



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: Senate Bill - 126 - Transportation - WMATA Operating Assistance - Alteration (Maryland Metro Funding Act of 2024)

SPONSOR: Senators Augustin and Feldman

HEARING DATE: January 24, 2024

COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 126 - Transportation - WMATA Operating Assistance - Alteration (Maryland Metro Funding Act of 2024)**, which temporarily pauses – for one fiscal year – the requirement that the Secretary of Transportation withhold a portion of the State's annual operating grant to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) when WMATA's budget increases by more than 3% over the previous fiscal year.

Prince George's County has a significant transit dependent population (among the highest in the Region), and therefore, the health and vitality of the entire transit network is critical to the larger ecosystem. As the WMATA is a central part of this essential transportation paradigm, ensuring that the entire network is robust is absolutely critical. Prince George's County strongly supports WMATA in best being able to serve the needs of the Region.

Central to the County's plans, is our recently launched Transit Transformation Initiative. While we are pleased that the Governor in his proposed FY 24-29 budget has restored the proposed 40 percent reduction to funding for the Locally Operating Transit Systems (LOTS) for FY 24. However, if in subsequent years Prince George's County's local bus LOTS funding is cut, and any other impacts, it will also be important to ensure that Prince George's County is able to provide the level and quality of transit service that our residents frankly deserve.

As the funding of transit systems coming out of the pandemic is particularly challenging, it is vital that in so doing, that we get it right. As we have worked

collaboratively with WMATA on the development of the Better Bus Network, moving forward together to create true synergy between the different providers is essential.

A delicate balance needed, one that requires being deliberate and understanding the best manor by which the residents can be served with reliable, frequent and efficient service. It will be crucial to look at the long run as to how best we can achieve together a more comprehensive and wholistic transit network that best serves the patrons of the Region.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 126** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.