



City of Alexandria, Virginia
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Justin M. Wilson
Mayor

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April 22, 2019

Mr. Paul J. Wiedefeld, General Manager and CEO
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
600 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, D.C 20001

Dear Mr. Wiedefeld:

Since the May 2018 WMATA announcement of the Platform Improvement Project, City of Alexandria staff and policymakers have worked closely to ensure the planned work will be successful. While the collaboration has not been without challenge, I believe the partnership has best prepared the region for the impacts of this important work.

It is from that spirit of collaboration and partnership that the City of Alexandria was surprised and disappointed by the announcement last Thursday about the need for a six-day extension to the planned schedule. City and WMATA staff, along with other stakeholders, have been diligently and collaboratively planning alternative transportation solutions for this effort believing that all four WMATA stations in the City would reopen on September 3. It was especially problematic to receive a last-minute call with a short warning before issuance of a press release – all without any collaborative preparation by the staff.

Having the shutdown period occurring largely during the summer made the community's understanding and acceptance easier to achieve. But with that work now spilling past Labor Day and *into the worst commuting period of the year*, all available goodwill will be exhausted. We understand that rehabilitating critical infrastructure can be uncertain and include unfortunate surprises. But this development has left our residents with many new questions and concerns.

As you are aware, WMATA staff have been invited to attend the April 23 City Council meeting to more fully inform City Council and the public about the rationale for the extra six days. To prepare for this Council meeting, we have compiled a list of questions and concerns that we would like WMATA staff ready to address on Tuesday:

1. Given that the Braddock "hump" platform issue was highly visible and well known to WMATA and to the public, how was it that a fix was not factored into the original platform work program? What changed?
2. What other alternatives to a six-day extension did WMATA consider and why were they rejected? Can WMATA begin the planned shutdown earlier than May 25 to avoid impacting the post-Labor Day period?
3. Is WMATA committing to keeping its planned alternative bus service schedule operating at the same level for these extra six days? Given that the City has also committed to mitigation efforts

predicated on a schedule provided by WMATA, is WMATA prepared to reimburse the City for additional transportation solutions that it must now provide for six days longer than planned?

4. Given that these six days will be very high usage days, will WMATA be planning to add additional bus service for the four likely busy commuter days (September 3, 4, 5 and 6) of this elongated shutdown?
5. How much contingency time is built into the new platform improvement schedule? Is it likely that we may see another extension of the shutdown time period?
6. Given that all other platform work on the other five Blue Line and Yellow Line stations should be completed, would single-tracking around the Braddock station during these extra six days be a partial solution?
7. Can some of the other system work planned for the future on our parts of the Blue and Yellow Lines (where it has been stated that there would be single tracking needed) be accelerated to these six added days, thereby obviating the need for some of these future planned single-track time periods?

Finally, I was surprised to see in the press release the statement that the extension was "predicated on the support of local jurisdictions" for around-the-clock work. It had been our impression that our staffs had been working well in finding the right balance of WMATA meeting its schedule and the minimization of disruption (noise, traffic, etc.) to our residents and businesses.

8. Can you please clarify in detail the construction impacts and disruption the City can expect from this added work?

On behalf of City Council, I look forward to a productive discussion with WMATA staff at City Council's April 23 meeting.

Sincerely,



Justin M. Wilson
Mayor

cc: The Honorable Members of City Council
Mark B. Jinks, City Manager
Emily B. Baker, Deputy City Manager
Yon Lambert, Director, Department of Transportation & Environmental Services



April 23, 2019

The Honorable Justin Wilson
Mayor, City of Alexandria
301 King Street, Suite 2300
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mayor Wilson,

Thank you for your April 22nd letter regarding WMATA's Platform Improvement Project. We appreciate the support and leadership you and the City Council have provided on this critical capital work that will benefit not only riders in the City of Alexandria and Fairfax County, but across the region. As you know, the schedule and scope of large capital projects frequently evolve as the project progresses from analysis into and through construction. While we are familiar with platform replacement, each station presents its own unique challenges.

In an effort to address your questions and provide more detail around the challenges of the Braddock "hump" work and the rail operations required to complete that work in the least disruptive manner, the following are responses to the questions raised in your letter:

1. Given that the Braddock "hump" platform issue was highly visible and well known to WMATA and the public, how was it that a fix was not factored into the original platform work program? What changed?

The "hump" at Braddock Road Station was known but consultants hired to evaluate the problem were not able to determine the root cause of the problem. In the absence of knowing a root cause, it was not possible to contract for a repair. Since a deeper investigation was required, including destructive investigation, the contractor was asked to investigate the problem and develop a solution if the root cause could be determined.

2. What other alternatives to a six-day extension did WMATA consider and why were they rejected? Can WMATA begin the planned shutdown earlier than May 25 to avoid impact the post-Labor Day period?

The repairs to the hump are needed to ensure a safe platform surface that is level with train doors, a requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The solution to repair the hump will involve installation of shoring towers under the main platform beams. The shoring towers will carry the weight of

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200 feet of the platform, part of the platform canopy, and the other elements sitting on the platform while the bearing supports for the platform beams are lowered. When the revised supports are built and new bearings are installed, the platform beams will be lowered into their new location. At this point, the original contract work to repair the platform can begin. The time frame to complete the structural repairs will not permit for the completion of the platform repair activities within the original summer shutdown window.

WMATA reviewed a number of alternatives before arriving at the decision to extend the closure period by six days. One alternative was adding 10 weekends in the fall of 2019 to finish the work which in addition to operational limitations at Braddock Road station would have severely affected service for the Blue and/or Yellow lines until the work was completed.

Due to the planned single-tracking at Van Dorn to complete those platforms, single-tracking at Braddock Road is not a viable solution. The combination of those two single-track zones results in a 30-40min headway. Such extended headways propagate through the system, affecting Green, Orange and Silver service. This makes shutdowns the only viable alternative to complete Braddock Road while Van Dorn station is still under construction. These 10 weekends translate to 20 total days of no or extremely limited service and would have been an inefficient use of resources given the frequent set up and take down effort required by the contractor.

It is not feasible to begin the planned work earlier than May 25 given the preparatory work required to make the shutdown effective.

3. Is WMATA committing to keeping its planned alternative bus service schedule operating at the same level for these extra six days? Given that the City has also committed to mitigation efforts predicated on a schedule provided by WMATA, is WMATA prepared to reimburse the City for additional transportation solutions that it must now provide for six days longer than planned?

Yes, WMATA is committed to maintaining its planned express and local shuttle bus service for customers until the stations reopen and train service resumes and that statement was provided in the April 18 press release describing the extension. This includes full reimbursement for the operation of the Blue Line shuttle (a service operated by Alexandria DASH).

WMATA does not have funding available to reimburse the City for any City initiatives associated with the six-day extension (enhanced AT3 & AT4 DASH service, expanded King Street trolley hours, water taxi service, etc.). However, we would be pleased to support any efforts by the City to seek

funding from other potential sources such as through the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board.

4. Given that these six days will be very high usage days, will WMATA be planning to add additional bus service for the four likely busy commuter days (September 3-6) of this elongated shutdown?

WMATA will be prepared to meet demand during the extension period and will ensure that the necessary resources are available. WMATA has extensive experience operating bus shuttles at all times during the year, including during some of the busiest commuting periods. The extension period is still a relatively lower ridership period compared to the rest of September, and a better option than providing limited service for a 10 week period. By extending the period rather than stopping and restarting, disruption is minimized because riders will not need to do anything different than they have during the summer.

5. How much contingency time is built into the new platform improvement schedule? Is it likely that we may see another extension of the shutdown time period?

As stated in the April 18 press release, the contractor has an aggressive but achievable schedule. WMATA expects service at Blue/Yellow Line stations south of National Airport to reopen on September 9.

6. Given that all other platform work on the other five Blue Line and Yellow stations should be completed, would single-tracking around the Braddock station during these extra six days be a partial solution?

The contract requires the completion of platform work at three and a half stations during the summer shutdown period: Braddock Road, King Street, Eisenhower Ave, and half of Van Dorn station. While incentives have been added to the contract to accelerate the work at other stations, completion of platform work at Van Dorn, Franconia, and Huntington stations are not guaranteed or committed by WMATA or the contractor. The priority remains to complete Braddock Road station in order to resume any service south of National Airport. WMATA anticipates that the extension will likely reduce the amount of time single tracking is required at Van Dorn on the Blue Line, as the contractor will continue to have full access to that station for the extension period.

7. Can some of the other system work planned for the future on our parts of the Blue and Yellow Lines (where it has been stated that there would be single tracking needed) to be accelerated to these six added

days, thereby obviating the need for some of these future planned single-track time periods?

As stated above, the contractor has incentives to finish as much work as possible during the summer of 2019 and will certainly attempt to do so while the stations are closed. WMATA will have a much better idea of milestones and anticipated service levels once the project begins and will be sharing regular updates with the region.

8. Can you please clarify in detail the construction impacts and disruption the City can expect from this added work?

The extension reflects the additional time required to complete the work to achieve level boarding at Braddock Road Station. There are no other impacts unique to this extension other than the extension of time. We agree that the WMATA and City of Alexandria staff have been working well together regarding construction impact. Weekly meetings are held with staff and they will continue to work through any issues and provide information needed.

Thank you and we look forward to our continued collaboration on this important project.

Sincerely,



for Paul J. Wiedefeld
General Manager and
Chief Executive Officer