



March 16, 2021

Dear Members of the Board of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority:

I write on behalf of the Cleveland Park Citizens Association — a non-profit, membership organization of neighborhood residents, founded in 1911 — regarding the proposals to make drastic service cuts, as were made for FY 2022, under future WMATA budgets. We were pleased to see WMATA's announcement that proposed service cuts and closures would no longer be considered for FY 2022 due to additional funding WMATA will receive under the recently enacted American Recovery Plan. However, we remain concerned by the prospect that such proposals might be made for future budgets.

Briefly stated, we recognize that WMATA, like public transportation systems across the country, has faced extraordinary financial challenges due to COVID-19, and we appreciate that drastic measures might have been necessary in the absence of extraordinary federal funding assistance. Our concern is that WMATA might propose similar cuts in the future if only as a tactic to demonstrate the need for additional funding. Such tactics may be politically helpful to WMATA, but the uncertainty they generate could have serious, negative, long-term effects on the well-being of our neighborhood.

We focus on the proposed closure of the Cleveland Park Metro Station, as well as the reductions in service and elimination of routes for Metro buses upon which our community depends. Our substantive concerns with the cuts that were proposed are much the same as those presented in Council Member Mary Cheh's letter of March 3. In Cleveland Park, the metro station is at the heart of the community, geographically and economically. Shuttering it would have a devastating impact, particularly on our many, small, family-owned businesses, and on our most vulnerable residents in a community with a high proportion of seniors. These effects would be exacerbated by proposed reductions to bus frequency and elimination of bus routes, including routes that enable our residents to access our metro stop.

Further, as reflected in the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan for the District of Columbia and in many public statements and presentations by the Office of the Mayor and the Office of Planning, development along the Red Line, including along

Connecticut Avenue in Cleveland Park is a priority. Such development is intended to increase affordable housing, promote sustainable commuting and city-living, and strengthen the vitality of commercial strips such as ours. For Cleveland Park, the metro stop and public transportation otherwise available to our neighborhood have been identified as both rationale for this initiative and essential to its success.

Whatever the timing for development and its extent may prove to be, access to public transportation is a core value for Cleveland Park. Uncertainty regarding future availability of the metro stop in particular, as well as regarding the strength of bus service, can be expected to affect decisions on whether to live in the neighborhood, let alone invest in buying a home here. Simply put, there is a fundamental difference in proposing cuts to public transportation in commercial and residential areas of DC. People do not choose jobs over whether they may have to walk a couple extra blocks to the next metro or bus stop, but they do choose where to live based on proximity to a metro stop or efficiently routed bus lines.

More broadly, lack of confidence in public transportation as an efficient, cost-effective option, leads to reduced usage and to reliance on other forms of transport. If WMATA should find it expedient to propose cuts in the future to demonstrate the need for more funding, we urge you not to focus on service to residential areas. Instead, we would urge WMATA to focus on the importance of efficient, readily available public transportation to the well-being of residential communities and to ensuring the sustainability of Washington, DC, and the region. What we need is more readily available and reliable public transportation, not more reasons to look for alternatives.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of our views,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Barlow Weiner". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "W".

John Barlow Weiner
President