



600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-962-2891

June 1, 2011

Chair Hudgins and Members of the Board:

As the Board concludes its deliberations on Metro's FY2012 budget, the Riders' Advisory Council would like to offer its comments.

All indications are that Metro's contributing jurisdictions will be able to provide a substantial portion of the subsidy requested as part of the General Manager's Proposed FY2012 Budget. The Council would like to offer its appreciation for your work both as Board members and representatives of your respective jurisdictions in making this happen. We understand that increasing support for Metro is especially challenging given current economic conditions. The Council would also like to publicly thank Metro GM/CEO Richard Sarles for putting forward an initial budget that recognized the critical nature of Metro service and started from a presumption of no cuts in service.

With regard to the specific items laid out as part of the public hearing process, the Council is opposed to the weekend rail headway widening proposed. While we understand the rationale for proposing these specific changes to rail service, these changes would negatively impact *all* of Metro's 300,000+ Saturday riders and 200,000+ Sunday riders. The proposed cost savings are not worth the added wait times for literally tens of millions of riders throughout the year.

Regarding the specific proposals for changes to or elimination of certain Metrobus services, the Council feels that the feedback provided by members of the public as part of the public hearing process is much more specific and useful than it would be able to provide. We would, however, urge Metro staff to work with the Board to "de-couple," as much as possible, the service planning process from the annual budget development process. Including service changes in budget hearings blurs the reasoning behind many of these changes – rather, it makes it appear that service is being cut to close a specific budget hole rather than to strategically align the Metro network to operate more efficiently or to provide better service.

Thank you again for all of your hard work in shepherding the FY2012 budget to its adoption.

Please don't hesitate to contact me or any other members of the Council should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Frank DeBernardo, Chairman