



October 18, 2016

Office of the Secretary
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001 via: writtentestimony@wmata.com

RE: Support for Docket R16-03: Proposed changes to WMATA facilities at Capitol Heights Metro Station & support for Capitol Heights Metrorail Station joint development project

Dear Office of the Secretary:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG). The Coalition for Smarter Growth is the leading organization working locally in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region dedicated to making the case for smart growth. Our mission is to promote walkable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities, and the land use and transportation policies and investments needed to make those communities flourish.

We are pleased to express our support for the proposed changes to WMATA facilities in order to advance the joint development plans at the Capitol Heights Metro station. We have long advocated for improving the walk and bicycle access to this Metro station, and supported pedestrian- and transit-oriented development here. This joint development and changes to WMATA facilities offer a number of benefits to the surrounding community, and more broadly to our region, and WMATA.

We wish to address a number of issues regarding the proposal:

1. **This proposed transit-oriented development is good for individuals, the community, and the region:** We support the construction of a mixed use building to offer approximately 184 homes, retail space, and a residential parking ratio of 0.65 at this site. More housing and business opportunities here help people live healthier lifestyles where they can walk, bicycle, and ride transit more, and drive less. This benefits individual residents, and also benefits the community by fostering a more walkable and safer environment around the Metro station. From a regional perspective, more people who are able to live and work near Metro means they will be driving less, generating less traffic, emitting less air pollution, and fewer greenhouse gases.

The residential parking ratio of 0.65 is reasonably low, but could be lower with enhanced transportation demand management measures such as residential transit passes, Capital Bikeshare and carshare memberships for new residents, and improvements to the surrounding pedestrian and biking environment. We also encourage the location of a Capital Bikeshare station here. Reduced parking is the strongest incentive to reduce traffic and air pollution. Offering subsidized alternatives to driving rather than subsidized parking is the best way to encourage the switch to a car-light, transit-oriented lifestyle, or attract those who have already made the switch and are simply seeking a place to live that supports that choice.

2. **Transit-oriented development fosters safety:** A mixed use building at this location will significantly contribute to fostering a safer environment for people walking to and from the Metro station. People living and working at this site will foster personal safety for all of the users and discourage crime. More people living here, and watching over the area creates “eyes on the street,” reducing opportunity for situations that foster crime such as an isolated individual or an isolated place.

Secondly, by designing land uses that support a walkable environment, we can create a safer place for pedestrians and bicyclists. Through pedestrian-oriented building and street designs, safety for all users will be enhanced, and more people will be encouraged to walk and bicycle to the Metro station, and nearby destinations. We ask WMATA, the developer, and the county to look in greater detail at how to ensure that the building and street designs make the most of this opportunity.

3. **We support elimination of the Metro park & ride spaces, but suggest creating more on-street spaces on Davey Street and Central Avenue that can be used by Metro riders.** Replacement of parking spaces at the WMATA park & ride lot is unnecessary for several reasons. First, nearby Addison Road Metro station has hundreds of underutilized parking spaces. Thus any person wishing to park and ride can easily find parking at the nearby Addison Road Metro station. Secondly, the high cost of replacing the parking spaces is not justified given both the availability of nearby Metro parking facilities, and the opportunity of the joint development design and use to enhance the station environment to better support other modes of access -- walk, bicycle, and bus.

We support at a minimum, WMATA’s proposal to create 43 metered/paid parking spaces along Davey Street for Metro riders. We strongly recommend payment options for meters that include credit cards and pay by phone or app. Parking pricing should be market-based, ensuring that 10-15% of spaces are always available.

Additional on-street parking can be designated on Central Avenue (controlled by MD SHA) by matching the parking rules of the DC side where East Capitol Street permits off-peak period parking. In addition, parking could also be managed in coordination with DC on Southern Avenue to support access to the Metro station. On-street parking offers multiple benefits by providing access for those who need to drive, and also by acting as a buffer for pedestrians, helping slow traffic speeds and form a physical buffer between the sidewalk and moving traffic.

We also note the need for a sidewalk on the east side of Southern Avenue. We suggest WMATA work with the county and the District to address this need to provide a safe walking approach to the Metro station from this side of Southern Avenue. In addition, the oversized intersection at Southern Ave. and East Capital Street should be addressed by working with the District.

Given the on-street potential for well-managed parking to support Metro riders’ need to sometimes park and ride, we ask WMATA to also redevelop the kiss and ride surface parking lot of 22-spaces. This surface parking lot degrades the pedestrian environment and could be better used as part of a larger building and public space design. These parking spaces could be replaced on-street.

Davey Street is a badly overdesigned street with a much too wide cross-section that encourages high speed vehicular traffic and endangers and discourages walkers and bicyclists. The redesign of Davey Street into a 2-travel lane, low-speed street with on-street parking on both sides has been acknowledged as a need for many years. This redevelopment gives us the opportunity to realize this potential. We urge WMATA to work with the county and state to use state-of-the-art street design standards, including the ones that the county is currently developing for urban centers.

These standards include design speeds of no more than 25 mph, 10-foot travel lanes (11 feet for bus routes), 15 foot turn radii, 7-foot parking lanes, narrowed cross-sections to minimize street crossing distances for pedestrians, on-street and protected bicycle lanes, and curb extensions. In addition, any street configuration should address specific topographic concerns to ensure good sightlines so that pedestrians can cross safely. Given the poor pedestrian environment on many of the streets connecting people to the Metro station, a variety of low-cost street improvements can be made right away to enhance pedestrian safety and access to the transit station. With additional funds, permanent improvements can be installed to greatly enhance the accessibility of this Metro station. The joint development project is the perfect opportunity to make these long-needed improvements.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. We look forward to continuing to work with stakeholders to support its success as a truly transit-oriented development.

Sincerely,



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Policy Director

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