



Arlington Coalition for Sensible Transportation

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The Hon. Dana Kauffman
Chairman, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
6121 Franconia Road
Alexandria, VA 22310
Via Fax: 703-971-3032

October 2, 2005

Re: October 3 Metro Funding Summit

Chairman Kauffman:

The Arlington Coalition for Sensible Transportation (ACST) is a citizen's organization dedicated to educating the public and policy makers on local, regional, and state transportation issues, particularly as they relate to Arlington. ACST recognizes that Metro is a vital component of our regional transportation system and has made tremendous contributions to our community and to the entire Washington region. We fully support Metro and the need to ensure that it is financially secure for the long term.

The last few years, however, have revealed a troubling pattern of management and other lapses at WMATA, many of which were well-documented in a four-part series in the Washington Post. At the same time, some officials outside of Arlington are seeking to disregard the 1977 Coleman Decision for I-66 inside the Beltway, a landmark agreement limiting I-66 to four managed travel lanes through Arlington complemented with a robust public transit system.

Moreover, a 23-mile Dulles Rail Extension project is being advanced, even though the core Metrorail system is far from stable, and concerns about the cost-effectiveness of this extension and the future capacity of the existing Orange Line have not been adequately addressed. In particular, we note that Northern Virginia and DC are linked by only two Metrorail tracks in each direction and that there are no provisions to add Metrorail tracks across the Potomac or to provide express rail service for the long Dulles Rail Extension. We also note that to accommodate Dulles trains through the Rosslyn chokepoint, Orange Line trains are projected to be removed from service, making the need for additional Orange Line capacity imperative.

Thus, while ACST supports efforts to enhance Metro's core funding, we believe that this funding should be contingent upon a number of reforms.

Accountability. Metro must be fully accountable to the public and the customers it serves. An independent Inspector General position should be created to audit and report on all aspects of Metro management. Moreover, Metro should be subject to the same basic accountability provisions as other public agencies, such as the Freedom of Information Act.

Customer Focus. The Metro Board should have representation from the people who use public transit. At least one rider-representative position should be created, and this position should have full voting privileges.

Honor the Coleman Decision. Although technically repealed through a back-room legislative deal, the Coleman Decision is very much alive in the hearts and minds of many Arlingtonians. WMATA has a vital interest in ensuring adequate long-term capacity for the existing Orange Line and should immediately undertake studies to adopt long-term solutions for Metrorail capacity across the Potomac and in the median of I-66 in Arlington.

Fix-it First. The first priority should be to ensure that the existing core system is sustainable for the long term. This includes a number of things, such as addressing long term capital needs and adding capacity to crowded lines. Major expansions should be put on hold until this is accomplished.

Increase Non-Motorized Access to Rail and Bus. Substantially increase walking and bicycling access to Metrorail and Metrobus by creating a new WMATA professional staff position dedicated to strategically improving and promoting non-motorized access to our public transit system. Greater access to Metro by foot and bicycle would increase WMATA revenue and lower operating costs, decrease traffic congestion and pollution, and enhance public health and livability. Presently, WMATA, with nearly 11,000 employees and a \$1 billion annual budget, lacks even one professional planner dedicated to coordinating bicycling and pedestrian access improvements.

Increase Emphasis on Transit-Oriented Development. Support transit-oriented development as a central principle for greater system ridership and revenue and for achieving local and regional land use and transportation goals. Specifically, a WMATA Station Area Planning Program should be established to strategically focus both transit-oriented development and pedestrian and bicycle access improvements at targeted Metrorail stations which are currently underused.

Thank you for considering these comments. We look forward to working with you to ensure that Metro gets both the funding and the reforms it needs to be sustainable over the long term.

Sincerely,

Jason Rylander
President
ACST