



Government of the District of Columbia
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G

Chevy Chase, Barnaby Woods, Hawthorne
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By Electronic Mail

March 15, 2023

Randy Clarke, General Manager and CEO
Washington Area Transit Authority
300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Board of Directors
Washington Area Transit Authority
300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Re: ANC 3/4G's Comments on WMATA's FY24 Budget

Dear Mr. Clarke and WMATA Board Members:

I am writing to you on behalf of ANC 3/4G to provide you and members of the WMATA Board of Director's our input into the agency's FY24 budget. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, our community enjoyed the use of the E6 bus route which provided essential bus service for seniors, school-aged children, and all our residents, but most significantly those living in the Chevy Chase, Barnaby Woods, and Hawthorne neighborhoods that relied on it to get to work. WMATA has not restored this route post pandemic leaving those most in need without a viable mass transportation option. As such, the ANC respectfully requests you restore the funding for this route in your FY24 budget.

The elimination of the E6 route came in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulted in WMATA combining the E6 and M4 bus routes. While this may have made some sense then, it

can no longer be justified as we return to pre-pandemic conditions. As you are aware from our previous submissions, The ANC and local community were opposed to this change then and remain opposed to this change now as it is vital to the well-being of our community and is in the best interests of the city as a whole. We have vocally advocated to keep and expand this route going as far back as 2014. WMATA has not provided the ANC or community with a sufficient justification for the continued combination of these routes. To be clear, the elimination of the E6 has resulted in negative impacts on seniors, Lafayette Elementary School (Lafayette ES) students and parents, and workers in our community who have relied on the E6 route for many years.

For example, the E6 bus has served a vital function for seniors who live at the Knollwood Military Life Plan Community, 6200 Oregon Avenue, NW. Knollwood and other area residents relied on the E6 to get to the Chevy Chase Community Center, the Chevy Chase Public Library, the Avalon Theater, the Safeway grocery store, and to shops and restaurants along the Connecticut Avenue as well as to the Friendship Heights Metro and the nearby shops, restaurants, and doctors' offices. Seniors who cannot or prefer not to drive feel this loss of direct transportation service greatly. For many of Knollwood's staff, the E6 bus links this far northwest facility to Metro and provided an essential way to get to work and other public services. Colonel Paul Bricker, CEO, Knollwood succinctly stated the importance of the E6 route to its residents:

“Although we realize the efficacy earlier this spring of halting the bus in order to curtail spread of the virus, our knowledge of the virus and the efforts each citizen must adhere to control its spread, now create a condition where the E6 must restart. The bus is crucial to the wellness of so many of our residents. Our residents previously used the E6 for essential services like shopping for groceries, refilling their prescriptions, and to see their doctors. Our residents use the bus, and public transportation is a responsible choice for older Americans to utilize versus driving their own cars on some of the busiest roads in America. The very last choice we want to force on our seniors is to start driving again; canceling the E6 is doing just that. Knollwood employees are paying \$135/week for alternative transit: i.e. taxicabs and Uber.”

Another example pertains to students and faculty at Lafayette Elementary ES who relied on the E6 bus to travel to and from school. Some parents reported that they rode the E6 with their children to Lafayette ES in the morning and then continued by bus to the Friendship Heights Metro Station. The principal at Lafayette ES previously reported that about 15 percent of the school's staff used the E6 bus daily and stated, “We would definitely feel the E6 if it were missing.” As one parent of LES students states, “Sure, kids can walk to and from Lafayette or to Pinehurst for the M4, but the E6 is a lot more convenient especially for younger kids and in inclement weather.” The E6 bus provided independence, stability, and an early lesson on the importance of public transit to our youngest learners and their families.

Additionally, the ANC has pointed out before WMATA's proposed changes are inconsistent with the District's Age-Friendly DC commitment to promoting “safer, timely and affordable modes of private and public transportation” for our seniors¹. The E6 provided residents in Chevy Chase's northwestern most neighborhoods direct access to Chevy Chase's main street and “civic core,” Connecticut Avenue. The M4 does not take residents directly to our civic core but instead

¹ See One-page Summary of Age-Friendly DC, 2018, available at <http://bit.ly/370MVBw>.

residents have to transfer to the E4 bus line to frequent critical public services and cultural activities. The substitution of the M4 for the E6 may also cause greater use of cars to transport young residents to and from school, exacerbating congestion around Lafayette ES and other areas in our community, creating more vehicle exposure and potential conflicts with pedestrians. These outcomes are in direct opposition to the Mayor's MoveDC plan² and VisionZero³.

The E6 bus is a literal lifeline. It was never made clear if WMATA's budget proposal to "continue not to operate" the E6 bus meant that it would be permanently eliminated or merely eliminated until the public health emergency was over. We urge you and the WMATA Board to reconsider the elimination of the E6 and fully fund this route in your FY24 budget to restore this route to its full original and pre-pandemic transit routes in our community.

We appreciate the opportunity to present our views to you and the WMATA Board regarding these vital services.

Respectfully,



Lisa R. Gore
Chair, ANC 3/4G

² <https://movedc-dcgis.hub.arcgis.com/>

³ <https://visionzero.dc.gov/>

cc: Matthew Frumin, Councilmember, Ward 3
Janeese Lewis George, Councilmember, Ward 4
Charles Allen, Councilmember, Ward 5, Chairperson, Committee on Transportation
and the Environment
Anita Bonds, At-Large Councilmember
Christina Henderson, At-Large Councilmember
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