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Fund-it/Fix-it Coalition of non-profits responds to LaHood report on WMATA

Washington, DC -- Today the Fund-it/Fix-It Coalition, a group of non-profits representing smart growth, conservation, transit, and civic groups across the Washington DC region responded to the LaHood report on WMATA funding and reform, which was leaked over the weekend to The Washington Post.

"We are very pleased with a number of aspects of the LaHood report, particularly the strong endorsement of the importance of at least an additional \$500 million in dedicated and bondable funding for Metro," said Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. "We agree, too, with Secretary LaHood that dedicated federal funding is necessary and appropriate, given the large share of federal riders and the critical role Metro plays in supporting our nation's capital and the federal government."

"We wish Secretary LaHood had lent his personal authority to recommending specific funding sources that the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia should tap or develop, to add impetus to efforts to reach agreement on funding," said Kathy McGuire, President of the League of Women Voters of the National Capital Area (LWVNCA). "We hope LaHood will share his recommendations in this regard because we need to break the logjam and identify funding sources that can be approved in early 2018."

"We find it helpful that the LaHood team has evaluated the cost structure at WMATA and found it comparable to the averages for large transit systems across the country," said Ronit Dancis for Action Committee for Transit. "This system + so essential to the economic competitiveness and sustainability of our region, is worthy of increased investment to restore it to world-class service."

"A concern involves the evaluation of bus service and recommendations for service cuts. The report appears to treat Metrorail and Metrobus very differently, favoring efforts to increase rail ridership, but proposing reductions in bus service," said Schwartz. "Certainly, we should work to make bus service better and provide high frequency, high-ridership service, but we also have many transit-dependent riders who live in suburban settings where it is hard to provide efficient

transit service. This means we will need to provide transit coverage, which may be less efficient but represents an essential public utility service, much like water, police, and fire service."

David Alpert, Founder and President of Greater Greater Washington added, "There's no need to recommend cutting bus service and reducing riders to save money. It's possible to improve service AND save money. The biggest opportunities to improve bus service and save money come from reducing delays. Buses spend time in traffic, waiting at lights, waiting for people to pay their fares one by one, and so on. If the buses, especially the high-ridership ones, had dedicated lanes through congested areas, ways to pay before boarding so people can get on quickly, and signal priority to get more green lights, buses could finish their routes faster, saving money, and offering better -- not worse -- service."

The groups in the Fund-it/Fix-it Coalition have pledged to campaign for dedicated funding for Metro with a goal of winning new dedicated, bondable funding in 2018 in order to restore Metrorail and Metrobus with frequent, safe, and reliable service.

22 groups have signed on to this statement of principles but the following are those that have had an opportunity to review the LaHood report:

Action Committee for Transit

The Central Maryland Transportation Alliance

Clean Water Action

Coalition for Smarter Growth

Friends of White Flint

Greater Greater Washington

League of Women Voters of the National Capital Area (LWVNCA)

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