



## Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board

Serving Bethesda, Cabin John, Chevy Chase, Friendship Heights, Garrett Park, Glen Echo,  
North Bethesda, Potomac, Rockville, and Twinbrook

December 20, 2022

Hon. Marc Elrich  
County Executive  
101 Monroe St., Second Floor  
Rockville, MD 20805

Dear Mr. Elrich:

The Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board (WMCCAB) is writing to recommend additional funding for the Bethesda Urban District as you prepare the FY24 operating budget. Through the Bethesda Urban District, we endorse the following community-driven initiatives that support your work toward a greener county and effective sustainable government:

- Inflationary Adjustment to the Bethesda Urban Partnership Contract

We recommend a 6.6 percent increase in funding to BUP at a cost of \$204,885. Since its establishment in 1994, BUP's strong stewardship and service to the community has ensured that Bethesda has remained one of the state's preeminent urban districts with a vibrant arts program, inclusive events, and engaging business opportunities.

Although inflation has increased 23 percent in the past six years, BUP's contract to serve the Bethesda Urban District has increased only 5 percent. The past fiscal year's operational costs have increased 6.6 percent overall led by areas such as insurance, vehicles, equipment, pest control, sidewalk and tree maintenance, rentals, communications, promotions, and events. Increasing the contract will allow BUP to continue its outstanding work, to provide cost-of-living salary increases to its employees equal to those provided to the County workforce, and to avoid future reduction in service levels.

- Recycling Cans to Improve Recycling Rates

We recommend providing an additional \$144,244 for 60 recycling cans to supplement existing trash cans in Bethesda. Bethesda does not currently meet the standard the County requires of businesses, which must provide recycling cans alongside every trash can. As a result, people often dispose of recyclables in the trash. Expanding recycling can capability by 250 percent can improve this.

BUP maintains 279 public trash cans and 40 recycling cans in the right of way, and it has agreed to absorb the cost of installing and servicing the new cans, leading to an annual savings of around \$100,000 – without additional labor or capital costs.

- Self-Enclosed Rat-Proof Trash Cans

We recommend providing an additional \$226,748 for the purchase of 95 self-enclosed rat-proof trash cans to replace open-topped cans in downtown Bethesda. Constituents and visitors to downtown Bethesda have filed multiple complaints with Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services and BUP about rats and their proximity to people in downtown Bethesda. Investigations have highlighted public trash and recycling cans as a food source which

propagates rat breeding and contact with the public.

Previous efforts with bait stations have not worked, so Bethesda needs a more aggressive and systematic rat-control strategy immediately. **This is an urgent issue.** Deploying rat proof self-enclosed trash cans in strategic locations will remove food sources for rats and reduce their number and proximity to public dining and gathering spaces.

- Self-Watering Planters Booster

We recommend providing an additional \$97,792 for the purchase of 275 self-watering planters to replace less-efficient traditional planters. BUP maintains hundreds of planters in the right-of-way throughout Bethesda, planting flowers seasonally and watering daily using a specialized truck. Self-watering planters are more efficient than traditional concrete/terracotta planters and reduce resources by a factor of thirty. Self-watering planters will let BUP move from daily watering to a once a monthly schedule. This initiative will provide three major advantages: **Less water use**, less labor, and reduced emissions and traffic congestion by cutting the time the water truck is on the road.

- Electric Circulator Buses

We recommend providing an additional \$308,000 a year for five years for the purchase of three electric busses for the Bethesda Circulator route. The current gas busses, which are at the end of their life cycle, require constant repairs, creating service disruptions. The service contract will expire before FY24.

We believe this presents an excellent opportunity to shift the Circulator to environmentally friendly electric busses that support the County's goal of **reducing emissions by 80% by 2027**.

These constituent-backed initiatives improve services, strengthen the downtown Bethesda business district, and support climate-change goals. These efforts will also continue Bethesda's longtime leadership in supporting environmental initiatives that set a standard for programs throughout the County, such as being first area in the County to provide street-level recycling education signs, to eliminate chemical usage, to transition to electric powered equipment, and to install self-watering planters. We look forward to continuing our work with you on the FY24 operating budget to ensure a prosperous future for our residents.

Sincerely,

Kristen A. Nelson  
Chair, Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board

Cc: Peter Fosselman, Director of Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services  
Adriana Hochberg, Director of Environmental Protection  
Andrew Friedson, Council Member for District 1  
Chris Conklin, Director of Transportation

**Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services**  
**Peter Fosselman, Director**