

ex officio. Commissioners who are appointed serve at the pleasure of the Executive, and commissioners who are not appointed from among the members of the governing bodies serve for a period of three years. By law, chairpersonship of the Commission rotates on an annual basis between Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

The Commission was established for the purpose of administering the activities and functions of the Washington Suburban Transit District, with powers to develop, on a bi-county basis, a transportation system including mass transit facilities for the needs and growth of both counties. The Commission appoints two of its members and two alternates to the Board of Directors of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), the interstate agency charged with the overall responsibility of planning, financing, and operating the regional rapid rail and bus transit systems for the Washington metropolitan area. The Commission works in conjunction with the interstate authority in the development of the regional rapid rail transit system, which has been under construction since December 1969. The

first segment of that system—4.5 miles extending from the Rhode Island Avenue Station to Farragut North Station in downtown Washington, D.C.—began revenue operations March 29, 1976. With completion of an additional 5.5 miles of track, the Red Line was extended from the Rhode Island Station to Silver Spring, where the first Maryland Station was ceremoniously opened for revenue operations on February 6, 1978.

In February 1973, the interstate authority acquired the operations of the areas' four privately-owned bus companies and began immediate plans for improving transit service in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. The Commission acts as the financial conduit through which funding of mass transportation projects within the counties take place. The Commission acts as the coordinating body with regard to mass transit matters within the bi-county area, and as such coordinates mass transit activities of the two county governments with each other, with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, and with the Maryland Department of Transportation.