



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

April 2, 2010

Dear Mayor Fenty, Governor O'Malley, Governor McDonnell, WMATA Board Members, and leaders of Northern Virginia jurisdictions:

The Coalition for Smarter Growth joins many others in the region in our grave concern over the dire funding problems facing the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA, "Metro"). We are transmitting to you the 2,030 petition signatures that we gathered since late fall of 2009, demonstrating strong support both for more capital funding and additional operating funding for Metro.

As the scope of the operating budget shortfall has become apparent in recent weeks, we launched www.FairShareforMetro.com, a campaign to support additional FY2011 operating funding for Metro from area jurisdictions in order to avoid the drastic service cuts being proposed. Ideally, we would also like to see enough funding to roll-back some of the proposed fare increases as well. The combination of higher fares and deep service cuts could create the oft feared "death spiral" for Metro.

- We urge Mayor Fenty to include in tomorrow's proposed budget the estimated \$27.4 million in additional funds necessary for the District of Columbia to meet its share of an extra \$74 million which will roll-back the service cuts.
- We urge the State of Maryland to fund an estimated \$29.6 million.
- We thank the local Virginia jurisdictions for making room in their tax rates for their share of additional Metro funding and we hope that you will vote to do so in your final budgets.
- We thank Governor McDonnell for stating on WTOP that he would try to find funding to help out Metro, and we hope that the state can provide some assistance to northern Virginia localities.
- We note that local bus services are also facing severe cuts, which we hope can be avoided as well.

Metro, and transit in general, are critical to the DC regional economy. Fare increases and service cuts mean severe financial strain for lower income households and even job losses when people cannot get to the places where they work. Seniors and people with disabilities can end up trapped in their homes, without the means to get to critical health appointments. Those riders who have options will leave transit and add to the traffic on the roadways, with worsening gridlock costing employees, employers, delivery services and contractors, time and money. Employers will decide not to locate in the region and developers will lose faith in what has been a booming market for transit-oriented development. The negative economic spin-off effects would be significant. Transit is an essential service and shares a central role in the success of our region. We should not be penny-wise and pound-foolish.

It is interesting to compare relative investment costs. The fare increase being proposed is about \$90 million and the additional jurisdictional share to avoid service cuts would be about \$74

million. For comparison, widening just one mile of Telegraph Road in Fairfax – a recently approved project – will cost over \$20 million including over \$6 million for right-of-way acquisition. The ability of transit to carry more people, particularly during the peak hour, is critical to avoiding not just millions, but billions of dollars worth of road expansion.

Looking to the future, given the nation's finances, nothing will be more important than funding the maintenance and operations of our existing roads and transit systems. After that, we will need to tie transportation funding for new capacity to much more efficient patterns of development. It is the only fiscally prudent approach.

In summary, we urge that you collectively fund another \$74 million to avoid the proposed service cuts and that you seek additional funding at all levels of government to reduce the fare increases and to reduce the cuts in local bus service as well.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Stewart Schwartz
Executive Director
Coalition for Smarter Growth