

I attended the Metro Town Hall last night sponsored by the Transportation and Environment Committee of the County Council. The T&E is chaired by Tom Hucker and includes Evan Glass and Hans Riemer. The special guests were WMATA Board members Michael Goldman and Kathy Porter. The program was well-attended, filling half of the great hall of the civic building. Following opening remarks, the WMATA folks gave an overview of the FY2020 budget and its impact on riders. Red Line changes were the focus of the presentation including the ending of the Silver Spring turnback, going to all 8 car trains, a flat fare on weekends, and increased hours. WMATA's 2020 budget is close to \$2B with \$1.2B of the funding coming in the form of the subsidy from MD, VA, and DC. The other \$800M in funding is from fareboxes and other revenue such as advertising. The next part of the program consisted of two panels of people representing various constituencies and testifying about the Metro system. This was followed by a Q&A with the audience. I ride Metro every day from Silver Spring to Suitland (at the far end of the Green Line). In the morning, I usually change lines at Fort Totten. In the afternoon, I do so at Gallery Place. So I experience a lot of the Red Line. I have to believe that most of the panelists and the audience who participated in the Q&A stopped riding the Metro when the service got pretty dismal several years ago and have not been on it since. All I heard was a litany of complaints about late trains and trains turning back at Silver Spring. One person testified that they saw three northbound trains in a row turn back at Silver Spring. I have seen two trains in a row turn back once in the 20 years I have been riding the system. I regularly ride the Metro from Silver Spring to Union Station to catch an Amtrak train and I have only missed a train once. Metro now has their Rush Hour promise that if your trip takes 10 minutes longer than it should have, they will refund your fare. They would not be doing this if their on time performance was as bad as these people are making it out to be. I agree that there are times when the trains are delayed and they are crowded, but the service is certainly reliable. I hope that some of those in the room will be enticed by the proposed improvements to come back and give the system another try.

Best regards,

Don

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