

March 7, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman  
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee  
251 House Office Building  
Annapolis MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Support – HB 1023 – Prince George’s County and Montgomery County – The Washington Suburban Transit Commission Reform Act***

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) strongly supports House Bill 1023 as an important step in streamlining and reforming the Washington Suburban Transit Commission and the State’s commitment to the oversight and support of Metro.

By way of background, the Washington Suburban Transit Commission (WSTC) was created in 1965 and is the bi-county agency that serves as the financial conduit for funding of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and for supporting transit in Prince George’s County through the Washington Suburban Transit District tax. MDOT plays a major role in staffing and supporting the WSTC and alongside Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties, we are working to make WSTC a more useful resource for our partners. MDOT views WSTC as Maryland’s Metro and DC-area transit think tank, aligning with the role NVTC plays in Northern Virginia. As such, MDOT is committed to working more closely with the Counties on transit policy matters and developing a new Joint Study Fund to address key WMATA policy issues.

House Bill 1023 makes three important changes:

1. Clarifies when the Secretary’s designee to the WMATA Board of Directors may attend meetings and confirms that the designee has the same authority as the Secretary when attending meetings. Current law only allows the Secretary’s designee to attend a meeting in the event there is a scheduling conflict – this provision is overly restrictive compared to other instances where the Secretary is authorized to select a designee to serve in their place.

2. Authorizes the WSTC to reappoint a member to the WMATA Board of Directors before the requirement to alternate between a Montgomery and a Prince George's County Director is triggered. Currently, the law is ambiguous in relation to whether current WMATA Board Directors from one of the Counties may be reappointed without triggering a succession event where a Commissioner from another County would need to take the seat. This ambiguity raises questions about the appropriate succession process and may create difficulties in achieving balance between the two Counties when, due to appointment timings and resignations, terms of service on the WMATA Board do not line up neatly with WSTC terms and the term length of previous Commissioners.
3. Repeals the requirement that Montgomery County and Prince George's County Councils must review and approve WSTC contracts. The requirement for the County Council review and approvals of contracts for the normal course of WSTC business is inconsistent with the regulatory regime for the other bi-county agencies such as the WSSC and M-NCPPC and imposes an administrative burden on the WSTC and the Counties.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Delegation grant House Bill 1023 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

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