

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 26, 2019

The Honorable Jack Evans, Chair
Board of Directors
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
600 5th St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Chairman Evans and Board Members:

As you prepare to vote later this week on a proposal to effectively reinstate weekend late-night service on Metrorail, we write to encourage you to consider the views of General Manager Paul Wiedefeld, federal safety officials, and state transportation policymakers in not reinstating these hours and instead continuing with the current safety maintenance schedule.

We appreciate how inconvenient this schedule is for our constituents who previously used Metrorail during these hours, not just patrons of bars and restaurants but also workers in those industries or others that require overnight commuting. However, we agree with GM Wiedefeld and safety oversight officials that safety must take precedence over convenience. WMATA management has briefed our offices on ongoing maintenance work that requires the unbroken hours on the track that are only available during these extended overnight stretches. Without these consecutive hours, the system will make up the shortfall by doing more daytime single-tracking, which creates even greater challenges, and the work will ultimately take longer.

Moreover, Virginia's 2018 dedicated funding legislation imposes a binding cap on jurisdictional operating subsidies as a condition for state transportation funds. The Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission tell us reinstating late-night service would exceed the cap and jeopardize state funds. Finally, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration has threatened to withhold federal funds and potentially suspend federal certification of the new Metrorail Safety Commission and withhold funds from Maryland's Purple Line project if this move goes forward.

As the four of us prepare legislation this year to reauthorize a long-term federal funding commitment to Metro, it is more vital than ever for WMATA to demonstrate its commitment to safety above all else. Prioritizing other needs over track safety work is exactly what got Metro into the situation of having a massive maintenance backlog. Doing so will make our goal of enacting new federal funding far more difficult.

As we all remember, at the end of 2015, the system's chief executive position had been vacant for nearly a year, and the system's maintenance shortfall had resulted in derailments, fires, and the death of a woman from Alexandria. GM Wiedefeld and his team have made significant progress since then, and are joining the Federal Transit Administration, Maryland and

Virginia, and several regional groups in requesting the Board vote to keep the existing hours of service in place. We strongly encourage you to do just that.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner



Tim Kaine



Benjamin L. Cardin



Chris Van Hollen