

Mr. Jack Evans
Chair, Metro Board of Directors
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
600 5th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Chair Evans,

Pursuant to the schedule for accepting public comments on the FY 18 operating budget, the Montgomery County Council offers the Board the following observations and recommendations:

We recognize the difficulties of closing a budget deficit. We also understand, notwithstanding the positive *additional* contributions of \$40 million made by each of the three principal funding jurisdictions, there remains a gap. The General Manager's budget proposal would eliminate \$50 million of the deficit through a combination of service cuts and fare increases in both rail and bus service.

We urge you to do whatever you can – without sacrificing the integrity of the safety and reliability work that you have begun – to minimize both service cuts and fare increases. We do not need to tell you that both public confidence and ridership numbers have been heading in the wrong direction as a result of the poor quality of service WMATA has provided our transit riders. Cutting services and increasing fares in the face of poor performance is a prescription for a “death spiral”, something that all of us have a strong interest in avoiding.

It is our understanding that there is a non-painful way in which these negative impacts to riders can be reduced by almost 50%. We are advised that \$23 million for spare parts was entered into both the operating and capital budget. Simply eliminating this double counting would allow the Board to reduce both the breadth of the service cuts and fare increases.

Specifically, these dollars would allow the Board to eliminate fare increases for our bus riding public; restore bus service; and eliminate the Grosvenor turn-back.

We also understand that there are federal grant funds earmarked for capital investments in the operating budget that could possibly be used to completely avoid all service cuts and fare increases. If the Board believes that that such funds can be used without “robbing Peter to pay Paul”, i.e., without sacrificing reliability or safety, we urge you to seriously explore such an option.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.