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January 4, 2006

Hon. T. Dana Kauffman
Chairman, Board of Directors
Washington Metropolitan Area
Transit Authority
600 Fifth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Opening WMATA to Greater Public Accountability

Dear Chairman Kauffman:

I am writing to urge the WMATA Board to immediately appoint an independent Inspector General to oversee the Metro system's day-to-day operations regardless of whether Congressman Davis' bill, H.R. 3496, is enacted. That measure, on which I am a cosponsor, would also authorize $1.5 billion over ten years to help WMATA purchase new railcars and buses for the Metro transit system. While this legislation was recently reported out of the House Government Reform Committee, enactment of the bill will, at minimum, take several months. In the meantime, however, Metro riders deserve to know of your commitment to the best possible service from WMATA, which would be reinforced by the Board's appointment of an independent investigative authority.

Given the recent and continuing series of press accounts of management and oversight problems in Metro's rail, bus and MetroAccess (paratransit) operations, I am disappointed that the WMATA Board has not yet acted on its own to adopt a comprehensive program for greater public accountability and transparency on all Metro matters – with or without Federal legislation. The Inspector General would be similar to those appointed to Federal agencies. Metro system riders and the general public should not learn of WMATA's hidden problems from daily newspaper stories. An Inspector General will increase accountability within WMATA through constant oversight.

Should H.R. 3496 be enacted, its oversight provisions would take effect after WMATA's Interstate Compact is amended by state, District of Columbia, and local jurisdictions to ensure a dedicated funding stream. Once this occurs, WMATA would be required to establish an Inspector General to report to the Board and public to make the agency more transparent and

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accountable. The Inspector General will study Metro budgets, plans, capital acquisition programs and employee relations with the goal of improving the day-to-day functions of the agency and alerting the Board and public to WMATA problem areas. H.R. 3496 also envisions expanding the WMATA Board to add Federal officials and a rider representative to ensure that the Metro system is more responsive to its customers.

In any event, the House of Representatives will not act on H.R. 3496 until sometime within the upcoming Second Session of the 109th Congress. I am sure the Congressional Delegation serving our metropolitan area will be supportive of this important legislation. However, the views of many other Members may be more highly influenced by the actions WMATA undertakes on its own in the intervening months to increase its public accountability and responsiveness to Metro's well-publicized problems.

Sincerely,

Albert R. Wynn
Member of Congress