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**METRO STRUGGLES WITHOUT FUNDING**

An ex-mayor, a tax collector, and Metro activists each proposed solutions yesterday morning Metro’s lack of dedicated funding and an inefficient Metro board.

The DC Metro is the only large-city transit without a dedicated source of funding. Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan Jr. promised $2 billion over four years and $500 million more if Virginia and the federal government matched it. Metro General Manager Paul J. Wiedefeld is seeking $15.5 billion.

While the District waits for funding, the Metro Board of Directors is listening to proposed solutions, some of which suggest replacing the board itself.

Former DC Mayor Anthony Williams said during a General Board Meeting on Tuesday morning that the board had too many members and scattered duties. Williams spoke on behalf of the Federal City Council, a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to improving DC; he argued that ineffective governance was just as important as the absence of funding and advocated for a streamlined board in the hope that fewer members would increase productivity.

“The problems Metro is facing today are not simply the result of chronic disinvestment,” Williams said. “While funding is certainly a significant factor, we believe that at their core, these problems are inevitably the product of a governance structure that, as designed, is fundamentally flawed and naturally leads to short-term thinking, which leads to poor outcomes.”

Metro’s board disputed William’s claim that the board was ineffective.

“Many of the attributes and expertise you’re looking for are already here,” said Michael Goldman, the principal director of the Metro board.

Williams suggested that the board focus on funding after removing unnecessary members. Meanwhile, other speakers proposed new ways to find Metro’s lost dollars.

Economist Peter Donohue proposed a budgeting solution: taxing properties closest to Metro stops. The Transit Assessment District (TAD), he said, would generate $1 billion in funding and enhance property values. Board members expressed concern that the TAD would disproportionately impact the poor.

“The TAD would shift the burden of transit funding from lower-income households to wealthier property owners whose properties’ values are enhanced by transit service that delivers customers, employees, clients, patients, students and others to their doors,” said Donohue.

The Metro general board of directors heard over 40 minutes of testimonies from local activists like super-commuter Sharon Williams, who spends over five hours each day commuting, and Kristi Matthews, a grassroots activist passionate about the rights of transgender people of color. While grassroots organizers advocated for fair prices, they also argued for equal treatment for people of color.

Matthews and Williams are part of the nonprofit Americans for Transit; the organization collected petitions with 11,000 signatures backing their demands for fair prices, expanded service (including late-night hours) and free transfers.

“If people can’t afford it, what’s the point?” said Matthews.