



January 19, 2021

WMATA Board of Directors  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
600 5th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Chair Smedberg,

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce encourages the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority not to follow through with proposed service reductions starting in January 2022 as a way of closing its projected budget gap. As vaccinations continue, we anticipate increased return to workplaces throughout 2021, and are hopeful that most workplaces are ready to reopen by the end of this calendar year. However, reducing transit service in 2022 could inhibit that recovery and have inequitable consequences as people whose jobs do not permit telework will feel the impacts most strongly.

The recent update of the Greater Washington Partnership's Capital COVID-19 Snapshot showed the share of the workforce reporting onsite is expected to rise steadily throughout 2021, up to 76% of the workforce in the fourth quarter of this year. We commend the recent budget proposal change to maintain service levels throughout the summer and autumn to support this return to the workplace. However, sharply reducing services from January 2022 risks cutting off this recovery just as it starts to gain steam.

The proposed service reductions for 2022 will fall hardest on our region's service sector workforce. Many service jobs run through the evening and many service workers rely on buses for all or part of their commutes. Closing Metrorail at 9:00 p.m. and reducing Metrobus service by 50% would disproportionately impact this workforce. Raising their cost and difficulty of commuting risks an inequitable distribution of economic impacts.

We appreciate the financial challenges that WMATA continues to face and the Chamber encourages the federal government to expand on the support that it is providing so that WMATA can maintain its service levels. Transit has a vital role to play as a public service. Cutting off transit services to balance the budget may stifle the very recovery that will help return WMATA to a more sustainable fiscal environment.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Bates". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Bates  
President & CEO