

Greetings WMATA Board of Directors:

The Mayor and Council of the City of Hyattsville opposes the proposed changes to the Yellow service as expressed in the WMATA 2024 proposed budget. This significant reduction in service is problematic for our city's residents in multiple ways.

First, it undermines our ability to attract investment and the economic development plans have been jointly pursued by WMATA, the city, the county, and the private sector for more than a decade. The Yellow Line turnaround at Mt. Vernon cuts our area off from major regional growth and job opportunities that the Amazon headquarters in Crystal City will generate and all of the multiplier effects associated with it. In addition, the lack of a one-seat ride to the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) negatively impacts the marketability of the West Hyattsville TOD to developers, prospective homeowners, and real estate investors who might have otherwise supported future development around the metro station in critical ways.

Second, the service cuts, on the face of it, will likely have a very negative impact on the perception of WMATA's commitment to equity in the region. Several very high-profile capital projects in the region have been targeting very wealthy, white communities in the region, including the recent completion of the Silver Line to Dulles Airport and the ongoing construction of the Purple Line. Moreover, the fact that WMATA is proposing to turnaround the Yellow Line but not similarly reduce service to, for example, the much more distant station of Shady Grove, also gives a strong impression that the agency is favoring wealthy suburban riders needs over those of even the downtown riders in Northeast Washington DC, let alone those of us in Prince Georges' County. This budget creates some very bad optics that suggest a significant disparity in where WMATA is cutting service and where it is expanding it, and it goes against the stated values about regional equity.

With all the growing momentum in support of transit-oriented and inclusive economic development in our city, it came as a shock to many of us when WMATA released its FY 2024 [budget proposal](#) showing a significant cut in transit service with the proposed Yellow Line turnaround at Mt. Vernon station. WMATA has communicated to [our community](#) on several occasions that it intends to prioritize transit-oriented development (TOD) specifically in Hyattsville over the next decade. This is beneficial to the community because it creates new opportunities for us to create safer, more vibrant community spaces, to attract and retain local businesses and create local jobs, to reduce carbon emissions through more sustainable land use practices, and to increase local and state tax revenues through denser, mixed-use, more sustainable development. Historically, TOD investments have benefited WMATA also because they increase transit ridership, improve safety near the stations with "eyes on the street," and create new revenue streams through real estate ground leasing or sales agreements with developers.

The City of Hyattsville would like to request that WMATA reconsider the proposed turnback of the Yellow Line at Mt. Vernon Station in order to continue advancing the strategic plans that are already in place for TOD investments in our county. We believe that WMATA should:

- At a minimum, WMATA should hold some community engagement sessions in our community to get more public input on this decision and educate our residents about the proposed changes and how they benefit us.
- WMATA should more seriously consider the opportunities available in the [bipartisan infrastructure bill](#) that the agency could leverage not only to address short term budget gaps, but more importantly to leverage those investments to expand TODs that create long-term revenue streams to sustain the system over the long-term, such as increasing the use of ground lease agreements and partnering with localities to apply for competitive grants such as the [Transit-Oriented Development Planning Grants](#).
- WMATA should re-evaluate its approach to assessing the equity of its investments regionally. The regional equity of service expansions through WMATA's capital projects and service cuts should not strive for fairness alone, they should also account for historical and structural inequities that continue to have present-day consequences for communities like ours whether in terms of the [racial wealth gap](#), reduced [access to jobs](#) and professional networks, [traffic safety](#), or discrimination in [home appraisals](#).

The lack of alignment between WMATA's strategic plans and the FY2024 budget proposal is very concerning. Although we understand the serious fiscal challenges facing WMATA and many other public transit agencies since the start of the pandemic, we do not feel that the agency has adequately considered how the Yellow Line turnaround will negatively impact the potential for WMATA to benefit from past and future TOD investments through alternative revenue streams and increased ridership in Northeast DC and Prince Georges' County. We hope that WMATA will reconsider these service cuts and their potential for having a negative impact on our community and many similar communities near us. Moreover, we are concerned that WMATA is not adequately leveraging the historic levels of infrastructure investment that are possible with the bipartisan infrastructure bill, as well as other major federal investments that could be used to proactively address structural inequality in our region. The transformative potential is there for the first time in a generation, and it would be a waste to let it pass our region by.

President Joseph Biden once said, "Don't tell me what you value, show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value." GM Randy Clarke echoed these sentiments himself in his public announcement of the proposed FY 2024 budget for WMATA, stating that budgets are about the values and priorities of an organization.

In words, at least, WMATA seems committed to regional equity and sustainability. WMATA's 10-year strategic plan to [expand](#) dense, mixed use development around three underutilized metro stations in Prince George's County, was a momentous step for the residents of our county. It suggested a serious commitment from WMATA to leverage the power of transportation and real estate investments to help counteract long-standing patterns disinvestment, racial segregation, discrimination in housing and access to financing, and the resulting racial wealth gap in our region between predominantly white communities and majority Black and Hispanic or Latino communities like Hyattsville.