



Testimony to WMATA Board Regarding FY2016 Budget

By Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director

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Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Stewart Schwartz and I am the Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, an 18-year-old organization dedicated to sustainable growth through walkable, transit-oriented communities linked by an extensive and efficient transit network. This vision, first outlined in the 1990's, is the vision adopted by all 21 area jurisdictions in *Region Forward*.

I am here to support our Metro system and speak in opposition to the proposed fare increases and service cuts. Metro has been central to our region's economic success. It has generated billions of dollars in development and economic activity while improving mobility and accessibility.

- Without Metro, our region would need 1600 more lane miles of highways and hundreds of blocks of downtown parking.
- Without Metro, our city and core suburbs would be as torn apart by highways and parking lots as sadly occurred in too many other U.S. cities.
- With Metro, eighty-four percent of new office development in the pipeline is taking place within 1/4 mile of a station as corporate leaders seek out these locations.
- With Metro, millenials and down-sizing empty nesters are flocking to our walkable, transit-oriented centers -- of which we have more than any other region in the country.
- With Metro we make possible the compact, walkable land forms that maximize walking, cycling and transit trips, while minimizing vehicle trips. Every person who lives and works in a transit-oriented community represents a regional traffic solution.

- Tysons and White Flint are booming because of Metro. County Executive Baker and Chairman Bulova have said repeatedly that transit-oriented development is the future for their counties.

This is why we so strongly support Metro's rehabilitation programs and Metro Momentum, beginning with the investment in 8-car trains and downtown station capacity. It's also why we -- and 80% of those you polled -- support increasing state and local investment to meet Metro's full operating budget shortfall, rather than include \$46 million in fare increases and service cuts.

When we see \$46 million, we think of the spending on road and interchange projects, where a single interchange can cost that much and more. Yes, one is capital and the other operating, but it illustrates that we face choices and need to set our priorities as a region. COG's recent report on existing, aging infrastructure showing \$58 billion in needs underscores that our first priority should be to maintain, rehabilitate and better utilize what we already have.

We understand the pressures on local budgets, but Metro's operations are a core basic service for both the city and urbanizing suburbs. If our state governments aren't doing enough, then we need to address that. Congress' failure to maintain the transit benefit at the same level as the driving benefit? We need to address that too. More stable sources of capital and operating funding? Yes, let's tackle that.

For its part, Metro staff must continue to improve communications, safety, incident response and customer service. As was the case in Naval Aviation where I served, every employee is and must be part of a culture of safety, to be able to freely report safety issues, and to contribute to improving procedures, service and incident response.

We are all Metro. And, we need the leadership and commitment of all of our region's elected officials to put Metro first in our transportation funding and investment priorities. Thank you.

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