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February 22, 2024

Chair Smedberg and Members of the Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Riders' Advisory Council's report for February 2024.

FY2025 Budget and Outreach:

In January 2024, the Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) sent numerous [letters](#) (see link) to elected officials describing the impact service cuts will have on riders if Metro doesn't get the timely funding it needs. Since that time, officials in the District, Maryland, and Virginia, proposed additional funding that—if approved—will soften the short-term blow to riders. Last week, the RAC sent more than 20 follow-up letters stating that riders are now looking to these officials to take their funding commitments to the finish line.

The RAC further noted that the combined funding proposals are not likely to completely stave off targeted service cuts and fare increases, in addition to the short-term nature of the commitments. But for the short term, the RAC is taking the approach that riders cannot rest easy until funding commitments are officially approved. As such, the RAC will continue to urge elected officials in the District, Maryland, and Virginia, to consider the rider experience and perspective as an important factor as they work to finalize Metro resourcing.

In preparation for the RAC's follow-up letter campaign, the RAC invited Regina Sullivan, Metro's Director of Government Relations, to provide a status update on where the budget process stood. Ms. Sullivan's candor was much appreciated and her presentation provided useful insight that helped inform the RAC's planning. The RAC sought to ensure that it was appropriately educating elected officials on the rider experience and perspective in a manner that would be productive for all concerned. In addition, the follow-up letters informed elected officials that the RAC is available to them as a resource on the rider perspective, and if requested, the RAC will ensure that rider representatives are available to meet, discuss, or otherwise share information pertaining to the rider standpoint and their fundamental transit needs.

Specific letters submitted by the RAC last week went to the following:

- *District of Columbia* – Mayor Bowser, with cc: to all thirteen Council members

- *Maryland* – relevant House and Senate Committee and Subcommittee Chairs as follows:
 - Del. Ben Barnes, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
 - Del. Courtney Watson, Chair, Transportation & Environment Committee, House Appropriations Committee
 - Sen. Guy Guzzone, Chair, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
 - Sen. Sarah Elfreth, Chair, Transportation & Environment Subcommittee, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
- *Virginia* – relevant House and Senate Committee and Sub-Committee Chairs as follows:
 - Del. Luke Torian, Chair, House Appropriations Committee, with cc: to all committee members
 - Del Paul Krizek, Chair Transportation & Public Safety Sub-Committee, House Appropriations Committee, with cc: to all sub-committee members
 - Sen. Louise Lucas, Chair, Senate Finance Committee, with cc: to all committee members
 - Sen. Jeremy McPike, Chair Capital Outlay & Transportation Sub-Committee, Senate Finance Committee, with cc: to all sub-committee members

As always, thank you for your time and attention, and I remain available for any questions.

Sincerely,

Mike Lebowitz

Mike Lebowitz, Chair
Riders' Advisory Council