



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Office of the Governor

Shannon Valentine  
Secretary of Transportation

November 18, 2020

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 September 30, 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.

Role of Alternates: The WMATA Board amended its bylaws in 2018 to clarify roles of alternate directors, including prohibiting their participation in official actions when primary Board members are present. At the September 2020 CTB meeting, DRPT verified that WMATA had complied with this bylaw for Fiscal Year 2020. Additionally, alternates participated in an agency safety training at a September Safety and Operations Committee meeting and are scheduled to participate in an ethics training in November. Participation in trainings is allowed under the revised bylaws.

**III) Labor costs and labor relations**

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

Budget Reductions: On September 19, 2020, the WMATA Board submitted a public hearing docket regarding several major and significant proposed reductions to its Fiscal Year 2021 budget, including up to \$160 million in service cuts. WMATA General Manager Paul Wiedefeld stated that WMATA has lost roughly \$2 million in fare box revenue each weekday since it put service reductions in place in March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While federal CARES Act funding has mitigated the revenue loss to date, WMATA will run out of CARES Act funding later this year, while fare box revenue is not expected to recover until later. For these reasons, the WMATA Board has proposed revising its Fiscal Year 2021 budget to reflect significant reductions in revenue that are anticipated to continue through the balance of the fiscal year. Absent any further action, a deficit of \$90 million per month may begin as soon as January 2021.

WMATA also expects a total reduction-in-force of 1,700 employees. Layoff notices will be sent out 60 days in advance. During this quarter, the Board also voted to reinstate bus fares effective January 1, 2021.

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

Washington Metrorail Safety Commission: On March 18, 2019, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced the certification of the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC) 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. On June 29, 2020, the WMSC submitted its annual report to DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell and me.

On September 7, 2020, the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission 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, including "unprofessional behavior such as attempts to manipulate safety event investigations and toxic culture," all resulting in "unacceptable safety risks." **Virginia and its jurisdictional partners created the new WMSC and specifically empowered it to hold WMATA and its Board accountable for the safety of its customers and Virginia citizens.** While the audit findings are troubling, Virginia will continue to work with Maryland and D.C. to ensure WMATA is safe. We support of the personnel and management changes at the ROCC that have already been announced. The full written response from WMATA is due October 23, 2020. To date, WMATA has submitted, and the WMSC accepted, two Corrective Action Plans (CAPs).

COVID-19: During the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2021, WMATA began to return service to pre-pandemic levels while maintaining safety precautions for its riders and employees. As of September 25, 2020, approximately 2,000 WMATA employees have tested positive for COVID-19

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and 1,864 of those employees have returned to work since the beginning of the pandemic. WMATA's total workforce is more than 12,700 employees.

Beginning August 16, 2020, WMATA added additional trains and buses, and increased its hours of service. These actions restored most service to pre-pandemic levels while also maintaining essential safety and response postures related to COVID-19. Metrorail increased service hours, including a return to normal opening hours and a two-hour delay of closing hours.

On August 23, 2020, Metrobus restored approximately 75 percent of pre-pandemic service. Weekday schedules improved on 174 routes, with most routes operating close to normal, and buses operating an additional hour longer (until midnight). Additionally, WMATA announced a significant investment to support the region's overnight workers, doubling the discount customers receive when using Lyft during Metro off-hours.

Platform Improvement Program: During the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2021, WMATA completed its second phase of the platform reconstruction plan. The East Falls Church, Dunn Loring, and Vienna stations reopened with restored platforms and other improvements after being closed since May 23, 2020.


The final two Virginia stations whose platforms will be improved are Reagan National Airport and Arlington National Cemetery. The Reagan National Airport station remains open for service while WMATA is working on the platforms. Restoration of the platform at Arlington National Cemetery station is scheduled to begin in February 2021.

**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**

Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD): As discussed in the previous quarterly report, the WMATA Board approved a new seven-member independent oversight panel of the Metro Transit Police Department. This new panel will be comprised of citizens and police members from Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. It will review police investigations and report quarterly, offering recommended policy changes.

As always, I am grateful for your continued engagement with WMATA.

Respectfully submitted,



Shannon Valentine