



Montgomery County's Advocates for Better Transportation

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January 19, 2023

SUPPORT for Maryland Metro Funding Act of 2024

HB 198 (Dels. M. Korman and J. Lewis) and SB 126 (Sens. M. Augustine and B. Feldman)

Action Committee for Transit, a Montgomery County–based organization, has long [supported](#) dedicated funding for WMATA and [applauded](#) the General Assembly for passing dedicated funding legislation in 2018. However, **the operating subsidy cap of 3% increases per year has held the system back from accessing needed funds**, due both to inflation and to how the permissible increases were calculated from artificially low levels.

As we stated in previous [testimony](#) before the House Appropriations Committee, as a result of the 3% cap, "Marylanders will lose buses they depend on to get to work, to school, to doctors and hospitals, and for trips of all kinds. This arbitrary cap fails to recognize that many actions by Maryland state and local governments raise WMATA's costs and reduce its revenues. Buses move slower when police allow Uber and Lyft vehicles to block bus traffic. Highway designs make walking to the bus stop dangerous and inconvenient. Traffic lights are timed to make 60 bus passengers wait while a single driver goes first. Bus-only lanes are much too rare, and the few that exist are poorly enforced. Restrictive zoning blocks transit-oriented development that would generate fare revenue for Metrobus and Metrorail."

More recently, WMATA has implemented improvements to the system, such as more frequent all-day service and more weekend service. In fact, **Metro [announced](#) this summer that it is now providing the most train service in the system's 47-year history and that bus service levels have not only been restored to pre-pandemic levels but also exceed pre-pandemic levels by four percent.** In Maryland specifically, WMATA [extended](#) a Metrobus route in Prince George's County this summer and rolled out a new route that serves Downtown Largo and New Carrollton with 20-minute headways for most of the day. These improvements are now increasingly affordable: In the past few years, WMATA has [implemented](#) \$2 flat fares for weekends, \$2 flat fares for weekday evenings after 9:30, and lower-cost monthly unlimited passes. This summer, the system launched [a new fare discount](#) for low-income riders (those who

are SNAP beneficiaries), ensuring that those who most rely on public transit have access. Finally, Metrobus recently launched a ["courtesy stop"](#) initiative for safer nighttime travel. As advocates for public transit, we are not the only ones who recognize how great Metro is—[multiple studies](#) have concluded that WMATA is the #1 transit system in the nation. **Metro's success should make us proud—and staunchly committed to providing the funding the system needs in order to maintain the service it provides.**

The Moore Administration's revised draft transportation budget released in December calls for increases of \$150 million in FY 2025 and 2026 and \$250 million in FY 2027, but these necessary increases violate the 3% statutory operating cap. Maryland needs to fix this statutory cap issue. We strongly urge you to vote yes on the [Maryland Metro Funding Act of 2024 \(HB 198\)](#) and [\(SB 126\)](#).

Sincerely,

Amy Frieder
President
Action Committee for Transit