

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 22, 2006

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H232 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boehner
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H107 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker and Mr. Leader:

It is our understanding that the House of Representatives may soon consider the National Capital Transportation Amendments Act (H.R. 3496)—legislation to authorize additional federal funding for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) system. We believe that H.R. 3496 unnecessarily commits the federal government to directly support the WMATA system at a time when federal budgetary resources are constrained due to high deficits, the Global War on Terror and other national priorities. Therefore, we write to express our strong concerns with this legislation's pending floor consideration.

As you know, since its creation in 1967, the federal government has provided sizable contributions toward the Metrorail system. According to the General Accountability Office (GAO), the system has relied on federal funding for 60% or \$6.2 billion of the costs to construct the original 103-mile system and fund various capital improvements. In addition, according to GAO, WMATA has relied on federal funding to cover over 40% of its capital costs over fiscal years 1995-2005.


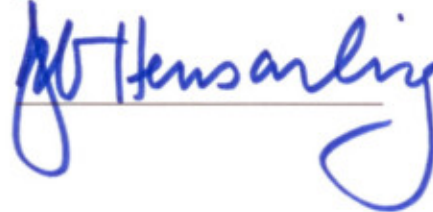
However, in 2002, WMATA adopted a new \$12.2 billion plan to improve and expand the system with an expectation that the federal government *would again absorb much of the plan's cost*. Under H.R. 3496, \$1.5 billion would be authorized to be spent on items that are questionable or low federal priorities. According to the Government Reform Committee, this funding would be used for the following:

- 340 new rail cars to all 8 car trains at peak capacity;
- 275 new buses and 3 bus garages;
- vehicle replacements, tunnel repairs, and station enhancements, such as escalators and elevators at transfer stations, including Union Station, Gallery Place, and Metro Center;
- pedestrian and bike improvements at 25 stations, including “pedestrian station connections” at Farragut North/Farragut West and Gallery Place/Metro Center; and
- 140 miles worth of bus corridor improvements (curb extensions, bus bays, and passenger shelters).

Respectfully, directly funding these items, in part because the system lacks a dedicated revenue source, is not an appropriate federal priority. Metrorail is a mature transit system: funding for these capital projects should principally come from passenger fares and nonfederal subsidies from WMATA's various member jurisdictions, and only be supplemented by federal grant funding from the various mass transit programs authorized by federal surface transportation bills such as the recently enacted SAFETEA-LU. According to GAO, WMATA's 2006 budget already depends on federal funds for 34% of its capital budget.

Given the dire fiscal straits that our nation currently faces, we believe that this bill should not be scheduled for floor consideration without an acceptable and real offset, preferably in the area of mass transit, already included.

Yours respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stan Lee", written over a horizontal line.A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Hensarling", written over a horizontal line.