



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING  
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

DAVID A. CATANIA  
Councilmember, At - Large  
Chair, Committee on Health

Committee Member  
Finance and Revenue  
Libraries, Parks and Recreation  
Government Operations and the Environment

February 12, 2010

Peter Benjamin  
Chairman, Board of Directors  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
600 Fifth Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Takoma Station Art and Underpass

Dear Mr. Benjamin:

I am writing with regard to the District of Columbia's gift of public art to be installed in the Takoma Metro Station, an item on the February 18, 2010 agenda of the Consumer Services, Operations and Safety Committee of the WMATA Board of Directors. Specifically, I would like to ask that you consider funding a number of improvements in the area of the underpass at the Takoma Metro Station in conjunction with your acceptance of the new public art to be installed there.

First, thank you for last year's enhancements to the station – I have heard positive feedback from residents regarding the new entrance to the District side of the Takoma Station.

I am writing today, however, to ask that you do more. I understand that your staff are proposing to make only very limited changes to the station to prepare for placement of the art, such as new lighting and cleaning only on the wall where the art will be installed. I further understand that staff's intent is to leave the rest of the deteriorated underpass largely untouched, except for removing some panels so that the art can be seen from the escalators.

I respectfully request that you consider a broader renovation effort. Constituents have communicated to me several reasons they would benefit from a cleaning of the entire underpass to make it clean and well-lit throughout:

- The Takoma Station underpass is considered a gateway to the District of Columbia and is close to the D.C./Maryland border.

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- The art is a major new work by one of the District's most important artists, Sam Gilliam, and it is a \$250,000 gift to WMATA patrons and the Takoma community from the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities. This project will be a wonderful addition to the metro area's cultural resources and it will likely attract many of the same visitors and tourists who gather to see Mr. Gilliam's works in New York City's Museum of Modern Art and the Corcoran Gallery here in the District, among others.
- In addition to its aesthetic value, the art is also an exceptional opportunity to leverage the taxpayers' \$250,000 investment into a contribution to the economic revival of the Takoma business community, located on the same block as the underpass.

Residents and the Old Takoma Business Association have spent years working to help the area's struggling shops. The lack of cleanliness and sufficient lighting of the current underpass -- the route to D.C.'s 4<sup>th</sup> Street shops from the Takoma Metro Station -- was frequently cited as one reason why many Maryland customers stayed on their side of the tracks.

Recently, the District also contributed an additional \$50,000 for facade improvements for 4<sup>th</sup> Street storefronts, all within two blocks from the underpass. This is on top of recent major investments by private businesses. Two months ago, three new businesses opened on the same block as the underpass -- Cedar Crossing Tavern and Wine Bar, My Little Bistro, and Mayorga Coffee. Also, at the same time, the owner of S & S Liquors, located about 50-feet from the underpass, freshly painted the outside of his building.

Clearly, years of work from residents, the business association, and the D.C. government are paying off. What is missing is a completely refurbished underpass that is a clean, well-lit and an appealing gateway to the District of Columbia that will tie everything together.

I ask that WMATA do its share to make its property an asset that matches the world-class art it will receive. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David A. Catania". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "D" and a long, sweeping tail.

David A. Catania  
Councilmember, At-Large  
Chair, Committee on Health

cc: Neil Albert, City Administrator, District of Columbia  
Michael A. Brown, At-Large, Council of the District of Columbia  
Jim Graham, Ward One, Council of the District of Columbia