



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Office of the Governor

Shannon Valentine  
Secretary of Transportation

January 17, 2019

The Honorable Charles W. Carrico  
Chairman, Senate Transportation Committee  
Post Office Box 1100  
Galax, Virginia 24333

The Honorable David E. Yancey  
Chairman, House Transportation Committee  
Post Office Box 1163  
Newport News, Virginia 23601

Dear Chairman Carrico and Chairman Yancey:

*Virginia Code* § 33.2-3101 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, 2018.

Over the past quarter, I have met with District of Columbia Director of Transportation, Jeff Marootian, and Maryland Secretary of Transportation, Pete Rahn, twice to discuss WMATA and the WMATA Compact. Coordination with the NVTC and my counterparts in the District of Columbia and Maryland is ongoing, and I remain committed to working with them and with the federal government to identify opportunities for collaboration on strengthening Metro.

- 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**

The 2018 Virginia General Assembly directed the Secretary of Transportation to conduct a review of the WMATA Board of Directors 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. This report has been submitted to the General Assembly and may be found on the Virginia Division of Legislative Automated Systems (DLAS) [website](#) and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) [website](#). A copy of the report is attached to this letter as well.

It was determined that the existing statutory requirements for the Commonwealth of Virginia's representatives to the WMATA Board of Directors sufficiently serve the best interests of the Commonwealth. Virginia WMATA Board members must have: (i) experience in at least one of the fields of transit planning, transportation planning, or land use planning; transit or transportation management or other public sector management; engineering; finance; public safety; homeland security; human resources; or the law or (ii) knowledge of the region's transportation issues derived from working on regional transportation issues resolution. Identical qualifications have been enacted by the District of Columbia and the State of Maryland regarding their own WMATA Board membership provisions.

On December 12, 2018, I announced that Paul C. Smedberg will be appointed to the WMATA Board of Directors to represent the Commonwealth as a Principal Director, effective January 1, 2019. Smedberg was appointed by NVTC to the WMATA Board as an Alternate Director in January of 2016. He joined the NVTC in 2006 and, in January of this year, was named its Chair. Mr. Smedberg also served five terms on the Alexandria City Council. His experience, leadership, and integrity make him uniquely qualified to step into this position. Smedberg earned degrees in economics and history from Allegheny College and is a 2001 Fellow of the Sorenson Institute for Political Leadership at the University of Virginia.

**III) Labor costs and labor relations**

**IV) Measures necessary to resolve WMATA's unfunded pension liability and other postemployment benefits**

Chapters 854 and 856 of the 2018 Acts of Assembly require, in any year that the total Virginia operating assistance in the approved WMATA budget increases by more than three percent from the operating assistance in the prior year's WMATA budget, the Commonwealth Transportation Board shall withhold 35 percent of the funds available in Section 33.2-1526.1(C)(3). My office and DRPT staff continue to monitor ongoing discussions at the WMATA Board level regarding the General Manager's budget proposal to ensure that Virginia's operating assistance does not grow by more than three percent. Likewise, Maryland is committed to limiting growth in its operating assistance to no more than three percent.

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

In 2017, the General Assembly created the Metro Safety Commission to comply with federal law requiring state safety oversight of rail transit systems. It is legally and financially independent of WMATA, ensuring that its priority is safety. The federal government assumed control of safety oversight for WMATA in 2015, and the jurisdictions are required to take over oversight by April 2019. If they do not, 100 percent of Virginia's federal transit funding will be withheld pending certification. The federal government and the Metro Safety Commission are currently working together during the transition process. I fully anticipate that the Commission will meet the April 2019 deadline and will assume oversight of WMATA.

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**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**

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, the NVTC submitted an annual WMATA performance report to Governor Northam and to the General Assembly. It was presented to the Commonwealth Transportation Board as well at its December meeting. This report reviews i) the safety and reliability of the rapid heavy rail mass transportation system and bus network; ii) the financial performance of WMATA related to the operations of the rapid heavy rail mass transportation system, including farebox recovery, service per rider, and cost per service hour; iii) the financial performance of WMATA related to the operations of the bus mass transportation system, including farebox recovery, service per rider, and cost per service hour; iv) potential strategies to reduce the growth in such costs and to improve the efficiency of WMATA operations; v) use of the funds provided from the WMATA Capital Fund to improve the safety and condition of the rapid heavy rail mass transportation system; and vi) ridership of the rapid heavy rail mass transportation system and the bus mass transportation system. This report may be found on the DLAS [website](#) as well as on the NVTC [website](#). A copy of the report is attached to this letter as well.

Also, as discussed in earlier reports, WMATA continues to work on a study of its bus services. WMATA's technical and policy committees have met several times to discuss the matter, and it is expected that WMATA will complete the study in 2019.

My office remains committed to working with you and the General Assembly to continue improving the efficiency and effectiveness of WMATA. As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for the opportunity to work together to ensure the accountability and transparency of this significant transportation asset.

With warmest regards,



Shannon Valentine

**Attachments**