

Public Comment

Metro Board of Directors Meeting

December 08, 2022



Benjamin & Molly Kairn (District of Columbia)

Dear Metro Board of Directors, While we 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

Chris Powell (District of Columbia)

Please prioritize electric busses in your next budget. It is vital that WMATA comes up to speed with other larger metropolitan areas. I moved from San Francisco years ago and they had electric busses before I left. As mass transit becomes more important in fighting our changing climate, WMATA must lead the way. Thank you.

Hailey Brue (Friends of Cancer Research)

Toxic emissions from buses driving up and down our streets every 20 minutes, 14 hours a day, seven days a week, pose a threat to public health. Metro's buses run on diesel or compressed natural gas (methane) and emit carbon pollution, particulate matter and nitrogen oxides into our air every day. Diesel tailpipe pollution has been linked to cancer, respiratory problems, heart disease, and premature death. Like diesel buses, CNG buses emit hydrocarbons, which have been linked to lung disease, and nitrogen oxides, the main component of smog. Metro's plan to continue to purchase fossil fuel buses until 2030 and slow-walk adding electric buses to its fleet will condemn area residents to two more decades of toxic and carbon bus pollution. Other major transit agencies and smaller ones in our region are facing the same challenges to electrify their fleets. But unlike Metro, they are addressing them head on and have ambitious plans to transition as quickly as possible. There is no reason why Metro cannot do the same.

Holly Pollinger (District of Columbia)

My name is Holly Pollinger and I have lived in Ward 3 for 50+ years. I have seen WAMATA deal with various issues over the years, but none is as important as the switch to electric buses and away from dirty fossil fuels. A few years ago, your goals would have been admirable, but they are no longer. I urge you to hasten the timeline and increase the budget for more electric buses. You play a vital role in D.C.'s response to climate change. The handwriting is on the wall – and you can lead by example. Please heed the Council's call to buy only electric and have 100% electric buses on the road by 2030. Thank you.

Michael Barrett (District of Columbia)

Friends, I chose DC as my “second city” in retirement because a vehicle is unnecessary. While covid reduced the number of bus stops and service initially, I use the system daily now for short and long haul trips—including my metro trip on the silver line to Dulles yesterday, wonderful! My “other city” (Milwaukee) provides free downtown rail service called “the Hop.” No worries. No money. No transfers. No change. Hop on! I love D.C.! Make bus service fee free for all residents, guests, visitors, and commuters. It’s a marriage made for all of us.

Eli Begoun (Montgomery County, Maryland)

Instead of raising the fare price, why don't you enforce a ban on gate jumping. I see 15 to 20 riders jump the gate during rush hour, each time I pay. Perhaps the answer is to join the gate jumpers and not pay. Change the ineffective turnstiles to jump proof kind . . . Plastic doors that close and only allow one person at a time.

Patricia Taylor (Montgomery County, Maryland)

Dear Board of Directors, I've been using WMATA buses and trains for my entire life. As a kid, my family took the train downtown to the museums, in college, I took the train home from College Park, and for my entire working career, I've relied on WMATA public transit. I've entered a new life chapter with pregnancy and I'm both disappointed and frustrated to discover that pregnant riders are not eligible for priority seating. Pregnancy is not listed on the priority seating signage on the trains, nor is it mentioned on any of the webpages below.

Patricia Taylor (cont.)

<https://www.wmata.com/service/accessibility/metrobus.cfm> •

<https://www.wmata.com/rider-guide/rules/> This February the Federal Transit Administration published Analysis of Challenges Facing Pregnant Women Riding Public Transit (<https://www.transit.dot.gov/research-innovation/analysis-challenges-facing-pregnant-women-riding-public-transit-report-0211>). I encourage the board and WMATA leadership to review this report. Several excerpts are included below. • “Priority seating is required by the ADA on both fixed-route bus and rail (rapid, light, and commuter) for persons with disabilities.

Patricia Taylor (cont.)

Signage in a priority seating area must inform other passengers that they should make the seats available to persons with disabilities who wish to use them. Additionally, many systems have “courtesy” policies that ask passengers to relinquish seats anywhere to people covered by the ADA, older adults, pregnant riders, and young children to increase both safety and comfort.” • “Overcrowding and/or non-compliance with courtesy seating policies add discomfort and may pose increased risk for pregnant women riding transit.” I urge WMATA to help protect the health and safety of pregnant women by taking actions such as adding pregnant riders to the list of passengers eligible for priority seating. Thank you.

Phill Posner (People with Disabilities using MetroAccess)

The GM's Draft Budget proposes reduced fares for low-income customers (those registered for SNAP). It states that this will be paid for by a 5% increase in Bus/Rail Fares. The Budget proposes calculating MetroAccess fares as twice the non-discounted fastest fixed route fare for a comparable trip. Thus: the disability community using MetroAccess will be charged 10% more for their trips, in order to pay for the proposed discount for people receiving SNAP benefits.

Ethan Parker (Outside)

First, I want to say congrats to all of you on FINALLY getting Silver line phase 2. 6 years late but hey better late than never, right? Gotta focus on the positive and that's the fact you all kept grinding to get this thing open! No one wants this more than me. Too bad I didn't get to go on opening day on the 6000 series train that posed as the inaugural train (similar to phase 1's inaugural run) and spray champagne in all in people's faces like NHL players do after Stanley Cup wins or MLB players after the world series lol. While I don't actually live in dc anymore, I do still go every few months to this day almost like I never left so I am still very cognizant of everything. Of course, while phase 1 opened in July 2014, my first time checking out the 5 phase 1 stops didn't occur until June 2015 if I recall correctly so I'm at peace for not being able to be there for this inauguration. And I commend GM Randy for his efforts on the job so far.

Ethan Parker (Cont.)

I can only imagine how difficult it's was to walk into a position on something bitter as train shortages and more adversity than usual and all that rather than in a more smooth and positive way. Secondly, I have some concerns about certain turnbacks potentially on the line. Ill start with the Silver Spring ones that ended in July 2019. A lot of northeastern red line riders are going to disagree with me and hate me for saying this lol but the Silver Spring turns I have never had much of an issue with due to the sparse population at Forest Glen, Wheaton and Glenmont respectively unlike all the other stops between Silver Spring and Shady Grove so I got nothing concerning to say about that particular one. Now the other 2 I am highly recommending these don't be done. Ill mention Grosvenor first that ended in December 2018, I highly oppose Grosvenor because I know how complicated it can be for staff to maintain so many switches at one time and how crowded it can be at certain stops past Grosvenor such as Shady Grove.

Ethan Parker (Cont.)

Hell, Shady Grove is the busiest station in all of Montgomery County from what I know, and I know a lot of land redevelopment has occurred at the 4 stops past in the last 2-3 years. Also, Mt. Vernon Square that ended in April 2019 is the biggie at least for me. This is the most concerning because while the "core" may be the most used out of everything, others that are on that segment but not necessarily in the core tend to have relatively high ridership as well such as Shaw Howard and College Park with students at Howard University and Univ of MD respectively (especially U of MD since that is a big 10 school) and also College Park serving Amtrak/MARC as well. Also, Fort Totten we know also serves the Red Line and we all know how catastrophic the Red Line can be at certain times lol. I also think about how Greenbelt is right off the Capital Beltway and how chaotic the beltway can be like at rush Hour and how it's the closest stop to BWI airport and how many BWI employees and travelers rely on it and like College Park, Greenbelt also serves Amtrak/MARC and lots switch back and forth since some stations are different on those than wmata.

Ethan Parker (Cont.)

Greenbelt would be easier to maintain for the employees controlling the switches since it requires less switches and reduces the chances of trains getting into traffic jams since its at the end where trains arrive and leave in the same direction and doing both the Greenbelt interlocking and the Mt. Vernon Square pocket track can be complicated for staff because it requires more switches and compromising positions. The more switches there are the more difficult it could be and the more chances of traffic jams could increase as well. Also, people who are unfamiliar could get confused if they look at the map and how the Yellow isn't all the way. Also, people like that having it gives them a chance to connect between northern PGC and Alexandria which the Green doesn't do. I also feel that while certain stops like the Green may be getting heavy like Navy Yard mostly cause of Baseball, I get the sense that deep down not everyone is going to the same place. Even if one area is heavier than another you never know so better to be safe than sorry.

Ethan Parker (Cont.)

I just think about how if a person were to arrive at Greenbelt and there's both a Branch Avenue Green and a Huntington Yellow serving the stop simultaneously and there going to need one or the other depending on where there going. Example being if a person were to go to a Nats game, they would learn that they specifically need the Green in order to do so or if someone had a flight out of DCA, they would specifically need the Yellow or if they were to go to a caps game they could do either one which ever leaves first. I also speak about how in the past people at Gallery Place Chinatown tend to feel overwhelmed at seeing a train arrive and depart only going 1 more stop farther and having to get off at the next then wait for another to come up adding extra time to getting home if they live north and can potentially create dangerous conditions if the Mt Vernon Square platform gets too crowded and the risk of people falling onto the tracks due to the lack of breathing room on the platform.

Ethan Parker (Cont.)

I totally understand the "core" is the most used but I believe everything combined needs to be a focus since most people don't technically live in the "core" like area. I also want to recommend that if crowds are coming and if more 7s are coming maybe make other fleets 8 cars again too like 3ks and 6ks so crowds can be alleviated more, especially 6ks since those under normal circumstances before the 7k issue were almost exclusively 8 cars. Anyway, that's enough of my rambling lol, I do hope these thoughts are taken seriously though especially now since the world we live in just in general not here specifically has a lot of reverse psychology in it. Anyway, love you all and out of respect and common courtesy, I got no further comment at this time.