



300 7<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20024  
(202) 962-2511

January 12, 2024

Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair  
Maryland House Appropriations Committee  
Room 121, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

*Via email*

Dear Delegate Barnes:

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 Maryland General Assembly imposed a 3 percent cap on growth on Maryland's annual operating subsidy to WMATA. Although the subsidy cap might have made sense in 2018, it could prove devastating to riders in 2024 and beyond. According to WMATA, riders face up to 60 percent service cuts. For Maryland 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 Maryland General Assembly, those concerns will prove prescient. Riders are likely to abandon the system in droves and the entire national 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 our community and a lifeline for more than 400,000 daily riders. Each number represents a real person in the community with diverse needs. Timely action by the Maryland General Assembly is needed to preserve safe, reliable mass transit now and for years to come. The RAC stands ready to assist you in ensuring that riders and their fundamental needs are represented.

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)  
Leonard Edwards (District of Columbia)  
Lucas Habosky (District of Columbia)  
Brian Meyer (Virginia)  
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Brandon Wu (District of Columbia)



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January 12, 2024

Delegate Courtney Watson, Chair  
Transportation & Environment Subcommittee,  
Maryland House Appropriations Committee  
Room 121, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

*Via email*

Dear Delegate Watson:

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January 12, 2024

Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair  
Maryland Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
3 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

*Via email*

Dear Senator Guzzone:

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.

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January 12, 2024

Senator Sarah Elfreth, Chair  
Transportation & Environment Subcommittee  
Maryland Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
3 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

*Via email*

Dear Senator Elfreth:

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