

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 20, 2019

Mr. Paul Wiedefeld
General Manager and Chief Executive Officer
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
600 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Mr. Paul Smedberg
Chairman
Board of Directors
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
600 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Wiedefeld and Mr. Smedberg:

We write with concerns regarding the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)'s handling of its contract with Transdev for the Cinder Bed Road Metrobus facility in Lorton, Virginia. As you know, 120 Metrobus operators and garage workers at the Cinder Bed Road garage have been on strike since October 24, over a labor dispute with Transdev, the international corporation WMATA hired to contract out the work at this facility.

As Members of Congress, we have a duty to ensure that there is proper oversight of WMATA – including the services that it contracts out to private companies – so that Metro continues to deliver safe and reliable service for our constituents. Notably, this dispute has interrupted service for our constituents for nearly a month and has reportedly affected around 8,500 commuters. During this timeframe, Transdev has failed to reopen the bus routes, and disappointingly, WMATA has refused to involve itself in the negotiations or create transportation alternatives for riders on the impacted routes.

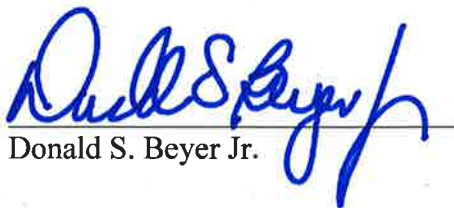
We are in receipt of your correspondence with Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689 and Transdev from last week, and we understand that WMATA includes a living wage provision in all its service contracts. We also understand that WMATA believes this to be a sufficient practice to ensure that all WMATA contract employees are fairly compensated. Unfortunately, as this dispute has demonstrated, WMATA likely needs to take a more proactive role in ensuring that this provision of its contracts is enforced. According to ATU Local 689, the Cinder Bed Road Metrobus workers employed by Transdev make significantly less than their WMATA employee counterparts and receive no raises, have no retirement plans, and their healthcare plans have a \$6,000 minimum deductible.

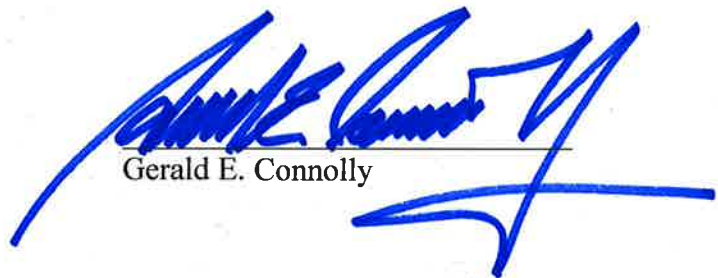
We are especially concerned with WMATA's lack of involvement in this dispute – and lack of action to ensure fair treatment of contract workers – due to WMATA's overall trend toward privatization, especially related to the Silver Line Extension project (which will be the first subway line in the United States to be under private contract). While we recognize that the decisions to privatize pieces of WMATA have been made with an eye toward financial stability, we urge WMATA to review whether these privatizations are necessary and whether they are, ultimately, financially beneficial to WMATA – accounting for service issues, potential loss of customers due to inefficiency, and other costs associated.

Regardless, WMATA's increased reliance on outside contractors places an increased burden on WMATA to choose its contractors wisely to ensure fair compensation of the entire WMATA workforce and ongoing safety and reliability for riders. The ultimate accountability for service delivery on the system lies with WMATA, and when labor relations between a contractor and its workers begin to impact service, WMATA's refusal to engage is unsustainable.

While we are glad to have learned that the Cinder Bed Road Metrobus workers and Transdev have returned to the bargaining table to resolve this dispute, we urge WMATA to become more engaged in the process and take a role in ensuring that its contract workers are fairly treated – for the benefit of its employees, its riders, and its future.

Sincerely,


Donald S. Beyer Jr.


Gerald E. Connolly


Jennifer Wexton