

Public Comment

Metro Board of Directors Meeting

November 17, 2022



Howard Crystal (District of Columbia)

I am writing to urge that WMATA make the investments necessary to rapidly transition the bus fleet away from fossil fuels. The climate emergency demands that we electrify everything as we move to a renewable energy grid. Electrifying the bus fleet will also give us cleaner air and a healthier environment, a win-win-win for all of us. Please make this a high priority in your planning. Other cities are moving much faster and our region must continue to be climate leaders! Thank you for your efforts on behalf of the City and region -

Judah Lesser (Prince George's County, MD)

At the last meeting, Metro proposed turning back the Yellow line at Mt Vernon. However, I would encourage Metro to consider instead running the Yellow line all the way to Greenbelt and turning the Green line back at Mt Vernon. This should be verified with ridership data, but I suspect there are more trips from the northern Green line to the southern Yellow line, than from the northern Green line to the southern Green line.

Tom Quinn (District of Columbia)

Hi: I am submitting this comment to urge the WMATA board to insist that the pending order to modernize the WMATA bus fleet require that the entire order consist of electric buses. For 4 years I lived less than a block from the Western Bus Garage in Friendship Heights and the smell from the diesel buses was a constant presence in the neighborhood as was the noise. I am also urging the WMATA board to require that the pending modernization of the Western and Northern bus garages only be designed for electric buses and not diesel buses and that the other bus garages also be converted to electric buses only. Thank you for considering this request which will improve our local air quality and also lessen WMATA's carbon footprint. Tom Quinn ANC Commissioner, 3E04

Mike Litt (District of Columbia)

Dear Metro Board of Directors, My name is Mike Litt. I am a car free renter in Ward 6 of Washington, DC. I frequently ride Metrorail and Metrobus. I love that Metro gives me the freedom to get around the DMV without a car. However, I wish doing so was more sustainable. That will require moving away from the pollution and climate emissions caused by fossil fuels. While I appreciate WMATA's zero-emissions bus goals you have adopted, I urge you to hasten the timeline. As a new United Nations report published at the end of October warned, the window for limiting climate emissions is closing. Given that transportation is the District's second leading source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, accounting for 21 percent of such emissions, WMATA will play an essential role in our response to the threat of climate change. For starters I ask you to heed the DC Council resolution passed earlier this year, urging WMATA to buy only electric buses going forward instead of waiting until 2030 to achieve its goal of 100% zero-emissions bus purchases. I hope that WMATA's proposed FY24 budget will allocate more for electric buses than it did in FY23, a year during which investments in electric buses paled in comparison to fossil fuel costs and funding for additional diesel and gas burning buses. We cannot afford to put new polluting buses on the road when really we should be taking them off of it. According to the TPB Climate Change Mitigation Study of 2021, the scenario that gets us the closest to meeting the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' goals for GHG emissions includes having 100% electric buses on the road by 2030. I urge you to act on such a timeline. Thank you,
Mike Litt

Carol Pickens (Arlington County, VA)

Thanks for opening the Silver line, a boon for travelers! But I have a comment/suggestion. The weekend morning schedule to Dulles--not opening until 7:00 a.m., combined with discontinuing the 5A bus--is problematic for folks with morning flights from Dulles. I live in Crystal City. Assuming about 1 hour to get from Crystal City to Dulles (given impeccable timing for train arrivals at both stations—leaving Crystal City at 7:15 or so and transferring in Roslyn) plus a 5-10 minute walk to get to the airport itself, plus another hour to get through security, check-in, and to the gate 30 minutes before it's closed, the earliest flight I could take would be about 9:30. My stars rarely align that perfectly. Absent metro to Dulles, I have taken the 5A leaving Roslyn at 5:45 and arriving at Dulles about 6:25. But, that option is being eliminated. And it's not all about me. What about the many airport workers who rely on public transportation to get to work, including on weekends? Would it be possible to start Silver line service at 5:00 a.m. every day (including weekends) or to restore the 5A bus on weekends? This weekend morning schedule issue as currently planned is problematic for many people. I hope you will be able to come up with a solution! Thanks, Carol Pickens

Elliott Negin (Union of Concerned Scientists and the Metro Electric Bus Coalition)

Was the Metro board aware that three months ago the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced \$1.66 billion in grants to 150 bus fleets and facilities across the country to transition to zero-emissions technologies? Los Angeles' transit agency, which plans to electrify its fleet of 2,320 buses by 2030, received more than \$104 million to help pay for the transition. Boston's transit agency, which is slated to electrify its 1,100 buses by 2040, received \$116 million. New York City's bus authority, which—like Boston's—is scheduled to transition its 5,800 buses to zero-emission by 2040, also got \$116 million. Smaller transit agencies in our region also won FTA grants. The District Department of Transportation's Circulator system, which plans to have an all-electric fleet by 2039, received nearly \$9.6 million. The Montgomery County Department of Transportation, meanwhile, received \$14.8 million. How much did Metro get? Nothing. Why? We suspect that Metro managers did not even apply for a grant. We hope we are wrong and Metro did apply. The FTA received 530 project proposal requests totaling more than \$7.7 billion, so obviously not all applicants got grants. But if Metro did not apply, it underscores our suspicion that Metro managers and staff are not truly committed to expeditiously transitioning to a zero-emission fleet. There will be other opportunities for Metro to apply. The bus grant awards, which the FTA made under its Buses and Bus Facilities and Low- and No-Emission Vehicle programs, are the agency's first competitive grant selections under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Are Metro managers planning to apply for grants in the future?

Steve Banashek (Virginia Sierra Club)

A top agenda item at the 27th UN Conference of the Parties climate negotiations taking place this week in Egypt is how to implement the Global Methane Pledge, an agreement signed last year by 119 countries to cut methane emissions by 30 percent this decade. It is critical to achieve that goal to avoid the worst consequences of climate change because over the first 20 years after its release, methane is more than 80 times more potent at warming the planet than carbon dioxide. Instead of moving expeditiously to wean the Metrobus fleet off of methane—the primary component of natural gas—Metro plans to expand the percentage of compressed natural gas buses (CNG) in its fleet, continue to purchase them until 2030, and build a new CNG fueling facility at the Shepherd Parkway Garage. Metro managers claim CNG buses are “lower-emission,” but they are no cleaner than diesel buses. They emit significantly more carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons than diesel buses, and—according to Argonne National Laboratory data—are responsible for at most 6 percent less lifecycle global warming emissions than diesel buses. Moreover, in many instances, they account for virtually the same amount of global warming emissions as diesel buses due to methane leaks and worse fuel economy. Our coalition, the D.C. Council, and four dozen other elected officials in the region have called on Metro to stop buying fossil fuel buses, replace half its fleet with electric buses by the end of the decade, and cancel plans to build new CNG fueling infrastructure. The Metro board must stop Metro from wasting millions of taxpayer dollars on new CNG fueling infrastructure, which the 2021 Fleet Management Plan shows will become a stranded asset as soon as Metro begins to transition its bus fleet to an electric one.