



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

Executive Director

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

March 7, 2017

The Honorable Christopher K. Peace
Commonwealth of Virginia
House of Delegates
1000 Bank Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Mr. Peace:

Thank you for your letter of February 13, 2017 requesting that I suspend the February 10, 2017 decision of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to withhold five percent of fiscal-year 2017 Urbanized Area formula funds from transit systems in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. The FTA advised the three jurisdictions of the withholding of these funds after they did not meet the February 9, 2017 deadline for the establishment of a federally-certified State Safety Oversight Program (SSOP), including a new State Safety Oversight Agency (SSOA), for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's rail operations (Metrorail).

Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia were notified of the need for a new and stronger Metrorail SSOA well before the February 9 deadline was set. The three jurisdictions recognized that need in a 2010 White Paper, and in 2012, Federal law made strengthening the SSSOA and SSOP mandatory. The shortcomings of the local Metrorail safety oversight was a key impetus for this nationwide requirement in Federal law. Nonetheless, the jurisdictions did not undertake meaningful efforts towards establishing a new SSOP or crafting the legislation allowing creation of a new SSOP and SSOA until after the February 9 deadline was set. Meanwhile, because the jurisdictions have not fulfilled their statutory safety responsibility, FTA has been forced to divert approximately \$6 million dollars a year from critical national transit safety programs to provide direct safety oversight of Metrorail.

Safety is the Department's highest priority. While FTA has engaged in robust safety oversight of Metrorail, that oversight is temporary and is ultimately the responsibility of Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, as required by Federal public transportation safety law. The future safety of the system requires that the three jurisdictions complete their work on a federally-compliant SSOP without further delay. Suspension of the withholding of these funds at this time, therefore, would not be in the best interest of a safe Metrorail system.

The FTA will continue to work diligently with the three jurisdictions to ensure that a federally-compliant SSOP is in place as soon as possible, after which the withheld formula funds will be released.

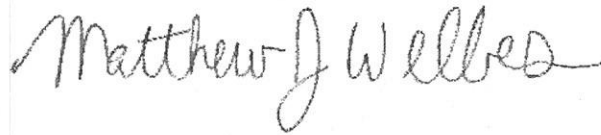
Your letter also seeks assistance with potential revisions to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Compact that you believe would address WMATA's financial and safety issues. While the possible revision of the WMATA Compact is an issue separate from the establishment of a federally-certified SSOP for Metrorail, FTA will continue dialogue with the jurisdictions on all matters related to the financial stability and safety of WMATA.

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Metrorail is a lynchpin tying together the economy and people of the District of Columbia, the State of Maryland, and the Commonwealth of Virginia. FTA is dedicated to working with the jurisdictions to support safe and reliable public transportation service for Metrorail passengers.

A similar letter has been sent to each of your cosigners. If I can provide further information or assistance, please feel free to call me directly at (202) 366-4040.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Matthew J. Welbes". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Matthew J. Welbes