



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**Office of the Governor**

Shannon Valentine  
Secretary of Transportation

August 5, 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* § 33.2-3102 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 June 30, 2019.

Over the past three years, the Commonwealth of Virginia has taken the lead on improving WMATA's effectiveness and efficiency. Virginia was the first jurisdiction to pass legislation creating the Metro Safety Commission in 2017, and then led the way in 2018 in committing dedicated annual funding for capital projects. In addition to these efforts, the Commonwealth has implemented significant reforms and additional oversight to improve WMATA's accountability. The leadership of Virginia's legislators and the Commonwealth's commitment to the WMATA system have resulted in an improved experience for the many Virginians who use the service daily.

- 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**

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 can be found on the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) [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. In accordance with Enactment Clause 7 of Chapters 854 and 856 of the 2018 Virginia Acts of Assembly, the Board amended its bylaws to clarify roles of alternate directors, prohibiting their participation in official actions when primary Board members are present.

As required by Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) policy, WMATA provided certification to DRPT on June 28, 2019, that it continues to adhere to this requirement; this letter is currently under review by DRPT and the Office of the Attorney General. DRPT will report to the CTB at its September meeting and will make a recommendation on compliance.

At the Board's June 2019 meeting, Paul Smedberg, one of Virginia's Board members, became chairman of the Board, replacing Jack Evans, a Board member from the District of Columbia. Mr. Smedberg has served on the Board since January 2016, first as an alternate director and then as a principal director beginning in January 2019.

**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 that, 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 budget, the CTB shall withhold 35 percent of the funds available in the Mass Transit Trust Fund.

My office and DRPT staff worked with the WMATA Board during the development of the FY2020 WMATA Budget to ensure that Virginia's operating assistance did not grow by more than three percent over the prior fiscal year's budget. The WMATA Board subsequently approved the \$2 billion FY2020 WMATA operating budget on March 28, 2019. The FY2020 base budget has no fare increases and includes new initiatives to grow ridership and revenue with extensions of the Yellow and Red Lines. Further, management actions of \$47 million were required to reduce subsidy growth to within the required three percent cap in the base budget. These actions include management's ability to defer hiring for open positions, cutting administrative departments, and other administrative savings such as deferring and streamlining purchases. The budget includes \$14 million for mandates legislatively excluded from the cap, including litigation, ADA paratransit, occupational safety and health, and jurisdiction-requested bus service.

The WMATA Dedicated Capital Funding Agreement between WMATA and the Commonwealth was executed on May 1, 2019. WMATA is expected to sign similar agreements with Maryland and the District of Columbia. The agreement, which will renew automatically on July 1 each year unless terminated by either party, states that Virginia will provide 30.9 percent of the \$500 million regional dedicated funding, which amounts to \$154.5 million annually. A separate agreement, set to expire on June 30, 2020, states that the Commonwealth will provide \$50 million in annual capital funding to match \$150 million annually in federal funding as part of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008.

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

On March 18, 2019, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced the certification of the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission State Safety Oversight Program. With this certification, independent responsibility for direct safety oversight of the WMATA Metrorail system immediately transferred from the FTA to the Commission.

At its March meeting, the CTB approved \$3.65 million in funding for supplemental mitigation strategies during the Blue/Yellow Line Shutdown between May 25, 2019, and September 8, 2019. During this time, WMATA is reconstructing platforms at the Braddock Road, King Street-Old Towne Alexandria, Eisenhower Avenue, Van Dorn Street, Huntington, and Franconia-Springfield stations to fix crumbling passenger platforms. Additionally, repairs are needed at the Braddock Road station to ensure a safe platform surface that is level with train doors, a requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The \$3.65 million in funding allows DRPT to work with local transit agencies, NVTC, and the Virginia Department of Transportation to implement a plan of supplemental services to complement WMATA's plan. The goal of the plan is to: i) provide options to impacted transit riders and those who travel major corridors to minimize a shift to single-occupant vehicle use during the shutdown period; ii) educate local communities on potential changes in travel patterns that may impact normal commuting patterns; and iii) manage demand by incentivizing use of transit, ridesharing, flexible work schedules, and telework.

## **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 April 25, 2019, WMATA announced that it has selected sites in Alexandria and Prince George County, Maryland, for new office buildings that will eventually accommodate the majority of its professional workforce. The announcement is a significant milestone in WMATA's regional office consolidation plan, which will reduce the number of metro office buildings from ten to four. This process will save an estimated \$130 million over the next 20 years. The Alexandria office building will be located near the Eisenhower Avenue Metrorail station as part of a larger redevelopment of that area of the city. This location, as well as the Maryland location, will be designed with the goal of achieving LEED Platinum certification to benefit the environment and reduce long-term operating costs.

In May 2019, WMATA released its Draft Bus Transformation Strategy for public comment. The Bus Transformation Project re-envisioned the bus network in the Washington, DC, region as a coordinated regional transportation solution that addresses the changing needs of customers, leverages innovative technology, and employs a sustainable cost structure. WMATA held three public open houses and thirteen "pop-up" events across the region, and received public comments throughout May and June via an online survey. The project team presented to the WMATA Board on the Bus Transformation Project and Draft Strategy in July. A DRPT employee is a member of both the Technical and Strategy Advisory Committees for the WMATA Bus Transformation Project.

WMATA also recently launched a two-year study of options to address some of Metrorail's longstanding and unaddressed needs related to current and future throughput on the Metrorail Blue, Orange, and Silver lines. The study will focus on capacity and reliability needs on these lines (originating in Springfield, Vienna, and Ashburn, respectively), including the need to increase capacity at the Rosslyn Tunnel between Arlington and Washington, DC. DRPT staff will serve on both the Technical and Strategy Advisory Committees for the new study.

A recent Washington Post-Schar School poll conducted in April and May 2019 asked Washington area residents to rate their opinion of WMATA service. The survey determined that 67 percent of Virginians have a positive view of WMATA, which was up from only 44 percent in 2017. I believe that our work to pass legislation creating the Metro Safety Commission, DRPT's mitigation efforts to support Metro's capital improvements during the summer of 2019, dedication of \$154.5 million in capital funding for WMATA, and the implementation of reforms have contributed to this increase. Thank you for the opportunity to collaborate on ensuring the accountability and transparency of this significant transportation asset.

With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shannon Valentine', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Shannon Valentine