

# Review of Projects from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

## Overview

In accordance with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA or Authority) Compact,<sup>1</sup> the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) receives notice and has an opportunity to comment on WMATA's mass transit plan and amendments. WMATA plans reviewed by the Commission per this agreement have ranged from major projects, such as the placement and design of Metrorail stations and route alignments, to relatively small-scale projects, like the reconfiguration of parking areas.<sup>2</sup> Depending on the complexity of the project and level of federal interest, the Commission will either review the project in an open session or on its consent calendar. Minor projects may be delegated to the Executive Director.



## WMATA Compact

WMATA is the multi-jurisdictional government agency that operates certain rail and bus service in the greater Washington area. The agency was created as part of an agreement between the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia to plan, develop, finance, and operate the region's mass transit system, including Metrorail and Metrobus. The WMATA Compact, the guiding document for WMATA, sets the terms of the agreement, including the planning of the mass transit resource system. In particular, the Compact requires that WMATA develop and adopt a mass transit plan, which should "include one or more plans designating:

- The transit facilities to be provided by the Authority, including the locations of terminals, stations, platforms, parking facilities and the character and nature thereof;
- The design and location of such facilities;
- Whether such facilities are to be constructed or acquired by lease, purchase, or condemnation;
- A timetable for the provision of such facilities;
- The anticipated capital costs;
- Estimated operating expenses and revenues relating thereto; and
- The various other factors and considerations, which... justify and require the projects therein proposed."

<sup>1</sup> As amended and codified in DC Code § 9-1107.01

<sup>2</sup> Note that while the Commission is provided an advisory review opportunity over WMATA projects, if a submitted project relates to WMATA activities but occurs on federal land in the District, the applicant would be the federal agency and the Commission would exercise its approval authority over the WMATA project on federal land.

Per the stipulations outlined in the Compact, any alterations, revisions, or amendments to the plan must be forwarded to certain agencies for review, including NCPC. Though all such modifications to the plan are submitted to NCPC, because of its mission, NCPC is most interested in amendments that propose alterations, revisions, or amendments to the design, location, and character of transit facilities, such as terminals, stations, platforms, and parking facilities. Other modifications to the plan, such as those related to funding and revenue are outside of the purview of NCPC.

## NCPC Review Interest

Consistent with WMATA's procedure for comment on Mass Transit Plan amendments, WMATA forwards all projects relating to the design, location, and character of facilities throughout the Metro system to the Commission for comment. Staff will determine if Commission review and comment is required, or if the project falls within the exception criteria described in Chapter 8 of the NCPC Submission Guidelines. Any comments from the Commission will serve as official correspondence to inform the WMATA Compact Public Hearing process.

In general, the Commission has the strongest interest in Metro projects proposed within the L'Enfant City, or on or adjacent to federal property. However, certain other major modifications, such as the establishment of new Metrorail transit lines, changes to existing Metrorail transit lines, or development of new Metrorail stations, have a strong nexus with the federal interest, which includes the orderly development of the National Capital, regional sustainability, multimodal transportation, and other principles described in NCPC's plans and policies. Consequently, WMATA should expect that NCPC will comment on these projects.

The extent of NCPC comment may vary—ranging from delegated actions by the NCPC Executive Director to review by the Commission at one of its monthly public meetings. As with all projects reviewed by NCPC, the Commission will comment on the consistency of WMATA projects with the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital and other areas of federal interest. The appropriate level of NCPC review must be determined by NCPC staff upon notification of the project. Should staff determine that there is no federal interest, the agency will issue an exception letter.

Metrorail Transit System



## Applicant Resources

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Compact

[https://www.wmata.com/about/board/upload/Compact\\_Annotated\\_2009\\_final.pdf](https://www.wmata.com/about/board/upload/Compact_Annotated_2009_final.pdf)