



December 14, 2023

Metro faces an unprecedented budget crisis

Additional funding could avoid service cuts, fare increases, layoffs

Dear Metro customers,

Today, I released **my proposed budget** that includes unprecedented service cuts and fare increases.

This is not the budget we want to propose but unfortunately, this is the budget we have with the funding that's available.

First, let me thank all of you for choosing Metro – one of the largest provider of public transit in America – as your trusted, reliable way to connect you to all the possibilities in the region. We are moving 850,000 riders each weekday on bus and rail, with record high customer satisfaction. Because of your loyalty and our team's incredibly hard work, we've restored our 7000-series rail fleet, opened the Silver Line extension and Potomac Yard-Virginia Tech station, deployed our first electric buses, met or beat our annual safety metrics, reduced crime and fare evasion, and delivered our seventh consecutive clean independent financial audit.

Your Metro is supported by essential workers who live in the communities we serve and earn a living wage to provide for their families. They are our neighbors, friends, family, who work 24/7, 365 days a year serving the DMV. Metro is the backbone of our regional economy: the half mile around Metrorail stations is just 3% of the region's land but contains 30% of property value, valued at \$328 billion; 40% of jobs; 65% of new office development; 50% of new apartments.

Constrained by Metro's funding structure, this budget proposal lays out two possible Metro futures. The first, forward-looking vision builds on indisputable achievements to date and delivers on the goals of our adopted, region-supported **Strategic Transformation Plan: Your Metro, The Way Forward**. The vision would fund full rail and bus service; continuing to implement the **Better Bus Network Redesign**; ordering the first option of new, locally-assembled 8000-series railcars to retire the oldest cars in the fleet; return the Yellow Line to Greenbelt; advancing equitable paratransit for customers; investing in retaining and rewarding staff performance; developing the next generation, technology-ready workforce; achieving our zero-emission bus program to meet regional climate targets; and preserving capital for needed infrastructure repairs and modernization.

Unfortunately, the second scenario is our actual budget proposal which does not deliver on that vision. It would be a giant step backward and jeopardizes Metro's current advancements. It guts rail and bus service by a third, eliminates thousands of jobs, hikes fares by 20%, and reduces connectivity to airports and other key activity centers. Metro is faced with the end of federal

pandemic relief money, and historic inflation that has for years pushed costs for everyone even higher. This scenario will be publicly and transparently discussed by Metro's Board of Directors early in the new year.

In preparing these two drastically different scenarios, I want you to know that Team Metro is doing what is within our power to protect rail, bus, and MetroAccess services, jobs, and continue supporting the region. Thanks to more frequent service and the Silver Line extension, Metro is transporting more people every day than all three regional airports combined. The new Silver Line extension served its millionth customer at Dulles since opening a year ago. Bus network improvements have resulted in growth to about 400,000 daily riders, or about 95% of pre-pandemic levels, and more than 100% on weekends.

We are digging deep, saving \$95 million last year, and \$50 million in new and recurring savings through vacancy cuts, reduced supplies, consultants and contract services, call center consolidation, and the introduction of new technology.

We have also made the difficult decision to eliminate salary increases and implement a hiring freeze which does not reflect the incredible work of our team. As an action of last resort, we must potentially use precious capital funds to cover maintenance costs for fleets, stations, and tracks, to reduce our budget gap.

Simply said, there is no silver bullet. Even if we immediately returned to full pre-pandemic ridership and fare revenue it would still not be enough to address the current deficit. We continue to address fare evasion throughout the region and are quickly retrofitting faregates which has increased fare enforcement significantly.

Closing the remainder of the budget gap through service cuts and fare hikes would be painful for customers, bus and rail operators, police officers, track workers and mechanics. Just as ridership is accelerating, Metro would have to reduce rail and bus service back to pandemic levels, below what is needed to accommodate our current level of ridership.

Even those who don't ride daily will feel the impacts -- if we think traffic is bad now, imagine what impact people switching to cars would have on road congestion, parking and pollution. Importantly, there are very real consequences for local jobs, as Metro service cuts means laying off thousands of employees who are neighbors, friends, and relatives.

In considering the budget options, we hope the region remembers that our essential workforce are the same individuals who showed up through the pandemic to move residents, business travelers, and tourists to hospitals, schools, and entertainment events, as well as to America's national monuments, museums, and memorials. Metro plays a vital security role for the federal government, providing transportation for thousands of government employees traveling to and from defense agencies, such as the Pentagon and Department of Homeland Security. We've demonstrated multiple times how important the system is in a time of crisis—from weather events to national emergencies such as 9/11. And, as the transit provider for the nation's capital, Metro is depended upon for major events such as the Cherry Blossom festival, World Pride, Inaugurations, sports championships, and first amendment activities.

We are a critical public service and need to be funded as such.

Team Metro answered the call to do better over the last year. Service is more frequent and reliable, and customers are responding by returning in growing numbers. Now, it's up to the public – customers, employees, community, and

businesses we serve, and elected officials – to join us in solving this crisis. I hope you will make your voices heard during the **public comment period** which starts in January as we all know what a healthy Metro does for the region's economy and sustainability.

Sincerely,



Randy Clarke
General Manager & Chief Executive Officer
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority



Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
WMATA.com

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority | 300 7th St. SW, Washington, DC 20024

Unsubscribe.jturner@wmata.com

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by jwpascale@wmata.com powered by



Try email marketing for free today!