



**Safety and Operations Committee**

**Board Information Item III-A**

**Better Bus Initiative Update**

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

## Board Action/Information Summary

☐ Action ☒ Information

Document  
Number:  
205542

Resolution:  
☐ Yes ☒ No

### Presentation Name:

Better Bus Initiative Update

### Project Manager:

Jeffrey Hiott

### Project Department:

Bus Transformation

### Purpose/Key Highlights:

Staff will provide updates on various bus projects under the programmatic title of “Better Bus Initiative.” The different projects and initiatives align with all of the Strategic Transformation Plan’s goals: Service Excellence, Talented Teams, Regional Opportunity and Partnership, and Sustainability.

### Interested Parties:

There are no interested parties for purposes of the Board determining conflicts of interest.

### Background:

Better Bus is Metro's overarching initiative to improve Metrobus for the region. There are various projects and initiatives guided by the Strategic Transformation Plan’s goals and objectives led by teams from across the agency. Better Bus Initiative includes projects like new facilities, bus electrification, improved bus communications, and more bus lanes and transit signage to improve the overall customer experience.

### Discussion:

This presentation is an opportunity to provide updates and status on a few projects and answer any questions. Projects that are being reviewed impact the customer experience, bus priority, safety and security, zero-emissions vehicles, and network redesign.

## ZERO-EMISSION VEHICLES

The zero-emission vehicle transition program is well underway. Metro was awarded a competitively awarded \$104 million grant in FTA's Low or No Emission Vehicle Program. These funds will be allocated to upgrading the Cinder Bed bus garage to support an all-battery electric fleet. Some of the funds will also support the battery-electric bus procurement.

Metro received the first articulated 60-foot battery-electric bus on June 19, 2023. It will undergo a series of inspections, commissioning, and safety certification before entering revenue service in September. This is the first of 12 buses that will be in service by mid-summer 2024.

Facility modernization and charger installation are also underway. The garage at Shepherd Parkway has overhead charging installed to support the initial fleet and will have additional chargers installed to align with future bus deliveries.

## **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

Three projects focused on improving the customer experience are underway. Courtesy Bus Stops is an initiative that allows the customer to request an intermediate stop closer to their destination between 9 PM and 5 AM daily. Bus operators use their best judgment to find a safe location for the customer to alight.

WMATA has a project team resurrecting a technology alerting Bus Operators when the last train has arrived so the Operator can hold the bus extra time to allow for passengers to make their connection. This is done by the train activating a strobe light located at the bus stop. When it is flashing the Bus Operator is aware of the upcoming train. This notification increased customer safety and saves customers time by not waiting for the next bus. Partners, such as MTA in Maryland, will also be able to take part in this project.

Another initiative underway is an effort to work with our local partners to install seating at bus stops that currently do not have that option available. This effort provides more accessibility and more comfort to riders.

Lastly, the Performance Team has worked to improve real-time bus arrival information. The bus ETA web app does not show ghost buses, so customers are not confused. Additionally, it now displays departures at terminal locations and enhanced crowding icons. Bus stop information and signage also has been modified to give clearer and more accurate information to customers at the stops.

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

To improve the safety and security of bus customers, a live video feed is now available on 100 percent of the fleet through DriveCam, providing two camera views. Live Video, via closed circuit television (CCTV), is expanding across the entire fleet to enable views of up to nine internal and external camera views.

Another initiative to improve safety and security is direct communication with youths in the region. Leadership from Bus Transportation and MTPD participate in a Youth Council that meets monthly. The Council's mission is to "learn life skills and allow youth to 'speak their peace' with law enforcement."

## **BUS PRIORITY**

To maintain a state of good repair, farebox replacement is underway. The new fareboxes will improve the customer experience by having newer technology that allows for quicker taps and fewer errors. To improve dwell time at busy stops and routes, SmartTrip "targets" are being installed at the rear door of buses to allow for all-door boarding. Initially, certain routes across the network will allow all-door boarding for customers. Customers who board in the rear will tap the SmartTrip® card at the rear "target."

Clear Lanes is a partnership with the District of Columbia to improve speed, reliability, and safety on 31 bus routes across all bus lanes in the District and at 1,400 Metrobus stops. 140 buses will be equipped with automated cameras to detect and capture license plate information on vehicles that are stopped or operating in dedicated bus lanes. Violators will be ticketed and fined by the District of Columbia, following a warming period that begins on July 24, 2023.

## **NETWORK REDESIGN**

The Network Redesign recently completed its Phase 2 Engagement process. Over 20,000 interactions with customers took place at over 60 events in the region. Over 7,800 comments were received on routes in the draft Visionary Network. Metro is using this feedback to refine the Visionary Network and develop a draft Year 1 network within available resources. Additional engagement with the public and stakeholders will occur in the coming months, including additional Board briefings.

### **Funding Impact:**

The projects are funded by various sources within the approved budget. Some projects may include federal funds from discretionary sources as well as future competitive opportunities. Today's briefing is an information item only and therefore there is no funding impact at this time.

### **Previous Actions:**

This is a standard update on projects. More updates will be given as projects advance.

March 2023 – Zero-Emissions Bus Transition (Information Item)

April 2023 – Better Bus: Network Redesign (Information Item)

April 2023 – Approval of Clear Lanes Reimbursable Project (Action Item)

April 2023 – Approval of Zero-Emission Bus Transition Goals (Action Item)

**Next Steps:**

- Continue to advance Better Bus initiatives across Authority
- Near Term Activities:
  - DC begins warnings on Clear Lances with ticketing to follow in Fall 2023
  - Continue installing new fareboxes and roll out All Door Boarding
  - Pilot new bus stop seating options
  - Continue network redesign

**Recommendation:**

Information Only

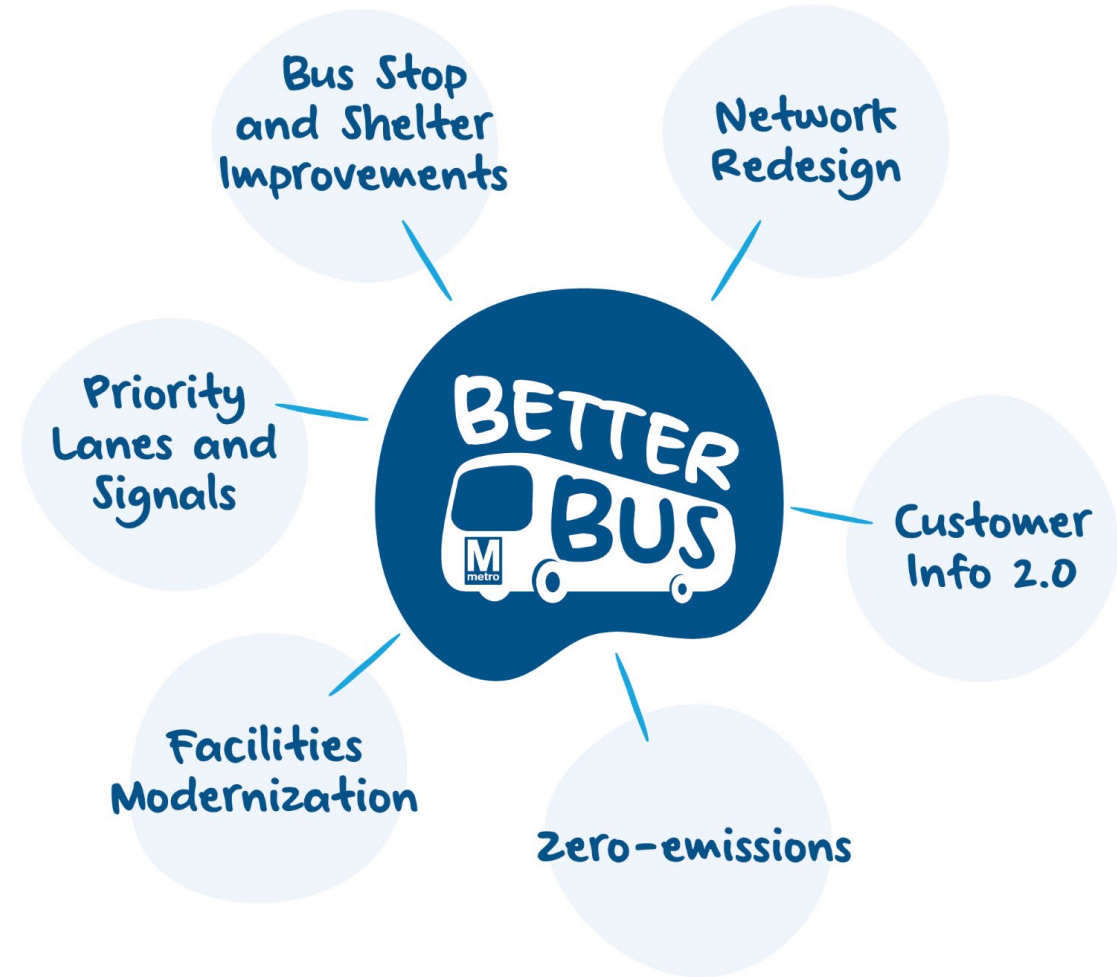
# Better Bus Update

**Safety and Operations Committee**  
July 27, 2023

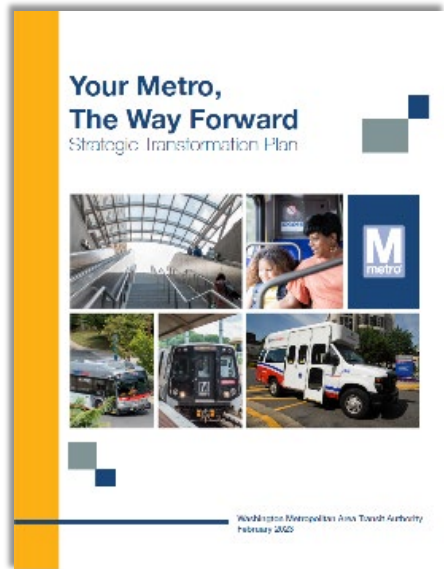


# Purpose: Provide an update on projects advancing the Better Bus Initiative:

- Zero-Emission Vehicles
- Customer Experience
- Bus Priority
- Network Redesign



## Strategic Transformation Plan: Guides long term strategy and day-to-day decision making of Metro over the next five + years



**Guiding**



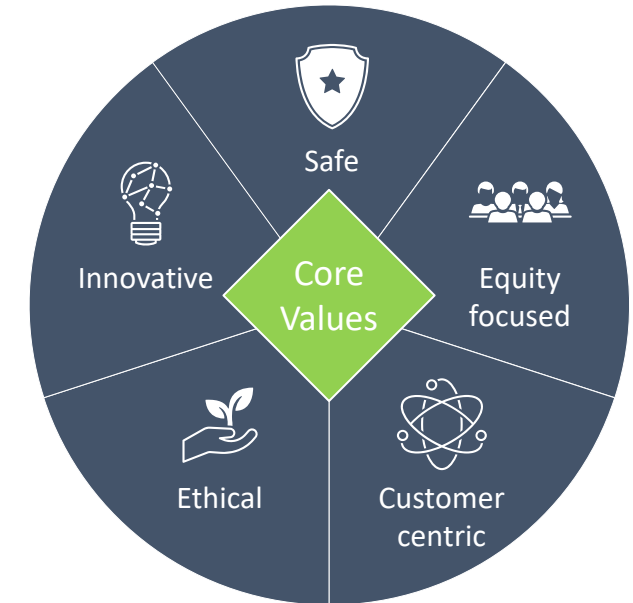
### Day-to-day decisions

- Customer interactions
- Service schedules
- Communications



### Long-term strategy

- Budget allocation
- Capital improvements
- Priority projects



**Goals — Our priorities to achieve the vision and Better Bus impacts all of them**

Service Excellence

Talented Teams

Regional  
Opportunity and  
Partnership

Sustainability



## Zero-Emission Bus

Metro awarded \$104M federal grant

### Buses

- First 60-foot bus delivered June 19, 2023
- Final inspection, commissioning and safety certification activity this summer
- Ten 40-foot buses anticipated in spring 2024
- Next bus procurement award winter 2023

### Facilities

- Two chargers and pantographs installed and awaiting commissioning at Shepherd Parkway
- Five more chargers and ten pantographs coming to Shepherd Parkway
- Construction of Northern and Bladensburg bus garages underway



Small ePaper Display



Strollers Are Welcome



Large ePaper Display



Infotainment Display





## Courtesy Bus Stops

- Launched June 25, 2023
- Operates from 9PM to 5AM daily
- Allow customers to exit only
- Bus operators will use professional judgement in determining safe areas and locations to stop



## Train Notification/Bus Transfer Light

Bus operators to be made aware of last connections from Rail to improve customer service.

- **First station:** Greenbelt - trial week of July 16
- Working to partner with MTA for future implementation
- **Future Stations:** Addison Road, Braddock Road, Deanwood, Minnesota Ave, Glenmont, Takoma, Huntington, East Falls Church



Strobe  
light

## Bus Stop Amenities: Shelters, Seating, Customer Information

- Many stops do not have shelters, seating, and real time customer information
- Working with jurisdictional partners who owns the right of way to
  - Identify procurement opportunities
  - Test seating options
  - Ensure equity



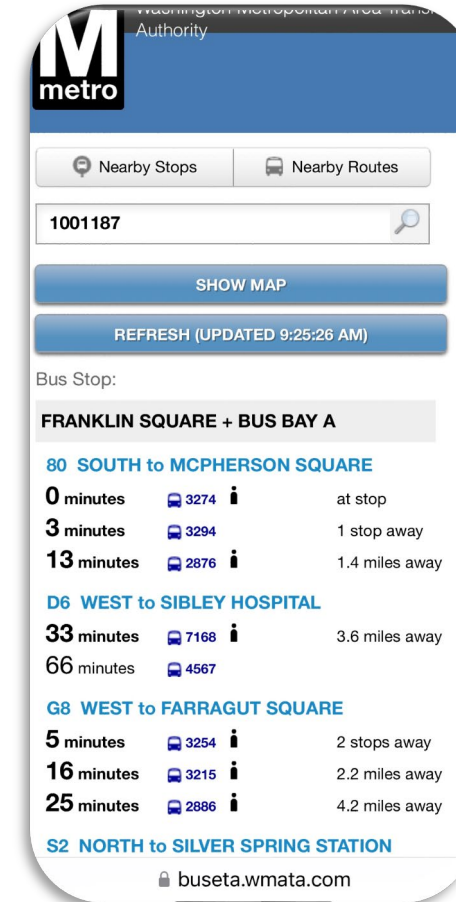
# Improve Real-Time Bus Arrival Information

## busETA

- Removed ghost buses
- Display departures at terminal locations
- Enhanced crowding icons

## Bus stop information and signs

- “Now” designates bus arriving
- Ensure late buses still show





## Live Video Feed

- All buses equipped with video surveillance

## Police and Employee Engagement

- Increased police visibility on buses
- 1,800+ ride-alongs by bus management

## Youth Council and Community Engagement

- Monthly meeting for local high school students
- Mission: Learn life skills and “speak their peace” with law enforcement



## Farebox Replacement and All-Door Boarding

### Farebox Replacement

- State of good repair activity
- Improve customer experience
- Incorporate rear door targets

### All Door Boarding

- Initial deployment: ~450 buses
- Incremental deployment considerations:
- Routes with high boarding stops
- Consistent operations and customer communications and experience

**Outcomes:** Reduce dwell time at stops and customer travel time

**Evaluation:** Dwell time improvements and changes in fare evasion

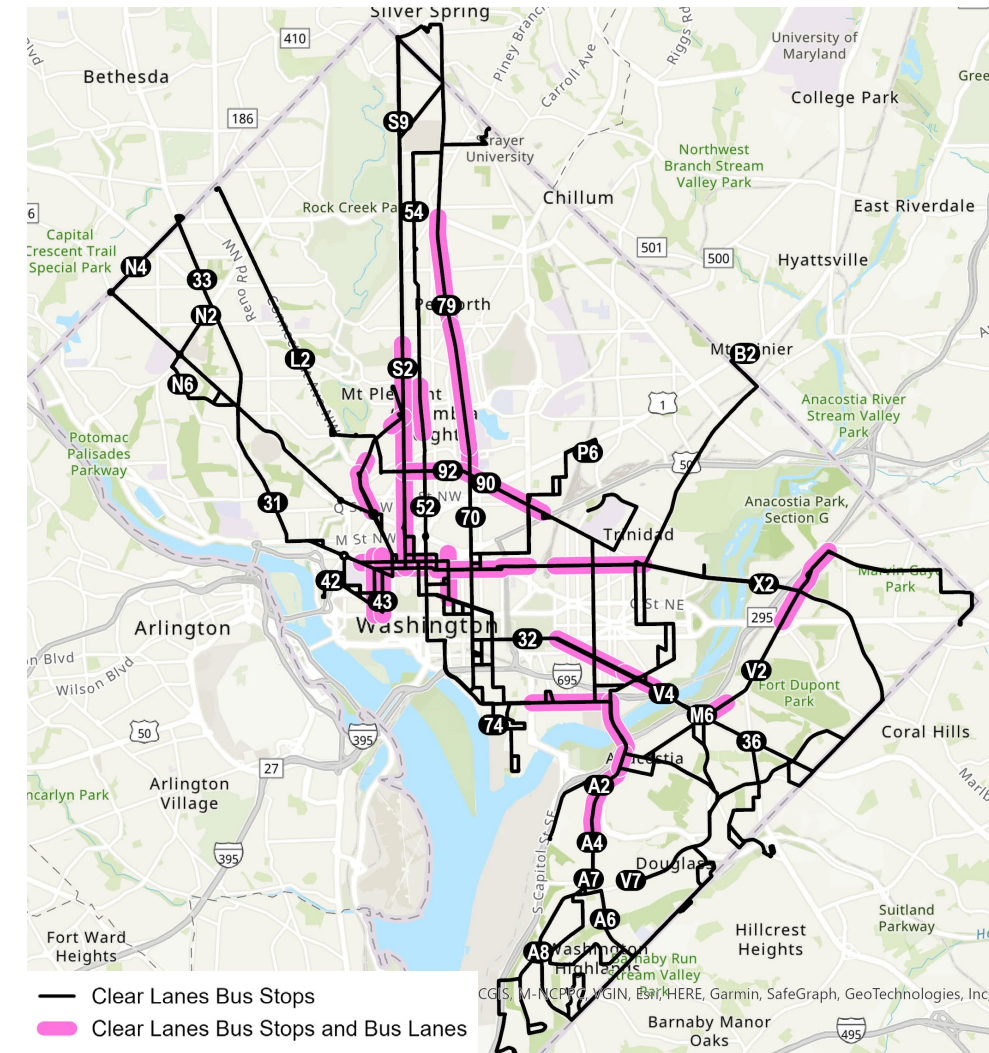
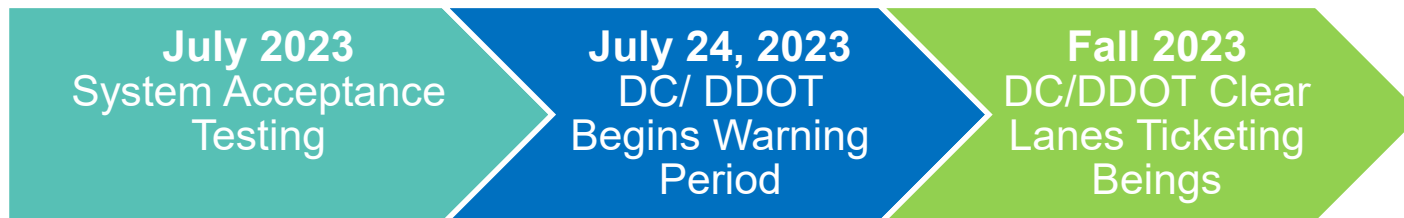




## Clear Lanes

- Partnership with the District of Columbia
- Two-year base contract period
- 140 Metrobuses equipped with automated cameras
- District will enforce violations of bus lanes and bus zones

**Outcomes:** Improve speed, reliability, and safety for 31 Metrobus routes across all DC bus lanes and 1,400 bus stops





## Network Redesign: Summary of Spring Engagement

**20,500**  
interactions  
(21% non-English)  
with customers  
at 60+ events

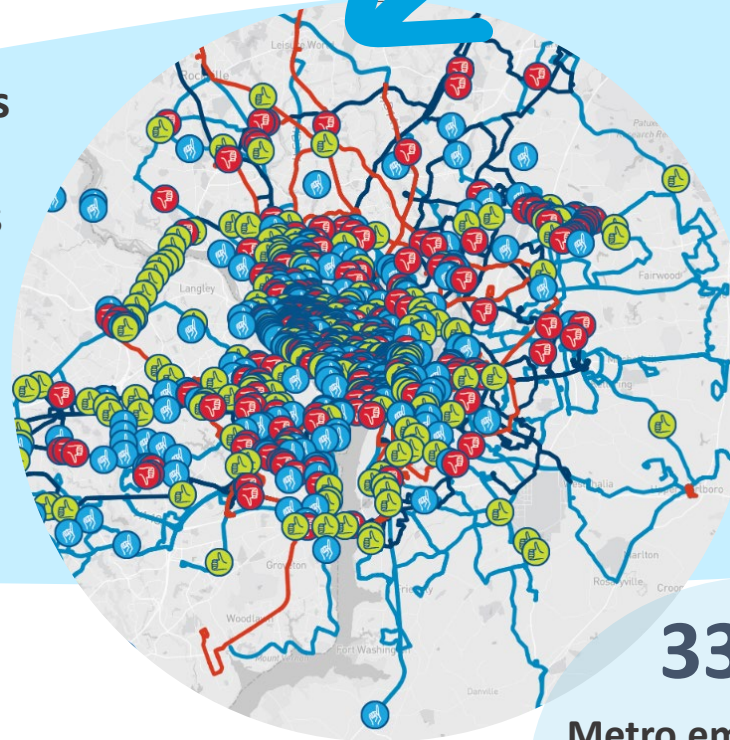
**500+**  
bus operations staff  
at 11 Preview Parties  
and Union  
Leadership meetings

**7,800+**  
comments on specific  
routes

*5.5% of daily ridership*

**75+** elected officials  
and **15+** advocacy  
groups, CBOs and  
committees briefed

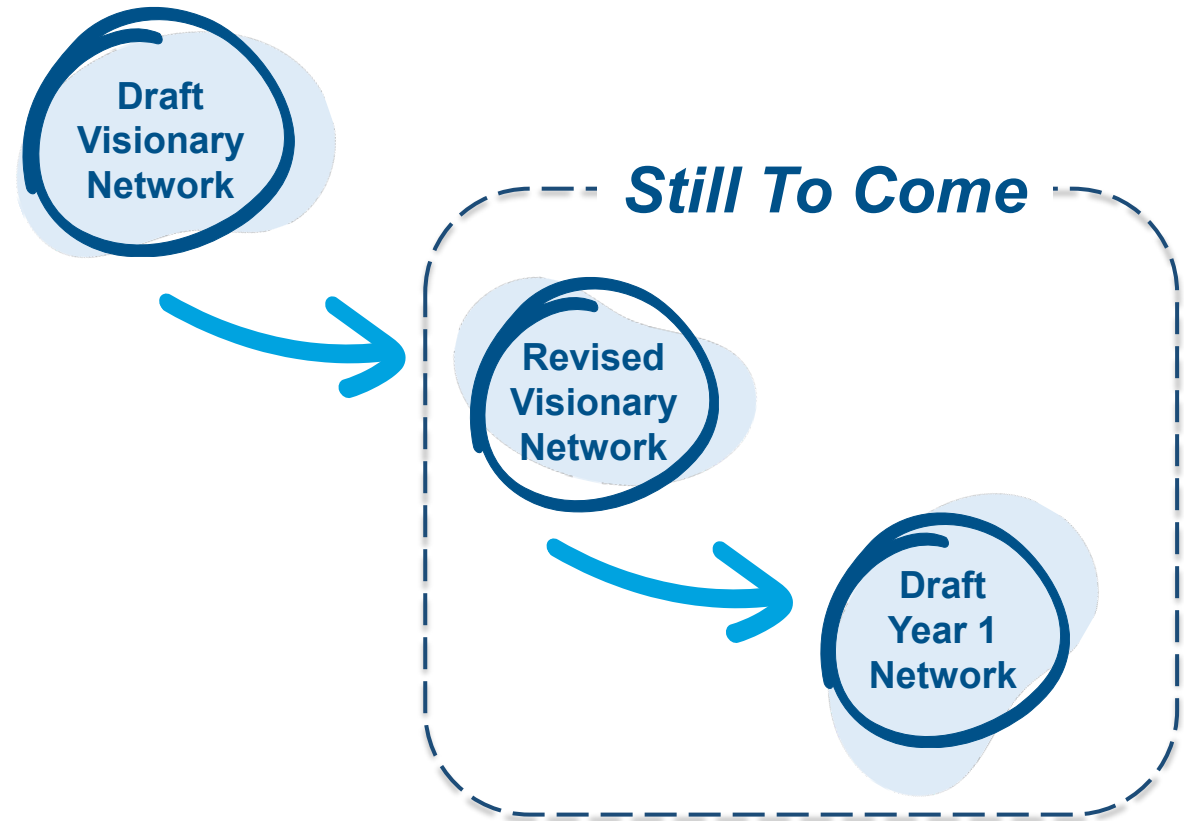
**330+**  
Metro employees at  
2 Coffee Chat events



# Steps to Build a Transformative Year 1 Network

- Refine Visionary Network based on public and stakeholder input
  - Adjust where routes go, when service operates, and how often buses run
- Develop draft Year 1 Network, using available resources
- Return to public and stakeholders to gather input on draft Year 1 Network

## *We Are Here*



# Next Steps for Better Bus

Continue to advance Better Bus initiatives across Authority

## Near Term Activities

- DC begins ticketing on Clear Lanes
- Continue installing new fareboxes and roll out All Door Boarding
- Pilot new stop seating options
- Continue network redesign

