

Committee: Budget and Taxation
Testimony on: SB0281- Metro Funding Modification Act
Submitting: Deborah A. Cohn
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 3, 2026

Dear Chair Guzzone and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of SB0281, the Metro Funding Modification Act of 2026. I have lived in Montgomery County for 40 years, depending for many of them on Metrorail for commuting. After switching to driving during Metrorail's decline, I am grateful for recently improved safety and service. Now retired, I value that I no longer need to drive to D.C. for safety reasons and want to ensure, through thoughtful and pragmatic legislation such as SB0281, that ever improving rail and bus service will be available for all Metropolitan Washington residents.

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) provides Metrorail and Metro bus service throughout the Washington DC metropolitan area. SB0281 provides WMATA capital funds to enable it to complete its transition of a rail signaling system and fully automated train operations system, which are safer, less expensive and more efficient. The bill appropriately protects workers. Appropriations may be withheld if collective bargaining agreements have not been reached and worker protections not implemented. The bill is supported by Amalgamated Transit Union.

In addition, SB0281 for the first time enables Maryland to provide its annual share of Metrorail's operating subsidy automatically, but ONLY if Virginia and the District of Columbia also provide their shares. This is a huge step which will avoid WMATA's yearly funding crisis and allow for efficient long range planning.

SB0281 brings many benefits. It is designed to fund DMV Moves which affects all of the Washington, DC, Maryland and Virginia (DMV) transit corridors and regional districts. Most importantly, it will move the DMV toward world class seamless transit. This investment plan allows WMATA to:

- Address ongoing repair, maintenance, and modernization of assets, systems and technologies,
- Deploy rail modernization, compatible fleet upgrades, and selective platform screen doors, all of which improve frequency, safety and capacity, and
- Provide faster, more frequent and reliable bus service that includes bus priority lanes and signals, and all day, all-week service that is better aligned with regional travel needs.

The Metro Funding Modification Act of 2026 is designed to make transit more affordable, more convenient and more integrated system-wide for all users. Accordingly, I urge this committee to issue a FAVORABLE report on SB0281.