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Washington, DC 20024  
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January 12, 2024

Mayor Muriel Bowser  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20004

*via email*

Dear Mayor Bowser:

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) serves in an advisory role to the WMATA Board of Directors and represents the diverse concerns of nearly 400,000 daily riders who use the Metro system (bus, rail and paratransit). Riders come from all backgrounds, including federal workers, military personnel, families, students, people working multiple jobs, and airport employees. Metro (both bus and rail) is a lifeline to many riders to get to work, school, the doctor's office, the grocery store, and other important community services. To state that riders are concerned about the short and long-term health of the Metro system is an understatement.

In 2018, the Virginia and Maryland General Assemblies imposed 3 percent caps on growth on their respective annual operating subsidies to WMATA. Although the subsidy caps might have made sense in 2018, they could prove devastating to riders in 2024 and beyond. Metro riders, businesses, social services and government agencies in the District will undoubtedly be affected. The potential to upend riders' lives is exacerbated by the loss of COVID-era federal financial assistance. Accordingly, based on WMATA budget models, riders face up to 60 percent service cuts. For Capital-region rail riders, this means the likely prospect of 20 to 30 minute wait times at various stations. We fear it means less Transit Police officers and more safety concerns. Quite simply, riders are deeply concerned that service cuts will result in drastically decreased ridership and potentially herald the end of Metro as we know it.

The RAC's 2023 Annual Report identified the long-term health of the Metro system and consistency of operations as top concerns among riders. Sixty percent of riders who contributed to the report specifically expressed concern that the system will gradually cease being a viable source of regional public transportation. Without timely action from the Virginia and Maryland General Assemblies, as well as tangible support from the Federal Government and the District, those concerns will prove prescient. Riders are likely to abandon the system in droves and the entire Capital region will feel the collateral effects.

Budget issues are full of metrics, numbers and quantifiable data points. But for riders, the Metro budget issue is personal. The RAC continues to collect personal stories from riders detailing how the potential service cuts will affect them. Many lives will be upended. Families risk

additional expenses over child care. Longer commutes will decrease workplace production or missed medical appointments. Riders flatly reported to the RAC that they will indeed abandon the system if service is drastically decreased. Please view an online sampling of comments from RAC members and others from across the transit zone expressing what a drastic cut in service means to them: [Riders Express Concerns about Proposed Drastic Metro Service Cuts](#)

As noted, Metro (both bus and rail) is not just a vital, transcendent part of the Capital region and a lifeline for more than 400,000 daily riders. Each number represents a real person in the community with diverse needs. Timely action and support by the District is needed to preserve safe, reliable mass transit now and for years to come. The RAC, along with our partners with the WMATA Accessibility Advisory Committee, stands ready to assist you in ensuring that riders and their fundamental needs are represented. We urge you to move quickly to help ensure that the District adequately contributes to Metro funding and resourcing in order to stave off drastic service cuts.

Sincerely,

*Mike Lebowitz*

Michael J. Lebowitz (Virginia)  
Chair, WMATA Riders' Advisory Council

Cole Staudt, Vice Chair (District of Columbia)  
Majalya Fernando, Vice Chair (Maryland)  
Solomon Chen (Virginia)  
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Lucas Habosky (District of Columbia)  
Brian Meyer (Virginia)  
Dina Passman (District of Columbia)  
Patrick Sheehan, Accessibility Advisory Committee Representative (Maryland)  
Brandon Wu (District of Columbia)

cc: Members, Council of the District of Columbia