January 25, 2018

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor
Commonwealth of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox
Speaker of the House
Virginia House of Delegates
Room E605, Pocahontas Building
900 E. Main St,
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.
Majority Leader
Senate of Virginia
Room E603, Pocahontas Building
900 E. Main St,
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor Northam, Speaker Cox, and Leader Norment:

As organizations representing Virginia’s business community, we are committed to promoting economic vitality in the Commonwealth of Virginia. What makes our Commonwealth so prosperous, in addition to the strong business climate promoted by leaders in Richmond, is Virginia’s investment in core statewide assets like the Port of Virginia, our international airports, and our public institutions of higher education. Metro, the largest public transit system in the Commonwealth, is one of those core statewide assets. The business community in Virginia is committed to the long term stability of Metro.

The Metro corridor has been the center of development and economic growth in Northern Virginia, particularly over the past decade. With last week’s announcement that Amazon has selected Northern Virginia as a finalist for its “HQ2” site, it is clear Metro is a key differentiator in Virginia’s attractiveness as a place to do business. The infusion of 50,000 high-wage jobs into Virginia would be a generational game-changer for the Commonwealth. Amazon has made clear that access to public transit is one of their top priorities in identifying a new home, and the Northern Virginia sites under consideration are located adjacent to a Metro station. It has never been more imperative that we ensure the Metro corridor continues to remain vibrant.

To ensure Metro’s future, investment in the system during this legislative session is vital. In order to maintain state of good repair, Virginia, Maryland, and Washington D.C. must identify a long-term, sustainable, dedicated, and bondable revenue source equaling $500 million per year, with Virginia’s share totaling $154 million per year. Identifying this funding during the 2018 General Assembly session is key, as delaying new Metro funding will push the system past important funding and maintenance deadlines that will likely result in the further curtailing of service and additional fare increases.

A dedicated funding package must also be paired with reforms. Changes to Metro’s board governance, specifically a temporary reform board, would establish a framework to implement needed, long-term structural reforms related to governance, operations and funding. A revitalized board can better allocate resources and develop stronger business plans to create a truly innovative transit system – something we all support.
More than 350,000 Virginians rely on Metro every day. Most of these Virginians are commuters who see Metro as a lifeline to reliably get to and from work. According to a recent study, the sales and income tax revenue generated by the presence of Metrorail, along with Virginia Railway Express, total more than $600 million annually to the Commonwealth’s general fund. Metro’s economic impact is felt not just in Northern Virginia or Greater Washington, but in every part of our Commonwealth where this revenue is used to improve quality of life for all Virginians.

Aside from the potential of Amazon HQ2, the continued development of Arlington and Alexandria, Tysons and Reston, and the planned growth in the Dulles corridor and Eastern Loudoun due to Phase II of the Silver Line, demonstrates that Metro is a critical component of Northern Virginia’s economic future and, in turn, the attractiveness of Virginia as a place to start, grow, or locate a business. In fact, Virginia’s most recent major corporate relocation, Nestle USA, was made possible in large part because of ready access to Metro.

Addressing the long term financial and operational stability of Metro is unquestionably a significant challenge, but the business community is committed to standing with leaders who are prepared to make the difficult decisions in addressing this challenge this year. Now is the time to act to ensure Virginia’s quality of life and continued economic growth are preserved for years to come through a fully funded, well-governed, and efficiently operated Metro system.

Sincerely,

Jim Corcoran
President and CEO
Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce

Joe Haggerty
President and CEO
Alexandria Chamber of Commerce

Kate Bates
President and CEO
Arlington Chamber of Commerce

John Boylan
President and CEO
Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce

Paul Kohlenberger
President
Greater McLean Chamber of Commerce

Mark S. Ingrao
President and CEO
Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce

Kim Scheeler
President and CEO
Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce

Kimberly K. Horn
2018 Chair
Greater Washington Board of Trade
Jason Miller
President and CEO
Greater Washington Partnership

Bryan K. Stephens
President and CEO
Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce

Anthony J. Howard
President and CEO
Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce

Deborah L. Jones
President and CEO
Prince William Chamber of Commerce

Holly Dougherty
Executive Director
Mount Vernon Lee Chamber of Commerce

Bobbie Kilberg
President and CEO
Northern Virginia Technology Council

David Birtwistle
CEO
Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance

Virginia Case
Chair
Tysons Regional Chamber of Commerce

Barry E. DuVal
President and CEO
Virginia Chamber of Commerce

cc: The Honorable Richard L. Saslaw, Minority Leader, Senate of Virginia
The Honorable Ryan McDougle, Majority Caucus Chairman, Senate of Virginia
The Honorable Mamie Locke, Minority Caucus Chair, Senate of Virginia
The Honorable Todd Gilbert, Majority Leader, Virginia House of Delegates
The Honorable David Toscano, Minority Leader, Virginia House of Delegates
The Honorable Tim Hugo, Majority Caucus Chairman, Virginia House of Delegates
The Honorable Charniele Herring, Minority Caucus Chair, Virginia House of Delegates
The Honorable Emmett Hanger, Co-Chair, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable S. Chris Jones, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee