

WASHINGTON REGION TRANSPORTATION COALITION

A Regional Multimodal Transportation Network Remains Key To the Washington Region's Economic Competitiveness, Quality of Life, Environmental Sustainability, and Equitable Access to Opportunity

We, the undersigned organizations representing the vast majority of businesses and employees of the Washington Region's private sector and non-profit workforce, believe that a well-planned, regional and multimodal transportation network remains key to our future economic and workforce competitiveness, quality of life, environmental sustainability, and equitable access to opportunity.

Transportation infrastructure is an investment in the future of our community. Our region is forecast to gain more than 1 million new jobs and 1.3 million new residents over the next two decades. Multimodal transportation investments including roadways, transit, bike and pedestrian facilities, and new technology are essential to meeting that demand. They also generate billions in economic activity and return millions to state and local coffers. In addition, these improvements make it easier for DC area residents to access jobs, opportunities, goods, and services throughout our region.

While travel patterns were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, daily vehicle miles traveled have since returned to pre-COVID levels and, according to the region's Transportation Planning Board, over 80 percent of all daily trips are anticipated to be on our road network even as far out as 2045. Additionally, even though transit ridership is still significantly below pre-pandemic levels, it remains essential to the Washington region's plan to accommodate future growth over the next 25 years, including a planned 40% increase in population density near high-capacity transit stations. Failing to invest in both roadway and transit infrastructure will lead to unbearable congestion and delays for everyone in our community. And according to our recent survey of Washington area residents, 84% said they support continued investment in our roadway network, and nearly 40% said they would consider leaving the DC area in the next 5 years if transportation does not improve.

Furthermore, roadway congestion and delays have a significant and disproportionate impact on low-income residents, the vast majority of whom rely on automobile travel in the Washington region. Households with incomes of less than \$60,000 are twice as likely to drive to work than take all other forms of transportation combined. And area residents with incomes of \$25,000 or less are three times more likely to drive alone than take a bus – and four times more likely to take an automobile than transit for their daily travel needs. At the same time, they are less likely to have a job that allows for telework or flexible scheduling. Our roadways are essential to expanding access to jobs and opportunities for millions of low-income residents across the region.

Therefore, we urge our elected leaders to continue investing in an all-of-the-above strategy to addressing our transportation challenges that includes roadways, rail, bus, bicycle, pedestrian, and technology improvements to ensure the continued success of our community.

PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

The primary function of our transportation infrastructure is to facilitate the movement of people and goods throughout our region. That function goes far beyond commuting, which only accounts for about 20% of all daily trips.

We support continued investment in Northern Virginia's transportation infrastructure using performance-based statewide and regional transportation plans that focus on corridors of regional and statewide significance and the prioritization of projects that produce the best long-term return on investment. We support similar investments in Maryland and throughout the region that deliver performance-based benefits to our region.

When prioritizing transportation projects, the Commonwealth Transportation Board, the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, State and local agencies in Maryland, and the region's Transportation Planning Board should focus on projects that:

- Reduce congestion and travel time between major regional employment centers;
- Move the greatest number of people throughout the region;
- Increase region-wide network reliability; and
- Promote regional economic opportunity and growth.

KEY IMPROVEMENTS

Using these criteria, transportation funds should be primarily allocated and leveraged, where appropriate, with federal, state, regional, and private funds on projects of large-scale regional significance. These include:

- **American Legion Bridge** -- Add two new High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes in each direction and add express bus service between Virginia and Maryland per the recommendations of the American Legion Bridge TDM Study.
- **Regional Express Lanes Network** -- Complete the planned Regional Express Lanes Network along the Maryland Beltway from the American Legion Bridge to I-270 and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge to I-95, the Virginia Beltway from Springfield to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, and I-270 to Frederick. All express lanes should be free for HOV and public transit vehicles.
- **Regional Rail Expansion** -- Fund the construction of a new Long Bridge and fourth track to Springfield, Union Station upgrades, and expansion of MARC and VRE run-through service between Virginia and Maryland.
- **New Potomac River Crossing** -- Construct a new Bridge northwest of the American Legion Bridge.
- **Route 355 BRT** -- Construct new dedicated lanes for Bus Rapid Transit along Route 355 in Montgomery County Maryland.
- **WMATA funding** -- Continued investment in safety and reliability of the region's Metro system as it continues to recover from COVID-19 related declines in ridership
- **Route 15** -- Widen and improve Route 15 including the Point of Rocks Bridge between Frederick, Maryland and Leesburg, Virginia; and improve heavily congested sections in Frederick, Maryland.
- **Route 28** -- Build the 28 Bypass and Route 28 STARS improvements in Prince William County.
- **Richmond Highway** -- Expand roadway capacity including dedicated lanes for Bus Rapid Transit.

- **Northstar Corridor** -- Connect Route 234 in Prince William with US Route 50 in Loudoun County.
- **Prince George's County** – Key interchanges and other corridor improvements to boost transit oriented development around the Greenbelt Metro station, New Carrollton, and various Blue Line Corridor Improvements including Medical Center Drive and Largo.
- **Southern Maryland Rapid Transit** – Fixed guideway transit project along the MD-5/US-301 corridor

NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY FUNDING & AUTONOMY

In order to make these investments, we strongly support the full restoration of Northern Virginia Transportation Authority funding diverted in 2018 using statewide or regional dedicated funding sources. After the 2020 General Assembly Session, there remains a \$38.5 million per year shortfall.

In addition, we believe the Commonwealth should maintain its commitment to fund transportation improvements in Northern Virginia. The presence of local, regional, and private transportation funding as well as toll revenue does not absolve the Commonwealth of this responsibility.

Furthermore, we support the continued autonomy of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority and Northern Virginia Transportation Commission to make regional transportation planning and funding decisions for Northern Virginia.

SUBURBAN MARYLAND TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

We support the creation of a Suburban Maryland Transportation Authority to identify, prioritize, and fund transportation capacity improvements in Charles, Frederick, Montgomery, and Prince George's Counties using new, dedicated regional revenue and specified performance metrics.

PRICE MANAGED LANES

We support the use of price managed express toll or High-Occupancy-Toll (HOT) lanes to expand the capacity of our roadway network, incentivize carpooling, and increase transit reliability. We believe that any net revenue to state or regional agencies raised through the implementation of these lanes should be reinvested in transportation improvements that directly expand the travel capacity of the corridor in which that revenue is raised.

WMATA

We believe that Metro is a core regional and statewide asset, and that a well-maintained, safe, reliable, and fiscally sustainable Metrorail system is essential to the Washington Region's economic competitiveness.

Therefore, we support maintaining sustainable, adequate Metrorail funding tied to implementation of appropriate operational, safety, and governance reforms. We also support an evaluation of WMATA's long-term financial stability due to the ridership impacts of COVID-19 and telework trends in the region. WMATA should also work with local transit agencies to continue improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our regional bus network including a bus network redesign, modernization, and the creation of a new dedicated bus lanes network in the region.

TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Finally, we support the creation of tax incentives for employers who provide employees with fare assistance for public transportation, telework, and other travel demand management options.



