



OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER
301 King St., Suite 3500
Alexandria, VA 22314

MARK B. JINKS
City Manager

703.746.4300
Fax:
703.838.6343

December 14, 2018

Paul Wiedefeld
General Manager
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
600 5th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Request for Additional WMATA Resources During Summer 2019 Platform Work

Dear Mr. Wiedefeld,

The City of Alexandria (the City) understands and supports WMATA's planned Summer 2019 Platform Work. This effort to address deteriorating outdoor station platforms is badly needed. The City also recognizes that by performing this work continuously, WMATA will be able to complete each platform in far less time than if the work were performed overnight only.

That said, the traffic and economic effect of closing the six Metrorail stations south of National Airport for three continuous months (May to September 2019) will likely be significant to city residents and businesses. The City remains concerned about impacts to the traveling public and local businesses. This is especially true since the entire platform repair program will begin south of National Airport, and the City and southern Fairfax County will be the first to experience such an extended and significant shutdown. Public perception and media coverage of the entire planned WMATA outdoor platform program will be shaped by this initial project.

Alexandria has been an active participant in local coordination efforts and we appreciate WMATA's collaborative approach. In addition to mitigation measures planned and funded by WMATA, the City is developing its own plan of travel alternatives for residents and visitors.

We also appreciate the opportunity to review and support WMATA's Draft Regional Mitigation Plan. However, Alexandria is concerned about two plan elements. Specifically, based on City staff calculations, the free shuttle service and the supplemental existing Metrobus service staff believes are insufficient and under-resourced.

According to WMATA's assessment, on typical weekday peak period, the Blue/Yellow Metrorail corridor can see up to 8,000 passengers per hour by the time trains reach the Pentagon Metrorail station. On an average weekday, Metrorail sees about 30,000 entries at the six stations

south of National Airport. Based on its experience with SafeTrack, WMATA estimates that 60 percent of daily Metrorail riders will use shuttle buses and connect back to Metrorail.

Upon our review of the data, and in consultation with key stakeholders, the City is concerned that WMATA has designated too few shuttles. Assuming 6-minute headways, the 4 shuttles combined will be able to move a maximum of 2,400 passengers/hour. The supplemental service along existing Metrobus routes will move a maximum of approximately 780 additional passengers/hour. Together, that totals only 3,180 passengers/hour, well short of WMATA's 60% target of 4,800. Stating it another way, WMATA's plan is only two-thirds of what it should be. WMATA's plan needs to "lean in" and take an over-resourcing risk.

More seriously, we are convinced that the estimate of 60 percent diversion onto shuttles is already too low for the following reasons:

1. The impact of this shutdown will be materially different than SafeTrack, which affected the City most substantially for only two weeks. This was a short enough timeframe that people were willing to change their behavior and travel patterns. The Summer 2019 shutdown will be three months. While the City is building alternatives, it is unlikely those options can consistently replace unmet demand by the additional bus service.
2. The data show the number of riders in the City does not diminish as much in summer as it may elsewhere. At the King St.-Old Town station, total boardings during August 2017 were 19.7 percent higher than our slowest month in the last fiscal year, which was January. In fact, July 2017 was the second busiest month for station entries over a 12-month period. Many of these riders in the summer are likely visitors to Alexandria, most of whom do not have e-mail addresses linked to SmarTrip cards. As a result, they may not be represented in WMATA's surveying efforts.
3. Unlike rail, which has a dedicated right of way, buses must share right of way with other traffic. The City will try to ease vehicular congestion where applicable, such as by extending hours and occupancy requirements for HOV lanes along Washington Street, but with a probable increase in traffic due to the Metrorail closure, it is likely that congestion along certain roadways in the peak hours will continue or worsen. Traffic congestion on the streets impacts travel times for buses, creates less reliable bus operations and can lead to bus bunching which increases the wait time between shuttles.

Because the City of Alexandria, Fairfax and Arlington counties will be the first jurisdictions to experience these extended station closures, we want to work with WMATA to ensure that passengers experience as little inconvenience as possible and the media coverage and public feedback on the planning and handling of these closures is positive. First impressions will be critical to the success of the entire WMATA Platform Project.

To accomplish this, the City requests WMATA revise its planning assumptions to ensure it has sufficient capacity. By our calculation, at a minimum, this means increasing capacity by another 1,620 passengers/hour, just to hit the 60% target. WMATA needs to be aggressive in its shuttle capacity planning. While the City believes added capacity at the King St.-Old Town Metrorail

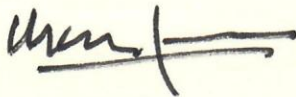
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station is most beneficial, capacity anywhere is welcome. The City will partner with WMATA and neighboring jurisdictions to move people as efficiently as possible and is committed to making the bus bridge and supplemental service successful.

We also request that WMATA staff attend the Alexandria City Council Legislative Meeting at 7 p.m. on January 22, 2019 to provide an update on mitigation planning.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Yon Lambert, Director, Department of Transportation & Environmental Services at 703.746.4025 or yon.lambert@alexandriava.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark B. Jinks', with a horizontal line drawn through the bottom of the signature.

Mark B. Jinks
City Manager

cc: The Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council, City of Alexandria
Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager
Yon Lambert, Director, Department of Transportation & Environmental Services