

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Board Action/Information Summary

☒ Action ☐ Information

Document
Number:
210876

Resolution:
☒ Yes ☐ No

Presentation Name:

Approval of 2025 Better Bus Network

Project Manager:

Allison Davis/Peter Cafiero

Project Department:

Planning and Performance

Purpose/Key Highlights:

This presentation provides an overview of the 2025 Better Bus Network, including the approach to building the 2025 Network, how the final network responds to customer and stakeholder feedback, benefits of the network, results of the Title VI analysis, the potential paratransit service area, and an overview of the 2025 Network implementation strategy. The presentation recommends approval of the 2025 Better Bus Network that aligns with project goals and works better for customers and the region. Additional details are available at wmata.com/betterbus.

Interested Parties:

For conflict-of-interest purposes, staff has identified the following contractors and interested parties involved in the Network Redesign: **Kimley-Horn, Cambridge Systematics, Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning, NeoNiche Strategies, WBA Research, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, and Sensis Agency.**

Background:

In June 2022, Metro launched the Better Bus Network Redesign to create a bus network to better match when and where people want to travel, provide fast, frequent and reliable service, address inequities, and increase access to opportunity for disenfranchised communities. The Better Bus Network Redesign is a key initiative in the Strategic Transformation Plan, meeting objectives in Service Excellence, Regional Opportunities and Partnership, and Sustainability.

At the completion of the Network Redesign, customers, the region, and our partners will have a:

- 2025 Better Bus Network and service plan developed within current resource levels for Metro Board consideration in CY2024 and implementation beginning in CY2025;
- Visionary Network and service plan with that will become possible with more resources, and that provides a path forward to meet some of the region's longer-term goals; and
- Clearly defined role of Metrobus in the region and a long-term sustainable, predictable funding model for bus service.

In the summer and fall of 2023, a revised Visionary Network was developed that incorporates the significant feedback gathered from customers, elected officials and jurisdictional partners in the spring of 2023. It sets the stage for what bus service can be in the region.

Discussion:

The proposed 2025 Better Bus Network is a bus network and service plan that reshapes the entire Metrobus system within current resource levels of the FY2025 budget. The strategic approach to developing the 2025 Better Bus Network includes a focus on:

- Better connecting people to where they want to go;
- Providing more frequent, consistent bus service;
- Advancing access to opportunity for Equity Focus Communities;
- Making bus service easier to understand; and
- Preparing us for the future.

Project Engagement and Outreach

Three rounds of public engagement and outreach guided the creation of the 2025 Better Bus Network, as well as a Visionary Network, which will be used to guide future service decisions when additional resources are available. Public engagement occurred in the fall of 2022, spring of 2023, and summer of 2024. Through those efforts, Metro engaged nearly 45,000 customers and potential customers, received over 21,000 comments on the draft 2025 and Visionary Networks, received more than 12,000 survey responses, and held over 130 customer-focused events across the region. In addition to the public, Metro engaged over 1,400 employees, including 820 bus operators and other operations staff, and held over 120 briefings with elected officials, stakeholders, and community representatives.

In spring/summer 2024 Metro held a Discovery Day in each state-level jurisdiction, which included both an expo to learn about the proposed network and provide feedback and, in adherence to the Compact, separate public hearings to gather comments. Metro held two additional virtual Compact Public Hearings to enable customers and potential customers to provide comments.

Extensive collaboration with local transit providers in the Transit Zone has occurred since the project's inception with multiple workshops and meetings to collaboratively redesign the Metrobus network and integrate it with the local providers. In partnership with TheBus, service in Prince George's County has been fully reimagined for both providers. Metro also collaborated with Montgomery County on Ride On Reimagined, the county's redesign effort. For reference and context, route profiles for Prince George's County's TheBus routes and one of Montgomery County's Ride On routes are included as an appendix in the route profiles. As these routes are operated by the counties, the Metro Board will not take action on those services.

Revising the 2025 Better Bus Network

During the project's final phase of engagement, Metro received over 13,000 comments on the proposed Better Bus Network. In fall of 2024, Metro reviewed all 13,000+ comments and used this feedback from the public and stakeholders to revise the 2025 Network. Revisions were focused on the project goals identified through our initial public engagement in fall 2022:

- Quality customer and operator experience: provides fast, frequent, and reliable service;
- Regional connectivity: matches when and where people want to travel; and
- Equity: addresses inequities and increases access to opportunity.

Comments received during the spring of 2024 were used to better address customer needs and concerns, while still working towards these three goals.

Changes were made to about 70 of the 125 Metrobus routes (56%) based on feedback received as well as additional analysis of the network and service plans. These revisions focused on addressing as many major customer concerns as possible, with a focus on changes that create a network that advances regional connectivity, customer and operator experience, and equity and where a second look at data showed revisions were warranted. The team carried over proposals in cases where data reaffirmed the proposed alignment change, service reduction, or elimination, where changes would create unsafe conditions for operators due to street geometry, where comments conflicted with one another, and where changes aren't feasible due to resource constraints.

The 2025 and Visionary Networks

The 2025 Better Bus Network will improve service and connections using the

resources we have today. The 2025 Network will increase the number of frequent service routes from 37 to 48 routes across the network (buses every 12-minutes or better and/or 20-minutes or better depending on the category of frequent service, 7 days a week) and provides 20,000 more DMV residents with access to weekend service, all within existing resources. The 2025 Better Bus Network could attract nearly 13,000 more daily weekday trips and avoid almost 4,300 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions a year.

With additional investment, the Visionary Network can improve access, frequency, and convenience and attract many more customers. The Visionary Network would:

- Provide at least 30-minute frequency throughout the day for most routes;
- Provide new routes, including more connections between Metrorail branches and emerging activity centers;
- Create a regionwide 24-hour bus network, including overnight connections to the region's airports; and
- Create even more consistent, frequent service all day and all week.

As a result, the Visionary Network would attract more customers than the 2025 Network, provide more environmental benefits, save more time on an average day for transit customers, make more trips convenient to take on transit, and provide access to more jobs within 60 minutes on transit for residents of the region.

Equity and Title VI Analysis

Metro ensured equity was a core value of the Better Bus Network Redesign. As noted above and throughout the previous presentations, building a more equitable network includes a focus on the following for Equity Focus Communities:

- Increasing midday, evening, and weekend service;
- Increasing access to frequent service;
- Increased connections at both ends of routes to key destinations, such as jobs, schools, grocery stores, and hospitals;
- Expanded access to jobs (and job centers)

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires that transit agencies conduct an equity analysis to determine whether proposed permanent major service changes will result in a disparate impact (DI) to minority customers or disproportionate burden (DB) to low-income customers. The 2025 Network proposes significant changes to Metrobus service. The analysis does not show a potential disparate impact on minority populations or a disproportionate burden on low-income populations.

This analysis examines both the demographics of those residents who will benefit

from improved service and those who will be adversely impacted from service reductions to see if minority or low-income residents will be disproportionately denied the benefits of Metrobus service. The bus service changes provide a significant increase in service to minority and low-income residents. However, to implement these beneficial service changes, some service has been reduced; therefore, some residents will be negatively impacted. For example, at some places in the network, service was straightened to provide faster, more direct service for more customers, which required realigning service in some Census Block Groups. In the Title VI analysis, this realignment would show up as a service reduction even if the net effect is more direct and faster service for customers.

In addition, the partnership with Prince George's County TheBus and Montgomery County's Ride On to redesign service in those jurisdictions has resulted in some changes to the provider who will operate the service on a particular street or area. In some cases, Metrobus will assume service previously operated by local operators and in others, the local operators will provide service on streets where it is currently provided by Metrobus. For Title VI analysis purposes the latter is considered a reduction to Metrobus service even though these residents will continue to have bus service.

Paratransit Service Area

Federal law requires the provision of paratransit services by bus and rail service providers where fixed route service is provided. The Metro Board has maintained a consistent paratransit service boundary since 2010. Additionally, as part of the adoption of the FY2025 operating and capital budgets, the Metro Board has extended the time for the boundary until June 30, 2026, to enable staff to evaluate the impact of the Better Bus service changes on paratransit service.

Bus Route Naming

Metro is also taking this opportunity to rename bus routes for the entirety of the Metrobus network. We heard from customers and potential customers that the existing route names are confusing and not intuitive. The approach is broad enough to allow local providers to also rename their routes within the below convention if they so choose. The approach to route names is as follows:

- First character: Defines the jurisdiction that the route mainly operates in:
 - D (downtown routes) or C (crosstown routes) for DC,
 - M for Montgomery, P for Prince George's,
 - A for Arlington and Alexandria,
 - F for Fairfax County and Cities of Fairfax and Falls Church;
- Second character: A number for route's corridor/neighborhood;
- Third character: A number to distinguish it from the other routes, with a '0' for the primary route on the corridor or an 'X' for a limited stop route.

Bus Stops

As part of the spring/summer 2024 engagement, Metro proposed the elimination of about 650 stops and received input from customers and jurisdictional partners about them. These bus stops exceed our bus stop spacing guidelines and are located too close to adjacent bus stops. These stops often have lower ridership than the adjacent stops and may lack safe pedestrian access such as crosswalks and sidewalks. Based on that input, Metro is proposing the elimination of about 510 bus stops (about five percent of Metrobus stops served) in the 2025 Better Bus Network. By eliminating these stops, bus speeds should increase, travel time should become more reliable, and bus service will be more efficient.

Draft Cost for the 2025 Better Bus Network

The 2025 Better Bus Network was created to be resource neutral for Metrobus. However, applying the restructured Metrobus subsidy allocation formula to the 2025 Better Bus Network does result in changes to the allocation of the Metrobus subsidy among Metro's funding partners. The calculation included in the presentation applies service and system costs and revenues from Metro's FY2025 adopted budget, so each jurisdiction's Metrobus subsidy will be revised as part of the draft FY2026 budget.

2025 Network Implementation Strategy

Metro anticipates implementing the 2025 Better Bus Network starting in the summer of 2025. The major tasks needed for implementation include planning and scheduling, training for operations and communications staff, customer information including bus stop flags, maps, and website, and ensuring our systems and data are updated to provide accurate customer information and to enable analysis and supervision of the new network with new route names. In addition, Metro staff continues to work closely with our jurisdictional partners to identify signage, operations, and infrastructure changes or needs for stops and streets in each jurisdiction to support the new network.

Funding Impact:

There is no impact on funding from this action item. This action will have a funding impact when the Board adopts the restructured Metrobus subsidy formula and the FY2026 and subsequent budgets.

Previous Actions:

- September 2022: Better Bus Network Redesign update, including adoption of Guiding Principles for the project
- January 2023: Better Bus Network Redesign update

- April 2023: Better Bus update including draft Visionary Network
- July 2023: Better Bus Network Redesign update
- September 2023: Better Bus Network Redesign update, including route renaming concepts
- May 2024: Public Hearing Authorization on Proposed 2025 Better Bus Network Redesign
- October 2024: Better Bus Network Redesign update

Next Steps:

Staff will incorporate the 2025 Better Bus Network into the GM/CEO's Recommended FY2026 Budget. If funded in Metro's FY2026 budget, implementation of the revised 2025 Better Bus Network could begin as early as the summer of 2025.

Recommendation:

Approval to: Staff recommends approval of the 2025 Better Bus Network.

PRESENTED AND ADOPTED: November 21, 2024

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF NEW METROBUS NETWORK

2024-32

RESOLUTION
OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF THE
WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

WHEREAS, Compact Section 60 provides that service performed by transit facilities owned or controlled by WMATA shall be subject to the sole and exclusive jurisdiction of the Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, WMATA's existing bus network has not undergone a comprehensive review since 1973, when WMATA acquired the D.C. Transit System, Incorporated, the Washington, Virginia and Maryland Coach Company, the Alexandria, Barcroft and Washington Transit Company, and the WMA Transit Company; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to Resolution 2022-25, staff has performed a comprehensive review of WMATA's existing bus network and designed a new and improved bus network to modernize WMATA's network and provide for optimal and effective use of WMATA resources; and

WHEREAS, In June 2010, the Board adopted a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile zone from fixed-route service for the provision of MetroAccess service (Res. 2010-31); and

WHEREAS, The new bus network developed in accordance with the Bus Service Guidelines adopted by Resolution 2020-43 and the Guidelines for Bus Stop Design, Information and Placement adopted by Resolution 2010-15 as amended by Resolution 2014-21, is set forth in Attachment A (including three overview maps) and the 125 route-level maps on WMATA's website incorporated by reference into this Resolution; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to the Public Participation Plan, the Board held public hearings on June 12, 18, 20, 24, and 26, 2024, regarding the proposed bus service changes as well as a public outreach for Title VI equity analysis; and

WHEREAS, Following the public hearings and public participation process, staff prepared an Engagement Summary prepared under the Public Participation Plan (Attachment B) and Title VI equity analysis (Attachment C) on the proposed bus service changes, which showed that the proposed changes do not result in a disparate impact on minority populations or a disproportionate burden on low-income populations;

Motioned by Mr. Drummer, seconded by Dr. Hadden Loh

Ayes: 7- Ms. Santos, Mr. Smedberg, Mr. McAndrew, Ms. Kline, Dr. Hadden Loh, Mr. Drummer and Ms. Martin-Proctor

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, That Board of Directors adopts the new bus network set forth in Attachment A and the 125 route-level maps on WMATA's website incorporated by reference into this Resolution, and shall be effective on the date established by the General Manager and Chief Executive Officer, but no earlier than on or about July 1, 2025; and be it further

RESOLVED, On the effective date of the new bus network established by the General Manager and Chief Executive Officer, all prior resolution provisions relating to the bus network or any portion of the bus network will be abolished; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile zone for provision of MetroAccess service in Resolution 2010-31 is suspended until June 30, 2026, to freeze the existing paratransit service area as it currently exists except as is otherwise required by federal law; and be it further

RESOLVED, That staff is instructed to evaluate the impact of the new bus network on paratransit service; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Board of Directors approves the Engagement Summary prepared under the Public Participation Plan as set forth in Attachment B; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Board of Directors approves the Title VI equity analysis as set forth in Attachment C; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Board of Directors designates routes F19, F81, F83, and F28 as express routes; and be it finally

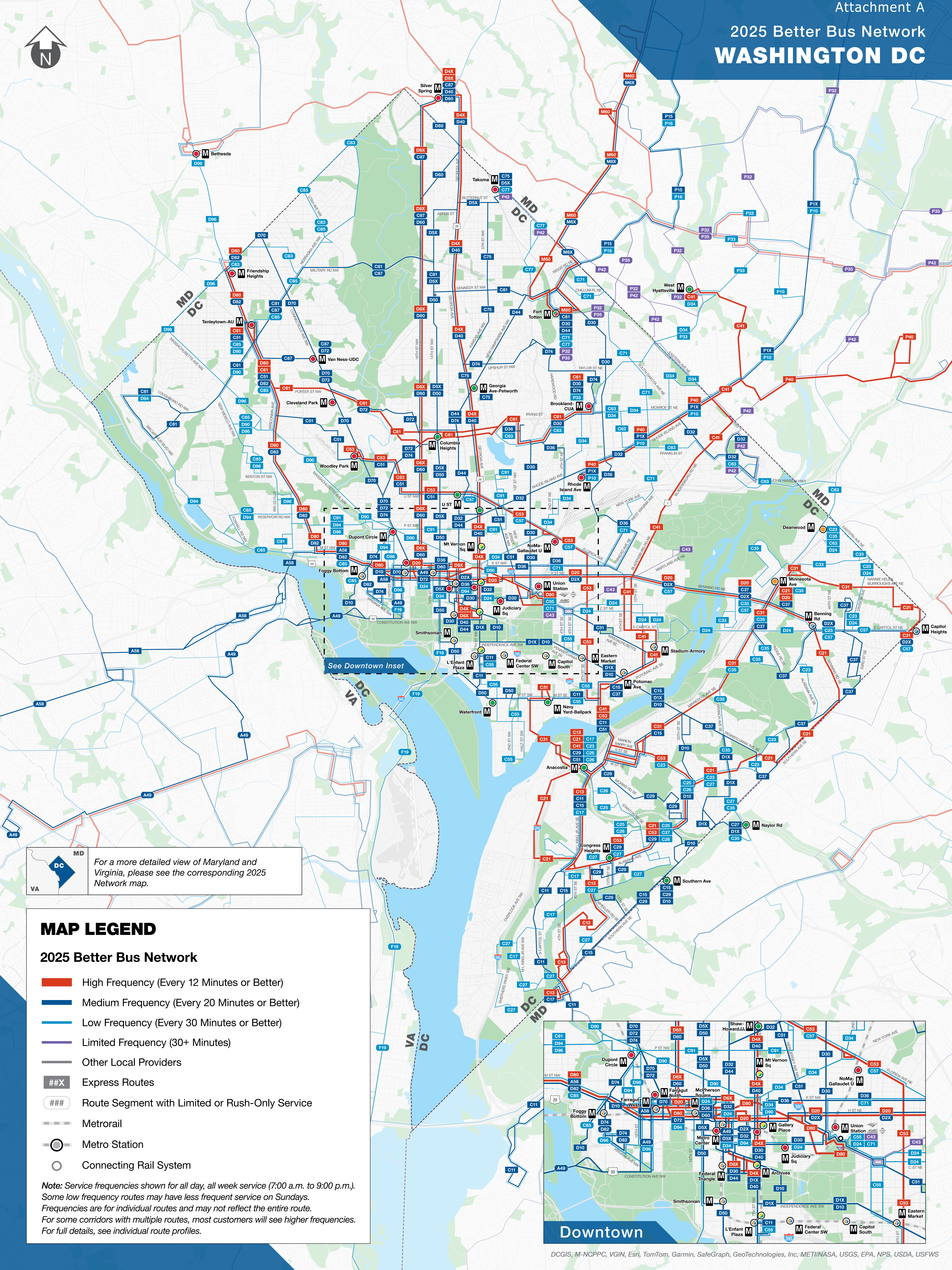
RESOLVED, That this Resolution shall be effective 30 days after adoption in accordance with Compact Section 8(b).

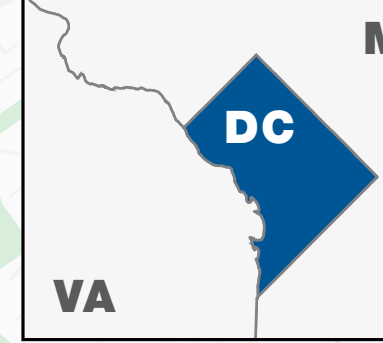
Reviewed as to form and legal sufficiency,



Patricia Y. Lee
Executive Vice President, Chief Legal Officer,
and General Counsel











2025 Better Bus Network
WASHINGTON DC



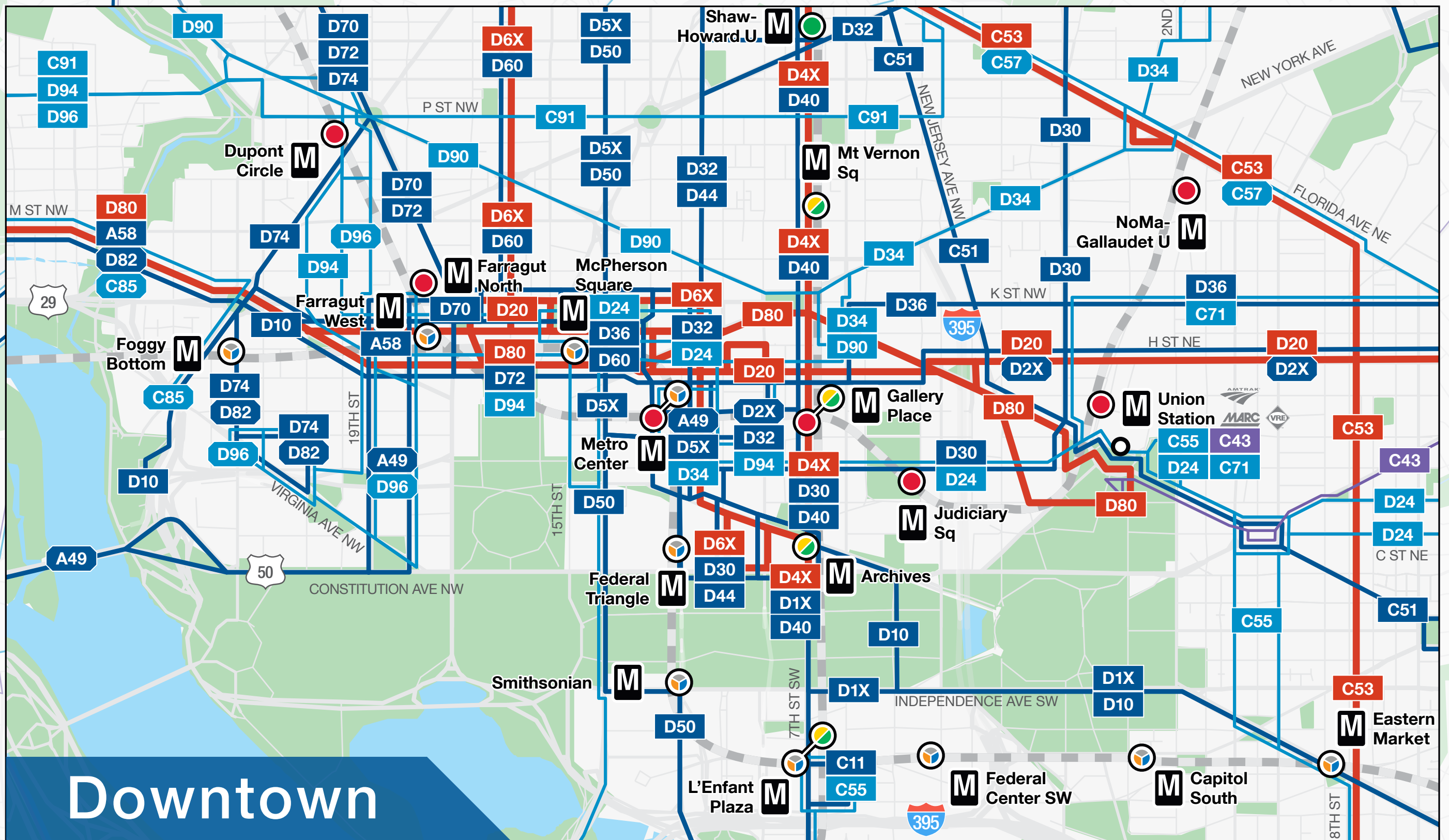
 For a more detailed view of Maryland and Virginia, please see the corresponding 2025 Network map.

MAP LEGEND

2025 Better Bus Network

-  High Frequency (Every 12 Minutes or Better)
-  Medium Frequency (Every 20 Minutes or Better)
-  Low Frequency (Every 30 Minutes or Better)
-  Limited Frequency (30+ Minutes)
-  Other Local Providers
-  Express Routes
-  Route Segment with Limited or Rush-Only Service
-  Metrorail
-  Metro Station
-  Connecting Rail System

Note: Service frequencies shown for all day, all week service (7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.). Some low frequency routes may have less frequent service on Sundays. Frequencies are for individual routes and may not reflect the entire route. For some corridors with multiple routes, most customers will see higher frequencies. For full details, see individual route profiles.



Downtown

Note: The following routes operate mostly in Washington, DC, but include some stops in Maryland. They are listed below by their Maryland endpoint. Consult the DC map to see these routes:

Capitol Heights: C31 D2X C57

Eastover Shopping Center: C13 C17

Naylor Rd: C27 D1X C35

Friendship Heights: D80 D82 C83

National Harbor: C11

Silver Spring: D4X D6X C87 D60 D40

Southern Ave: D10 C15 C29

For a more detailed view of DC and Virginia, please see the corresponding 2025 Network map.

MAP LEGEND

2025 Better Bus Network

- High Frequency (Every 12 Minutes or Better)
- Medium Frequency (Every 20 Minutes or Better)
- Low Frequency (Every 30 Minutes or Better)
- Limited Frequency (30+ Minutes)

##X Express Routes

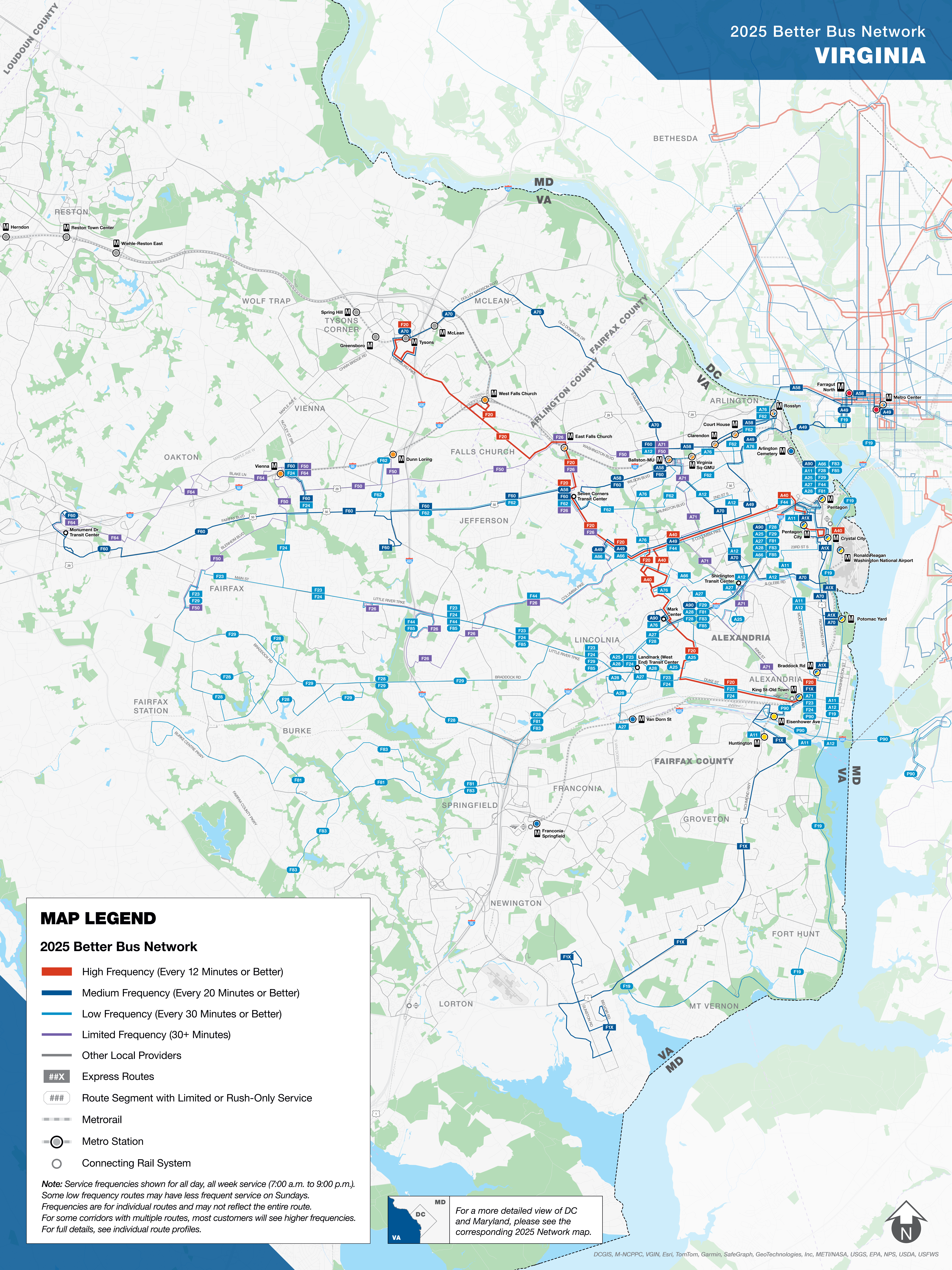
Route Segment with Limited or Rush-Only Service

Route Operated by Prince George's County TheBus or Montgomery County's Ride On

Metrorail

Metro Station

Note: Service frequencies shown for all day, all week service (7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.). Some low frequency routes may have less frequent service on Sundays. Frequencies are for individual routes and may not reflect the entire route. For some corridors with multiple routes, most customers will see higher frequencies. For full details, see individual route profiles.



MAP LEGEND

2025 Better Bus Network

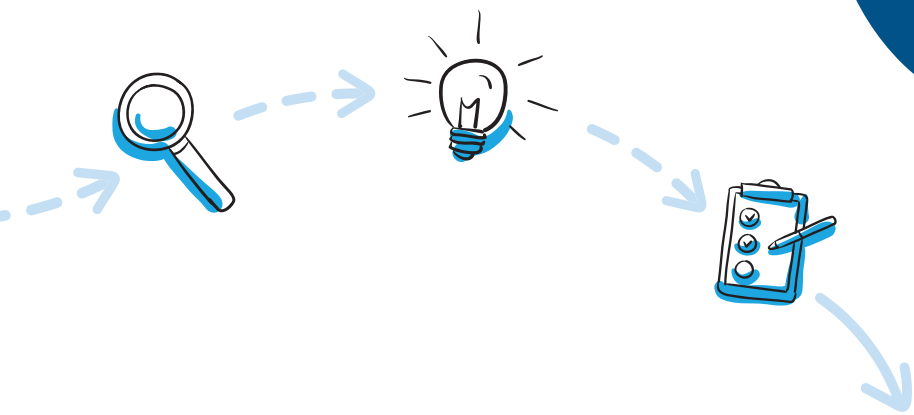
- High Frequency (Every 12 Minutes or Better)
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- Limited Frequency (30+ Minutes)
- Other Local Providers
- ##X Express Routes
- #### Route Segment with Limited or Rush-Only Service
- Metrorail
- Metro Station
- Connecting Rail System

Note: Service frequencies shown for all day, all week service (7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.). Some low frequency routes may have less frequent service on Sundays. Frequencies are for individual routes and may not reflect the entire route. For some corridors with multiple routes, most customers will see higher frequencies. For full details, see individual route profiles.



For a more detailed view of DC and Maryland, please see the corresponding 2025 Network map.





Network Redesign

Title VI Equity Analysis

Attachment C
Title VI Equity Analysis – Metrobus Service Changes
Better Bus Network Redesign

I. Background

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires that transit agencies conduct an equity analysis to determine whether proposed permanent major service changes or fare changes will result in a disparate impact (DI) to minority customers or a disproportionate burden (DB) to low-income customers (FTA Circular 4702.1B). This requirement stems from the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which states that, “no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” The purpose of the analysis is to determine whether the adverse effects of proposed major service changes or fare changes are disproportionately borne by minority or low-income customers, and alternatively, whether the positive benefits of proposed major service changes or fare changes are disproportionately received by non-minority and non-low-income customers. Such a finding is known as a disparate impact (DI) to minority customers or a disproportionate burden (DB) to low-income customers.

II. Overview

This report summarizes the results of an equity analysis for low-income and minority populations who may be impacted by major Metrobus bus service changes proposed in the Better Bus Network Redesign. The analysis does not show a potential disparate impact on minority populations or a disproportionate burden on low-income populations.

III. Title VI Analysis

A. Data Sources and Methods

Service equity analyses are conducted on service reductions and service increases separately. The analysis is conducted separately for each mode, Metrorail and Metrobus, at the systemwide level.

In December 2023, Metro adopted a new Title VI approach to assess service changes associated with the Network Redesign as part of the Authority’s Title VI Program Update.¹ Instead of looking at difference in treatment using an impacted customers method, the analysis looks at the change in service levels for minority and low-income residents of each Census Block Group. The cumulative number of impacted minority and low-income residents is calculated as a percentage of all impacted residents and compared to the service area average.

¹ Metro Board Res. 2023-39, adopted December 14, 2023

The difference in these percentages is then compared to the corresponding disparate impact and disproportionate burden thresholds to determine if there is a potential disparate impact or disproportionate burden. As part of the 2023 Title VI Program Update, Metro's Board of Directors established a threshold for potential DI and DB treatment for service changes made as part of the Network Redesign. There is a potential DI or DB if the percentage of minority or low-income residents impacted by the changes exceeds the service area percentage of minority/low-income residents by more than the applicable threshold percentage shown below. The threshold is determined by the total number of residents impacted.

Table One: DI/DB Service Thresholds – Bus Network Redesign

Total Residents Impacted	Threshold for Significant Disparity
Up to 10,000	8%
10,001 to 20,000	7%
20,001 to 40,000	6%
Over 40,000	5%

B. Major Service Changes

Metro's Board of Directors also established definitions for major service changes for the Network Redesign in the 2023 Title VI Program Update. These include changes of one hour or more in the span of service or a change of more than five percent in the number of scheduled buses for a given Census Block Group. The equity analysis uses these definitions to determine which residents are impacted by service changes, as only major service changes are analyzed under Title VI rules. Note that that definition applies to changes in Metrobus service levels only. In some cases, local operators will assume service currently provided by Metrobus, meaning that the residents in that Census Block Group will continue to have bus service even though they may have a major service decrease in terms of Metrobus service.

Staff analyzed service levels for approximately 3,600 Census Block Groups that either currently have or will have Metrobus service as part of the Network Redesign. Approximately 800 Block Groups will see a major service increase and approximately 500 Block Groups will see a major service decrease in the number of scheduled Metrobuses on weekdays.

C. Results of Analysis – Bus Service Changes

The bus service changes provide a significant increase in service to minority and low-income residents. However, in order to implement these beneficial service changes, some service will have to be reduced; therefore, some residents will be negatively impacted. For example, at some places in the Network, service was straightened to

provide faster, more direct service for more customers, which required realigning service in some Census Block Groups. In the Title VI analysis, this realignment would show up as a service reduction even if the net effect is more direct service for customers. This analysis looks at both the demographics of those residents who will benefit from improved service and those who will be adversely impacted from service reductions to see if minority or low-income residents will be disproportionately denied the benefits of Metrobus service.

a. Bus Service Increases

Using US Census data, Metro staff calculated the percentage of minority and low-income residents benefiting from the proposal. In accordance with Metro's Title VI Program, staff then compared that percentage to the service area for Metrobus (65.7 percent minority; 22.4 percent low-income). The average daily number of impacted residents is more than 40,000; therefore, the threshold for a finding of potential DI/DB is five percent. Note, the threshold is shown as a negative number because the analysis focuses on benefiting residents. The proposal can benefit a *lower* percentage of minority or low-income residents up to the threshold before there is a finding of potential DI or DB.

Table Two: DI/DB Test, Metrobus Service Increases

	Minority Impacted Residents	Low-Income Impacted Residents
Impacted Ratio	64.97%	21.81%
Service Area	65.72%	22.43%
Difference	-0.76%	-0.62%
Threshold	-5.00%	-5.00%
DI or DB	No	No

As shown in Table Two, the proposal benefits a somewhat lower proportion of minority and low-income residents than the service area average; however, this difference is below the corresponding DI/DB thresholds. Therefore, there is not a DI for minority or DB for low-income residents.

b. Bus Service Reductions

In order to implement the service increases, some residents will see a reduction in Metrobus service levels. The analysis reviews the impact to minority and low-income residents. The number of impacted residents is more than 40,000; therefore, the threshold for a finding of potential DI/DB is five percent.

Table Three: DI/DB Test, Metrobus Service Reductions

	Minority Impacted Residents	Low-Income Impacted Residents
Impacted Ratio	70.62%	20.29%
Service Area	65.72%	22.43%
Difference	4.89%	-2.13%
Threshold	5.00%	5.00%
DI or DB	No	No

As shown in Table Three, the proposal impacts a higher proportion of minority residents than the service area average. However, this difference (of 4.89 percent) is below the 5.00 percent threshold. Therefore, there is not a DI for minority customers. The proposal adversely impacts a lower percentage of low-income residents than the service area average. Therefore, there is not a DB for low-income residents.

Supplemental Analysis – Bus Service Reductions

As previously discussed, in some cases, local operators will assume service currently provided by Metrobus. This change in operators is counted as a reduction to *Metrobus* service when in reality these residents will continue to have bus service. In order to ensure that these changes do not cause disparate treatment when looked at more broadly, staff analyzed the net remaining service reductions proposed for the Year One Network that includes these shifts in service provider. Table Four summarizes the results.

Table Four: Combined Operator Service Reductions

	Minority Impacted Residents	Low-Income Impacted Residents
Impacted Ratio	67.53%	20.04%
Service Area	66.44%	22.28%
Difference	1.08%	-2.24%
Threshold	5.00%	5.00%
DI or DB	No	No

As shown, when accounting for service maintained by local operators, the proposal impacts minority residents approximately 1.1 percent more than the service area average, and approximately 2.2 percent less than the service area average for low-income residents.