

June 18, 2010

Governor Robert McDonnell
Office of the Governor
1111 East Broad Street, Third Floor
Richmond, VA 23319

Senator Mark Warner
459A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Jim Webb
248 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Congressman Jim Moran
2239 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Frank Wolf
241 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Gerry Connolly
327 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Governor McDonnell, Senators and Representatives:

We are writing to express our very serious concern and opposition to changing the Northern Virginia representation on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Board of Directors. Northern Virginia's representatives have stood out on the WMATA Board of Directors for their commitment to the success of Metro, to transparency to the public, and to funding the level of transit service our region deserves. Because our local elected officials at WMATA are also responsible for local land use decisions, they have ensured that transit and land use are linked, helping to create billions of dollars of transit-oriented development and tax revenues for the state of Virginia.

The primary problem faced by our Metro system has been years of chronic underfunding of preventative maintenance and replacement of its aging infrastructure. In our view, the state of Virginia has never provided adequate support for transit capital and operating needs, while local taxpayers and riders have provided the lion's share of funding for our transit needs including Metro. The combination of fares paid by riders, local gas taxes, and local property tax support for Metro is significantly more than has been provided by the state. In the case of our major new

transit capital project, Dulles Rail, virtually the entire cost is funded by the federal government, local property taxes and locally paid tolls.

The threat to withhold the \$50 million in state match for the hard-won federal funding threatens the entire carefully constructed \$300 million package of funding for Metro. Withholding of the funds will cause the State of Maryland and the District of Columbia to withhold their share of the funds and cause the federal government to freeze their payments. This funding is urgently needed now for the aging system, as maintenance problems have continued in the year since the tragic accident.

Improving accountability and safety at Metro is important, but the Governor's proposed change would neither strengthen efforts to increase accountability nor improve safety at Metro. Replacing local public officials elected by the people of Northern Virginia with appointees would weaken Metro's accountability to the people it serves. For comparison, few Northern Virginians know that there is a Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority now controlling the tolls they are paying on the Dulles toll road, much less who those appointed board members are. Yet, they do know that they can call up their local elected officials about Metrorail and Metrobus issues and get a rapid response.

We urge you to support continued management of Metro by northern Virginia's local elected officials on behalf of northern Virginians, and to return the focus to providing the critical funds that WMATA needs. At the same time, we should continue the process of hiring a strong Metro manager and strengthening the structure, transparency, procedures and safety culture of the organization.

Respectfully,



Stewart Schwartz
Executive Director
Coalition for Smarter Growth

Roger Diedrich
Smart Growth and Transportation Chair
Sierra Club's Virginia Chapter

Allen Muchnick
President
Arlington Coalition for Sensible Transportation