

#30
2
3-10-10

David Kaplan

418 Queen Street

Alexandria, VA 22314

City Council's Budget Public Hearing – March 10, 2010

As my wife Kim mentioned to you earlier, Metro is in crisis. Getting the system back on solid footing needs to be one of our highest priorities in this region. To close next year's \$189 million budget gap, WMATA proposes to raise fares between 15-28% on rail, bus, and Metro Access. This is one of the highest fare increases in the system's history. After the fares are raised, Metro will still need to cut about \$32 million in service. We might say goodbye to Yellow Line trains between King Street and Fort Totten after 9pm on weekdays and all day on weekends.

Headways will be increased on all other lines. At night and on weekends, Metrorail service at King Street and Braddock Road Stations would be cut by almost half. The system would open later in the morning and close three hours earlier on weekends.

The 29 Metrobus route will no longer serve most of Duke Street in Alexandria, our busiest bus corridor. And if a bus rider needs to get to Beatley Library after 7 PM because their local branch is closed, he or she could encounter a wait time for a DASH bus traveling to the library of up to 65 minutes.

After the service gets cut, there is a \$40 million figure left, which WMATA calls "money from a yet to be identified source". If this source isn't identified, then riders would likely face even higher fares and more severe service cuts.

Service cuts of this size, combined with the fare increase, could launch Metro into a "death spiral". I believe that the jurisdictions funding WMATA should partner with riders and make up the portion of the budget gap being covered by service cuts with increased subsidy. That total, along with \$40 million from the unidentified source, is \$73 million. Alexandria's share would be \$2.62 million.

I make this request very much aware of our challenging fiscal environment. But, the City has benefited substantially from Metro's presence. According to the Urban Land Institute, WMATA has added 15 billion in real estate value to the region. Had we and our neighbors reinvested that money in Metro, I doubt the system would now be in crisis. Councilman Fannon asked at the

work session on revenues where in the City residential property assessments went up. The answer: neighborhoods adjacent to Metro, and almost nowhere else. Our tax base is more stable because Metro makes this an attractive place to live and do business. And our City hopes to continue to benefiting from WMATA's presence at Potomac Yard.

That's why I'm willing to pay more in fares. And that's why I would support an increase in my property taxes to fill our portion of Metro's budget gap. Arlington County has already voted to advertise a maximum tax rate high enough to permit them to fill their share of the gap.

You vote this weekend on the maximum tax rate, yet the Council work session on transit subsidies is not until April 5th. If you don't advertise a tax rate high enough to accommodate additional subsidy for Metro, then you've essentially taken that option off the table without discussion.

The decisions made in this budget cycle will shape our efforts to promote transit-oriented development and make our City more livable for the next generation. We are depending on the City to do its fair share. I thank you.