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3-13-10

Subject: Funding suggestions for WMATA and DASH FY2011 budget

Good morning, my name is Christopher Der. I am a resident of the West End and I would like to comment on funding solutions for WMATA and DASH in the 2011 fiscal year. First off, I would like to apologize for not being in attendance at the budget hearing on Wednesday evening. I had prior commitments that night and I was unable to attend. My first comment is for City Council to demand that the state picks up their end of transportation funding. I commend Vice Mayor Donley for proposing a legislative package that included an increase in the Northern Virginia gas tax, with revenues being dedicated towards WMATA. Even though the bill failed in the State Legislature, we must push again for the gas tax increase in FY 2012. A source of dedicated revenue for WMATA is exactly what the system needs to maintain its status as a world-class transit system. Without dedicated funding, WMATA will spiral into disarray, and our region's roads will be more congested than we can ever imagine.

Secondly, I want City Council to advertise a property tax rate high enough to devote additional funding for WMATA. Arlington County and Fairfax County have already done this for their upcoming budgets, and I do not want Alexandria to fall behind the curve and compromise their ability to raise badly needed revenue for WMATA. By not advertising the maximum property tax rate that would accommodate the additional WMATA subsidy, a solution I support would have been eliminated before City residents and the City Council could even discuss it. If we are willing to accept some of the largest fare increases in the history of WMATA, then it is only fair that local jurisdictions pick up their share as well.

Finally, I would like City Council to restore all funding for the DASH bus system in FY2011. DASH is the primary line of transportation for many City residents, and by reducing the subsidy you provide for DASH, all you do is hinder their ability to provide a high level of safe and efficient transportation. DASH has long term goals for more frequent service and aims to fulfill the City's policies for more transit oriented development. I live along Duke Street, and the DASH buses on this road are routinely crowded, and are in need of additional trips and larger buses. In addition, DASH also needs to provide transit options for Base Realignment and Closure developments. None of this is possible without appropriate funding from the City. Thank you.