycle of congestion, costs, and service reduction. As delays increase, buses take longer to reach their destinations, requiring more vehicles and more drivers to operate the route. That increases costs, and with tight budgets across the region, has resulted in reduced bus service in the form of longer headways and some route

eliminations. The reduced service means that some bus riders switch to driving, further increasing congestion.

One solution to this cycle is to fix bottlenecks that delay bus service. A well-placed queue jumper could remove 30 seconds of delay from every bus that passes a specific point, according to Metro staff estimates. A relatively frequent bus route might run 5-minute headways for 7 peak hours and 10 minute headways for 9 additional hours, for 138 buses per day in each direction. Saving each bus 30 seconds saves 70 minutes a day. Since buses cost approximately \$120 per hour to operate, that totals an estimated \$35,280 in savings each year into the future for each queue jumper installed, make bus service more appealing at the same time, and improves our region's transit options, hopefully, attracting more riders to transit and reducing congestion.

The cooperation of member jurisdictions is necessary for Metro to identify specific opportunities for such improvements. We urge you to work closely with Metro staff to find the best of such opportunities, evaluate their true cost of implementation and savings in bus costs, and then make it a priority to implement them as soon as possible.

All jurisdictions face tight budgets this year. We know it will be difficult for your jurisdictions to contribute additional funds to transit. Nevertheless, it is vital that each jurisdiction find ways to contribute to solving this problem. Implementing some bus priority features on the roadway network is one major way each jurisdiction can contribute in a non-monetary way, improve transit, save money, and improve the lives of its residents.

Thank you,

/s/

Diana Zinkl, J.D., M.C.P.  
2009 Chair, Riders' Advisory Council

Sent to: Timothy Kaine, Governor of Virginia  
Martin O'Malley, Governor of Maryland  
Adrian Fenty, Mayor of the District of Columbia  
Robert McDonnell, Governor-Elect of Virginia  
Pierce Homer, Virginia Secretary of Transportation  
Gabe Klein, Director, District Department of Transportation  
Beverley Swaim-Staley, Maryland Secretary of Transportation  
Neil Pedersen, Maryland State Highway Administrator  
Barbara Donnellan, Acting County Manager, Arlington County  
Isaiah Leggett, County Executive, Montgomery County  
Jack Johnson, County Executive, Prince George's County  
Haitham Hijazi, Director, Prince George's County Department of Public Works and  
Transportation  
Arthur Holmes, Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation

cc: Chuck Colgan, President pro tempore, Senate of Virginia  
Thomas Mike Miller, President, Senate of Maryland  
Michael Busch, Speaker, Maryland House of Delegates  
William Howell, Speaker, Virginia House of Delegates  
Vincent Gray, Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia  
Phil Andrews, Chairman, Montgomery County Council  
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Jackie Jeter, President, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689