



March 16, 2021

Chair Paul Smedberg
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Chair Smedberg and WMATA Board of Directors,

On behalf of the Tysons Partnership, thank you for this opportunity to comment on WMATA's budget proposal for FY 22 and beyond.

Transit is existential to the promise of Tysons as envisioned by Fairfax County in its Comprehensive Plan for Tysons. Billions of dollars of investment in Tysons are predicated on the promise of reliable, regular transit throughout Tysons and the Silver Line corridor. The availability of regular, comprehensive transit is integral to the decision of companies choosing to locate in Tysons and is used as a tool for workforce recruitment and retention. Much has been accomplished in the decade since Fairfax County adopted the Comprehensive Plan, and reliable transit remains key to continued progress.

Unfortunately, seven years after the Silver Line opened in Tysons, there is *less* transit service rather than more. In January 2015, Silver Line trains ran every 6 minutes during rush hour. Today, Silver Line trains never run more frequently than 12 minutes. In 2015, the rail system stayed open until 3am on Friday and Saturday nights, and closed at 12am Sunday – Tuesday. Today, the system closes at 11pm every night. Area wide bus service is at about 80% of pre-pandemic service. To fulfill Tysons' promise, we need more transit, not less.

Transit reliability has been hit hard by Metro's need to deal with a backlog of maintenance and the pandemic. In the past twelve months, train and bus service has been cut drastically and though much improved, has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. The uncertainty created by inconsistent service and station closures makes it difficult for individuals to trust that transit will be available when they need it. We applaud WMATA's commitment to safety and resolving decades of deferred maintenance, and fully understand the pandemic required Metro to take unprecedented steps. The Tysons Partnership is grateful to the federal, state and regional partners who have worked together to provide continued transit funding in these unprecedented times. The riding public has now been through five years of inconsistent service. We urge the WMATA Board and the jurisdictions to keep that in mind as they work together for WMATA's future.

The need for more transit in the coming months will only rise as vaccination rates increase, followed by increased activity and reopening. Employees, shoppers and visitors will need more trains and buses to get them to work and to the urban experiences available in Tysons.



The coming weeks and months are a unique opportunity for WMATA. People are most likely to form and sustain new habits at “turning point” moments such as starting a new job or moving to a new home. When people begin riding transit at such times, they are likely to continue doing so. The receding pandemic threat and resumption of regular activities is a major such turning point. People who return to or begin using transit at this critical juncture will be motivated to stick with it—but only if it’s demonstrably reliable and convenient. We urge WMATA to stay ahead of demand so that Tysons can truly fulfill its promise.

The fulfillment of the promise not only of Tysons, but of the entire Silver Line corridor, is contingent upon the completion of the Silver Line and opening of Phase 2 to riders. It is then that the region will be able to fully unlock the economic growth and possibilities of this rail line. While it is understood that there are mechanical or construction issues which may delay the opening of Silver Phase, no delays should occur due to financial constraints. We urge the WMATA Board to make sure WMATA customers will not have to wait to ride Silver Phase 2 because of financial reasons. The Tysons Partnership looks forward to the safe and timely completion of the Silver Line.

In March 2020, WMATA and Tysons faced a new pandemic and great uncertainty. A year later, we can all take pride in how WMATA and the region met a great challenge with resiliency and innovation, and we can look to the future. Thank you for considering our comments as you plan WMATA’s budget for Fiscal Year 2022 and beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sol Glasner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sol Glasner,
President and CEO, Tysons Partnership

cc: Chair Jeffrey C. McKay; Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Supervisor Walter Alcorn, WMATA Alternate Director (Virginia)