



Network Redesign

Phase 1 Engagement Summary



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About the Project



Buses keep our region moving, connecting more than 500,000 customers every day to the places they want to go. The Better Bus network redesign project is an initiative to rethink, redesign, and revitalize bus service to better serve the needs of customers in the region.

Metro launched the network redesign project—the region’s first comprehensive redesign of the entire Metrobus network since its creation in 1973—as a critical piece of Better Bus. It’s an opportunity:

With the network redesign project, Metro is putting customers at the forefront, using data-driven analysis and a robust, interactive public engagement process to evaluate Metrobus service and create a Better Bus network that is fast, frequent, reliable, and easier to understand.



To keep up with our evolving region and the people who live here



To better connect people to where they need to go



To promote equity, inclusiveness, and access to opportunity



To create an easy-to-use network, no matter where customers are

Phase 1 (Fall 2022) of the network redesign project focused on:

- ✓ Identifying priorities for improving bus service
- ✓ Developing goals and objectives to guide the development of the new network
- ✓ Identifying needs, gaps, and opportunities to create a framework for redesigning the bus network

BETTER FOR YOU!



Phase 1 At a Glance



Target Audiences

Stakeholders

- Project Partners: Prince George's County TheBus and City of Fairfax CUE
- Elected officials
- Local transportation and transit agencies
- Union leadership
- Community-based organizations
- Transit advocacy groups
- Major regional employers and institutions

Public

- Current bus customers
- Lapsed (former) bus customers
- Historically underrepresented populations: People from low-income households, people of color, people with limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, people without smartphones, seniors, and zero-car households
- Non-riders

Metro Employees

- Metro staff
- Bus operators



Communications and Engagement Plan

Guided by Metro's Public Participation Plan and Language Assistance Plan, the Phase 1 communications and engagement campaign was **designed to reach customers at their bus stops, in their neighborhoods, and in their homes**. The campaign delivered targeted multilingual communications to a diverse customer and stakeholder base to increase awareness and provide key project information.

Tactics

Phase 1 of communications and engagement was guided by research-based strategies to **share calls-to-action and communicate timely information to customers and stakeholders**. Expanding on successful strategies from previous projects as well as using new and innovative approaches, we deployed comprehensive tactics to **increase project awareness and engage target audiences**. Tactics included in-person engagement events, social media campaigns, print and digital advertisements, employee engagement, and more.

Objectives



Inform

Introduce the Better Bus initiative and network redesign project, and build awareness of and support for the project



Consult

Gather input from customers, stakeholders, and the public across diverse constituencies and communities around existing experiences of and priorities for the bus network



Collaborate

Partner with customers, stakeholders, and the public to begin identifying challenges, opportunities, and potential future enhancements for the bus network



By the Numbers



Nearly 9,500 interactions
at **18 pop-up events**

500+ conversations with customers at **10 bus stops**

6,500+ survey participants



Nearly 12,000 Metro employees
informed through newsletter and podcast

200+ bus operators engaged



Unique QR code and URL for
10 languages, resulting in nearly
2,500 QR code scans

7,000 unique page views on the
Better Bus webpage

Nearly 3,000 subscribers
to e-newsletters



890,000+ impressions
on online ads

7 advertisements in
6 languages in
community newspapers

Digital signage at all
91 stations



80+ representatives
from jurisdictional partners, community
organizations, advocacy groups,
and major institutions across
2 committees

20+ meetings with elected
officials across the region



What do you think about bus service today?

Comparta una palabra sobre el servicio de autobús.

Share one word about bus service.



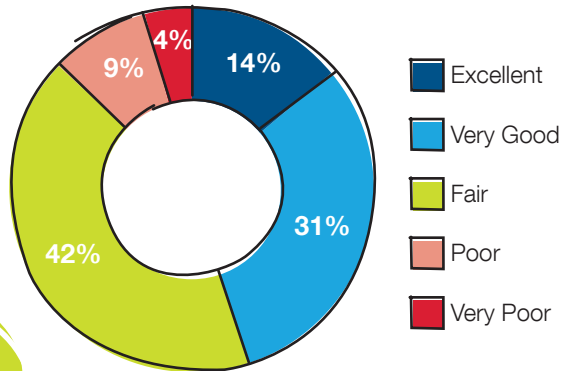
What We Learned

Key Takeaways

The region's bus service is good, but it could be better

45% of respondents expressed that existing bus service is "very good" or "excellent."

Overall Satisfaction of Regional Bus Service



Fast, frequent, and reliable service are top priorities

Shorter wait times and on-time arrivals are among the most important factors for current and potential customers.



Post-pandemic, a majority of bus customers surveyed ride the same amount or more

Only 25% of current customers surveyed ride the bus less often than they did pre-COVID.

The bus can serve more types of trips at more times

While work trips are among the top drivers of bus travel, opportunity exists to better serve non-work destinations.



Key Takeaways

Inequities exist in reported walk distance and wait times

Customers of color and low-income customers report having to walk farther to their bus stop and wait longer for their buses to arrive compared to white customers and higher income customers.



Connecting bus systems, both information and service, is critical

42% of customers report using two or more bus systems in the region.



Quality of life is essential in attracting and retaining bus operators

Several key factors contribute to stress and pressure on bus operators, including routes, schedules, and safety concerns.



Regional partners desire more transparency to build trust with Metro

Partners across the region understand value of Metro, but need consistency and collaboration to create a better bus system





A Closer Look

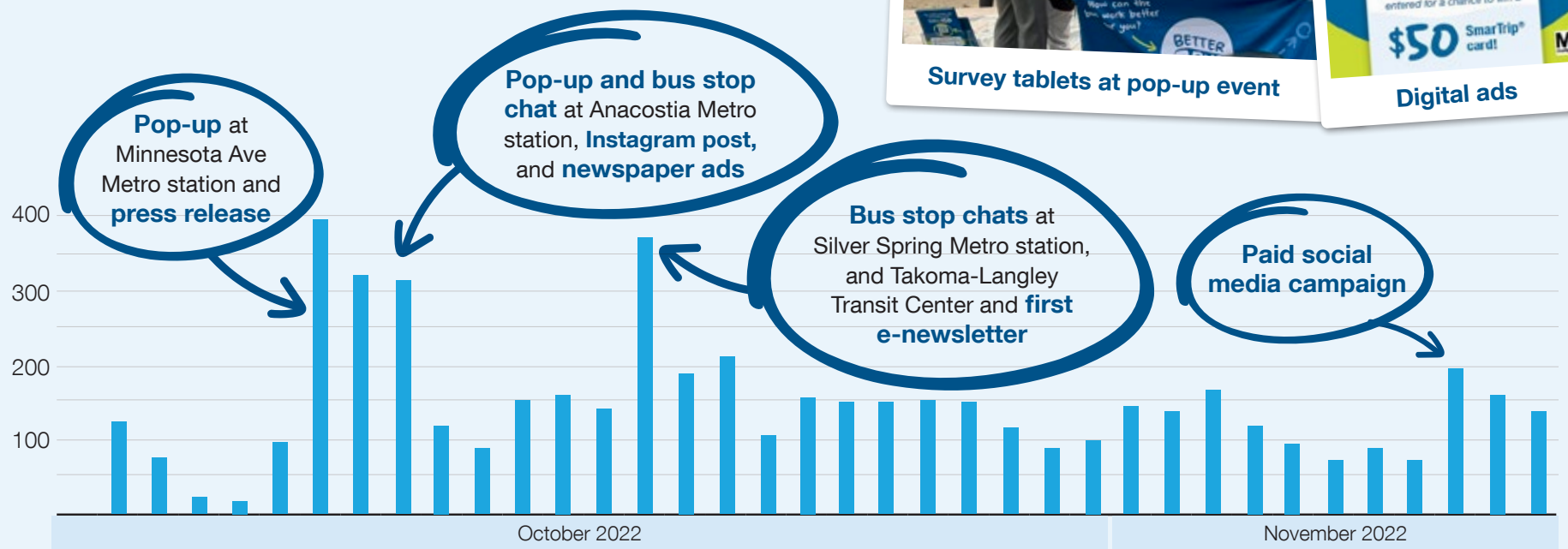
Customer Research

Public Survey

A public survey was open from October 7 to November 11, 2022, serving as the key public feedback mechanism for Phase 1. Customers and the community were able to access the survey online in English and Spanish, with links to it prominently featured on the project webpage and with QR codes on system-wide print and digital signage. The public survey also was made available via phone for the following additional languages:

- Amharic/አማርኛ
- Arabic/عربي
- French/français
- Korean/한국어
- Mandarin Chinese/中国人/中國人
- Somali/somalia
- Vietnamese/Tiếng Việt

Metro heavily promoted the survey at pop-up events and via the project e-newsletter, social media, and multilingual print, digital, and radio advertisements, including El Zol radio station and the Transit App.



Survey Responses by Day

Customer Research

Public Survey



6,511 people participated in the survey during the 5-week period

90% in English | 10% in Spanish



47% of current customers rated the existing system “very good” or “excellent”

People of color were more likely to give a positive rating than white respondents



Post-pandemic, a majority of bus customers surveyed ride the same amount or more

Only 24% of current customers surveyed ride the bus less often than pre-COVID



Opportunities exist to expand bus usage, especially for non-work trips

While 60% of respondents reported “always” taking the bus to work, only 32% reported “always” taking the bus for recreational, entertainment, or personal purposes

Customers of color and low-income customers are more likely to “always” take the bus to work (66% and 75%, respectively) compared to white customers and higher-income customers (38%)



Customers of color report having to walk **52% farther** to their bus stop and wait **22% longer** for their bus to arrive compared to white customers.

Low-income customers report having to walk **71% farther** to their bus stop and wait **45% longer** for their bus to arrive compared to higher-income customers.

Both Current and Potential Customers Seek

Fast, Frequent, and Reliable Service

Top 3 Priorities for Bus Service

Current Customers

- Buses that arrive on time
- Quick and easy transfers
- Reliable service

Potential Customers

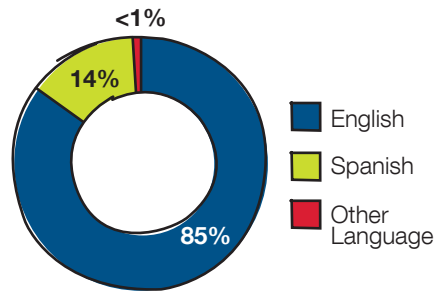
- Reliable service
- Bus service in new locations
- Shorter wait times

Meeting the Community Where They Are

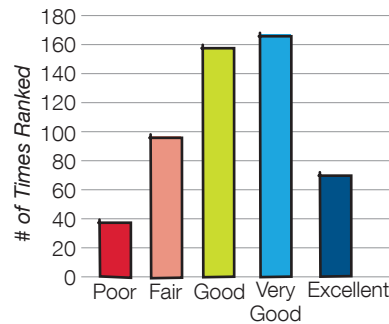
Bus Stop Chats

We met bus customers directly at their bus stops to get their valuable input and reach those less likely to engage through other methods. Ten bus stop chats were conducted across the region that resulted in 571 conversations with customers.

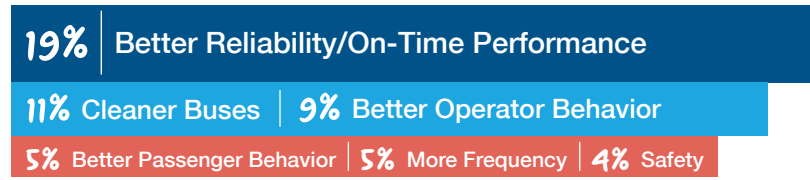
The vast majority of conversations occurred in English, with 14% that occurred in Spanish



A majority of bus customers expressed that the existing bus network is either good, very good, or excellent



Top Priorities for Improvements



18%

of people indicated that they are happy with the existing system and have no suggested improvements



"Other"

priorities expressed included on-board comfort, customer service, and easier fare payment

Top Priorities for Improvements by Location



Better Operator Behavior



Weekend Service and Cleaner Buses (Tie)



Other



Better Reliability / On-Time Performance



N/A / None / Happy with System

Meeting the Community Where They Are

Roadshow Pop-Up Events

We took the traditional open house “on the road” with innovative pop-ups that were accessible, engaging, and convenient.

Bilingual outreach teams and Metro staff hosted 18 events at locations across the region, to learn about current experiences and priorities for the future. Featuring a branded booth setup, these events included informative tent sidewalls with project information and interactive feedback activities.



18
Pop-up Events



1,500+
Interactive Feedback
Activities Completed



9,000+
Interactions
(25% in Spanish)



44
Video
Testimonials
Recorded

Event attendees were encouraged to record a video “testimonial” to speak in more detail about their experiences with and desires for bus service.

“The bus is very helpful - it takes me where I need to go.”

“I would like to see stops closer to my home and less transfers.”

“We need cleaner buses, less crowding, and on-time arrivals.”

“The bus system is pretty good right now. I like it.”



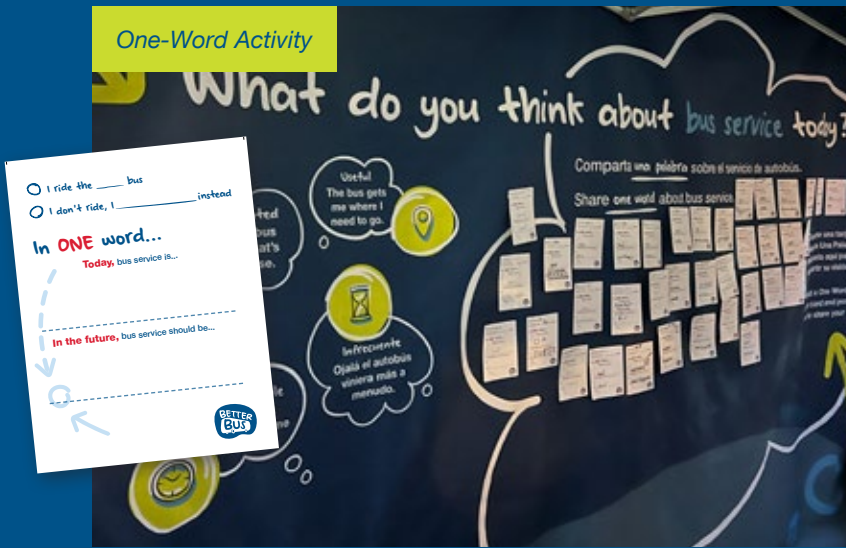
Click here to watch more video testimonials from customers



Meeting the Community Where They Are

Roadshow Pop-Up Events

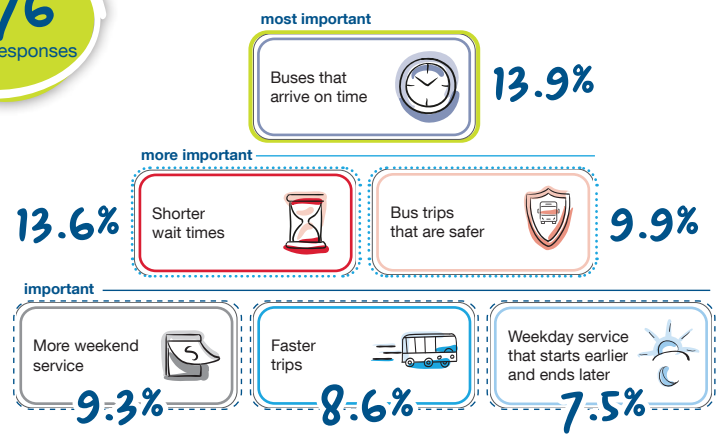
1,047
Total Responses



One-word activity responses shed light on the wide range of experiences and opinions about bus service today, as well as on what customers and the community desire for the future

476
Total Responses

My Better Bus Wishlist



Wishlist Activity



The Wishlist activity provided event attendees with 12 types of Better Bus improvements to rank in order of importance on a priority pyramid. With only 6 spaces on the pyramid, participants had to select those that were most important to them over others

Engaging Stakeholders with Purpose

To leverage the region's wide range of stakeholders, Metro formed two advisory committees. During Phase 1, these committees helped shape the direction of the project and spread the word about public engagement opportunities across their respective communities.

Technical Committee

The project's Technical Committee includes Metro staff and staff from other transit agencies in the region, including partner jurisdictions Prince George's County and the City of Fairfax. Members' collective technical expertise and first-hand knowledge of running bus service provides the project team with insightful input at key milestones throughout the network redesign process.



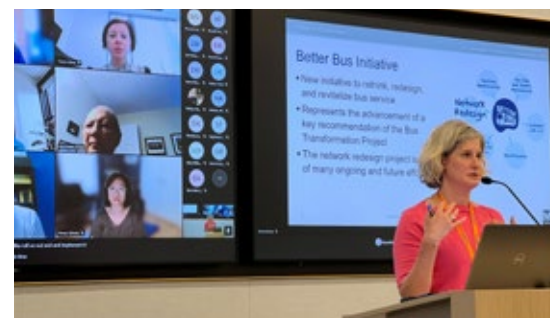
During Phase 1, Technical Committee members offered input on the project's planned technical analysis and approach to redesigning the bus network.

Community Connections Committee

The project's Community Connections Committee (CCC) includes representatives from transit advocacy groups, major employers and institutions, service and interest groups connected to target language access and equity communities, and more. The 39 members of the CCC were recruited to represent a diversity of organizations that help extend project engagement through their constituencies.



During Phase 1, CCC members were briefed on the project's community engagement strategy, asked to provide input on engagement strategies, and asked to help amplify public engagement opportunities to members of their communities.



Phase 1 committee meetings were conducted in a hybrid format, with in-person attendees gathering at Metro's headquarters at L'Enfant Plaza.



Northern Virginia Transportation Authority



Engaging Stakeholders with Purpose

Community-Based Organizations

We planned and executed customized engagement with community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve as trusted pillars in their communities at the onset of Phase 1.



We provided more than 400 CBOs customized digital materials, as well as physical printed materials upon request, to distribute to their constituents



Metro also encouraged CBOs to utilize the resources within the project's **Digital Communications Toolkit** to spread the word across their communities

Riders' Advisory Council and Accessibility Advisory Committee

Metro engaged its Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) and Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) at key points during Phase 1 to introduce the project, increase awareness about public engagement opportunities, and gather feedback on technical and engagement approaches.



We held a "Meet the Project Team" event that provided an opportunity for interested members of the public to engage directly with the project team and RAC members.

Digital Communications Toolkit

The Digital Communications Toolkit—housed on the Better Bus webpage—provides multilingual collateral, sample newsletter and social media text, and photos for use by Metro partners to introduce the project and promote the e-newsletter and public survey.



275 page views
(Rank 4 of 5 English language webpage)

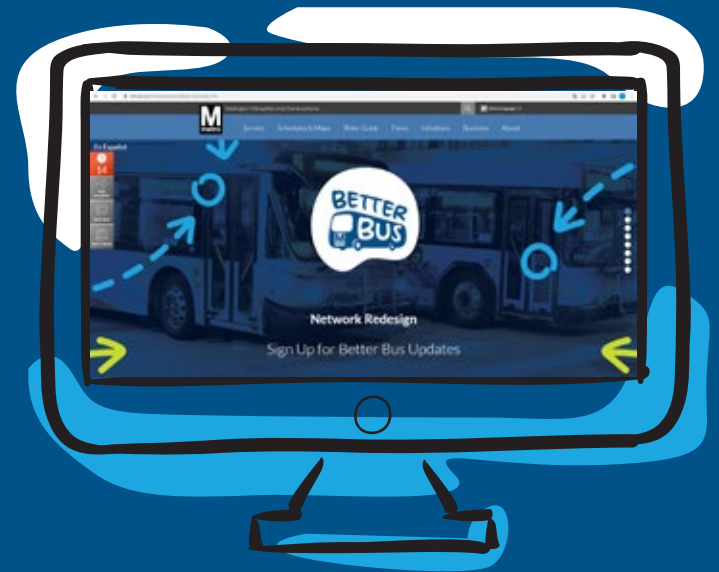


3.5 min on page
(Longest of all Better Bus webpage)











Digital Engagement

Project Webpage | wmata.com/betterbus

Metro created the Better Bus webpage to be the hub for information about the Better Bus Initiative and the network redesign project. A general project overview was featured on the home page, with additional public-friendly details about schedule, process, frequently asked questions, the Digital Communications Toolkit, and public engagement opportunities across four sub-pages. All pages were made fully available in English and Spanish, with an embedded Google Translate widget for translation to Chinese, French, Korean, and Vietnamese.



Number of Page Views + Times Spent on Page

Home Page		
Share Your Input		
About the Project		
Digital Communications Toolkit		
FAQs		

7,271 Unique Page Views

4.7% of Surveys Accessed via Home Page

44% Mobile Device Views

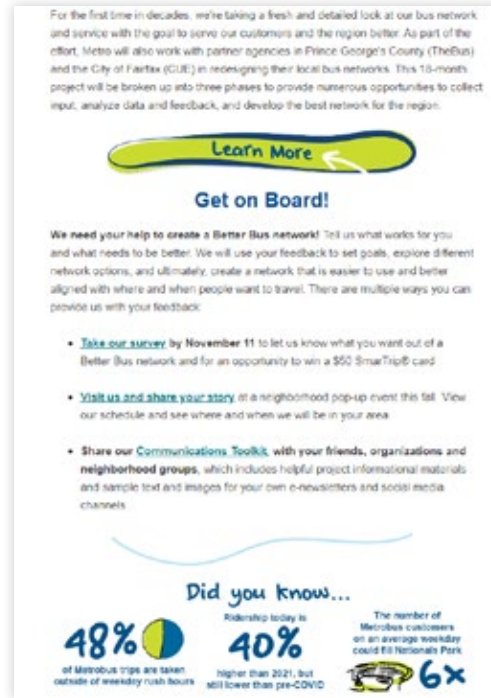
Data: Google Analytics, English Language Pages, October 1 – November 20, 2022

Digital Engagement

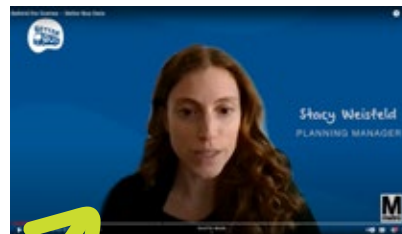
Better Bus Dispatch e-Newsletter

We created the Better Bus Dispatch to be a monthly e-newsletter with timely and important project updates, giving subscribers an inside look at the network redesign as it progresses.

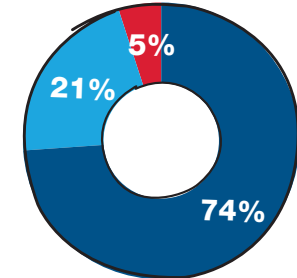
In Phase 1, we issued two Dispatches with links to the webpage, “Behind-the-Scenes” videos, and interactive polls to increase interest and engagement.



Better Bus Dispatch Edition 1 (October 2022)



Subscribers by Source



- Public Survey
- Better Bus Webpage
- Committee Membership

Digital Engagement

Organic Social Media

Metro used its social media platforms to organically drive traffic to the public survey and field questions and comments directly from the public.



60 Posts → 100,000+ Impressions



10.52%
Click-Through Rate of Top-Performing Post



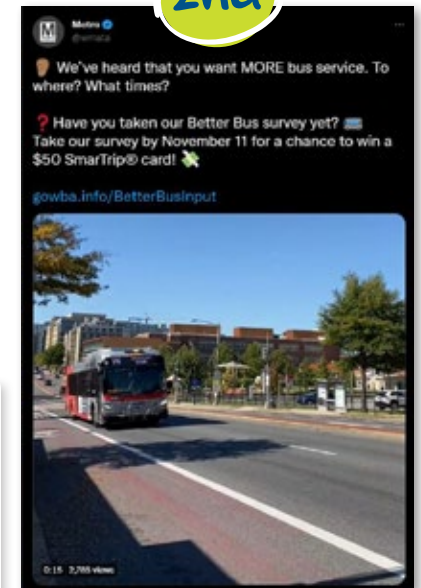
Metro's General Manager highlighted the project throughout Phase 1 to his Twitter following of 11,000+

11,000+



October 29, 2022 Facebook post

Top-Performing Social Media Posts



November 11, 2022 Twitter post



October 27, 2022 Instagram post

"[I] absolutely hate driving, but it's hard to want to take a bus when it turns a 15-20 minute drive into an hour, and I'm forced to walk for half of it."

- Customer Social Media Comment

Digital Engagement

Paid Social Media

We ran a paid social media campaign on Facebook and Instagram in English and Spanish as an additional way to direct customers to the public survey.



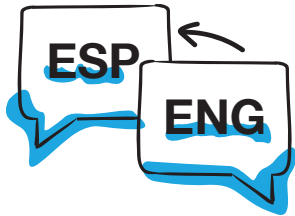
2,754
Clicks

290,000+
Impressions



0.95%

Average Click-Through Rate
(compared to 0.90% industry standard)



Spanish

61% of all Impressions
59% of all Clicks
1.0% Click-Through Rate

(Stronger performance over English posts)



Spreading the Word Across the System

Print and Digital Promotion

Metro implemented a print and digital campaign across the Metrobus system and service area to encourage customers to take the public survey, visit the Better Bus webpage, and subscribe to the e-newsletter.



1,500 printed signs and 235,000 take-ones in English and Spanish on-board buses



Additional multilingual take-ones in 8 languages at events



Digital screen displays in English and Spanish at 91 Metro stations



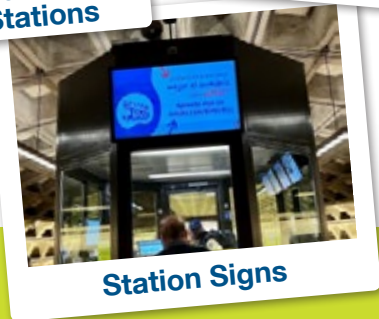
100 yard signs in English and Spanish at 41 Metro stations that serve as key bus transfer locations



Yard Signs at Metro Stations



Signs on Buses



Station Signs

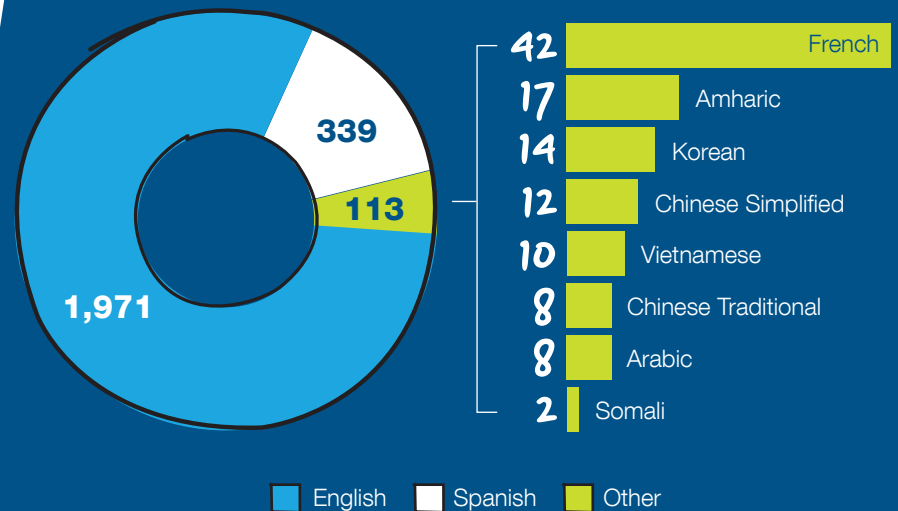


Multilingual Take-Ones

We included QR codes on signs, in print collateral, and in newspaper and digital advertising to track the effectiveness of the campaign and provide immediate and convenient access to the public survey.



Number of QR Code Scans



Note: In placements where both English and Spanish languages were presented together (e.g., on-bus signs) the English QR code was used.

Spreading the Word Across the System

Print and Digital Promotion



7 print ad placements with **301,000** circulations in non-English media



274,195 digital ad impressions

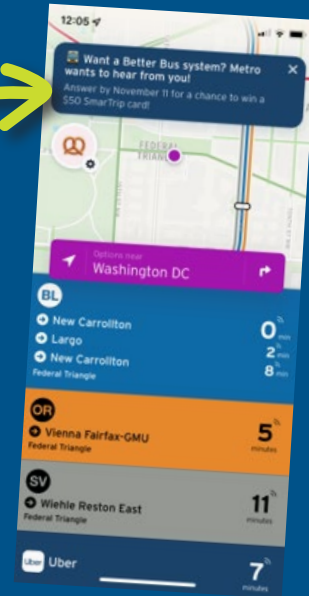


300,000 impressions on Transit App banner with a **15%** click rate

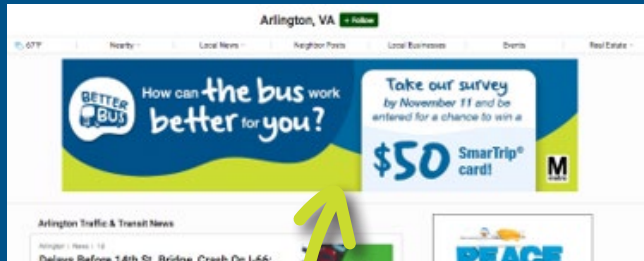


159,000 El Zol Spanish radio listeners reached per week

Transit App Banner



Web Banner Ad



Community Newspaper Print Ads

Engaging our Frontline Employees

Bus Operator Listening Sessions

As critical frontline employees, bus operators have the strongest pulse on the needs and opinions of bus customers. Metro held listening sessions with operators at all nine Metrobus garages, as well as TheBus and CUE garages, to provide information about the project and gain their input about today's conditions and customer needs. **We directly engaged nearly 200 bus operators during Phase 1.**

What We Heard



Route schedules need updating, primarily to allow for longer layovers and reflect traffic congestion on busy corridors



Peak periods for travel demand may be shifting following the COVID-19 pandemic, and service and routes need to be updated to reflect more daytime travel and less rush hour travel



Bus routes serving schools may benefit from added service to meet the travel demand occurring at school release times



Safety-related concerns exist across the system, including those from customers and from physical conditions like turning movements at intersections



Where We Went:

- Montgomery Division
- Western Division
- Andrews Division
- Four Mile Division
- Landover Division
- Southern Ave Division
- Shephard Parkway Division
- Bladensburg Division
- Cinder Bed Division
- Prince George's County TheBus
- City of Fairfax CUE

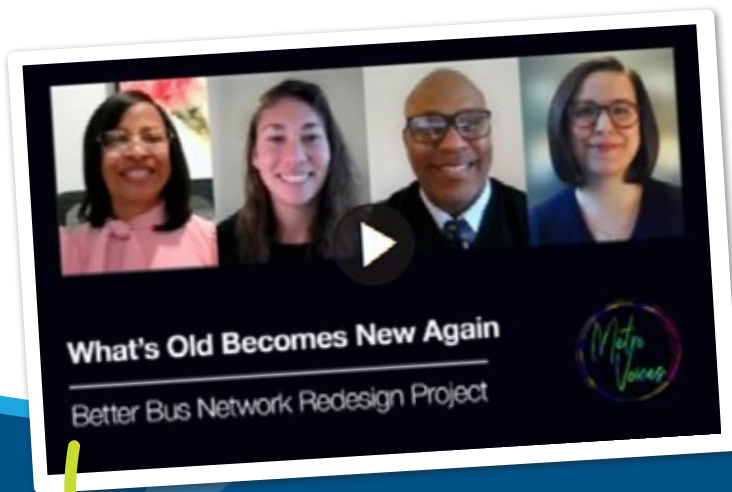


Keeping Employees Informed

Employee Communication

We informed nearly 12,000 Metro employees about the project and ways to provide input in Phase 1 through:

- ✓ An article in the MetroVoices employee e-newsletter (October 5)
- ✓ A video podcast (November 1) featuring a bus operator, project team member, and bus planner to speak about the importance and impact of the project



"The Network Redesign project ... [will] build a new network that better serves our communities."

"[The Network Redesign] presents the chance to build a bus network that gets more people where they want to go, when they want to go and is fast, frequent, and easy to understand."

- Metro Project Manager

Heard About the Better Bus Network Redesign?

We're embarking on an opportunity to reimagine how bus service can work better for the community.

[LEARN MORE](#)

We're Checking-In on Metro Clean Sweep

The Office of Plant Maintenance has been working around the clock to improve the cleanliness of our rail system.

[VIEW PHOTOS](#)

Heard About the Better Bus Network Redesign? Employee Sparks with Tonya Varner

She's one of the first place winners of this year's Metrobus Rodeo!

[MEET MS. VARNER](#)

We're Checking-In on Metro Clean Sweep SAFE Works to Fill in the Gaps

An employee's report to the Safety Hotline addressed a serious road hazard.

[READ MORE](#)



Conclusion and Next Steps



Conclusion and Next Steps

Measuring Success: A Look Back on Phase 1 Efforts

Using a multichannel communications and engagement campaign, Metro was able to build awareness and support for the project and receive input from more than 18,000 customers, stakeholders, and employees during Phase 1.



Through a widespread, regional approach to in-person events, we successfully gathered input from customers, stakeholders, and the public across diverse constituencies and communities around existing experiences of and priorities for the bus network.



5,340 surveys were completed and 12,400 interactions were recorded at public events, which represents 3.5% percent of average weekday regional bus ridership. In future phases, we will make an effort to obtain feedback from even more current and future bus customers.



41% of survey respondents identified as people of color, compared to the existing customer base that is 84% people of color. In future phases, we will make an effort to obtain feedback from a more representative cross section of the region's diversity.



2022
Phase 1

Moving Forward

Metro appreciates everyone from across the region who shared their feedback during Phase 1, as well as external stakeholders who were essential to the success of the communications and engagement campaign. The feedback gathered during this initial phase was critical to shaping this important project and will be reflected in the bus network options presented in Phases 2.

Phase 2 will launch in early 2023, and will focus on presenting and getting feedback on future bus network options. Phase 2 communications and engagement goals include:

- **Ensuring ongoing awareness** of the project
- **Obtaining input from the public, stakeholders, and employees** on future bus network options
- **Empowering internal and external stakeholders** to become advocates for the project
- **Ensuring the public, stakeholders, and employees understand** how their input will be used

2023
Phases 2&3



Starting
2024
Implement
New Network

