



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Shannon Valentine
Secretary of Transportation

February 5, 2021

The Honorable Dave W. Marsden, Chairman
Senate Transportation Committee
Post Office Box 10889
Burke, Virginia 22009

The Honorable Delores McQuinn, Chairman
House Transportation Committee
Post Office Box 406
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Senator Marsden and Delegate McQuinn,

Virginia Code § 33.2-3102 requires the Secretary of Transportation to provide a quarterly update on Virginia's efforts to work with its counterparts in Maryland and the District of Columbia, as well as the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), on necessary reforms of the Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) to support a viable transit system. This letter serves as the update for the quarter ending December 31, 2020.

- I) **Legal and organizational structure of WMATA**
- II) **Composition and qualifications of the WMATA Board of Directors and the length of terms of its members**

WMATA Board Membership: Chapter 429 of the 2018 Acts of Assembly directed the Secretary of Transportation to conduct a review of the WMATA Board of Directors (Board) membership provisions to determine whether the criteria used for membership eligibility serves the Commonwealth's best interests, and to determine whether any changes to such representation can be made without an amendment to the WMATA Compact. A copy of this report is on DRPT's website. DRPT determined that existing requirements in the *Code of Virginia* regarding Commonwealth representation on the Board sufficiently serve the best interest of the state.

- III) **Labor costs and labor relations**
- IV) **Measures necessary to resolve WMATA's unfunded pension liability and other postemployment benefits**
- VI) **Financial and operational improvements necessary to ensure that WMATA's performance is at least as efficient as its closest comparable transit system in the United States**

Labor Costs and Relations: The WMATA Board approved a collective bargaining agreement for Local 922 International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) for November 1, 2020, through October 31, 2024. The contract calls for annual increases of 2.0 to 2.5 percent at a four-year cost of \$12.8 million. IBT Local 922 represents nearly 400 operating, maintenance, clerical, and administrative personnel employed in the Landover, Maryland Bus Division.

Budget: On December 10, the WMATA Board's Finance and Capital Committee and the WMATA Board both approved a public hearing/comment docket for the General Manager's proposed WMATA FY22 budget. At the time, WMATA was facing a \$494.5 million shortfall in its proposed FY22 budget, which is required to be balanced.

On December 27, President Trump signed into law the nearly \$900 billion federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA). The Washington region will receive approximately \$830 million. WMATA currently expects to directly retain approximately \$610 million in CRRSAA funding, and it is anticipated that WMATA will use the same Board-approved distribution as the 2020 CARES Act funding.

WMATA plans to use \$95.6 million of its new federal CRRSAA funding to help close a \$176.5 million deficit for FY21. The new federal funding will allow WMATA to avoid layoffs in FY21, to restore some Metrobus service, and to avoid further cuts to Metrorail operating hours that had been planned in FY21.

The remaining new federal funding will reduce WMATA's projected FY22 operating deficit to \$209.8 million. In FY22, WMATA will now be able to eliminate or postpone many, but not all, of its previously planned service changes and reductions. The new federal funding will also allow WMATA to keep its FY22 member operating subsidies flat at FY21 levels.

V) Measures Necessary to Better Ensure the Safety of Riders and Employees

Rail Operations Control Center: On September 7, the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC) released an audit initiated in January 2020 of the WMATA Rail Operations Control Center (ROCC). Among the 21 specific findings requiring corrective action, the audit alleged significant management issues. WMATA submitted the written response to the audit on October 23. To date, four Corrective Action Plans have been submitted and two approved.

On December 11, WMATA issued a press release claiming that an independent investigation by the law firm of Littler Mendelson had exonerated two ROCC employees. The WMSC released a statement in response to WMATA contradicting the Littler Mendelson report and standing by its original audit. WMATA General Manager Paul Wiedefeld and Board Chair Paul Smedberg also issued a letter committing to overhauling the ROCC. Moving forward, WMATA has hired Edward Donaldson, Director of Systems Operation and Security for the Federal Aviation Administration and a former air traffic controller, as ROCC director.

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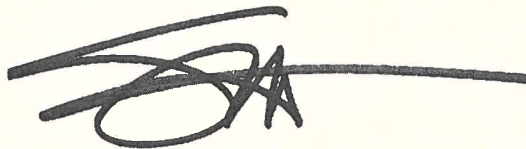
Red Line Train Derailments: On October 20, the WMSC released its findings about the Red Line train that pulled apart on October 9 leaving passengers stranded for over an hour. The Commission concluded that several factors, including an “improperly torqued bolt,” led to the incident. The Commission also voiced concern that WMATA improperly handled evidence, such as tightening the bolt after the incident but before an inspector’s review. The Commission gave WMATA 30 days to implement a policy to communicate to its employees how to respond during an investigation.

On November 24, an eight-car 6000 series train decoupled when departing the Glenmont station on the Red Line. There were no injuries resulting from the incident. In response, WMATA has pulled all 6000 series railcars from Metrorail service. There are 128 6000 series railcars in Metro’s fleet of 1,200 railcars. The 6000 series railcars were first put into Metrorail service in 2006 and are less than halfway through their 40-year useful life. The WMSC is investigating the incident and issued a statement supporting the removal of the 6000 series railcars from service until an investigation and inspections are complete.

Platform Improvement Program: On November 13, WMATA announced a new major Metrorail Blue Line closure schedule to accelerate a signal modernization project at the Alexandria Rail Yard. The work is ongoing and is planned to be concluded by March 14, 2021. A full two-week shutdown occurred between December 21, 2020, and January 1, 2021, with no Blue Line service to Van Dorn in Alexandria and Franconia-Springfield in Fairfax County. Shuttle buses replaced trains. WMATA utilized Dedicated Funding for this project.

While we are living through this unprecedented time, we remain committed to transparency, accountability, and safety of WMATA. Thank you for the opportunity to present this update to you. As always, should you have any questions or recommendations, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "SA" with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Shannon Valentine