



# **WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

## **Public Testimony in Support of HB 1237**

### **Public Safety – Elevator Inspections – Transit Compact Authority**

#### **Before the House Economic Matters Committee**

**March 10, 2020**

Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. I'm Charlie Scott, Senior Government Relations Officer for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). I thank Delegate Lewis for sponsoring HB 1237 and urge a favorable report.

### **WMATA Compact**

WMATA was established in 1967 as an interstate compact agency created by the State of Maryland, District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Virginia, with the consent of the U.S. Congress. The laws creating WMATA were enacted in identical form by these three signatories and is also federal law. By entering into such a compact and to avoid conflicting regulation, each signatory to the Compact relinquishes certain ability to regulate the operations of WMATA. A couple of specific exceptions to such regulatory exemption provided in the Compact are rules governing the safety of the system and land use and zoning of WMATA-owned property.

### **WMSC Compact**

In 2012, with the leadership of U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski, a new federal law required that states with rail transit systems identify or establish State Safety Oversight Agency in their state to ensure that rail transit systems within their borders adhere to a new safety framework. The commonwealth of Virginia, the state of Maryland and the District of Columbia joined together to craft an agreement creating the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC), which was charged to oversee the safety of the WMATA rail system. Because of the unique nature of the multistate agreement, Congress needed to formally approve the Compact, which it ratified in August 2017.

The WMSC began directly overseeing the safety of the Metrorail system on March 18, 2019 upon receiving federal certification. Today, the WMSC employs a staff of approximately a dozen professionals who are tasked with day-to-day efforts that support its core functions, including: safety investigations,

inspections and audits of the Metrorail system. The operations of the WMSC are funded partially by the Federal Transit Administration, with the balance funded proportionally by Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia.

### **Purpose of HB 1237**

With the WMSC now staffed and in operation, HB 1237 removes redundant state-funded safety oversight of elevators and escalators owned by WMATA. Further, if there is a safety-related incident with an elevator or escalator unit owned by WMATA in Maryland, this legislation clarifies that any incident investigation would be under the purview of the federally-certified WMSC.

### **WMATA Elevator/Escalator Facts and Figures**

Across the entire WMATA system, Metro owns, operates and maintains and inspects 321 elevators and 618 escalators. With ~35,000 escalators in the United States, WMATA owns almost 2 percent of our country's escalators, including the three longest escalators in the western hemisphere at the Wheaton station.

WMATA's Office of Elevator and Escalator Services (ELES) is overseen by a General Superintendent and employs 274 staff. To maintain an ongoing staff of skilled professionals, ELES has established an industry-leading apprenticeship program at Metro's Carmen Turner Facility in Landover. Over the past twenty years, this program has graduated almost 200 mechanics.

WMATA's ELES Office also includes a fully independent Office of Inspection and Compliance with a direct line of report to the ELES General Superintendent. These inspectors ensure safety and compliance with effective building codes and regulations and are certified to perform inspections on behalf of numerous jurisdictions including Arlington and Fairfax Counties and the District of Columbia. Under this proposed legislation, these inspectors would have the primary responsibility for inspections of WMATA elevators and escalators in Maryland, with regulatory safety oversight undertaken by the Washington Metrorail Safety Commission.

For these reasons, WMATA respectfully supports HB 1237 and seeks a favorable report from this Committee. Also, joining me today is Mitch Nici, General Superintendent of WMATA's Office of Elevator and Escalator Services and we are glad to answer any questions.