

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 9, 2019

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairman
Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Collins and Ranking Member Reed:

As you draft the FY20 THUD bill, we urge you to include at least \$150 million in federal funds for critical capital and safety improvements for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) as requested in the President's budget proposal. We also ask that consideration be given to providing additional funds, if authorized, based upon further improvements and reforms that WMATA is undertaking.

The federal government relies on Metro. Many Metrorail stations were built at the request of the federal government, and more than one third of all stations are located on or near federal facilities. Federal employees comprise nearly 40 percent of WMATA's peak ridership, and millions of others use the WMATA system (Metrorail, Metrobus, and Metro's Paratransit programs) each year for business or personal visits to the Nation's Capital. WMATA also serves a unique national security role, providing transportation for federal employees traveling to and from the Pentagon and Department of Homeland Security and ensuring continuity of federal operations during an emergency. WMATA is central to most federal agency emergency preparedness plans, a necessity that was proven on September 11, 2001. The system is also indispensable for transporting large crowds attending events of national importance, such as the Presidential Inauguration and Fourth of July on the National Mall.

We do not dismiss the challenges Metrorail faces that are the result of a combination of under-investment in infrastructure and unsatisfactory agency performance. Recent safety issues, including a high-profile fatal incident in 2015 as well as recent derailments, have shined a light on the vast scope of the system's safety challenges. We all agree on the need for WMATA to demonstrate major improvement in safety, reliability, and customer service and we plan to continue to push for additional oversight and meaningful reform. We also strongly emphasize that better performance from WMATA and reliable funding from Congress and the jurisdictions are complementary goals. Both must be achieved in order for WMATA to reverse a concerning

downward trend in ridership, which will simply put more of its 600,000 daily riders back onto already-congested highways, and earn back the trust of our region's visitors and commuters.

The bipartisan Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA, PL 110-432) created a successful federal-state partnership under which the three WMATA jurisdictions collectively match this funding with another \$150 million each year for 10 years for a total of a \$1.5 billion federal investment. That partnership has been instrumental in funding critical capital investment and safety projects, but recent analysis has shown the system has needs far beyond this commitment, as General Manager Paul Wiedefeld and his team dig out of a safety maintenance backlog that is the result of decades of underinvestment in maintenance. We are pleased to see the Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2020 reflect this ongoing need with its request for \$150 million for WMATA. As the four of us prepare legislation to implement further improvements to WMATA safety and accountability alongside this investment, we support the President's Budget request for \$150 million in FY20. Given the continued unmet needs of the system, we also ask that consideration be given to additional federal funding beyond the \$150 million predicated on WMATA making continued progress in governance reforms and prioritizing safety. We therefore request the following report language:

The Committee believes that the safe and reliable operation of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority is important to the operation of the federal government and supports continued funding. Federal employees represent approximately 40 percent of Metrorail's peak period ridership, and more than one-third of all Metrorail stations are located on or adjacent to federal property. Recognizing the essential role that the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority plays in transporting federal employees daily and millions of visitors to the Nation's Capital annually, the bill provides ongoing and increased support for projects that support safe operation of the transit system.

We have renewed confidence that this investment will pay off for riders and the taxpayer. Under the direction of GM Wiedefeld, WMATA has made significant progress in recent years to address overdue track safety maintenance, enforce stricter accountability in the workforce, resolve longstanding and inexcusable financial irregularities, and implement stringent policies to prioritize safety over other important needs. To keep WMATA moving in the right direction, in addition to continuing the federal commitment first made a decade ago, we must set the stage for critical reforms and strengthened oversight of WMATA to ensure that the hundreds of thousands of riders depending on this system get as safe and efficient a ride as possible. WMATA under this management team has demonstrated that continued federal investment will be well-spent.

The federal government relies on Metro, and maintaining a functioning transit system for the seat of the federal government is a national priority. For these reasons, we strongly urge you to consider the above funding and report language requests.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mark. R. Warner
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator