

Finance and Capital Committee

Information Item III-A

May 14, 2020

COVID-19 Recovery Planning Update

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Board Action/Information Summary

Action	Information	MEAD Number: 202177	Resolution: Yes No
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TITLE:

COVID-19 Recovery Plan

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:

Staff will present Metro's Recovery Plan for the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan meets the needs of the region while protecting the safety of employees and customers and is designed to phase in actions that position Metro to emerge stronger and more resilient for post-pandemic operations.

PURPOSE:

To inform the Board, jurisdictional partners, businesses and the riding public of Metro's pandemic recovery plan.

DESCRIPTION:

There are no interested parties associated with this item.

Key Highlights:

Making Metro Stronger and More Resilient

As part of the recovery plan, staff is proactively working to adapt our operations to new challenges while retaining our vision to become an employer of choice and the region's transportation provider of choice. Work is ongoing in five key areas:

For Customers: Make Metro the cleanest option for customers; facilitate social distancing to gain and maintain public confidence; accelerate and expand plans for becoming a contactless experience; provide customers better real-time information; incentivize travel with innovative fare offers.

For Employees: Reform the remote work policy to improve productivity while maintaining accountability; improve safety, health and welfare; review work schedules to reduce risk of exposure; recognize the value of frontline, essential staff.

For the Capital Program: Review safety protocols for employees and contractors working on capital projects; identify and prioritize capital projects and programs that allow Metro to recover as a safer system.

For Operations: Implement cleaning protocols to best protect staff; implement schedules to increase productivity as well as safety; improve systems and data management to support more efficient deployment of service and resources.

For Finance: Ensure balanced budget without additional subsidy contributions; leverage operating expense efficiencies to reduce pandemic cost increases; use CARES Act funding reimbursement to eliminate operating revenue losses; advance readiness for potential federal infrastructure stimulus.

Background and History:

Customer Research

As part of recovery planning, rider surveys and focus groups have been conducted to understand customer concerns and anticipate changes to travel behavior. Customers have told Metro that they want to see frequent, visible cleaning and disinfection, and expect all passengers to wear face coverings. They perceive riding Metro to be a higher risk than going to the grocery store because of the limited space for social distancing, but appreciate having the service available when it is needed for essential trips. 90% of riders surveyed do not yet have information from their employers about future telework plans.

Discussion:

Strategic Approach

Metro is powered by its employees and their wellbeing is our top priority. For their protection during this pandemic, we implemented changes to work schedules and practices to reduce their risk of exposure to COVID-19. To protect our customers, while providing transportation for essential trips, we decreased service to align with stay-at-home policies and suppressed ridership by reducing bus service to Sunday levels during the week, decreased rail frequency, closed the lowest ridership stations, and launched a public information campaign to encourage use of Metro for essential travel only. As a result, since Metro implemented its pandemic plan, ridership has fallen by 95% on Metrorail and by more than 70% on Metrobus.

In coordination with federal, state, and local officials, as well as public health experts, Metro is preparing for multiple contingencies and a phased recovery. We are sharing best practices and monitoring actions of peer transit agencies domestically and internationally. The proposed service recovery levels are based on various workforce availability scenarios and anticipated customer social distancing. While ridership demand is difficult to predict for the next 12-

18 months, our goal is to increase service in stages, ahead of demand, to maintain social distancing for customers to the extent possible.

Each stage of the recovery plan addresses twin priorities: protect Metro's workforce and protect customers. The nature of Metro's large operation provides a challenge to quickly increasing capacity. It takes more than two months to develop new service plans, draft daily schedules that connect buses and trains, implement the operator assignment process ("pick") for 4,000 employees under the collective bargaining agreements, modify information systems, and give employers and riders notice of service changes. Recognizing the required advance work, staff is pre-planning three basic levels of service that can be implemented in response to changing conditions in the region. Metro must predict when the region will be ready for increased service and prepare to deliver that service in advance of rider demand.

Social distancing cuts effective capacity by approximately 80% on railcars and buses (reduced to approximately 20-25 people per railcar and 10 people per standard bus), implying the need for five times the level of service to carry the same number of customers as under normal service conditions. While Metro will use these guidelines to inform the timing of service increases, optimal distancing will be challenging even when accompanied by regional efforts to stagger worker re-entry.

Service Recovery Plan

As riders begin to return to workplaces and the region's leaders relax stay-at-home policies, three pre-planned service levels -- Stabilization, Managed Re-entry and Recovery -- have been developed to provide as much service as possible within Metro's anticipated workforce availability. Stabilization is similar to the current phase of pandemic service, with some improvements in bus service. Managed Re-entry and Recovery service plans are subject to regional developments this summer and fall.

Stabilization Service Plan

We anticipate a slight uptick in total travel demand from current levels during this phase. Non-essential work travel resumes on a limited basis; restaurants, bars and evening activities are likely to remain restricted; and large social gatherings and events are prohibited. Schools and childcare facilities will remain closed. Within this service plan, there is some ability to increase service, particularly for rail, as warranted by the relaxation of stay-at-home orders.

Metro is in the process of implementing this service plan in May. It maintains similar or better service to what exists today but schedule changes for the workforce make it sustainable and predictable. While public health guidance continues to discourage nonessential travel, the plan provides sufficient

capacity to accommodate approximately 40,000 daily Metrorail trips and 85,000 daily Metrobus trips while social distancing.

The Stabilization Service Plan:

- Rail:

- o Operate all 8-car trains at 20-minute headways on all lines except Red, which will operate on 15-minute headway

- o Span of service will remain 5a-9p weekdays and 8a-9p on weekends

- o When safe & appropriate to increase capacity:

 - § Re-open the first and eighth car, which will increase capacity by one third.

 - § Re-open select stations that have been closed due to COVID-19, excluding those stations within the shutdown area for the platform program (west of Ballston)

- Bus:

- o Operate Sunday-like headways on Sunday-only routes

- o Span of service remains 4a-11p daily

- o Continue rear-door boarding for all riders, except those requiring assistance, and continue fare waiver (free travel)

- o The first 10 seats of every Metrobus will continue to be sectioned off to protect operators

Managed Re-Entry Service Plan

As conditions improve, jurisdictions are expected to relax stay-at-home policies and businesses will reopen, as will schools and childcare facilities.

Accordingly, more customers are expected to commute to work or travel for other needs. However, large-scale telework and persistent unemployment are expected in this phase, and discretionary activities including dining out and entertainment remain limited. Continued social distancing measures will be required due to ongoing transmission risk. Frontline Metro staff and contractors will continue to face challenging conditions to deliver Metro's essential services, requiring ongoing deployment of personal protective equipment and implementation of physical distancing practices, as well as enhanced cleaning and disinfection. With protection measures in place, we anticipate a stabilization of Metro's workforce such that most (80%) workers are reliably available for duty. Although the exact timing of this phase is not yet known,

based on trends in other countries, it is estimated that this phase may happen between August and October.

Metro's goal in this phase is to provide full connectivity with substantially all stations open and bus routes operating, but with initial service levels less than a pre-pandemic weekday to account for low ridership and reduced workforce availability. Note that the reopening of stations west of Ballston also depends on the completion of those capital programs. As this phase may continue for several months and ridership levels and conditions are likely to evolve, staff will continue to monitor ridership and workforce availability and consider more significant service changes if warranted.

The tentative Managed Re-Entry Service Plan:

- Rail

- o Double capacity, operating service at approximately 10-minute headways
- o Continue span of service at 5a-9p weekdays and 7/8a-9p on weekends
- o Provide capacity up to about 200,000 daily rail trips without significant staggering of work schedules. If regional employers can stagger work times, effective daily capacity increases

- Bus

- o Substantially all routes operating with reduced frequencies, primarily local service, and no extra peak service
- o Expand span of service to 4a-12a daily
- o Maintain rear-door boarding for all riders, except those requiring assistance, and continue fare waiver (free travel)
- o Provide capacity of about 110,000 trips/weekday on Metrobus

Recovery Service Plan

The return of pre-pandemic levels of community activities including travel will likely depend on the timing of easy access to testing, a widely-available vaccine and the building of immunity. The CDC suggests this may be the case by some time in 2021. State and local recovery planning suggests that all services may reopen with limited constraints on retail and restaurants, gatherings, and events. Many, but not all, workers eligible to work from home during the pandemic will resume commuting. However, economic recovery will be gradual with lingering impacts to tourism, for example. The Recovery

service plan is based on social distancing no longer being necessary. The tentative Recovery Service Plan is:

- Rail:

- o Increase service to near pre-pandemic levels with peaks in frequency
- o Extend span of service to midnight

- Bus

- o Return to full weekday service with all routes operating at pre-pandemic operating hours
- o Resume front-door boarding and end the fare waiver

§ Metro is evaluating accelerated installation of SmarTrip targets on rear doors to enable smooth transition to All-Door Boarding at this time.

Capital Program Plan

Critical to successful recovery, and continuity of safe, reliable service, is maintaining progress on the capital program. The guidance from Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (DHS-CISA) included mass transit and construction as essential, as did regional stay-at-home policies. Therefore, all projects have been authorized to continue working, though many have been impacted by the pandemic.

Metro has been working with its contractors to revise construction protocols to incorporate CDC guidance for hand and tool washing, social distancing and wearing face coverings or masks. The biggest impact to the capital program has been Metro's workforce availability challenges that affect our ability to support capital work, such as providing escorts and establishing work zones. In addition, some projects may see delays due to productivity losses associated with the pandemic, including supply chain disruption.

In order to mitigate delays and, in some cases, accelerate work while ridership is significantly reduced, Metro is moving forward with two changes to the capital program:

1) The previously planned shutdown for this summer's Platform Improvement Project has been enlarged to encompass all stations west of Ballston (nine stations in total will be closed). This change eliminates the need for a continuous single-track, which is not possible due to workforce availability in the Rail Operations Control Center. In addition, this change resolves a key challenge for the Silver Line Extension to Dulles, the integration of the train

control systems between Phase I and Phase II (at Wiehle –Reston East station), which will be completed and tested under the revised outage.

2) While in the current Stabilization service pattern, Metro will progress critical safety and reliability projects through short, localized shutdowns. Each week a small section of the rail system (2-5 stations) will be closed to enable work to be completed more efficiently. This enables us to leverage lower ridership and reduced customer impacts while advancing the radio project, as well as several state of good repair projects for the tracks and replacement of the standpipes (part of the tunnel fire suppression system). These events will be planned on a rolling basis, with the subsequent month's events announced no later than the middle of the prior month. Each event will be coordinated with the jurisdictions to ensure sufficient alternative bus service is provided. The June track work events are:

June 7-13:

- L'Enfant Plaza to Pentagon work zone
- No stations closed
- No Yellow Line service north of National Airport

June 14-20:

- L'Enfant Plaza to Anacostia/Pentagon work zone
- Closed stations: Navy Yard and Waterfront
- No Yellow Line service north of National Airport

June 21-27:

- L'Enfant Plaza to Shaw-Howard/Pentagon work zone
- Closed Stations: Archives, Gallery Place-Chinatown (Lower), and Mt. Vernon-Convention Center
- No Yellow Line service north of National Airport

June 28-July 12:

- U Street to Ft. Totten work zone
- Closed Stations: Columbia Heights and Georgia Ave

FUNDING IMPACT:



COVID-19 Recovery Planning Update

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Goals

- Support region's managed re-entry
- Earn public trust that bus/rail travel is safe
- Effectively communicate changing service/fare plans

Service Restoration Strategy

- 1 Protect employees
- 2 Protect customers by providing service that enables safe social distancing
- 3 Stay ahead of demand until vaccine or herd immunity makes social distancing unnecessary

Monitor crowding continuously



COVID-19 Recovery & Restoration of Service

- **COVID-19 peak and duration of restrictions difficult to predict**
 - Multiple models, broad range of outcomes
 - Approximately 75-day range for National Capital Region peak
 - Could be extended if second wave/outbreak of cases, as in other countries
 - Significant variation in community impacts, based on access to healthcare, food, income, and race
 - Much still to be learned, models and contact-tracing methods continually improving
- **Parallel paths being pursued to:**
 - Alleviate supply chain shortages → Reduce transmission
 - Increase hospital capacity → Reduce need to #FlattenTheCurve
 - Develop treatments AND vaccines for COVID-19 → Reduce mortality

Restoration timing depends on all of the above, none of which is in WMATA's control.
But we have to predict when it will happen in order to be ready with appropriate service

Protecting Employees

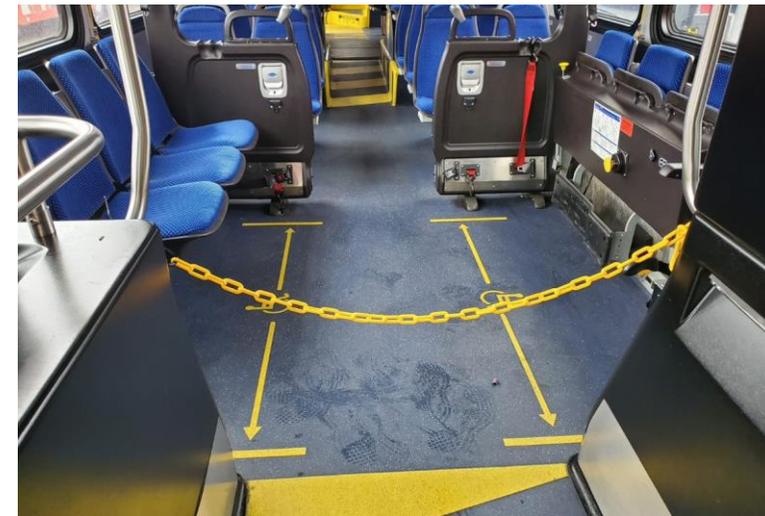
■ Reducing Exposure Risk through Role-Based Risk Assessments

- Engineering Controls
 - Partitioning workspaces
 - Rear-door boarding on buses
 - Mobile handwashing stations
- Administrative Controls
 - Modified schedules
 - Reduced occupancy and team size
 - Modified work practices to accommodate social distancing
- Individual Actions
 - Hand hygiene
 - PPE and face coverings

■ Workforce Availability

- Quarantine & case rate
- Community transmission

Operator Shield (Below)

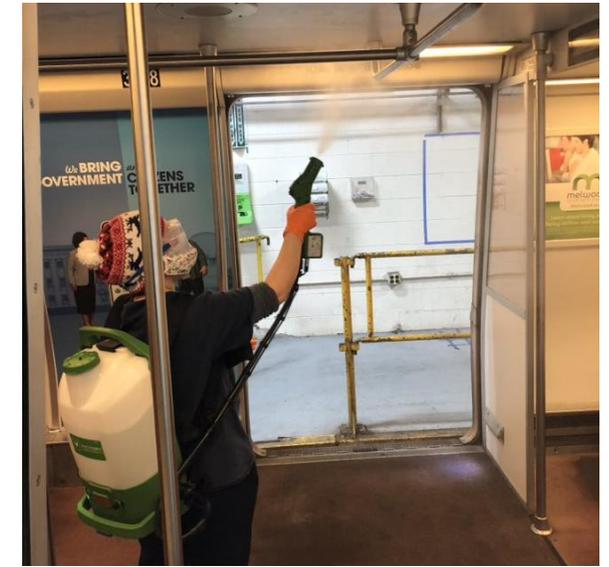


Clear Area on Bus (Above)

Protecting Customers

■ Comprehensive Operational Safety Assessments

- Engineering Controls
 - Cleaning and disinfection practices
 - Equipment
 - Facilities
- Administrative Controls
 - Wayfinding guides
 - Farecard system modifications
 - Communications
- Individual Actions
 - Face coverings
 - Hand hygiene



Hand Wiping (left), Cleaning with Fogger (right)

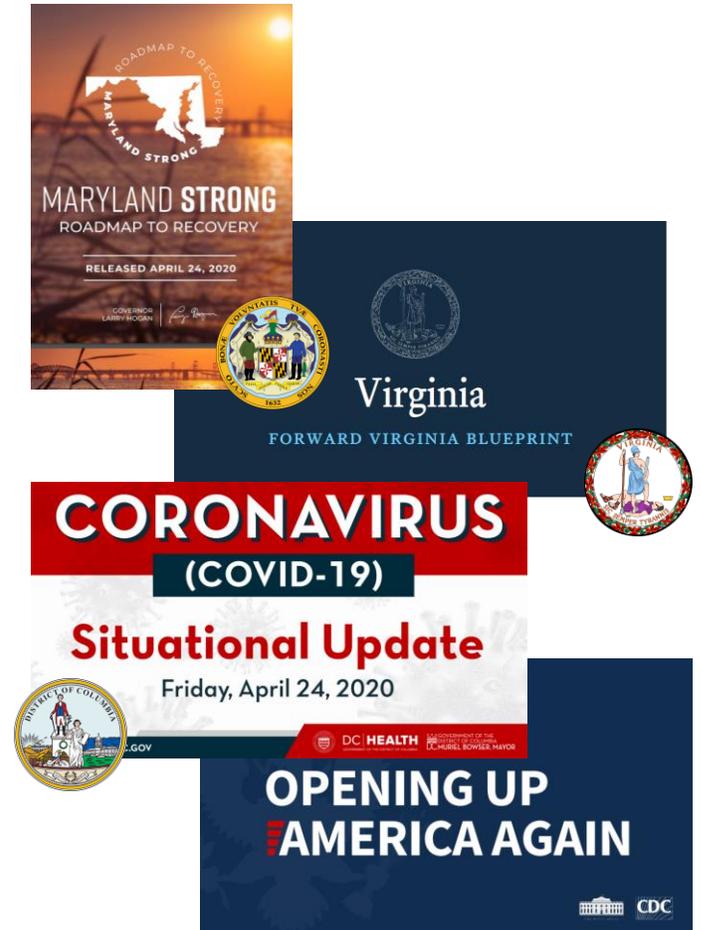
■ Social Distancing

- *Social distancing cuts capacity by 80%* → it takes 5x the vehicles to carry the same number of people
- Monitoring crowd conditions

Goal: Stay ahead of demand until vaccine or herd immunity makes social distancing unnecessary

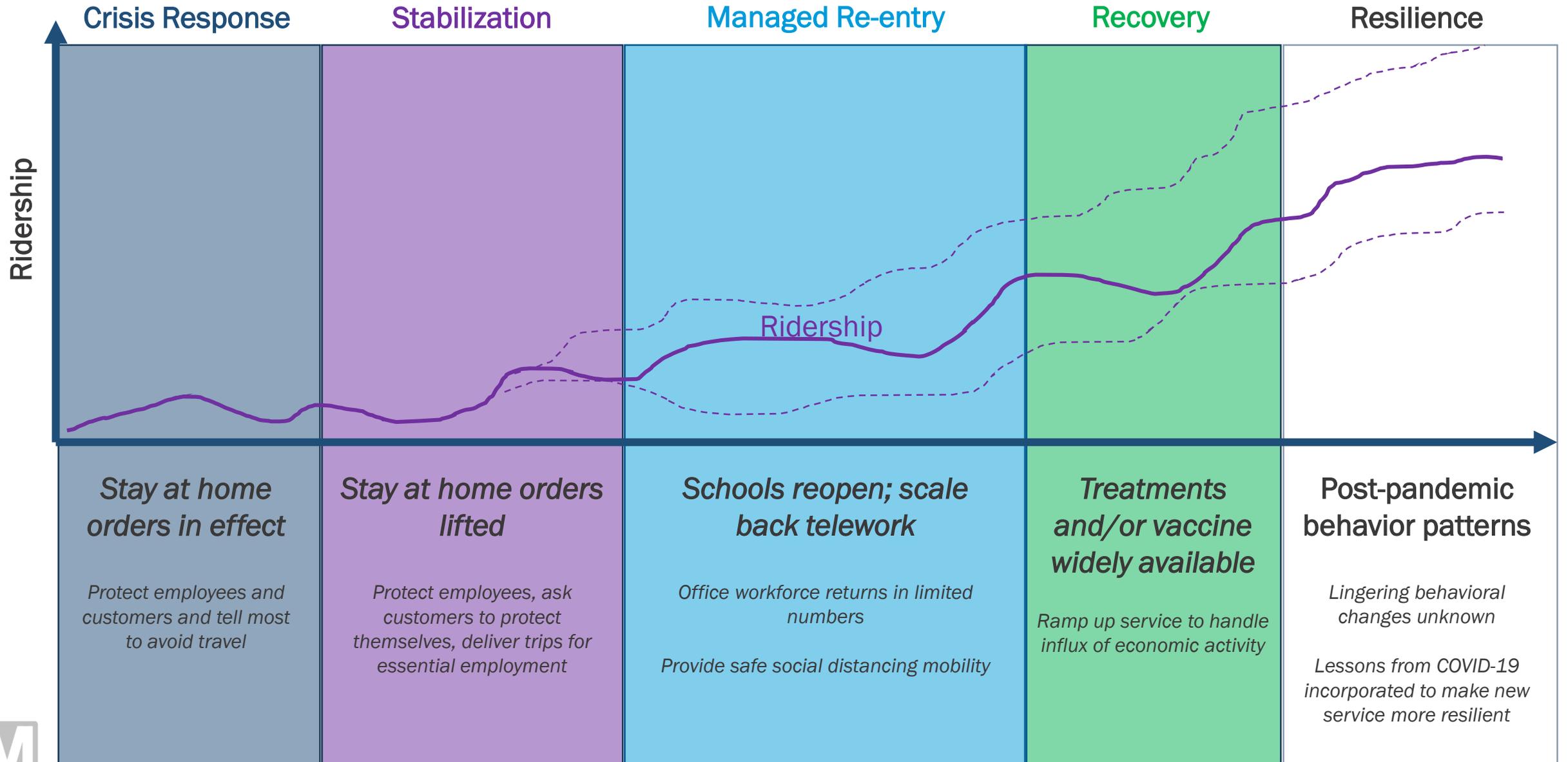
Aligning With The Region

- Moving focus from response to recovery
- Consistent ‘phased’ approach across the region
- Consistent data analyzed to set criteria and forecast progression through recovery phases
 - Number of cases declining for 14+ days
 - Testing and contact tracing
 - Hospitalizations
 - Sufficient supply of PPE
- Consistent factors characterize each phase
 - Social distancing
 - Teleworking
 - Re-opening of business
- Flexible roadmap rather than a strict timetable
- Strong emphasis on working together including dialogue with OMB/OPM on guidance for federal workforce



WMATA consulted Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia’s Recovery Plans, plus CDC’s Interim Guidance.

A Multi-Phase Approach



Anticipating Customer Behavior

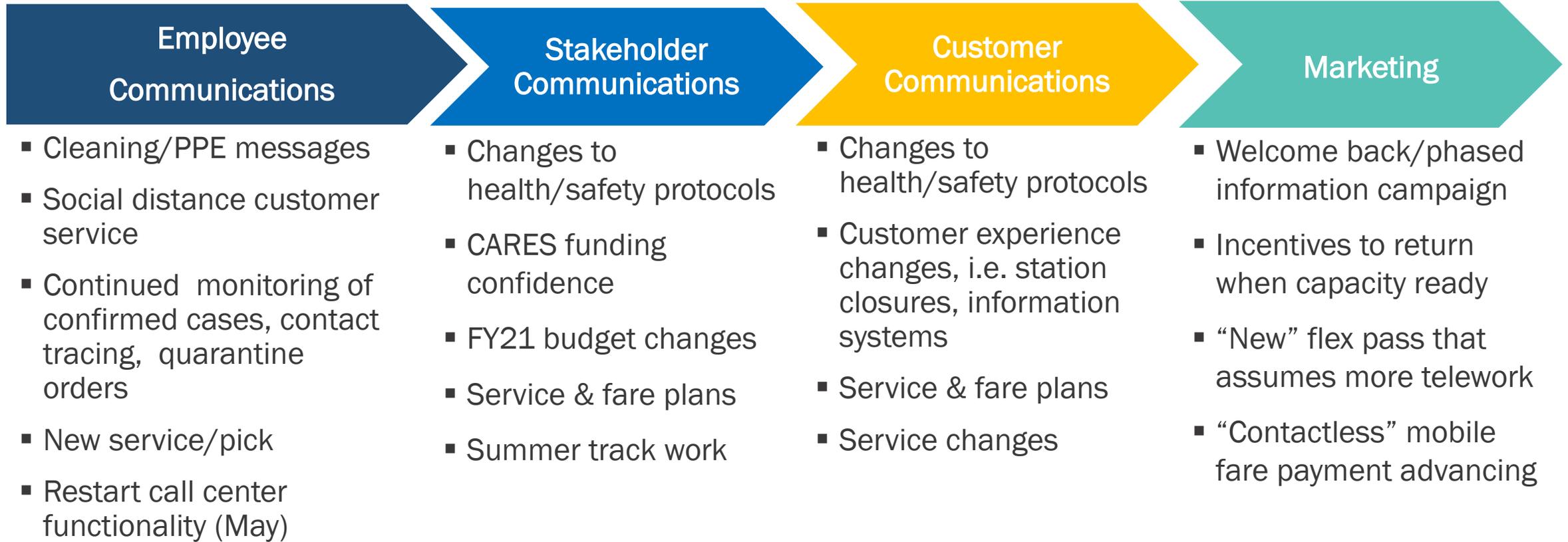


- Customer research conducted in late April/May to inform plan
 - Rider focus groups discuss concerns, preferences, and information sources
 - Rider survey to learn current (pandemic) and future travel choices / decision triggers
 - Testing alternative boarding solutions to promote social distancing
- Employer survey – polling SmartBenefits providers to determine workforce changes (staggered hours, alternate days, telework expansion)
- Collaborate with OMB/OPM on guidance to federal workforce

Anticipating Customer Behavior

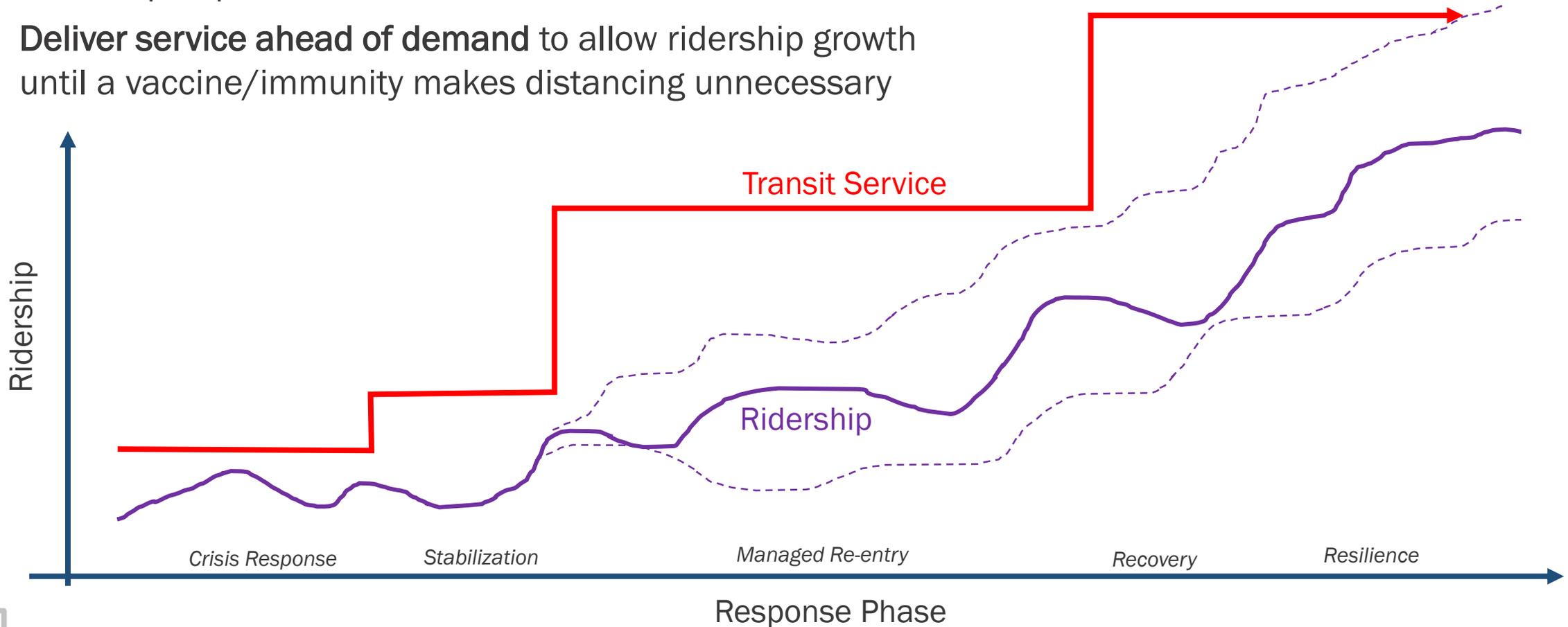
- Mid -April survey showed customers believe Metro handling health crisis well
 - Positive sentiment towards frontline essential workers
- Customers perceive Metro travel riskier than grocery shopping due to inability to social distance
 - Customers want cleaning/disinfecting to be visible and frequent
 - Expect all passengers to wear face coverings
- 90% have no information from employers on future telework plans
- Top three sources of Metro service information are Washington Post, MetroAlerts and NBC4, among other news and social media

Communications Strategy



We are not a light switch, but.... the lights need to be on before people enter the room

- Ridership unpredictable in next 18 months
- Deliver service ahead of demand to allow ridership growth until a vaccine/immunity makes distancing unnecessary



Increasing Service Requires Advance Work

- **Focus on bigger service “steps” as it takes ~3 months to implement new service plans**
 - Develop bus and rail schedules and align for connections between modes
 - Collaborate with jurisdictions to coordinate connections
 - Program fares into systems driving online transactions, point of sale at fare machines, gates
 - ~4,000 employees to select new assignments from schedule based on seniority
 - Adjust inspection & maintenance regimens to be ready for increased service
 - Produce & install updated signage in station and onboard trains and buses
 - Notify customers in time for travel planning for SmartBenefits choices, pass products
- **Pre-planning levels of service will enable us to reduce implementation time by 1 month**
 - Implement “Stabilization” service pattern now
 - Maintains or improves current service
 - Prepares us for likely **increase** in case rate within next 2 months
 - Does NOT include the changes approved as part of original FY21 budget

Define & prepare next two service levels now, so that we can implement faster

Stepping Up Service in Three Levels

Service Level:	Stabilization	Managed Re-Entry	Recovery										
Workforce Availability	Low: Schedule built on 50% availability	Moderate: Assumes >80% availability	Normal										
CDC Guidelines for Social Distancing	Required	Encouraged	Not necessary										
Other Factors	1) Re-establish accurate rider planning tools (e.g. Bus ETA) 2) Mitigate delays to capital program	1) Acceleration of capital program (infrastructure stimulus)											
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
	2020								2021				

2m lead time:
Decide by June
service for August



Dates are only tentative; actual dates of service change will be based on regional readiness, with 2 month lead time

Phased Approach for Rail Service

Stabilization

- Implementation in Progress (eff. 5/24)
- ~20-min headways
- Span:
 - Weekdays: 5a-9p
 - Weekends: 8a-9p
- Stations west of Ballston closed
- Cars 1 + 8 reopened when appropriate

Managed Re-entry (tentative)

- *Est. start in August-October 2020*
- *Doubled capacity from current state: ~10-min headways*
- *Span:*
 - *Weekdays: 5a-9p*
 - *Weekends: 7/8a-9p*
- *All stations open** (depends on timing of platform program completion for stations west of Ballston)*

Recovery (tentative)

- *Est. start in Spring 2021*
- *Ridership peaks emerging, evenings reviving*
- *Service near pre-pandemic levels, with peak service*
- *Span: 5a-midnight*

Phased Approach for Bus Service

Stabilization

- Implementation in Progress
- Address current crowding issues
- Sunday-like headways, with some adjustments based on ridership to date
- Sunday-only routes operated; less on weekends
- Span: 4a-11p
- Rear-door boarding, front of bus still isolated

Managed Re-entry (tentative)

- *Est. start in August-October 2020*
 - *May be earlier than Rail*
- *All routes operating, but*
 - *Less frequent than normal,*
 - *No extra peak service,*
 - *Focused on local service*
- *Span: 4a- midnight*
- *Rear door boarding*

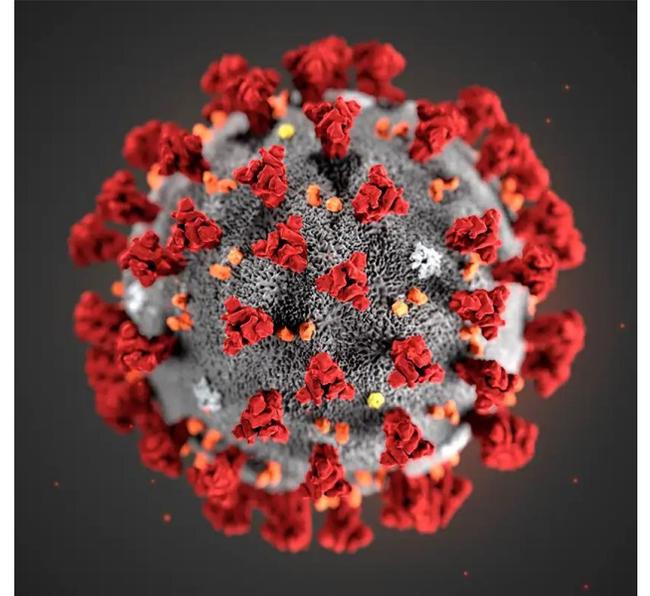
Recovery (tentative)

- *Est. start in Spring 2021*
- *Full weekday service*
- *All routes operating*
- *Normal span*
- *Resume front-door boarding*
 - *Looking to potentially accelerate installation of targets on rear doors in order to launch All-Door Boarding*

Mitigating Delays to Capital Program

- **Construction is essential so work continues, subject to:**
 - New safety protocols in compliance with CDC guidance
 - Hand & tool washing requirements
 - Additional PPE based on the work: face coverings, gloves
 - Social distancing on work site
 - Availability of operations personnel to support work
 - Other potential Impacts
 - Productivity losses
 - Supply chain delays

- **Key options to mitigate work delays and/or accelerate work while ridership is down**
 1. Enlarge summer shutdown for Platform Improvement Project & Silver Line
 2. Localized, short duration shutdowns for state of good repair work



Expanded Summer Shutdown: West of Ballston

Effective: Saturday, May 23, 2020

- All stations west of Ballston-MU on the Orange and Silver lines will be closed
- All trains will begin and end service at Ballston-MU
- Orange Line service will run from Ballston-MU to New Carrollton
- No Silver Line service



Effective: Saturday, May 23, 2020

Alternate Travel Options – Free Shuttles

OR SV Free Shuttle Service

Effective: Saturday, May 23, 2020

Orange Line Local

Service between **Vienna, Dunn Loring, West Falls Church & Ballston-MU**

Orange Line Express

Direct service between **Vienna & Ballston-MU**
(no intermediate stops)

Silver Line Local

Service between **Wiehle-Reston East, Spring Hill, Tysons Corner & Ballston-MU**

ADA shuttles provided upon request
between impacted stations



Shuttle Hours & Frequencies

Weekdays

- 5 a.m. – 9 p.m.
- Approx. every 10 min.

Weekends

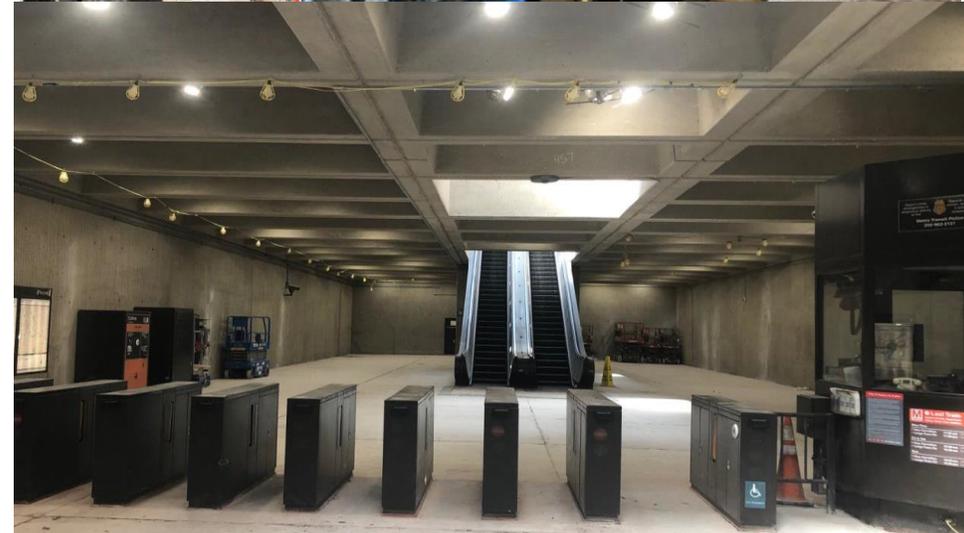
- 8 a.m. – 9 p.m.
- Approx. every 15 min.

Shuttles will not stop at stations closed due to Metro's response to COVID-19

Platform Project Progress to Date

Prior to the start of the summer shutdown, Kiewit is working within the new CDC guidelines and has an average of 120 people on site each day, across 4 stations and 2 shifts.

Scope Item	% Complete
Mezzanine & Ped Bridge Floor Tile Removal	100
Mezzanine Ceiling Panel Removal	95
Platform Ceiling Panel Removal	100
Platform Shoring Installation	85
Concrete Cleaning	20
Crack Repairs	40
Platform Tile Removal	25
Fire Alarm Conduit Installation	55



Summer Track Work: Localized Shutdowns

- **High-level concept**

- During “Stabilization” phase, use short localized shutdowns to execute capital work around the clock
- 1-2 weeks per location, 1 location at a time
- Each location: 3-5 station rail segment
- Announce locations mid-month for following month’s work

- **Service**

- Maintain rail service on rest of the system
- Bus bridges to be provided across closure area



June Track Work Plan

- **June 7-13:**
 - L'Enfant Plaza to Pentagon work zone
 - No stations closed
 - No Yellow Line service north of National Airport
- **June 14-20:**
 - L'Enfant Plaza to Anacostia/Pentagon work zone
 - Closed stations: Navy Yard and Waterfront
 - No Yellow Line service north of National Airport
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Metro is accessible.



Planning for WMATA's "Managed Re-entry"

Customers	Workforce	Capital	Operations	Finance
<p>Public Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible cleanliness of Metro • Maintain social distancing as much as operationally possible • Develop contactless rider experience <p>Information & Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide service & COVID-19 information across all platforms • Ensure real time information for bus & rail 	<p>Remote Work Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity & accountability <p>Employee Wellness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure health and welfare of all employees <p>Work Schedules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative work schedules • Staggered shifts <p>Frontline & Essential Employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight critical role of essential employees during crisis internally & externally 	<p>Supply Chain & Procurement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainment of disinfecting function <p>Safety of Capital Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that safety protocols are set and being followed on current and upcoming capital projects <p>Adjust Capital Projects/Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and prioritize capital projects and programs that allow Metro to recover 	<p>Safe & Efficient Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement schedules to best protect employees & meet rider demand • Sustain changes for cleaning protocols <p>New Mobility Landscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase knowledge of rider/non-rider travel behavior to support operating decisions <p>Supporting Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build back-end systems and organization that enables accurate internal analysis and customer-facing information 	<p>Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure balanced budget without additional subsidy contributions • Leverage operating expense efficiencies to reduce cost increases associated with COVID-19 <p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use CARES Act funding reimbursement to eliminate operating revenue loss in FY2020 • Advance readiness for potential federal infrastructure stimulus • Pursue additional federal operating and capital aid

Adapting to the present, while building a more resilient future



FUNDING IMPACT: To Be Determined

TIMELINE:

Previous Actions	NONE
Anticipated actions after presentation	Staff will provide pandemic response related updates as appropriate

RECOMMENDATION:

- None