



## Public Comment Provided on February 29, 2024 at the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Virtual Budget Hearing

My name is Kevin O'Brien, a DC resident and organizer with the Washington Area Bicyclist Association. Perhaps counterintuitively, I find being a bicycling advocate also means being a transit advocate because the two modes complement each other, directly and indirectly. Directly, transit – and Metrorail in particular – allows bicyclists like me to reach more corners of the region, more quickly. A typical journey for me is biking the 1 mile to my nearest Metro station, taking the Metro across the Potomac into Virginia, and then bicycling another mile or two to my destination. The 20, 30, or 45 minute walk on each end of my Metro journey turns into an easy 8- or 10-minute ride. Metro's embrace of bicycling over the last several years, in the form of allowing bikes on trains at all hours, its thoughtful consideration of the unique needs of bicyclists in its new train car designs, and the significant investments in bike storage at stations has truly been one of the most exciting developments for me since moving to the region nearly 10 years ago.

But the indirect benefits of transit to bicycling are perhaps more consequential. Every person taking transit is a person who might otherwise be driving. And I think we can all agree that more cars on the road is the exact opposite of what our region needs. More cars worsen already-bad congestion and saps valuable time from our daily lives, increases carbon emissions and air pollution with the burden falling most heavily on low-income communities and communities of color living nearest highways, and it exacerbates the risks of roadway violence that continues to claim the lives of more and more pedestrians and bicyclists, year after year, despite promises from area leaders to stem the tide. As a bicyclist, the last thing I want to see is an extra 10,000, 50,000, or 100,000 daily car trips as a result of reduced transit service.

If you care about the climate, if you care about livability, if you care about roadway safety and Vision Zero, then you have to care about Metro. We need to be putting more money into our transit system, expanding rather than reducing service hours and frequency, to get more folks out of their cars and onto transit. Cuts to service, especially Metrobus, means farther walks for riders, longer waits alongside often busy roadways, and more exposure to vehicular and other types of violence. Station closures means a smaller travel radius, a smaller world, for the tens of thousands of people like me without a car.

As a bicyclist, as an environmentalist, as a frequent transit rider, and most importantly as a resident who loves living here, I implore WMATA and our local jurisdictions to continue working to permanently right the fiscal ship; avoid at all costs the most drastic service cuts; and avoid, to the greatest extent possible, short term budgetary sleight-of-hands that punts a long term fix and risks future investments and repairs. I appreciate everything WMATA has done so far to address its budget shortfall and look forward to it continuing to work to get it right.