

TRANSIT FIRST!

Coalition members (list in formation): Action Committee for Transit, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689, Audubon Naturalist Society, Clean Water Action, Coalition for Smarter Growth, MCGEO — UFCW Local 1994, Prince George's Advocates for Community-based Transit, Progressive Maryland, Save Maryland Area Rail Transit

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 11, 2009

WHAT: TRANSIT COALITION TO OPPOSE SERVICE CUTS

DATE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12

TIME: 9AM

WHERE: 600 5th St NW, WASHINGTON (IN FRONT OF METRO HEADQUARTERS)

Thursday, Feb 12, Washington, DC - "Transit First," a new coalition of transit riders, environmental and union groups, is organizing to oppose cuts in public transportation funding.

As the Metro executive board meets Thursday to discuss budget shortfalls and possible service cuts, community leaders will speak out to underscore the importance of a well-funded public transportation system. Speaking Thursday will be James Allen from Prince George's Advocates for Community-based Transit, Andy Fellows from Clean Water Action, and Ben Ross from the Action Committee for Transit.

With transit ridership setting new records and continuing to rise -- and with many commuters looking for alternatives to driving - the transit advocates say it's counterproductive to make any reductions in Metro or Metrobus service. The coalition will urge elected officials in local and state government who are responsible for funding transit to take immediate action to avoid service cuts.

Groups involved in the Transit First coalition include the Action Committee for Transit, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689, Clean Water Action, Coalition for Smarter Growth, MCGEO - UFCW Local 1994, Prince George's Advocates for Community-based Transit, Progressive Maryland, and Save Maryland Area Rail Transit.

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Why Transit Service Must Not Be Cut

Ridership - Transit ridership is going up while people are driving less. It makes no sense to cut transit service while continuing to expand the road network.

Environment - Transit use protects the environment in many ways. It fights global warming, prevents air pollution that causes asthma and other diseases, and forestalls the sprawl development that is destroying our Chesapeake Bay fisheries and natural habitats on the land.

Fairness - Since 1992, Metro fares have been raised four times while the gas tax has remained constant. Transit riders have done our part to keep transportation budgets even with inflation and should not be punished because others have not done the same.

Social justice - Transit helps families save on transportation costs and have more disposable income. It brings workers to new jobs. For many, transit is a lifeline -- a third of our population is unable to drive or cannot afford a car.

Economic recovery - Transit will stimulate economic recovery. Builders can go to work now supplying unmet demand to live and work in convenient, walkable places around transit stations.

National security - To end our country's dependence on foreign oil, automobile travel must be reduced.

Traffic congestion - Loss of transit service will put more cars on already crowded highways.