



PRESS RELEASE

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**Committee of 100 Tells Metro to Stop Painting Historic
Metro Stations and Make Better Use of the Money**

In an April 14, 2017 letter to WMATA CEO Paul Wiedefeld, Committee of 100 on the Federal City (C100) Chairman, Stephen A. Hansen urged the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority to cease immediately painting the coffered concrete ceilings and walls of the System's famous underground stations. An estimated \$75,000 to \$100,000 painting cost per station would be better spent on the System's perennially cash-strapped operations than on cosmetic "fix ups." (see C100 letter to Wiedefeld: <https://tinyurl.com/maxa3sm>).

The design of the Washington's Metro stations is a nationally significant, historic architectural and engineering triumph. As the vision of Chicago modernist architect Harry Weese, the stations were recognized as masterpieces of mid-20th century design even at their dedication in 1976. The stations embody significant Post-World War II architectural/ engineering concepts expressed in the unpainted cast concrete throughout the stations. These concrete walls and coffered ceilings are universal hallmarks of a 20th century, modernist architectural philosophy that championed "honest" use of material. In this case – the exposed, unpainted concrete (Béton brut as it was labeled - a French word meaning raw concrete – from which the style label "Brutalism" was derived).

WMATA's purported rationale for the inappropriate concrete painting is to "cheer up" oftentimes gloomy station ambiance – particularly as riders now spend more time in them given the System's increasingly erratic and attenuated schedules. While a worthwhile goal, the challenge is better, more appropriately, and more cheaply met with careful and respectful upgrading of Bill Lam's original historic lighting design and by cleaning the concrete periodically, and not through multiple coats of paint that will require constant repainting at ever greater cost through time.

Mr. Wiedefeld and WMATA's Board must recognize that they hold in trust for future generations an important American architectural and engineering treasure of national historic significance. Founded in 1923, the Committee of 100 is an independent, not-for profit, citizen organization dedicated to safeguarding the important values that give our nation's capital its distinction and community character. C100, the citizens of Washington, DC, Virginia, and Maryland are proud of the Washington area's Metro System – the Nation's 2nd busiest. C100 trusts WMATA is as well and will act accordingly. Stop painting the exposed concrete!