

To: Montgomery County Council

Subject: Supplemental Appropriation to the FY22 Operating Budget, MCDOT Transit Services, \$8,631,001

Date: February 1, 2022

Dear Councilmembers:

This supplemental appropriation will dramatically increase MCDOT bus drivers' salaries. Only the Council, not MCDOT, can decide to increase bus drivers' salaries.

Salaries are a main issue confronting a workforce with an already difficult job, further complicated by the pandemic. Many essential service workers depend on transit to get to their jobs, including those in Equity Focus Areas. Parents experience canceled school bus routes due to lack of MCPS drivers. We need our bus operators.

Across the country, more than 20 million people quit their jobs in the second half of 2021. Some are calling it the "great resignation." We need to do better to retain our workers, who are leaving for a variety of reasons:

- exhaustion from working extra-long shifts to cover for absentee colleagues,
- fear of exposure to COVID,
- lack of childcare options, or
- simply opting for early retirement.

A market compatibility study comparing County bus driver salaries with WMATA salaries showed:

- it takes MCDOT operators 24 years to reach a peak salary of approximately \$75,000
- WMATA operators reach that same salary in 6 years (or 1/4th the time!!) and go on to earn even more during their careers.

MCDOT owns and operates nearly 400 buses. MCDOT promotes from within, cultivating professionals who know their jobs and who are role models for new employees. Let's say -- Looking for a meaningful career in public service? Consider being a bus operator. MCDOT will pay for your Commercial Driver's License training!

Let's pass this supplemental appropriation to reward our current workers, plus bring on board new bus drivers!

Sincerely,
Tina Slater