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November 3, 2010

Councilman Jim Graham, Chairman
Committee on Public Works and Transportation
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 116
Washington, DC 20004

Councilman Graham:

I am writing to ask for your assistance, in your capacity as Chairman of the Council's Committee on Public Works and Transportation, in revising the District's permitting process for street closures in order to significantly improve communication with Metrobus riders in the District of Columbia. These revisions would require the permit applicant to cover the cost of fabricating and installing signage at bus stops to alert the traveling public to changes to bus service as a result of the street closure.

A common rider complaint is that when Metrobus and other bus services are rerouted to accommodate special events or other pre-planned street closures, riders are not given clear information about the location of relocated bus stops and the duration of the street closure and subsequent bus service disruptions. Metro staff have been working collaboratively with the Riders' Advisory Council's Metrobus Committee to improve communications to riders during street closures. For example, based on input from the Metrobus Committee, Metro recently began adding more detailed detour information to its press releases, and is working to add detour information to its interactive voice-response (phone) system. However, we believe that signage at bus stops is critical to effectively communicating with riders impacted by road closures. This signage would directly target the affected stops and riders and would not require riders to seek out information about changes in service; the information would be literally right in front of them.

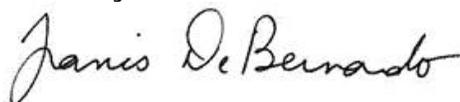
Of course, during this time of extremely constrained resources, neither Metro nor the District government is in the position to fund additional programs. In order to ensure that these critical communications are funded, we propose that the District include the cost of manufacturing and installing temporary signage in any fees levied as part of the street closure permitting process.

This idea has been vetted with staff from both Metro and the District Department of Transportation, who did not raise objections to the approach. Staff suggested that the actual printing and installation of these temporary signs be performed by Metro, to ensure that the signs are consistent both in terms of their appearance and the information that they provide.

The Riders' Advisory Council looks forward to working with you and your colleagues on the Committee on Public Works and Transportation to advance changes to the street closure permitting process to improve public transit in the District of Columbia.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide you with any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank DeBernardo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "F" and "D".

Frank DeBernardo, Chairman

DRAFT