![Metro logo](M metro)

Safety and Operations Committee

Information Item IV-A

July 25, 2019

Bus Transformation — Draft Strategy

○ Action ● Information	MEAD Number: 202088	Resolution: ○ Yes ● No

TITLE:

Bus Transformation Project Briefing

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:

Rob Puentes, Chair of the Bus Transformation Project's Executive Steering Committee, and Rich Davey, from the project's consultant team will brief the Board on the Bus Transformation Project's draft strategy and recommendations that were released for comment on May 6, along with a summary of the feedback from the public and project stakeholders on the draft strategy and recommendations.

PURPOSE:

Provide an update to the Board on the Bus Transformation Project's draft strategy and recommendations and the feedback to the team from the public, jurisdictions, and other project stakeholders.

DESCRIPTION:

In September 2018, Metro, its partner jurisdictions, and local transit agencies launched the Bus Transformation Project with the goal to create a bold, new vision and a collaborative action plan for the future of bus in the region. A briefing was provided to the Board on January 24, 2019 on the bus system today, the project's goals, timeline, and deliverables, and the main strategic considerations that will guide the project's strategy and ten-year action plan. On May 6, 2019, the draft strategy and recommendations were released for public and stakeholder comment and feedback was received through a survey, open houses, stakeholder listening sessions, and formal letters. The public comment period closed on June 5, 2019. This briefing will review the draft strategy and recommendations along with the feedback and input received from the project's stakeholders and the public. The briefing will also provide early direction for the final strategy based on the feedback and input received.

Key Highlights:

- Congestion, affordability, and mobility are major issues in the DC region and the region's bus system is critical to enable the region to meet the challenges. Buses are an integral part of the region's transportation network, carrying 621,000 trips per day and reaching 81 percent of the region's residents (within the Transit Zone).

- Bus ridership is declining across the region due to slow buses, increased competition, and a system that is not built around the customer's needs and expectations.
- The Bus Transformation Project was structured as an independent assessment of the region's bus system and obtain regional consensus on a vision and collaborative action plan for the future of bus in the region and the role of Metrobus within the bus system. The project's Executive Steering Committee (ESC) will guide the strategy's development and is comprised of recognized regional leaders.
- The Bus Transformation Project will develop a strategy with specific recommendations and create an action plan that prioritizes and sequences actions to ensure success.
- The draft strategy and recommendations were released for comment on May 6th. The strategy is grouped into six (6) elements with 27 recommendations. The six elements are: Customer focused; Prioritize buses on major roads; Convenient bus service; Balanced local and regional provider responsibilities; Streamline back-office functions; and Regional steward to transform the bus system.
- Public engagement on the draft strategy occurred through a public survey and three open houses. Comments emphasized the need for fast, frequent, reliable, affordable service that feels cohesive and unified. Comments did not emphasize jurisdictional boundaries, how service is funded, or the color of the bus. Recommendations that respondents perceived to be extras (e.g. wifi, mobile apps) were of less interest than the top priorities of building dedicated bus lanes, free transfers between bus and Metrorail, running more buses on busy routes, and making bus stops safe, convenient, and accessible. Respondents who self-reported as low-income highly prioritized affordability of bus service, first through free transfers and second by reducing the cost for low-income riders.
- The stakeholders from the Technical Team and Strategy Advisory Panel provided broad support for the recommendations in Elements 1, 2, 3, and 5 though local bus providers also raised concerns about costs and perceived limits to local independence for some of the recommendations. Jurisdictional stakeholders expressed the most concern about many of the recommendations in Elements 4 and 6. However, some jurisdictions noted that they are open to discussing the proposals further, provided more clarity is provided on potential impacts. Jurisdictions also indicated a desire to utilize existing frameworks for coordination and collaboration.
- The strategy and recommendations will be finalized this summer and once complete, the project team will prioritize the recommendations to develop a draft 1, 3, 5, and 10-year action plan in the Fall 2019 with the final documents delivered to all stakeholders in Winter 2019.

Background and History:

Buses are an integral part of the National Capital Region's transportation system. Metro and the other local operators like ART, CUE, DASH, DC Circulator, Fairfax Connector, Ride On, and TheBus affordably connect

residents to jobs, school, and other aspects of daily life. However, traffic is increasing and bus speeds are decreasing, leading to longer travel times and unreliability in getting to a destination. Customer expectations have changed and there is increased competition for fewer passengers. Government budgets are under pressure to do more with less. Bus' market share is eroding as competition becomes more plentiful and, in some cases, more affordable. The allure of new technology, such as autonomous cars, distracts from the fact that driverless cars and transportation network companies (TNCs), including Uber and Lyft, won't solve the region's mobility problem without defying the laws of physics and geometry. Empirical research points to the likelihood that the new options will make current problems worse.

The Bus Transformation Project released a draft strategy for public comment. The strategy is grouped into six (6) elements with 27 recommendations. It was informed by input and guidance from the Executive Steering Committee, Metrobus Leadership Team, Technical Team, and Strategy Advisory Panel, along with the public survey that was conducted in the Fall 2018, stakeholder interviews, and Metrobus operator listening sessions.

Discussion:

Metro, along with jurisdictional partners and the region's local bus providers like ART, CUE, DASH, DC Circulator, Fairfax Connector, Loudoun County Transit, Ride On, and TheBus, launched the Bus Transformation Project in September 2018. [1] Buses are an integral part of the region's transportation network and are a key component to solving the congestion, affordability, and mobility challenges that plague the Washington DC region. Buses carry 621,000 trips per day and reach 81 percent of the region's residents (within the Transit Zone). However, bus providers and the cities, counties, and states that own and operate the region's roadways must coordinate and collaborate to transform the bus system into a system that meets changing customer needs, keeps up with changing technology, and maintains a sustainable cost structure. The Bus Transformation Project has taken a broad view of 'bus' to include any vehicle that transports many riders, makes efficient use of roadways, and is considered a local bus, as distinct from commuter buses.

The outcome of the Bus Transformation Project will be both a strategy, which provides the direction for the regional bus system, and a 10-year roadmap that prioritizes recommendations and outlines the specific implementation steps to advance the recommendations. The vision is that 'Bus will be the mode of choice on the region's roads by 2030, serving as the backbone of a strong and inclusive regional mobility system.' Goals include regional connectivity, rider experience, financial stewardship, sustainable economic health and access to opportunity, and equity. The final strategy is expected this summer and the roadmap will be developed in the fall.

Public and stakeholder engagement has been a key piece of the project from its launch. The project is led by the Executive Steering Committee (ESC), with

additional stakeholder groups including a Strategic Advisory Panel, Technical Team, and the WMATA Leadership Team. The public has been involved through surveys, open houses, and pop-up events at transit locations. A summary of stakeholder engagement since the project began in 2018 includes:

- 8,500+ responses to two public surveys
- 140 participants in the September 2018 Kickoff Summit
- 33 regional pop-up events across the region to gather public input
- 3 focus groups
- 3 public open house events
- 31 project committee meetings
- 13 Metrobus Division meetings to gather input from front line operations and maintenance staff
- 40 stakeholder interviews with jurisdictions, transit agencies, and regional transportation organizations.
- 35 project briefings, including 17 with elected officials
- 15,365 people reached by the project Facebook page

Working together with over 140 stakeholders and informed by the many points of view heard since September, the Draft Strategy was released on May 6th for public and stakeholder comment. An Executive Summary sets an ambitious path forward and outlines the draft strategy that is comprised of six (6) elements and 27 recommendations. The six elements are shown below and the recommendations can be found in the Executive Summary. Additional details that support the strategy can be found on the project website (www.bustransformationproject.com).

1. Make the bus **customer-focused** and an easy-to-use option that people want to ride

2. Give **priority to buses** to efficiently move people quickly and reliably

3. Provide **frequent and convenient** bus service to improve quality of life in the region

4. **Balance** local and regional bus system responsibilities

5. Streamline back-office functions and **share innovation** across bus systems in the region

6. Establish a **regional steward** to transform the bus system

A public survey was available online from May 6th – June 5th and gathered input from across the region and incorporated comments from all demographic groups. During this time, thirteen pop-ups at transit stations and three public open houses were held to gather input. Public participants indicated that they want better bus service and are not concerned by jurisdictional boundaries,

how service is funded, or the color of the bus. Recommendations that respondents perceived to be extras (e.g. wifi, apps) were of less interest than the top priorities of building dedicated bus lanes, free transfers between bus and Metrorail, running more buses on busy routes, and making bus stops safe, convenient, and accessible. Respondents who self-reported as low-income highly prioritized affordability of bus service, first through free transfers and second by reducing the cost for low-income riders. 85 percent of respondents were very confident or somewhat confident that the listed ideas would transform bus service in the Washington Area and 82 percent were moderately in favor or strongly in favor of investing public funds to implement the proposed measures.

At the three open houses, conducted the week of May 20th, 93 percent of attendees indicated that prioritizing bus would improve local bus in the region and 92 percent felt that governments should invest to move buses faster. Attendees also noted that providing free transfers, reducing the costs for low-income customers, and improving safety and convenience of bus stops would most likely result in more people riding the bus.

Stakeholders, including WMATA and all of the jurisdictional partners, provided general support for the recommendations in Elements 1, 2, 3, and 5, though local bus providers also raised concerns about costs, duplication of existing efforts, acknowledging existing efforts, and perceived limits to local independence for some of the recommendations. Element 4, as presented, was not generally supported; however, many jurisdictions and WMATA did indicate an openness to continuing the discussion and better understanding the impacts. Jurisdictions and regional transportation organizations also indicated a desire to better define the roles and responsibilities of the proposed Task Force and to utilize existing frameworks where possible in Element 6. The project team received letters from the jurisdictions and some stakeholders and will be shared with the Board and are published on the project website.

The feedback from the public and stakeholders indicates a clear interest in making buses work better for riders and the region's residents. The project team will develop a customer-first strategy that prioritizes actions to meet customer desires, but also recognizes existing realities to ensure that the strategy is implemented. The strategy and recommendations will be finalized this summer and once complete, the project team will prioritize the recommendations to develop a draft 1, 3, 5, and 10-year action plan in the Fall 2019 with the final documents delivered in Winter 2019.

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[1] This project does not include commuter bus routes operated by Loudoun County, Maryland Transit Administration.

FUNDING IMPACT:

This is an information item.

TIMELINE:

Previous Actions	May 2018: Consultant awarded contract for Bus Transformation Project September 2018: Kick-off Summit for all stakeholders November 2018: Completed first round of public engagement; Completed strategic considerations discussion with each committee Winter-Spring 2019: Draft strategies developed May 2019: Draft strategy and recommendations released for public and stakeholder comment June 2019: Completed second public survey and open houses. Completed listening sessions and presentations with project committees. July 2019: Complete presentations and discussions with regional transportation organizations.
Anticipated actions after presentation	Summer 2019: Align on final strategies Fall - Winter 2019: Develop roadmap for implementation

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an information item. No Board actions recommended.

BUS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

WMATA Board Presentation

July 25, 2019

WASHINGTON AREA
BUS TRANSFORMATION
PROJECT

Overview

1. Review Draft Strategy
2. Summarize What We Heard From Stakeholders
3. Board Reactions and Comments
4. Next steps: Finalize Strategy and Draft Roadmap

1

Summary: Strategy Elements

The strategy to achieve the vision and goals is built around six elements – with a set of recommendations underlying each:

1	**Customer Focused**	The bus system should be customer-focused and an easy-to-use option that people want to ride
2	**Priority to Buses on Major Roads**	Prioritizing buses on major roads is the fiscally responsible way to move the most people quickly and reliably
3	**Convenient Bus Service**	Frequent and convenient bus service is fundamental to accessing opportunity, building an equitable region, and ensuring high quality of life
4	**Balanced local and regional provider responsibilities**	Balance local and regional provider responsibilities by positioning local bus systems to meet their jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits
5	**Streamline Back-Office Functions and Share Innovation**	Optimize back-office functions through sharing, streamlining and shared innovation by consolidating regional resources and devoting more resources to operating bus service
6	**Regional Steward to Transform the Bus System**	Customers in a region with multiple bus providers need a regional steward to transform the bus system

2

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Element: Bus system should be customer-focused and an easy-to-use option that people want to ride

Recommendations to drive strategy:

A Expand **marketing** efforts related to bus to enhance visibility of bus options and benefits

B Make buses easy to understand with **legible maps and consistent route naming** conventions

C Create a **single mobile app** that allows riders to plan and pay for trips and access real-time service information

D Make **bus fares** clear and consistent across the region

E Introduce pass products that work across **all bus systems**

F Enhance **reduced fare products** for low-income residents

G Allow customers to **transfer for free** between bus and rail

H Incentivize more employers to offer **transit benefits**

I Make **bus stops** safe, convenient, and accessible across the region

J Modernize the region's **bus fleet** with energy-saving, green technologies

Key input received:

- Broad support for the full list of customer-facing improvements
- Strong support for free transfers and reduced fare programs
- Look for opportunities to consolidate recommendations

3

Element: Prioritizing buses on major roads is the fiscally responsible way to move the most people quickly and reliably.

Recommendations to drive strategy:

A Obtain commitments from each local and state jurisdiction to prioritize bus on major corridors within their boundaries

B Adopt consistent priority guidelines for corridors across the region

C Develop enforcement programs that maximize the effectiveness of bus priority efforts

D Offer incentives to jurisdictions to encourage implementation of the regional priority guidelines

E Coordinate with regional congestion mitigation efforts, including congestion pricing, curb access management, and parking limitations to move more people more efficiently

Key input received:

- Customers - faster, more reliable bus service is transformational
- Link Commitments (A) with Incentives (D)
- Convey urgency to move from planning to implementation on many regional projects
- Describe more explicitly the operating cost incentives and capital funding priority for agencies that follow guidelines
- Add detail on proposed Priority Guidelines, and link to Service Guidelines (Element 3)

4

Element: Frequent and convenient bus service is fundamental to accessing opportunity, building an equitable region, and ensuring high quality of life

Recommendations to drive strategy:

A Develop a regional bus network plan that realigns routes to create the most efficient and customer focused bus system

B Adopt consistent guidelines across the region to provide customers with the right amount of bus service by location and time of day

C Provide flexible, on-demand transit services to markets where customers are not well-served by conventional bus service

Key input received:

- Acknowledge current plans – WMATA Mass Transit Plan and local providers' Transit Development Plans
- Include estimated costs of implementation
- Emphasize land use connection
- Acknowledge existing WMATA guidelines
- Incorporate data standards (see Element 5)
- "Flexible, on-demand" should consider future transit modes and preferences

5

Element: Balance local and regional provider responsibilities by positioning local bus systems to meet their jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits

Recommendations to drive strategy:

Ⓐ Position the regional bus system to provide the services that meet regional needs

Ⓑ Revise the cost local jurisdictions pay WMATA for local service to better match the actual cost to provide service

Ⓒ Develop a 10-year plan to optimally allocate services between bus systems for applicable routes

Key input received:

- Jurisdictions commented that this element can be perceived as unwanted devolution of WMATA responsibility to local providers
- Desire for additional discussion among WMATA, local jurisdictions, and states
- The basis for overall potential cost savings could be more clearly documented

6

Element: Streamline back-office functions and share innovation by consolidating regional resources and devoting more resources to operating bus service

Recommendations to drive strategy:

A Consolidate **back-office support functions** to realize shared benefits of scale for bus systems that choose to participate

B Establish a Regional Mobility **Innovation Lab** to drive continuous improvement in customer experience

C Develop **regional standards for bus data** collection, formatting, sharing, and analysis

Key input received:

- Support for coordinated back-office functions where benefits outweigh costs
- Innovations are already being piloted by agencies across the region

7

Element: Customers in a region with multiple bus providers need a regional steward to transform the bus system.

Action recommendations to drive strategy:

A Form a **task force** responsible for Bus Transformation Project execution; after a three-year period, transfer responsibilities to a formal **Coalition of jurisdictional representatives** with authority for implementation

B Hold transportation and transit agencies accountable for prioritizing bus as a **primary mode of transportation** within their organizations

C Publish an annual Bus Transformation and **bus performance scorecard** to drive accountability for results

Key input received:

- Define what the proposed Task Force will do, and clarify current agency capabilities
- Clarify definition of scorecard - what incentives to include
- Define the need and sources for additional operations and capital funding

8

The Draft Strategy is the result of collective effort

Since the project began in September 2018, elected officials, transit agencies, transit advocates, bus operators, bus riders, and many other stakeholders helped to develop the recommendations in the Draft Strategy.

- 8,500+ public survey responses
- 140 participants in September 2018 Kickoff Summit
- 33 regional pop-up events
- 3 Focus Groups
- 3 Public Open House events
- 31 project committee meetings
- 13 Metrobus operator listening sessions
- 40 interviews with local jurisdictions and transit agencies
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9

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Public Survey: Top Priorities

- Based on 2,905 responses to the public survey on the Draft Strategy, the highest priorities are:

    o **Free transfers between bus and Metrorail**

    o **Build dedicated bus lanes**

    o **Run more buses on busy routes**

- Overall, there is strong support for recommendations to **reduce the cost to ride the bus**, whether through free transfers between bus and rail or by reduced fares for low-income customers.

- Providing "flexible bus service in less populated areas" was selected least in both the raw count of preferences, as well as when respondents selected their #1 priority.

10

What We Heard From Stakeholders

	Elements Generally Supported	Overall Comments
1	**Focus on the Customer**	Resounding support for these recommendations; draw greater attention to "more affordable" and "faster/more reliable" bus service
2	**Prioritize Buses on Major Roads**	Speed up implementation of current plans; add specificity to proposed guidelines and incentives
3	**Make Service Consistently Convenient**	Strong support for better connectivity among bus routes; recognition that a regional network plan and common service guidelines are part of the solution
4	**Balance local and regional responsibilities**	Jurisdictions expressed concern with these recommendations; some expressed openness to further discussion and analysis
5	**Coordinate Support Functions to Drive Innovation**	General support for these recommendations; comments that financial impact may be relatively modest
6	**Strengthen Regional Cooperation to Transform the Bus System**	General recognition that coordination should be strengthened; desire to clarify current agency roles and understand options for future roles

11

Building a Final Strategy and Roadmap

Changes:

- Highlight recommendations with **strong public support**
- Identify where **implementation underway** in the region
- Describe how each recommendation will **solve an issue**
- Demonstrate **benefits** prove this strategy is worth it
- Highlight expected **challenges, costs, and funding** needs/sources
- Describe proposed **incentives and accountability**

Outcomes:

- Create a **customer-focused strategy** that responds to customer input
- Identify **specific initiatives** that can be implemented quickly
- Build on current jurisdiction/agency **successes**
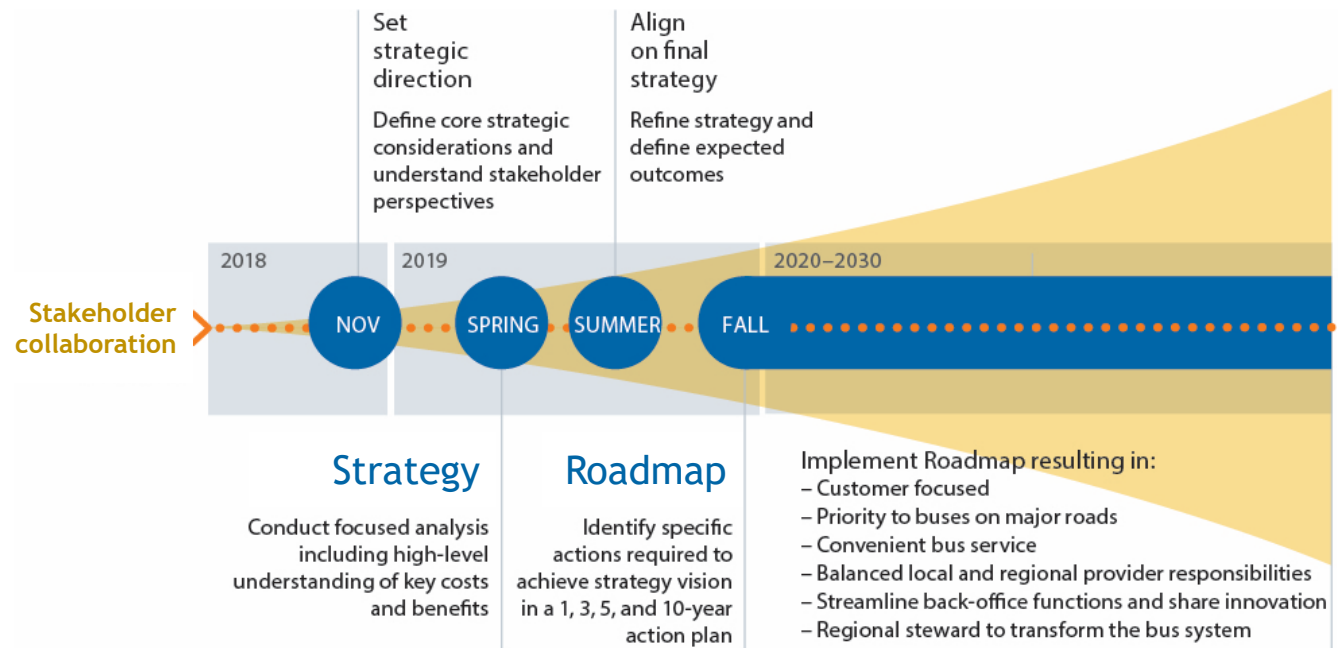
There is a better way to get there.

12

Implementation Process

The Strategy lays out the desired **direction for the regional bus system**

A **10-year Roadmap** will lay out a series of specific implementation steps that will help the Bus Transformation gain momentum over time

Bus Transformation starts immediately - The Roadmap establishes specific implementation actions

Set strategic direction

Define core strategic considerations and understand stakeholder perspectives

Align on final strategy

Refine strategy and define expected outcomes

2018   2019   2020–2030

Stakeholder collaboration

NOV   SPRING   SUMMER   FALL

Strategy

Conduct focused analysis including high-level understanding of key costs and benefits

Roadmap

Identify specific actions required to achieve strategy vision in a 1, 3, 5, and 10-year action plan

Implement Roadmap resulting in:
– Customer focused
– Priority to buses on major roads
– Convenient bus service
– Balanced local and regional provider responsibilities
– Streamline back-office functions and share innovation
– Regional steward to transform the bus system

13

Appendix

Congestion, affordability, and mobility are major problems in the DC region that will only continue to grow

What can we do?

Bus is a major part of the region's transportation system, carrying 600,000 daily passengers.

- Much of our region's population depends on bus as their only way to travel

Meanwhile, the world of transportation is innovating rapidly, and our bus system has not kept pace.

- Many technology-driven mobility options threaten to make congestion worse
- Ridership is declining and operators are feeling the pinch

It is time for this region to transform its bus system.

The Challenge:

Customers are turning to other travel options. Traditional definitions of bus service are not keeping pace with rapid technology and social change.

Since 2012, bus ridership has fallen by 13 percent across the region.

Regional bus ridership per year (M)
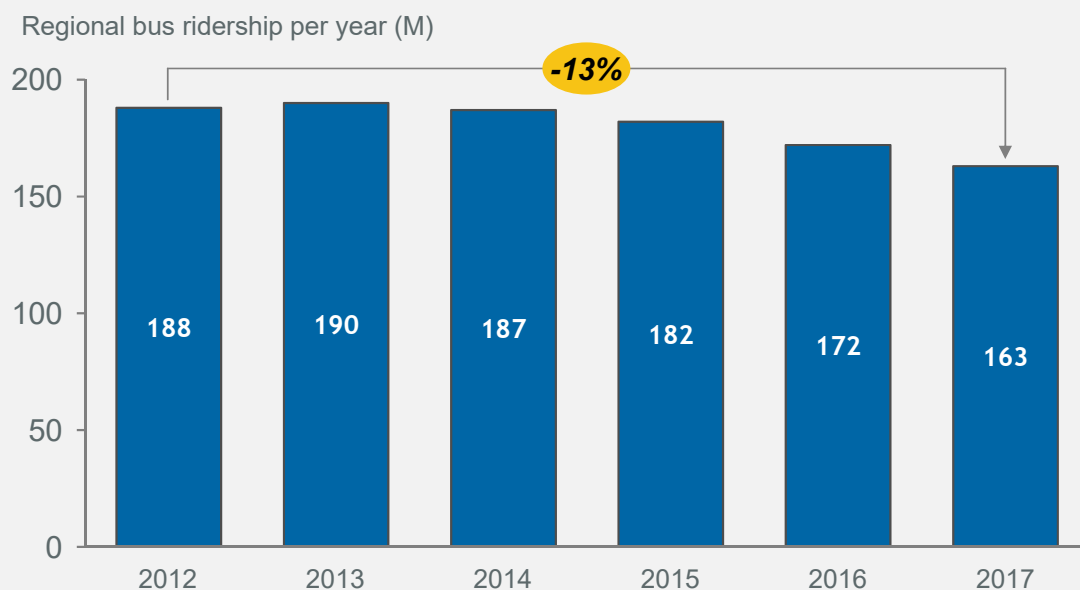
Bus faces several core challenges that will continue to grow unless changes are made today:

- Meet changing **customer needs**
- Keep up with **changing technology**
- **Coordinating** across region
- Maintain **sustainable** cost structure
- **Deciding** how service is paid for

16

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Structure for transformation: independent review

The Bus Transformation Project was structured as an independent assessment of the region's bus system:

- Customer preferences

- Region's commitment to prioritizing bus

- Opportunities for innovation

- Agency roles in operations, management, funding

Decision makers within Metro responsible for implementing change

Regional thought leaders charged with recommending meaningful change

WMATA Leadership Team

Executive Steering Committee

Technical Team

Strategy Advisory Panel

Transportation professionals from each bus operating agency

Broad representation from the region's jurisdictions, business sector, and transit users

17

Project Vision:

Bus will be the **mode of choice** on the region's roads by 2030, serving as the backbone of a **strong and inclusive** regional mobility system.

Goals for bus in the region as voiced by stakeholders

1	**Regional connectivity**	• Provide reliable on-street transit options that efficiently connect people to places and improve mobility
2	**Rider experience**	• Ensure a convenient, easy-to-use, user-centered mobility option
3	**Financial stewardship**	• Maintain a transit mode that is financially sustainable in the long term
4	**Sustainable economic health & access to opportunity**	• Encourage vibrant, economically-thriving and sustainable communities
5	**Equity**	• Create a bus system that is affordable and equitable

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WASHINGTON AREA
BUS TRANSFORMATION
PROJECT

A better way to get there

Strategy Summary

METROWAY

27th & CRYSTAL

"Buses play a critical role in connecting people throughout this region to opportunities. The Bus Transformation Project will identify and implement steps to make local bus a world class travel option for all of the region's residents."

—Rob Puentes, Executive Steering Committee Chair

Prosperity in Peril

Congestion, affordability, and mobility are major problems in the Washington Region that will only continue to grow as 40,000–60,000 jobs and households are added each year. Meanwhile, the world of transportation is innovating at a rapid clip, and our regional bus system has not kept pace.

THE CHALLENGE

Growing congestion results in poor access to jobs, higher costs of living, and decreased economic growth, which is degrading the region's competitiveness. Time spent in congestion takes away from family, friends, faith, and fitness, suppresses income potential, adds to stress and frustration, and lowers the overall quality of life. Because the vast majority of the region's 20 million daily trips occur in personal vehicles on already-grid locked roads, environmental degradation continues, accelerating climate change.

Rail transit emerged as a highly-effective tool to combat these forces in our region, but its effectiveness has limits. Metrorail's high-speed, high-capacity network only reaches about a quarter of the region's land area, and any rail system expansion is many billions of dollars and decades away.

THE BUS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Undertaken as a collaborative project to transform the bus system of the DC Metro area, the Bus Transformation Project re-envisions the bus network as a coordinated regional transportation solution that addresses the changing needs of customers, leverages innovative technology, and employs a sustainable cost structure.

This Strategy Summary introduces more than 25 key recommendations for consideration by the broad range of public stakeholders across the region.

These strategies push forward innovation in operations, institutions, and technology that will position the region to create a truly integrated, accessible bus network.

Visit bustransformationproject.com to read more about the project and the draft Strategy in full.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Other regions nationally and globally have transformed their bus systems to solve congestion, promote inclusive mobility, generate ridership gains, and operate efficiently using currently available smart technology.

It is past time for us to do the same: rapid, effective transportation is critical to our region's prosperity. Buses have a vital role to play because they make efficient use of roadways by transporting large numbers of riders safely, conveniently, and affordably, and provide service in areas not accessible by Metrorail.

A better way to *GET THERE*

THE VISION

Bus will be the mode of choice on the region's roads by 2030, serving as the backbone of a strong and inclusive regional mobility system that will support a growing and sustainable economy.

A Regional Strategy

This strategy represents an entirely new and transformative mindset that redefines the traditional notion of bus by examining what a bus system is, what bus vehicles look like, how quality bus service works to best support various types of users across different areas within our region, and how the region's existing bus operators can best interact with each other and with other users of the roadways.

By exploring innovation in operations, institutions, and technology, this strategy positions the region to adopt strategies and concrete actions that transform the existing regional bus system into a truly integrated, accessible regional bus network that is part of the larger regional mobility system.

Goals and Recommendations

From its vision, the Bus Transformation Strategy set out five goals to guide the transformation of bus across the District of Columbia, State of Maryland, and Commonwealth of Virginia: regional connectivity, rider experience, financial stewardship, sustainability, and equity.

To meet these goals, the project developed a dynamic range of recommendations based on stakeholder collaboration, public engagement, and world-wide best practices. These recommendations directly address the core challenges that will continue to get worse unless changes are made. While buses are a space- and cost-efficient means to move large numbers of people, they are currently not being used to their potential.

Collaboration

Working together across political boundaries, solutions can be achieved that facilitate fast, frequent, affordable, and seamless travel connections for customers; connect people with jobs, services, and opportunity in our region; align the high-frequency and high-capacity regional bus network with roadways where buses are given priority; clearly delineate and effectively coordinate regionally provided services and locally managed bus systems; and empower organizations to coordinate functions, leverage transformative technologies, and transparently track progress.

Strategies

The bus network of tomorrow can achieve performance outcomes and transportation objectives that will make the region more competitive, sustainable, and equitable.

OUR GOALS

Developed by an inclusive group of stakeholders drawn from across the region, these goals guide the strategies envisioned to transform the regional bus system:

Regional connectivity: Provide reliable on-street transit options that efficiently connect people to places and improve mobility.

Rider experience: Ensure a convenient, easy-to-use, user-centered travel choice.

Financial stewardship: Maintain a transit mode that is financially sustainable in the long term.

Sustainability: Encourage vibrant, economically thriving and sustainable communities.

Equity: Create a bus system that is affordable and equitable.

1 The bus system should be **customer focused** and an easy- to-use option that people want to ride.

2 **Prioritizing buses** on major roads moves the most people in the quickest, most reliable and fiscally responsible way.

3 Frequent, reliable, and **convenient bus service** is fundamental to offering equitable access to opportunities and improving quality of life across the region.

4 **Balancing the responsibilities of local and regional providers** will position local bus systems to meet their own jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits.

5 **Streamlining back-office functions and sharing innovation** will help all operators and allow more resources for operating bus service.

6 **Transforming and incorporating changes in bus service** operated by multiple providers across the region will require centralized leadership, coordination and collaboration.

4

This project will transform bus service . . .

FROM		TO
Last resort	**FOCUS ON THE CUSTOMER**	**Appealing and desirable**
Slow and stuck in traffic	**PRIORITIZE BUSES ON MAJOR ROADWAYS**	**Fast trips to where you want to go**
Wondering when the bus will come	**MAKE BUS THE EASY FIRST CHOICE**	**Frequent and predictable**
Disjointed	**BALANCE LOCAL AND REGIONAL PROVIDER RESPONSIBILITIES**	**Unified and cohesive**
Overlapping	**WORK TOGETHER TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND ENHANCE INNOVATION**	**Streamlined and efficient**
Region divided	**STRENGTHEN REGIONAL COOPERATION TO TRANSFORM THE BUS SYSTEM**	**Stronger together**

From Strategy to Action

Authored in partnership with stakeholders across the region, the draft Bus Transformation Strategy sets out an ambitious path forward. Under six themes (referred to as elements in the full strategy), the draft strategy makes more than 25 recommendations to achieve the goals of this effort.

Learn more about how the project developed into a draft strategy, and read the draft strategy in full on the website.

1 The bus system should be customer focused and an easy- to-use option that people want to ride.

Recommendations

A Expand marketing efforts related to bus to enhance visibility of bus options and benefits.
B Make buses easy to understand with legible maps and consistent route naming conventions.
C Create a mobile solution that allows riders to plan and pay for trips and access real-time service information.
D Make bus fares clear and consistent across the region.
E Introduce pass products that work across all bus systems.
F Enhance reduced fare products for low-income residents.
G Allow customers to transfer for free between bus and rail.
H Incentivize more employers to offer transit benefits.
I Make bus stops safe, convenient, and accessible across the region.
J Modernize the region's bus fleet with advanced technologies that improve the environment, safety, and the rider experience.

Importance

A modern bus system must…
✓ *Be a convenient, safe, easy-to-use, user-focused mobility option for all riders.*
✓ *Be legible for all users and provide one-stop information that includes trip planning, payment, and real-time status.*
✓ *Capitalize on innovations that reduce negative environmental impacts.*
✓ *Provide seamless connectivity to other transit modes.*

Implementing these recommendations will result in…
✓ *Increased ridership and improved perception that bus is an appealing and desirable mode of travel, becoming an easy choice for all users, regardless of class, age, or ability.*
✓ *Positive impacts to the built and natural environment that create a more livable and sustainable region.*
✓ *Reshaped travel choices that help people choose where they live and work.*

2

Prioritizing buses on major roads moves the most people in the quickest, most reliable and fiscally responsible way.

Recommendations

A Obtain commitments from each local and state jurisdiction to prioritize bus on major corridors within their boundaries.
B Adopt consistent priority guidelines for corridors across the region.
C Develop enforcement programs that maximize the effectiveness of bus priority efforts.
D Offer incentives to jurisdictions to encourage implementation of the regional priority guidelines.
E Coordinate with regional congestion mitigation efforts, including congestion pricing, curb access management, and parking limitations to move more people more efficiently.

Importance

A modern bus system...
✓ *Cannot be burdened by the high levels congestion that single-occupancy vehicles cause in the first place.*
✓ *Maximizes the people-carrying capacity of the region's roadway infrastructure.*
✓ *Effectively combats congestion with fast, frequent, and reliable service.*
✓ *Without intervention, bus runs the risk of becoming the mode of last resort, or worse, the mobility option reserved only for those who have no other choice.*

Implementing these recommendations will result in...
✓ *Predictable and reliable bus service that customers can trust.*
✓ *Moving the greatest number of people in the most efficient way—and giving people more time to earn, learn, and play.*
✓ *Myriad benefits across the region, including increased access to jobs and tourist attractions, enhanced economic competitiveness for the region, reduced emissions, and promotion of a healthier natural environment.*

3

Frequent, reliable, and convenient bus service is fundamental to offering equitable access to opportunities and improving quality of life across the region.

Recommendations

A Develop a regional bus network plan that realigns routes to create the most efficient and customer focused bus system.
B Adopt consistent guidelines across the region to provide customers with the right amount of bus service by location and time of day.
C Provide flexible, on-demand transit services to markets where customers are not well served by conventional bus service.

Importance

A modern bus system must...
✓ *Recognize that one size does not fit all, and that service decisions must be guided by demand, using evidence-based approaches, and performance targets.*
✓ *Consider the conditions that make sense for bus operations versus those that may make sense for other mobility options and individual jurisdictions.*
✓ *Offer a better choice over the personalized, on-demand choices people have at their disposal today.*

Implementing these recommendations will result in...
✓ *Consistent service across the region, as a result of cohesive planning, operations, and performance.*
✓ *Customers who are able to use bus region-wide to access key destinations—regardless of where they live and what times they travel.*
✓ *More consistent and effective services across the region, not only in supply, but in alternate forms of bus that are flexible and cost-effective, and that meet riders' growing expectations of transit and travel.*

4

Balancing the responsibilities of local and regional providers will position local bus systems to meet their own jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits.

Recommendations

A Position the regional bus system to provide the services that meet regional needs.
B Revise the cost local jurisdictions pay WMATA for local service to better match the actual cost to provide service.
C Develop a 10-year plan to optimally allocate services between bus systems for applicable routes.

Importance

Because…
✓ *The region's high-frequency, high-capacity bus network is a critical regional asset that must be clearly planned and managed.*
✓ *WMATA and its partner jurisdictions have the responsibility to clearly define 'regional' bus service, and decide how it should be delivered.*

Implementing these recommendations will result in…
✓ *Regional and local entities that operate the services they are best suited for.*
– *Metrobus will operate the high-intensity inter-jurisdictional services that foster regional mobility and connect the whole region.*
– *Local agencies will be empowered to better serve residents and businesses with direct control of local service.*
✓ *A consistent and transparent system for focusing resources on needed routes and services, leading to better overall service.*
✓ *Greater transparency of costs associated with "regional" services— clearer connections between what local jurisdictions pay for and the benefits received.*

5

Streamlining back-office functions and sharing innovation will help all operators and allow more resources for operating bus service.

Recommendations

A Consolidate back-office support functions to realize shared benefits for bus systems that choose to participate.
B Establish a Regional Mobility Innovation Lab to drive continuous improvement in customer experience.
C Develop regional standards for bus data collection, formatting, sharing and analysis.

Importance

Because…
✓ *Some initiatives can only be delivered through regional collaboration and by leveraging regional resources to deliver efficiency and coherence through combined core support functions.*
✓ *The region's agencies must pilot new technologies and techniques that don't require extensive political will or funding streams for individual projects.*

Implementing these recommendations will result in…
✓ *A more seamless integration of programs that eliminates duplicative functions, drives joint actions where appropriate, and operates at a scale that propels regional efficiencies and cost savings.*
✓ *A system that facilitates a robust pilot program to serve as a catalyst for implementing new ideas—whether administrative, such as a standardized system for IT and data management, or for making bus move—quickly, efficiently, and equitably.*
✓ *Bus administration that will continue to evolve as a long-term, structured effort, and run more with the language of a business that ultimately serves the public good.*

6 — Transforming and incorporating changes in bus service operated by multiple providers across the region will require centralized leadership, coordination and collaboration.

Recommendations

A Form a regional task force responsible for Bus Transformation Project execution; after a three-year period, transfer responsibilities to a formal Coalition of jurisdictional representatives with authority for implementation.

B Hold transportation and transit agencies accountable for prioritizing bus as a primary mode of transportation within their organizations.

C Publish an annual Bus Transformation and bus performance scorecard to drive accountability for results.

Importance

Because…
✓ Immediate and sustained action is needed to implement recommendations to transform the bus system.
✓ Responsible agencies must be held accountable for the goals, priorities, and performance of bus across the region.
✓ A task force will have the authority to define who tackles what first, identify immediate priorities and challenges, and recommend composition and scope of the new Coalition.

Implementing these recommendations will result in…
✓ Strengthened government entities responsible for bus who are unified in implementing strategy recommendations.
✓ A unified and progressive regional program; otherwise, the status quo will remain, and the region will likely be facing the problem for years, or decades to come.
✓ Regular reporting by independent organizations that increases the visibility of bus transformation and yields measurable improvements for customers.

These recommendations position the region to provide the surface transit network it needs, with fast and frequent bus service that gets people where they want to go, quickly, reliably, and efficiently.

Collaboration

Engagement has been a cornerstone of this project, with more happening every day! Outreach activities to date:

140 Participants at the Kickoff Summit

5,700 Survey responses to date

13 Metrobus division engagement events

10 Focus groups

16 ESC meetings

8 TT meetings

1 SAP meeting

33 External project briefings

8 WMATA LT briefings

128 Social media postings

10,056 People reached via social media

Creating a sustainable surface transportation future depends on collaboration between bus operators, cities, counties, and states that own the roads.

It also depends on input from the broader community - from businesses, non-profits and community organizations, thought leaders, the public, and many more!

WHO IS DRIVING THIS BUS?

Tapping into the immense expertise within this region has guided the development of this strategy, and this project has relied on the input of many from across the region.

Executive Steering Committee
Committee members, who hold various leadership positions in the business community, with regional organizations and non-profits, or are unaffiliated transit experts or labor representatives, have been closely involved with developing the strategy and played an important role in ensuring transparency, independence, and consideration of the needs of the region's travelers and bus service providers.

Strategy Advisory Panel
Panel members, who hold leadership positions in local and state governments, community-based organizations, businesses, minority and disability groups, labor organizations, think tanks, and the education community, represent a variety of regional perspectives and provide critical insight into issues that affect bus.

Technical Team
Team members are recognized discipline leaders within WMATA and senior jurisdiction transit staff who review technical aspects and analyses throughout the project.

WMATA Leadership Team
Team members are decision-makers within WMATA who oversee those parts of the project that affect organization and operations.
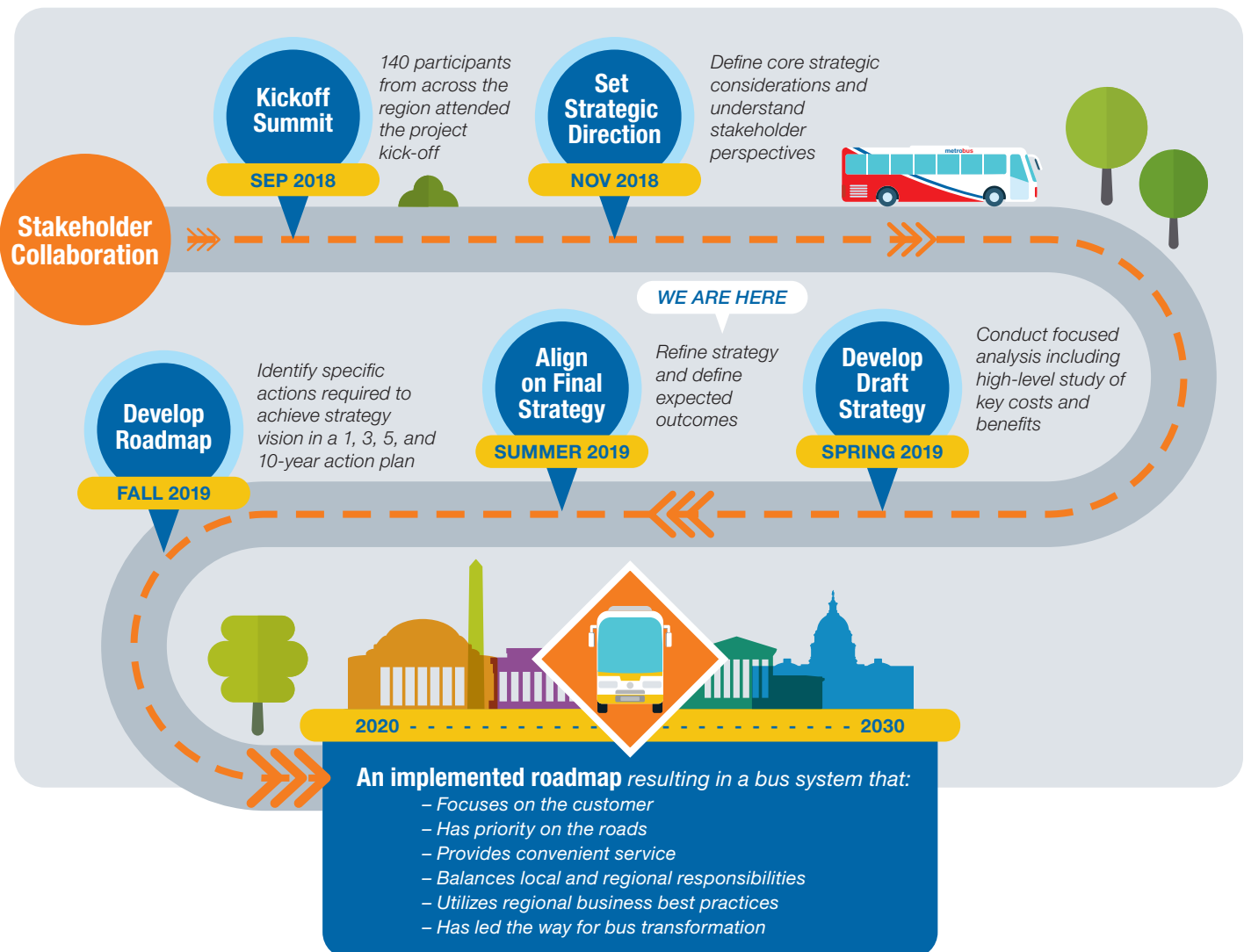
General Public
A broad sample of bus riders and non-riders have shared their priorities through various media, including almost 5,700 survey responses, both on-line and on-site at locations throughout the region.

Other Key Stakeholders
Other stakeholders from across the region have provided input that represents the perspectives of broad constituencies. These stakeholders include transit and transportation leaders, and elected and appointed officials.

Next Steps

The draft Strategy and its recommendations are the result of extensive stakeholder insights, best practice from other regions, and comprehensive analysis of the region's bus system.

Stakeholder Collaboration

Kickoff Summit
SEP 2018

140 participants from across the region attended the project kick-off

Set Strategic Direction
NOV 2018

Define core strategic considerations and understand stakeholder perspectives

Develop Roadmap
FALL 2019

Identify specific actions required to achieve strategy vision in a 1, 3, 5, and 10-year action plan

Align on Final Strategy
SUMMER 2019

WE ARE HERE

Refine strategy and define expected outcomes

Develop Draft Strategy
SPRING 2019

Conduct focused analysis including high-level study of key costs and benefits

2020 - 2030

An implemented roadmap *resulting in a bus system that:*
– *Focuses on the customer*
– *Has priority on the roads*
– *Provides convenient service*
– *Balances local and regional responsibilities*
– *Utilizes regional business best practices*
– *Has led the way for bus transformation*

Opportunities to give your feedback start now and continue through June 2019!
Visit our website for more information and to read the draft Strategy in full.

May 2019

Table of Contents for Letters Received for Bus Transformation Project Draft Strategy and Recommendations

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Angela D. Alsobrooks
County Executive

Department of Public Works and Transportation
Office of the Director

Terry L. Bellamy
Director

June 11, 2019

NeoNiche Strategies
c/o Bus Transformation Project
4501 Ford Ave, Suite 501
Alexandria, VA 22302

Dear Bus Transformation Project Team:

As you know, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) plays a vital role in our transportation network and helps provide our residents with access to jobs, educational opportunities, shopping and medical facilities through the regional Metrorail system and over 60 Metrobus lines operating within and through the County. While Metrorail provides our residents with access to the regional network, Metrobus is equally as vital to transporting residents to activity centers, jobs and places of interest in the County.

Over the years, the County absorbed service realignments to the Metrobus system in response to rising subsidy costs and County staff, in turn, worked with WMATA staff to minimize the impact on residents. While our residents adjusted, the County has and continues to believe, that additional Metrobus service is needed throughout the County, especially south of Fort Washington and Clinton.

After the announcement of the Bus Transformation Project, the County was optimistic and excited about the prospect of getting a fresh look at the system and uncovering innovative solutions to improve service options for residents through the existing Metrobus network. Our County staff and elected stakeholders articulated the need for better Metrobus service, which is user friendly, customer focused and responsive to the transportation needs in the community.

We appreciate an acknowledgment of these needs and opportunities in the draft strategies and recommendations. However, some recommendations raise concern because they dramatically alter the provision of Metrobus service in the County in ways that we did not anticipate at the beginning of the study.

Specifically, the County is concerned about absorbing 48 existing WMATA bus lines and operating them under the County's transit system. As articulated through our recently completed County transit vision plan, we have outstanding needs in our 28-route system, such as replacing our aging fleet while working to find ways to expand weekday hours and provide Saturday service. At this point, the County is no position to absorb these additional routes and a great many things would need to happen to enable that in the future.
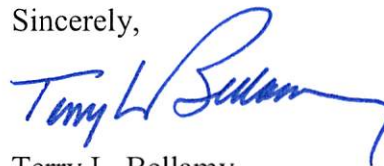
While very important, the Bus Transformation Project is part of a more comprehensive look at fixed route services in the County that also addresses local transit needs of our "The Bus" passengers. Therefore, as WMATA looks towards implementation, it is crucial that impacted local jurisdictions and partner agencies are fully informed about the implications and requirements to absorb new WMATA service and its impact to their existing networks. A shift of this proposed scale would likely require reconstructing the entire local bus system, finding alternative funding sources and developing a detailed education and implementation strategy. Prince George's County will be actively engaged in ensuring that these issues are considered and solutions to them are incorporated into the rollout of the broader Bus Transformation effort.

Lastly, communication and public engagement on this project needs to be significantly enhanced. A single forum has been held in Montgomery County, which is simply not sufficient. It is not acceptable to conduct a forum in Montgomery County, where the recommendation is to shift only two routes, but not in Prince George's County where the recommendation is to shift forty-eight. The Transformation Project Team *must* present the project in an open forum in Prince George's County.

Our County and its staff look forward to continued dialogue with Bus Transformation Project staff as they finalize their draft strategies in the Fall and releases its final report. In the end, we hope that our residents and the region, who depend upon Metrobus services, will reap the benefits of a better transportation network. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Deputy Director Martin Harris at (301) 883-5617, or mharris@co.pg.md.us.

Sincerely,

Terry L. Bellamy
Director

cc: Prince George's County Council
        Major F. Riddick, Jr., Acting Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the County Executive
        Floyd Holt, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the County Executive
        Martin L. Harris, Deputy Director, DPW&T
        D'Andrea L. Walker, Associate Director, OT, DPW&T
        WMATA Board of Directors
        Paul Wiedefeld, General Manager and CEO, WMATA
        Regina Sullivan, Director of Government Relations, WMATA
        Charlie Scott, Government Relations Officer, WMATA
        Allison Davis, Director, Strategic Planning, Office of Planning, WMATA

June 10, 2019

Dear Chair Evans and Members of the Board,

It is the pleasure of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and the Bus and Rail Subcommittee (BRS) to present you with the report on the Bus Transformation Project (BTP).

The purpose of the BTP is to identify and implement steps that would render the Washington region's bus services into a seamless system, and thus, a world-class travel option for all current and potentially new users of public transit here.

How will the BTP achieve that? By transforming the various existing bus services into one interconnected system that would produce affordable, reliable services throughout the region. To date, three Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) members have participated on the BTP's Strategy Advisory Panel. Their hope has been that the Project's strategies will yield a system more useful to current riders and attractive to new riders including, of course, more people with disabilities and seniors.

During a first AAC discussion of the BTP's May 2019 Strategy Summary paper, an AAC member and a commenter from the public both noted that the Summary highlighted laudable goals but was bereft of actionable details.

Later, after attending one of three BTP "Open House" briefings, the same AAC member reported disappointment that the lengthier paper available at the event also fell short on specifics. For example, that document did map out bus deserts in the region, i.e., areas underserved by bus companies or virtually not served at all. After inquiring about when existing routes would be realigned, or new routes mapped to serve bus deserts, the member was told that such details were not expected to be specified in the BTP's September 2019 report — and possibly not even later.

Of course, a basic problem affecting the implementation of an interconnected bus service system is that the Washington region is served by nine companies involving eight separate governmental jurisdictions or entities with no coordinating system of governance.

In contrast, an example of successful interjurisdictional governance is the Port of New York and New Jersey Authority. For almost 100 years, that bi-state Authority has grown to manage effectively a train connection between the two States, tunnel and bridge connections, as well as the seaports and five airports located in those States.

Very recently, the governments of Austria, Germany, and Switzerland successfully built a governance model for public transportation at an international level. Thus, as complicated and challenging as it is to create interjurisdictional governance, there are precedents elsewhere suggesting it should be possible to do so here. The AAC is hopeful that such will eventually come about and lead to building a seamless bus system serving more riders within our Washington region.

Meanwhile, the AAC applauds the current data presented in BTP documents and strongly supports implementation of the methods presented thus far that would produce an integrated jurisdictional system and result in a growing, more inclusive, more satisfied ridership. To that end, the AAC continues to believe that the oversight of this new system is best served by a group that includes diverse bus riders of all socio-economic groups, people with disabilities, and seniors throughout the region's rural, suburban and urban areas.

Sincerely,

Philip Posner
Chair, AAC

Tino Calabia
Chair, BRS

June 5, 2019

BusTransformationProject.com
NeoNiche Strategies

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for inviting House of Ruth to participate in the Bus Transformation Project for D.C. and the surrounding area. As the first women's shelter in Washington, D.C., and a 43-year-old nonprofit focusing on women and children survivors of homelessness and domestic violence, transportation affordability is a key focus for House of Ruth.

The more than 1,000 clients we serve each year have already battled traumas, domestic violence, homelessness, and starting over. We provide them with safe, private housing; with counseling to strengthen their resilience; and with developmental childcare for children ages six weeks to five years. What we need YOUR help with is affordable transportation.

Lyfts, Ubers, cabs and car ownership remain unaffordable and out of reach for most of our clients. Bikes and walking is sometimes possible, but hard to do with young children. Public transportation is their only means of getting from Point A to Point B, and in D.C., there are no discounts for no-income or low-income residents on public transportation.

Of all of the good work we've seen throughout this process, the recommendation to create an affordable fare is the one that heartens us the most, and we **_strongly urge_** you to implement this as soon as possible.

The residents of D.C. can't wait much longer for this. Thank you again for allowing us to be part of the team.

Sincerely,

Sandra L. Jackson, MSW, LICSW, LCSW-C
Executive Director

5 Thomas Circle, NW | Washington, DC 20005-4153 | (202) 667-7001 | (202) 667-7047 (Fax) | **www.houseofruth.org**

COMMONWEALTH *of* VIRGINIA

Jennifer L. Mitchell Director	DEPARTMENT OF RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION 600 EAST MAIN STREET, SUITE 2102 RICHMOND, VA 23219-2416	(804) 786-4440 FAX (804) 225-3752 Virginia Relay Center 800-828-1120 (TDD)

June 5, 2019

Bus Transformation Project Team
c/o NeoNiche Strategies
4501 Ford Avenue, Suite 501
Alexandria, Virginia 23102

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) appreciates the opportunity to review and provide comments on the WMATA Bus Transformation Project strategic recommendations. DRPT has participated in the Strategy and Technical Committee process throughout the study and appreciates the thoughtful consideration that the team has given to a very complex initiative.

DRPT is generally supportive of the recommendations to make the system more customer-focused, prioritizing buses on major roads, encouraging innovation, promoting efficiency, and improving accessibility to bus service. Our comments are focused in two key areas: redefining the bus network and consolidation of functions.

Redefining the Bus Network

DRPT is encouraged by the willingness to take a fresh look at the region's bus network and are supportive of the concept of a network redesign. The LaHood Study, completed in November 2017, emphasized the need for WMATA to take a hard look at the regional bus network and operations as a way to improve efficiency and service to the public. The LaHood recommendations specifically identified the need to review service on low performing routes, location of bus garages (leading to excessive deadhead mileage), route structure, changing patterns of demand, fare structure, and fare evasion patterns as areas could be examined.

However, we are concerned that the work to date appears focused on shifting routes from WMATA to local providers and lacks detailed analysis. WMATA and the Northern Virginia transit agencies (as a collective whole) have not reviewed the entire bus network on a route by route basis. Further, the exclusion of Loudoun County Transit and Omniride from the study do not allow for a holistic view of bus transit from Northern Virginia into the District of Columbia.

The Smartest Distance Between Two Points
www.drpt.virginia.gov

The transition of routes from WMATA to local providers has been successfully undertaken in the past, using state resources to support capital and operating needs. Any large scale shift in responsibility will place additional financial responsibilities on the Commonwealth, while financial assistance to WMATA has been increased significantly. Operating efficiency, increased ridership, and cost reduction could all result from transforming the network, but only if such a redesign is undertaken in a thoughtful, deliberate, and inclusive manner. Therefore, additional study is necessary to fulfill the recommendations of the LaHood report and ensure that implementation of a "bus reset" is comprehensive and can be supported by all of the stakeholders.

Consolidation of Functions

Throughout the strategic recommendations, there is a recurring theme of consolidation of functions. There are a number of efforts already underway in the region to coordinate mobility options/initiatives and the outcome of this strategic effort should drive towards leveraging existing regional efforts and not just consolidate responsibility within WMATA. Should the region pursue a formal coalition, it will be critical that such a coalition listens to and meets the needs of individual jurisdictions. Additional work is necessary to more clearly define what is being proposed and better articulate the intended outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this regional effort. DRPT is committed to improving personal mobility in an efficient and effective manner, and is committed to being part of the solution going forward. If you have questions regarding these comments, please contact Jennifer DeBruhl at (804)786-1063.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Mitchell

Jennifer Mitchell

June 5, 2019

Bus Transformation Project Team
c/o NeoNiche Strategies
4501 Ford Avenue, Suite #501
Alexandria, Virginia 223102

Re: Comments on Draft Bus Transformation Project Recommendations

Dear Bus Transformation Project Team:

The City of Alexandria and DASH would like to thank WMATA and the consultant team for involving the City in the Bus Transformation Project process and providing this opportunity to comment on the draft recommendations. The City recognizes that the region cannot build its way out of congestion and that a transformation of the bus mode represents the least expensive and most impactful way to address the mobility needs of our region's residents and visitors.

The City supports many of the recommendations in the draft strategy document and has already been advancing many of these strategies within the City in coordination with WMATA. However, we would like to provide the following comments and suggestions to help shape the final recommendations and regional implementation:

Strategy 1: The City supports a more streamlined fare structure and more useful and equitable pass products in order to make the system more accessible and easier to use for all users. However, we will need to ensure that the cost impacts of these efforts are distributed fairly.

Strategy 2: The City supports the recommendations for bus transit priority measures under Strategy 2. The City has led the effort to implement bus rapid transit (BRT) in the region, through a partnership with Arlington County on the Metroway service, and is working to advance two other BRT corridors within the City. The City and DASH are also in the process of implementing a city-wide network of Transit Signal Priority (TSP) systems. A regional framework for advancing bus priority more broadly and where data indicates it is most important will ensure positive outcomes for our riders.

Strategy 3 (A) and 4: The City has reservations about the proposal to take over the operation of additional routes. In short, the City does not believe that this study is the proper mechanism to reassign routes to different providers and does not agree with all of the proposals and assumptions for doing so.

Specifically, the City has concerns that the proposed criteria would result in multi-jurisdictional routes that likely warrant being operated by a regional provider, such as the 10B and 25B which operate between major centers of activity in both Alexandria and Arlington.

Beyond the criteria, the cost savings articulated in the strategy document do not reflect actual costs, as costs are increasing to operate service for many jurisdictions. Moreover, the need to operate out of additional facilities due to an increase in fleet size will have significant impacts on operations that do not seem to be taken into account in the study.

The City therefore recommends that if WMATA wishes to re-designate routes, the final set of criteria are not established until after both the bus network plan in Strategy 3 and a more detailed analysis of the cost implications and benefits for all parties are developed.

Lastly, the City of Alexandria is currently conducting a bus network redesign of its own, the Alexandria Transit Vision Plan, to realign all routes in Alexandria most efficiently to meet the needs of residents. The core goals and objective of this ATV Plan are in alignment with the goals and objectives of the Bus Transformation Project, and Planning staff from WMATA and other partner agencies have been directly involved in the development of the ATV network designs. Based on this, the City of Alexandria and DASH strongly recommend that WMATA use the final ATV Plan recommendations for Alexandria as a key input for the development of the broader network redesign.

Strategy 5 (A): While the City supports improvements in efficiencies, the cost savings achieved by streamlining back office functions may result in more challenges than the cost savings are worth. The $11 million estimate relative to WMATA's $1.1 billion operating budget is fairly insignificant. WMATA should weigh the benefits versus the costs before advancing this recommendation.

Strategy 6: Regional coordination and support will be necessary to implement the strategies in the Bus Transformation Project. The City recommends building off existing structures and mechanisms wherever possible to achieve the greatest likelihood of success.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback. We look forward to working with you as this process advances into implementation.

Sincerely,

Yon Lambert
Director of Transportation & Environmental Services
City of Alexandria

Josh Baker
General Manager
DASH

Bus Transformation Project

Comments by Monica Backmon on behalf of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA)

My comments are based on the full Bus Transformation Project (BTP) document.[1]

Appendix B, starting on page 214, lists the detailed goals/objectives. Of particular interest to NVTA are:

- Goal 1 (p215) under the general title of 'Regional Connectivity' to 'Provide reliable on-street transit options that efficiently connect people to places and improve mobility.'
- Goal 2 (p216) under the general title of 'Rider Experience' to 'Ensure a convenient, easy-to-use user-centered travel choice'.
- Goals 1 and 2 appear to drive many of the recommendations associated with Elements 1 thru 3.

Objective 1-b specifically seeks to 'Mitigate congestion by increasing transit usage.' This is broadly consistent with the vision and goals of NVTA's TransAction[2] and the project selection process for our Six Year Program. It would be truly transformational for the region if increased ridership leads to reductions in AADT, VMT, and/or congestion, by even a few percentage points. **Consequently, I strongly support Objective 1-b, and my comments are focused on this objective.**

I commend the BTP team for producing a draft strategy with a strong customer focus, but it is difficult to discern strategies that <u>specifically</u> address attracting new riders versus existing riders. In places the document is worded in a way that implies existing riders are the primary focus of the BTP, but that will <u>not</u> accomplish Objective 1-b. While the recommendations associated with Elements 1 thru 3 are necessary, I question whether they are sufficient to encourage transit use by drive-alone travelers who rarely ride transit. **I suggest that the recommendations be modified or supplemented with new riders in mind.**

As future action plans are developed, **I recommend that consideration be given to a multi-jurisdictional corridor-based pilot deployment that specifically seeks to accomplish Objective 1-b**, by attracting new riders to a fast, frequent, reliable transit service connecting major origins with major destinations in the selected corridor. Keep in mind that analysis conducted for TransAction highlighted that a significant portion of NoVA commuter trips begin and/or end in Fairfax County, or pass through the County. A pilot focused on Tysons may be a good starting point. Lessons learned from the pilot will be invaluable for any future expansion of the pilot across the region.

I recommend that the development and implementation of such a pilot, and any subsequent expansion, be conducted jointly by all relevant transit agencies, highway agencies, and funding entities, following a thorough examination of travel demand and a full understanding of the factors that are key to accomplishing modal transfer. Extraordinary levels of market research, public engagement, education, information, and customer service will be critical to success of Objective 1-b.

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[1] See https://bustransformationproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Detailed-Document-Bus-Transformation-Project-Draft-Strategy-2019-05-06-1.pdf
[2] TransAction is the long range, multimodal transportation plan for Northern Virginia. NVTA is responsible for developing TransAction, which is updated on a five-year cycle. The current version of TransAction was adopted by the Authority in November 2017.

I do not plan to make comments on Goals 3 thru 5 or the recommendations related to Elements 4 thru 6. While these are important and complementary, I consider it is more appropriate for our member jurisdictions to address these. Suffice it to say, project selection and programing using the Authority's regional revenues are subject to compliance with Virginia Code and the Authority's prevailing processes.

I note that the exclusion of PRTC from the BTP, while understandable, may potentially limit the effectiveness of future actions from a NoVA perspective, especially when you consider the potential for AADT and VMT reductions by long distant drive-alone commuters from outer jurisdictions.

June 5, 2019

Bus Transformation Project Team

RE: Bus Transformation Project

Dear Bus Transformation Project Team:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Bus Transformation Project as part of the Strategy Advisory Panel. The DC Office of Planning (OP) is committed to the values expressed in the Draft Strategies Report, including making transit more people focused and prioritizing bus service on District and regional roadways. OP develops and manages land use-based policy through tools including the Comprehensive Plan that prioritize transit-oriented development. The goal of this guidance is to create an urban form and transportation system that encourages people to take trips using transit, by walking and/or biking.

OP offers the following comments on the Bus Transformation Project Draft Strategy published May 2019 with the goal of strengthening the connection between bus transit and the land use and people it serves.

General Comments
- The plan does not recognize the intertwined relationship between bus and the land uses it serves. A key to transits' success is connecting people to their jobs, services, and entertainment needs. This relationship should be detailed as one of the emphasis in either *Strategy to Action* 2 or 3.
- There should be a bigger emphasis on the economic opportunities that the bus system provides its riders who would otherwise be left out of the job market.
- How does this plan relate to other regional and jurisdictional transportation and transit plans? This should be explained in the report; for the District specifically, how the Bus Transformation Project Draft Strategy relates to moveDC and Visualize 2045.
- The plan briefly recognizes that transportation preferences have changed but does not have a significant dialogue about how the plan addresses these preferences. Will this strategy be successful in an ever-evolving transportation landscape?
  - Specifically, major upcoming technological changes will happen over the 10-year life of this 'plan'. These potential changes are only slightly acknowledged, but not flushed out in detail. The plan could address how changes will be monitored and addressed.

- The plan recommends many actions that would require their own studies. Is there an identified work plan to initiate these efforts following the completion of the plan?
  - The task force recommended in Strategy to Action 6 does address some of the near term (three years) efforts but is light on the details of what these efforts would entail.
- The plan does not address the relationship between the region's bus system and Metrorail. There should be a more robust discussion of how the repositioning of bus complements and supplements the Metrorail.
- The plan recommends a new regional board to guide bus. How is this different than existing regional boards that already focus on transportation including WMATA and TPB?

Specific Comments
- Page 4 – should the first bullet be better and faster transportation? Currently the first result is "reduce congestion and emissions."
- Page 5 – references needs to overcome transportation challenges to continue to grow and compete with other regions around the country.
  - OP comment: should we reference our importance on the world stage as a world capital?
- Page 66: discusses the benefit of electric bus, specifically references that "electric bus garages are more community-friendly than existing bus garages; as a result, less pushback from NIMBY's."
  - OP comment: rather than referencing NIMBY's, the comment should reference surrounding communities. In addition, there should be an acknowledgement that electric bus garages have the potential to be in more vertical structures, and provide additional housing, office, or creative space.
- Page 74: discusses how planning and execution of bus priority projects are currently done in the region.
  - OP comment: jurisdictions are required to ensure that land uses around many of these priority bus corridors have the adequate populations to support dedicated services. Often the planning process reflects the intertwined relationship between enhanced transit service and the land uses that support the facilities.
- Page 77: recommends adopting consistent priority guidelines for corridors across the region.
  - OP comment: please include references that prioritization on corridors with high density, transit friendly land use will help to make bus an even more attractive option and improve service efficiency. This relationship needs to be elevated in the document. Bus ridership is dependent upon the type of land uses served.
- Page 81: indicates that a key consideration should be to maximize return on investment for bus priority treatment.
  - OP comment: this should include a reference to the ability of surrounding land to be densified based on the improved transit facilities and the potential for value capture of land use value increase and/or improvements.
- Page 90: References encouraging shifts away from low-occupancy vehicles will benefit transit riders and the region. One of the benefits indicated is "more sustainable land use development – less space needed for personal vehicles can be used for other purposes."
  - OP comment: This claim is likely true, but too vague and unsubstantiated. The benefits should be elaborated on, specifically what space will be used differently. Also, the description indicates that land use development would change, but does not indicate how.

- Page 173: Recommends that after three years of the task force's work, responsibilities should be transferred to a formal Coalition of jurisdictional representatives with authority for implementation.
  - OP comment: How is this different than the existing WMATA Board, or the recommendation for dedicated staff different WMATA's bus planners? How would it relate to TPB or NVTC in Virginia? This sounds like an additional layer of bureaucracy that does not have a clear purpose or expressed empowerment. How would this new entity be funded?
- Page 174: Hold transportation and transit agencies accountable for prioritizing bus as a primary mode of transportation within their organizations.
  - OP comment: There is not any recognition that the priority comes from funding bodies including elected boards/councils/legislatures. There should be a recognition that this plan will take more than organizational will, it will take political will from multiple jurisdictions across the region.

If you have any questions about or would like to discuss our comments, please contact Kristin Calkins via the telephone at 202-442-8812, or via e-mail at kristin.calkins@dc.gov. Please note that while the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT) will submit separate comments, OP and DDOT have coordinated to ensure consistency.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be involved in the Study and to comment on the Draft Strategy. The Office of Planning looks forward to continued coordination on how bus can best serve District residents and the region.

Sincerely,

Andrew Trueblood

cc: Jeff Marootian, Director, DDOT
        Sakina Khan, Deputy Director, Citywide and Strategy & Analysis, OP
        Dan Emerine, Manager, Policy and Legislative Affairs Division, DDOT

ARLINGTON
VIRGINIA

May 21, 2019

Shyam Kannan
Vice President of Planning
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)
600 5th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Comments on Bus Transformation Project

Dear Mr. Kannan,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on and participate in the Bus Transformation Project.
We are writing as members of the Strategic Advisory Panel and Technical Team. These
comments represent Arlington County's position on the strategies and recommendations in the
draft report.

In general, Arlington County is very supportive of efforts to increase ridership, market Metrobus,
offer better pass options, and install priority treatments on County-owned roadways. We also
agree with the vision statement of the project. However, we feel that the recommendations
regarding transfer of service to local operators and changing the regional/non-regional formula
are an overreach into an area of WMATA board policy. We encourage staff to seek
authorization from the Board of Directors to begin a study on these topics during FY20 before
any route transfers are considered or a change to an existing formula is proposed for discussion.

As a community, Arlington has always valued transit. Our investment in WMATA is reflected
in bus and rail ridership, which is the highest of any jurisdiction other than the District of
Columbia. Additionally, we have consistently demonstrated how much we value transit in the
way that our community has developed around rail stations.

Below are our specific comments on individual strategies in the draft report.

**Strategy 1: The bus system should be customer focused and an easy-to-use option that
people want to ride.**

Arlington is already moving forward with several strategies that are listed including accepting
regional passes, making fares consistent with WMATA, improving bus stops, and modernizing
our bus fleet. We also market Metrobus and ART through Arlington County Commuter Services
(ACCS) programs such as the Car-Free Diet, Arlington Transportation Partners, Mobility Lab,
Commuter Stores, transit information screens, and various social media platforms.

Strategy	Arlington Comment
Expand marketing efforts related to bus.	Strongly support.
Make bus easy to understand with legible maps and consistent naming conventions.	Could support for Metrobus. Recommend setting up working group to discuss.

Create a single mobile app that allows payment and real time information.	Could support. ART accepts SmarTrip and real time information is already publicly available.
Make bus fares clear and consistent.	ART fares already mirror Metrobus.
Introduce passes that work across systems.	ART accepts SmarTrip, open to SelectPass.
Enhance pass products for low income riders.	Support for Arlington. Allow opt in for others.
Allow free transfers between bus and rail.	Support pending revenue/ridership study.
Make bus stops safe, convenient, and accessible across the region.	Support. Arlington has stop improvement program.
Modernize the region's bus fleet with energy saving, green technology.	Support depending on cost-benefit and availability of funding for facility retrofit.

Strategy 2: Prioritizing buses on major roads is the fiscally responsible way to move most people quickly.

We support this strategy and will work with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to prioritize buses on a corridor-by-corridor and in some cases street-by-street or intersection-by-intersection basis where WMATA requests. Our Traffic Engineering & Operations (TE&O) will work directly with WMATA and where feasible.

Strategy	Arlington Comment
Obtain commitments from local and state jurisdictions to prioritize bus.	Support for County-owned roads. Will work with WMATA on VDOT-owned roads.
Adopt consistent priority guidelines for corridors across the region.	Support individual corridor studies on a case-by-case basis and retain local guidelines.
Develop enforcement programs that maximize the effectiveness of bus priority.	Could support depending on implementation.
Offer incentives to jurisdictions encourage implementation of regional priority guidelines.	Could support depending on specifics.
Coordinate with regional congestion mitigation efforts, curb access management, and parking limitations.	Support. Arlington is willing to proactively manage curb space and already limits on-street parking for bus stops.

Strategy 3: Frequent and convenient bus service is fundamental to accessing opportunity, building an equitable region, and ensuring high quality of life.

While the goal is laudable, many of the strategies listed are not practical. The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) already requires transit operators to maintain and annually update a Transit Development Plan (TDP). These plans supersede any regional plans and also address WMATA service within Compact jurisdictions. Additionally, WMATA is required by the Compact (Section 16) to adopt and maintain a mass transit plan. While historically this plan has not focused on bus service, WMATA should already be maintaining a regional plan for Metrobus.

Also, WMATA has already adopted service standards to measure the productivity of bus service. The WMATA board has approved these service standards, and the Bus Transformation Project has not demonstrated that they need to be updated or replaced. Instead WMATA should reinstate quarterly and annual reporting on productivity measures by route.

Strategy	Arlington Comment
Develop a regional bus network plan.	Modify. WMATA should develop and maintain a multi-year TDP for integrated rail and bus service.
Adopt consistent guidelines across region.	Support existing WMATA service standards. Jurisdiction reserve right to adopt standards better tailored to local needs.
Provide flexible, on-demand transit service.	Support if developed as collaborative partnership between WMATA and local jurisdictions.

Strategy 4: Balance local and regional provider responsibilities by positioning local bus systems to meet the jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits

The recommendations listed in this chapter are highly problematic. WMATA already has a regional and non-regional formula that has been adopted by the board and resulted from an extensive regional debate. The Bus Transformation Project has not demonstrated that the existing formula needs to be updated or replaced. If staff feel the formula needs to be replaced, they should seek authorization from the board to convene a task force, report back to the board, and seek authorization to change rather than burying it in a consultant report.

Specifically, Arlington is not willing to transfer the 41, 42, 43, or 87 to WMATA and will not accept a transfer to ART of the 2A, 4A, and 4B, all of which have significant mileage in Fairfax County. Proposing such in a consultant report is an overreach by staff into a rightful area of board policy.

Strategy	Arlington Comment
Position the regional bus system to provide the services that meet regional needs.	Oppose definition of regional in draft strategy report. Recommend board revisit.
Revise the cost local jurisdictions pay WMATA for local service.	Oppose blended rate. Jurisdictions should retain option to purchase service at marginal rate.
Facilitate short-term operations of local service.	Oppose recommendations for Arlington.
Develop a 10-year plan to allocate service between bus systems for applicable routes.	Oppose. Recommend WMATA develop collaborative process with jurisdictions prior any suggested route transfers.

Additionally, there are several specific statements with which Arlington does not agree:

1) The three criteria for Metrobus service on page 124,
2) The statement that routes that are not eligible for regional operation should transfer to local operators over a 10-year period and the new cost for non-regional service on page 125,
3) The note on page 132 that a jurisdiction should operate a route that has at least 50% or the largest share of stops,

4) The statement on page 135 that non-regional service is contracted out based on actual cost and is not considered as part of the 3% subsidy cap, and

5) The operations, maintenance, and overhead costs for ART on page 143.

Arlington could support a collaborative process with WMATA that on a route-by-route or segment-by-segment basis determines whether WMATA or Arlington should operate a route or segment. We encourage WMATA to develop that process. Arlington strongly supports WMATA maintaining a non-regional rate for service requested by and within the boundaries of a single jurisdiction. We feel that non-regional service should be charged to jurisdictions at $104.74. Regarding the 3% cap, we strongly feel that both contracted and non-regional service must be operated within it. Finally, we note that all of WMATA's current collective bargaining agreements have been negotiated with a less than 3% annual increase, for which we strongly commend WMATA management.

Strategy 5: Optimize back-office functions through sharing, streamlining and shared innovation by consolidating regional resources and devoting more resources to operating bus service.

We are generally agreement with this statement and already collaborate with other jurisdictions, WMATA, regional agencies, and state agencies on specific functions.

Strategy	Arlington Comment
Consolidate back-office support functions.	Already occurs. Limited opportunities to expand.
Establish Regional Mobility Innovation Lab.	Needs further explanation.
Develop regional standards for bus stop data.	Regional collaboration already occurring. Could be enhanced.
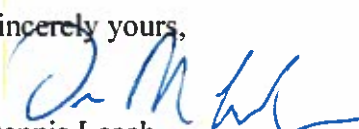
Strategy 6: Customers in a region with multiple bus providers need a regional steward to transform the bus system.

While this statement is generally true, WMATA already is the regional steward of the bus system. Additionally, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) already houses a Regional Public Transit Subcommittee (RPTS) and Metropolitan Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Technical Committee that are meeting this stated need.

Strategy	Arlington Comment
Form a regional task force responsible for Bus Transformation Project execution; transfer responsibilities to Coalition.	Identify agency to house and ensure willingness to support prior to forming Coalition. Recommend MWCOG.
Hold transportation and transit agencies accountable for prioritizing bus.	Not necessary. Already addressed in Strategy 2A.
Publish annual Bus Transformation and bus performance scorecard.	Support. Recommend MWCOG produce with WMATA input.

Thank you again for the opportunity comment. Please contact Tim Roseboom at (703) 228-0090 or troseboom@arlingtonva.us if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely yours,

Dennis Leach
Director of Transportation

Lynn Rivers
Transit Bureau Chief

Cc: Christian Dorsey, Chair
        Mark Schwartz, County Manager

William Jones
Transit Services Manager

Tim Roseboom
WMATA Services Coordinator

We at OmniRide understand the rationale for excluding commuter bus services and local services that are outside of the WMATA compact area from consideration in the Bus Transformation Project. At the same time we recognize that our current and potential riders would benefit from an improved regional bus network. While the majority of our Express service riders don't regularly interact with the existing regional network an improved network would result in enhanced travel options for our riders and expand our perceived service footprint. We also operate service that feeds directly into the regional bus network at the Tysons Corner and Franconia-Springfield Metro Stations. In general, we're supportive of the effort to improve the regional network and are in agreement with these draft recommendations. We do believe that expanding participation in some efforts beyond compact operators would be beneficial to all parties – including bus riders throughout the region.

OmniRide services have been a part of the regional transit network for many years and we are or have been participants in many regional transit efforts. Prince William area residents and employees are certainly part of the regional travel mix. While it makes sense to separate out commuter bus for consideration of certain elements of the transformation project – route naming conventions, consideration of operating responsibilities between WMATA and other compact jurisdictions, for example – others should include **all** regional bus operators. Continued cooperation on fare products and policies, data standardization, and the development of an innovation lab are all examples of recommended efforts that will benefit from expanding participation beyond the compact operators. Outer-ring suburban jurisdictions like Prince William County will continue to experience significant growth in both residential population and employment resulting in more local transit service as well as a greater focus on regionally connected services. To exclude operators from these areas from participation in these regional efforts seems, at best, short-sighted. A few comments directed at specific elements or recommendations follow.

Recommendations: Make bus fares clear and consistent across the region. Create a mobile solution that allows riders to plan and pay for trips, and access real-time service information.

Comment: All SmarTrip regional partners should have a seat at the table when discussing changes to regional fare policies and products. The region has long cooperated on fare collection and creating barriers for transit users in jurisdictions that have long benefited from this cooperation because they are not considered in the transformation project would be counter to the goals and objectives of the project.

Recommendations: Position the regional bus system to provide the services that meet regional need. Develop a 10-year plan to optimally allocate services between bus systems for applicable routes.

Comment: The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation bases transit operations funding on certain performance measures (including revenue hours, revenue miles and ridership). The transition of non-regional routes to local operators and all regional routes to WMATA should

include an analysis of impacts on state funding and provisions to hold jurisdictions harmless for any net funding losses. Especially since the routes transitioned are likely to have a significant impact on the DRPT performance measures due to route lengths and shifts in ridership. A net calculation considering local operator's loss/gain of state funding as well as required portion of regional bus operations would be necessary to fully understand the budgetary impact to local operators.

Element: Streamline back office functions and share innovation by consolidating regional resources and devoting more resources to operating bus services.

Comment: This effort should be expanded beyond the regional bus services concept to include opportunities for participation by operators of bus service not considered as part of the transformation project. Including data from commuter bus agencies would provide a more comprehensive picture of regional travel patterns. Any efforts related to fare collection should obviously include all of the current regional SmarTrip partners. Restricting participation in a regional innovation lab would simply serve to shut out potential innovations that may come from or through these operators and prevent innovative solutions from being easily adapted across the entire region. Including commuter bus in real-time information and trip planning platforms would further incentivize use of the regional bus system by those in the outer suburbs. Creating barriers to participation for tens of thousands of regular travelers by virtue of the study's limits fails to recognize the current and potential benefits of inclusion where appropriate.

It's easy to understand why operators outside the compact area or certain service types are not considered for inclusion in the project-defined "regional bus system", that doesn't mean that those services are not part of the regional bus system. The project should acknowledge this by plainly identifying those elements or recommendations that should or could include wider participation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.

Chuck Steigerwald
Director of Strategic Planning
Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission
703-580-6144
csteigerwald@omniride.com

Date: June 7, 2019

From: Coalition for Smarter Growth

To: Bus Transformation Study

Subj: Comments on Bus Transformation Study

Thank you to the entire Bus Transformation Team, and every member of the advisory committees for your dedication and expertise in developing the draft strategy. We support the draft strategy to a significant extent, and will limit our comments to the strategy components:

Strategy 1 – Customer focus – Support

We wish to particularly highlight the importance of:
- Improve bus riders' experience with bus shelters, real-time information, accessibility at all bus stops
- Free transfers between bus and rail
- Low-income rider discounted fares/passes

Strategy 2 – Prioritizing buses – Support but with critical recommendations

We particularly wish to highlight the importance and need for:
- Dedicated Bus Lanes: on all PCN routes - support regional coordination for standards.
- Bus Lane compliance: Enforce bus stop and lanes compliance, expanded peak period parking restrictions/phase out of parking on all bus lane corridors & high ridership routes
- All-door boarding: Implement cashless, all-door boarding on all MetroExpress routes by 2022
- Transit Signal Priority (TSP): Refine TSP performance and expand to all PCN intersections.
- Queue Jumps: Add queue jumps to key bottlenecks on all PCN routes
- Limited stop service: Add MetroExpress, limited-stop service to all top ridership corridors (99, 80X, A7)
- Bus stop consolidation

We need urgent action by elected officials to require DOT's to provide road space for dedicated lanes. This must be a top priority. Dedicated bus lanes need not and should not be tied to expanding arterial roads but should begin with, wherever possible, with conversion of existing lanes.

Strategy 3 -- Frequent, reliable, convenient service – Support but with critical recommendations

We believe that bus network redesign should also be a top priority after adoption of this report and should be completed prior to decisions about who should operate particular services. This redesign should be done in parallel with negotiating a regional commitment to dedicated bus lanes.

We are concerned about the mention of tying service to demand if it is applied too rigorously. Because of the role that high-frequency bus can have in shaping land use there are cases where it must be put in place in the early stages of redevelopment. An example is the Metroway which has taken time to build ridership, but we are seeing it grow as redevelopment continues and residents choose a location where they can live car free or "car-lite."

At the same time, we want to ensure that the focus on high frequency, high ridership routes does not leave lower income communities behind. Good coverage is needed, particularly for lower income communities in suburban areas, but will also be challenging in areas that lack good street grids. The Council of Governments Equity Map and other social equity maps, including the COG/VCU health indicator maps are good resources to use when developing new networks and ensuring adequate coverage.

Strategy 4 – Regional and local service – Concerns

We believe that consideration of this issue should be deferred pending completion of a bus network redesign study for the entire regional network including the local services. Once we have defined the service structure that we need, then the decision can be made about which entity should operate the service.

At the same time, we are concerned that the regional vs local framing might not result in the proper analysis of the functions of bus service in various contexts. For example, the main types of service might be considered to be: 1) peak hour commute; 2) TOD supportive high-frequency, all-day rapid transit; 3) local and equity coverage service -- rather than the regional v local paradigm.

As noted re Strategy 3 above, we do not want the region's bus system to become one focused only on high ridership, longer distance, peak hour commute service. We are concerned for example that the toll lane-funded projects have already directed significant funding to long distance service, while we are not providing sufficient funding for "density" of service for existing communities within and near the Beltway where more compact land uses merit more routes and more frequency.

We believe caution must be exercised regarding the proposed devolution of more service to local providers. The advantage of the WMATA regional compact and the hoops required prior to reducing service are such that it can protect and stabilize bus service, whereas local control potentially puts bus service at greater risk during periods of political turnover and budgetary challenges. Service could be quickly cut and lost, and restoration difficult. Recently Montgomery County cut a few high ridership RideOn routes and almost cut more. If bus is to be the mode of choice and we are to have a strong regional network, then it seems best to have a strong regional coordinating body and commitments to maintaining consistent and growing service.

Strategy Five – Streamlining back office and fostering innovation – Support

Strategy Six – Coordination – Support

We think that the task force to champion and advance the reform agenda, and an annual report card, are particularly important and wish to serve on this task force and be a non-profit partner in the annual report card.

Thank you,

Stewart

June 7, 2019

Allison Davis, Director of Planning
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
600 5th Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Comments on the Bus Transformation Project (BTP)

Dear Ms. Davis,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Bus Transformation Project (BTP). We are writing as members of the Strategic Advisory Panel and Technical Team to share feedback representing the City of Fairfax, Virginia.

In general, the City of Fairfax is very supportive of efforts to improve bus operations and the experience of bus riders (including on bus service provided by local jurisdictions as well as Metrobus). We support strategies and actions that increase reliability, improve customer experience, and increase efficiency of operations. However, we are concerned that some specific recommendations in the BTP have not been developed with sufficient analysis and input from stakeholders, particularly the redefinition of regional and non-regional routes and responsibilities. Rather than seeking to define specific guidelines and criteria within this larger study, we encourage staff to work with the regional partners to study changes to the regional/non-regional routes and formulas.

Below are additional comments on the individual strategies in the draft report.

- Strategy 1: The bus system should be customer focused and an easy-to-use option that people want to ride.
    o We support moving forward with a number of actions in this strategy to leverage and expand on existing efforts in this area and achieve early successes with "low hanging fruit". The City of Fairfax CUE already accepts SmarTrip and regional pass products, and are engaged in a project to improve bus stops in our jurisdiction.
    o We fully support recommendations to expand marketing, introducing new pass products, incentivizing employer-supported transit benefits, and improving bus stops.

- We conditionally support recommendations to improve legibility of the system, creating a mobile app, making bus fares consistent, enhancing reduced fare products for low-income riders, allowing free transfers between bus and rail, and modernizing the region's bus fleet with green technology. We would support these initiatives pending further analysis of costs and benefits and further discussion of how these are implemented on Metrobus versus local bus systems.

- Strategy 2: Prioritizing buses on major roads moves the most people in the quickest, most reliable and fiscally responsible way.
  - We support the recommendations in this strategy, with the caveat that bus priority corridor improvements will need to be evaluated and implemented on a case-by-case basis. Regional guidelines for bus priority corridors, curb access, and parking management may not be successful as a "one size fits all" solution; the City of Fairfax is willing to consider regional guidance but may establish local guidelines.

- Strategy 3: Frequent, reliable, and convenient bus service is fundamental to offering equitable access to opportunities and improving quality of life across the region.
  - We conditionally support the recommendations in this strategy. The development or update of a regional bus network plan should build on WMATA's current regional mass transit plans and should be done in close coordination with local agencies and jurisdictions, given that we already develop our own Transit Development Plans with consideration of WMATA service. Updates to service guidelines should not be adopted without first evaluating WMATA's existing service standards. Local jurisdictions may also adopt local standards.

- Strategy 4: Balancing the responsibilities of local and regional providers will position bus systems to meet their own jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits.
  - We do not support the re-definition of regional and non-regional service and reallocation of services and costs as recommended in this strategy. While there may be a case for updating regional service definitions and while the City of Fairfax would be willing to collaborate on a more in-depth study of this topic, the specific recommendations in this strategy are premature. The impacts on local budgets and service quality have not been adequately evaluated. Further, decisions about regional bus responsibilities are closely linked to other proposed strategies in this plan (such as Strategy 3) and should be developed and evaluated in coordination with related strategies. We recommend that this strategy be modified to further study this issue in conjunction with updates to service standards and the regional bus network.
  - Additionally, we do not agree with the decision to include the City of Fairfax in Fairfax County when analyzing inter-jurisdictional routes (page 118 of the detailed report). The

City is an independent jurisdiction with separate budgeting and policy processes and is a separate member of the Compact, and the implications of providing regional service and allocating regional costs need to be evaluated with this in mind.

- Strategy 5: Streamlining back-office functions and sharing innovation will help all operators and allow more resources for operating bus service.
  - We support the goal of this strategy, and would welcome further discussion of what functions are already coordinated and what opportunities exist to expand coordination and consolidation. We would also welcome opportunities to coordinate on innovation, with recognition of existing local and state innovation efforts, and we would support efforts to improve regional data collection, analysis and data sharing.

- Strategy 6: Transforming and incorporating changes in bus service operated by multiple providers across the region will require centralized leadership, coordination and collaboration.
  - We support the goal of this strategy and agree that regional bus improvements should be led by regional stewards. However, we do not see the need for a new separate body to carry this out. Relationships and responsibilities within existing organizations including WMATA, MWCOG, and other regional entities should be used and enhanced to provide the necessary coordination and authority to implement improvements.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Chloe Ritter

Chloe Ritter
Multimodal Transportation Planner

CC: Wendy Block Sanford, Transportation Director
       Rob Stalzer, City Manager

County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

June 10, 2019

Bus Transformation Project Team
c/o Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
600 Fifth Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001

Reference: Draft Bus Transformation Project Strategy

Dear Bus Transformation Team:

The Fairfax County staff has reviewed the Draft Bus Transformation Project Strategy. Enclosed are the combined staff comments on the six strategies. While the staff agrees with several of the sub-strategies, there are others that either require additional refinement or are elements that cannot be supported at this time.

The most significant of the supportable strategies is the transfer of 26 Metrobus routes within Fairfax County to the Fairfax Connector (as stated in Section 4) overtime; although, this strategy still needs implementation plan refinement regarding the transfer of transit services. However, the staff does not support the transfer of any existing Fairfax Connector routes to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA); therefore, those specific recommendations should be deleted from the plan.

Additionally, the staff supports the strategies of implementing traffic signal priority and roadway infrastructure that can improve transit service and on-time performance; although, implementation would vary widely across the region. Since the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has authority over the roadway network, any strategy impacting the roadway network would require a comprehensive and cooperative process with VDOT. The plan needs to address this issue and provide a detailed implementation process.

Furthermore, the staff does not recommend creating any additional committees to oversee implementation and planning of the project's strategies, as several such oversight bodies already currently exist within Northern Virginia.

The following bullets detail the Fairfax County staff comments on the Draft Bus Transformation Strategic Project:

- Introduction section: We suggest including a statement about nationwide bus ridership to show that it is not solely the Washington, D.C., region that has experienced decreased ridership.

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Page 83 of 136

- Goal Overview: The local and regional provider responsibilities do not have to be "balanced," as we are uncertain what "balanced" refers to in this context.

- Fairfax County already has programs similar to Priorities 1A through 1E, 1I, and 1J.

- Priority 1B: Adjusting system maps and route naming convention is a low priority, as passengers are more concerned that a bus arrives on time than what the route is numbered.

- Priority 1C: The regional pay app is acceptable to Fairfax County; however, the regional SmarTrip group is already working on a regional pay app as an outgrowth of the current SmarTrip card. Although this system is not perfect, it seems to work well for most people. Therefore, the staff suggests that creation of the pay app be a low priority. Also, it might be best to utilize an existing pay app employed by other transit systems, rather than create a new pay app.

- Priority 1F: This program may be beneficial with additional vetting. The program would need to be administrated by a non-transportation department agency, such as the Fairfax Neighborhood Community Services.

- Priority 1G: Free transfers between bus and rail has been previously considered. Although most regional staff are in favor of it, free transfers are unfortunately not considered financially feasible, because the revenue loss may be too large.

- Priority 1H: Employer outreach programs are currently utilized; however, additional incentives may be unaffordable. Furthermore, mandatory requirements may not be legal in Virginia. The Council of Governments has taken the lead regarding these efforts in the past.

- Priority 1I: Fairfax County currently has a program to upgrade bus stops and is improving 50 to 100 stops per year. As this program is generally limited by funding, more bus stops could be upgraded, if additional funding becomes available. Although uniform bus stops across the region are not necessary, the stops do need to contain certain standardized features, such as ADA accessibility.

- Priority 2A: Prioritizing all buses on roadways would require buy-in from VDOT, since it controls the highway system in Fairfax County. Additionally, a more structured process would be needed for traffic signal priority to be implemented in Northern Virginia. Without a well-defined process to move forward with VDOT and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, many of the project's recommendations and identified advantages would be difficult to achieve over the ten-year horizon. Therefore, the staff believes VDOT should have been an active participant in this project, since they control the majority of roadways in Virginia. However, Fairfax County is already working on certain bus priority corridors such as Routes 1 and 7. As well, the project needs to address the fact that local land use is controlled by the local governing bodies and is unique to each jurisdiction.

- Priority 2B: These guidelines should be consistent at the state level; although, they may be challenging to achieve across this region. In addition, WMATA and the Transportation Planning Board already identified regional bus priority corridors several years ago. Fairfax County is

currently working on the bus priority corridors along Routes 1 and 7. These two routes are considered high priority and will absorb the presently available funding.

- Priority 2C: The Virginia General Assembly has allowed red light camera enforcement (reluctantly), but not speed enforcement. Therefore, the staff believes the Virginia General Assembly is unlikely to allow transit lane enforcement by camera.

- Priority 2D: Fairfax Connector already has major incentives (such as increasing ridership and cost savings) to make bus service more efficient.

- Priority 2E: This program could be beneficial within this area; although, it would need to be implemented at the state level rather than regional level. Therefore, such techniques must be done in coordination with VDOT. Additionally, the rules and ownership of roadways are significantly different between Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. At this time, Fairfax County is initiating a parking management study to consider some of these methods.

- Priorities 3A and 3B: Virginia jurisdictions already have these types of guidelines and regional bus plan coordination.

- Priority 3B: As long as the jurisdictions are paying bus subsidies, each jurisdiction can and should decide on the level they are willing to pay for.

- Priority 3C: This is an option Fairfax County is already starting to explore.

- Chapter 4: This chapter needs to be modified. Regardless of service type, Fairfax County pays for all of the service within the County. This chapter is vastly incomplete regarding service types to be operated by certain operators and what savings may or may not be realized by shifting service between operators. Cost allocations are very complicated in our region; thus, it is challenging to equally and fairly compare the different operating costs. Furthermore, the regional and non-regional designations currently in use were based on WMATA's recommendations. Jurisdictions have made financial decisions based on their designations of regional and non-regional transit routes. Therefore, the project needs to be more inclusive of the local jurisdictions' definitions and financial authority.

- Chapter 4: Fairfax County staff is concerned that WMATA may see the rebalancing of local and regional provision of transit as a means to satisfy the three percent operating cap (imposed by the Virginia dedicated funding legislation) by simply moving the cost of service from one side of the ledger to the other instead of making fundamental changes to WMATA's cost structure. Staff recommends WMATA engage with the jurisdictions, and transit operators to ensure that any changes to how bus services are provided does no harm to our localities and ensures that jurisdictions' investment in WMATA provided service is commensurate with the level of service being provided.

- Chapter 4: The staff generally supports on the list of Metrobus routes for transfer over to Fairfax Connector overtime; although, a more detailed implementation plan and phasing of the route transfers would need to be developed, and resources will need to be approved by the Board of Supervisors. However, to maintain proper service levels for the Fairfax County residents, the staff does not support transferring any Fairfax Connector routes to WMATA. Therefore, those specific recommendations should be deleted from the project.

- Chapter 5: This chapter would require more examination to determine the potential savings. The rough estimate in this report is $11 million regionwide, which is very small per funding jurisdiction. As well, the National Transit Database already does Priority 5C.

- Priority 6A: The staff supports a forum to discuss regional bus service issues and coordination, but does not advocate the scorecard concept or giving the forum any authority to impose regional bus positions. The type of information proposed as part of the scorecard is already reported by transit agencies in the National Transit Database. Furthermore, each jurisdiction has its own priorities for bus service being paid for. As such, Fairfax County is not willing to cede policy decisions to a regional group for the Fairfax Connector or Metrobus service it pays for. Therefore, the staff does not support decision-making and funding authority for the regional forum.

- The recommendations should be prioritized from those with the smallest impact and greatest benefit to those with the largest impact and most complex implementation. In addition, it would be helpful if the project developed cost estimates or ranges for the least to highest priority items.
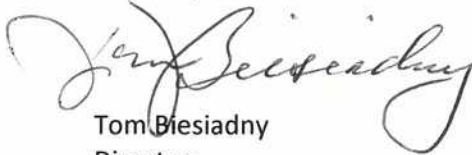
Also, the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning comments on the Bus Transformation Project are included as Attachment I to this letter.

While Fairfax County has stated several concerns with this project, the staff does agree with the overall objectives to improve transit service and increase coordination across the region. In addition, if Priority 1F is advanced; low-income fares would need to be implemented through the Fairfax Neighborhood Community Services. As well, the staff supports the general concepts of Priorities 4A and 4D, improving the regional bus system, developing a ten-year implementation plan, and opportunities for back-office functions (in terms of training and marketing).

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with the WMATA and consulting teams to discuss the draft document and our comments. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Michael Felschow at 703-877-5612.

Sincerely,

Tom Biesiadny
Director

Enclosure: Attachment I

Distribution:
Fred Selden, Director, Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning
Barbara Byron, Director, Office of Community Revitalization
Marianne Gardner, Planning Director, FCDPZ
Meghan Van Dam, Branch Chief, Policy and Plan Development Branch, FCDPZ
Dwayne Pelfrey, Chief of Transit Service Division, FCDOT
Todd Wigglesworth, Chief of Coordination and Funding Division, FCDOT
Michael Felschow, Planning Section Chief of Transit Service Division, FCDOT

County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 7, 2019

TO: Michael Felschow, Planning Section Chief, Transit Services Division
Fairfax County Department of Transportation

FROM: Meghan Van Dam, Branch Chief, Policy and Plan Development Branch
Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning

SUBJECT: Bus Transformation Project

These comments were prepared by Sophia Fisher, Senior Planner in the Policy and Plan Development Branch. Questions or comments can be directed to her via phone at 703-324-1349 or via email at sophia.fisher@fairfaxcounty.gov. Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning staff appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft Bus Transformation Strategy, published in May 2019. The goals of the project, to increase transit ridership in the region and to provide a convenient alternative to single occupant vehicular travel, align with many of the goals of the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan.

The primary focus of the Draft Bus Transformation Strategy is on operations and logistics, including streamlining bus routes, improving fare collection, and prioritizing high-frequency and high-capacity bus routes. Connecting transportation projects to land use and environmental policies is vital to the success of both; however, discussion of these connections is limited in the document. Staff believes that emphasizing the land use/transportation connection and environmental benefits is critical to the success of the Bus Transformation Project and has noted several ways that strategy elements 1, 2 and 3 can be revised to reflect the how land use policies support transit operations both now and in the future.

The following comments are based on the guidance found in the Policy Plan Element of the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan[1] and the One Fairfax Policy[2]. The relevant policies have been excerpted below.

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[1] Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Policy Plan, Land Use, Transportation, Housing, and Environment Elements. https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-zoning/comprehensive-plan/policy-plan
[2] One Fairfax Policy, November 21, 2017 https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/one-fairfax

- General comment: Page 14, Principles to keep in mind, bullet 2: staff suggests that this bullet be expanded to include large buses on fixed routes that operate in dedicated lanes, such as a Bus Rapid Transit system.

- Strategy element 1: The bus system should be customer-focused and an easy-to use option that people want to ride.

  - 1.J: This recommendation discusses improving the environment by modernizing bus technology using such methods as electric buses. Staff suggests that this recommendation could be expanded to include a discussion of how a modern and efficient bus system could encourage people to ride transit instead of drive single occupant vehicles, thus helping to improve air quality because fewer cars would be on the road, consistent with other statements in the plan.

- Strategy element 2: Prioritizing buses on major roads is the fiscally responsible way to move the most people quickly and reliably.

  - 2.A: In addition to prioritizing bus on major corridors within their boundaries, staff suggests that this element to be expanded to include an emphasis on aligning bus service with employment centers, housing concentrations, and other major destinations. This also has the potential to improve air quality and public health, by reducing congestion and encouraging people to use transit instead of single occupant vehicles and by walking more.

  - 2.A: Consideration should also be given to the potential for future growth and development when prioritizing buses on major roads. As an example, Fairfax County is currently in the planning stage for a new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system on Richmond Highway, Route 1 south of the City of Alexandria. A significant amount of development is planned for the areas surrounding the planned BRT stations.

- Strategy element 3: Frequent and convenient bus service is fundamental to accessing opportunity, building an equitable region, and ensuring high quality of life.

  - 3.D (proposed): This element is an opportunity to promote transit-oriented development by encouraging new residential and commercial development along high-capacity and high-frequency bus lines. This can help to address the proximity and destination elements of convenient bus service by providing more opportunities for bus travel to be the easy and obvious mode choice. To that end, a new recommendation D on page 92 that discusses the importance of land use when planning a transportation system should be added. This new recommendation D could also discuss the importance of taking the plans for future growth and development into consideration when planning for future bus service across the region.

  - As of April 2019, the Quantification and Forecasting group in the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning estimated that close to 100% of future

residential growth could be accommodated in activity centers that are served by transit (both rail and bus). Language should be included in the Bus Transformation Strategy document that encourages all jurisdictions in the region to proactively focus future growth and development in areas that will be served by transit, especially bus.

o Fairfax County has been participating in an effort led by MWCOG that has been evaluating a regional approach to addressing the need to produce more housing units, and more affordable housing units in particular. This effort has had a significant amount of discussion about directing future residential growth to areas served by transit to reduce congestion and to ensure that jobs and services are easily accessible for everyone.

- Equity and Public Health: The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and School Board have jointly adopted One Fairfax dated November 21, 2017, a joint social and racial equity policy. It commits the county and schools to intentionally consider equity when making policies or delivering programs and services.

    o There are a number of ways that the Bus Transformation Project would serve to advance the goals of equity, particularly in terms of the recommendation for a consistent reduced fare program for low-income people across jurisdictions (Strategy Element 1, Recommendation F) and using equity as a metric to measure the success of Strategy 3, Recommendation A (Develop a regional bus network plan that realigns routes to create the most efficient and customer focused bus system).

    o Equity was one of the top five goals for the region as voiced by stakeholders, but the discussion of the meaning of equity in the context of a bus system is limited. A section should be added that outlines the ways in which the Bus Transformation Project will advance the goal of equity for the region.

    o Similar to the county's Comprehensive Plan, the One Fairfax Policy calls for a healthy and quality environment for residents in which to live and work. There is a connection between health and the built environment, and staff believes that there is an opportunity for this document to highlight that connection. Goal 4 on page 22 addresses sustainable economic health and access to opportunity. There is an opportunity to add discussion about the positive impacts to human health when air quality is improved through reducing congestion. Additionally, more walkable and transit-oriented neighborhoods allow mobility for a wider spectrum of ages and physical abilities, therefore expanding access to jobs and services. This comment is further supported by the policies in the Fairfax County Community Health Improvement Plan.[3]

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[3] Fairfax County Community Health Improvement Plan Priorities for Change, 2013-2018, published September 2013; https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/livehealthy/sites/livehealthy/files/assets/documents/pdf/chip-summary.pdf.

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan Guidance

The Policy Plan Element of the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan contains a variety of objectives that support a land use pattern that encourages serving existing development with transit and further supports locating future development in areas that are served by transit. The following land use, transportation, housing, and environmental policy objectives highlight the importance of the land use-transportation connection.

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Policy Plan, Land Use Element, amended through 12-04-2018; pages 5-10:

Objective 6: Fairfax County should have a land use pattern which increases transportation efficiency, encourages transit use and decreases automobile dependency.

Objective 16: Fairfax County should encourage Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) with focused growth near certain planned and existing rail transit stations as a way to create opportunities for compact pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly, neighborhood centers accessible to transit.

Appendix 11 of the Land Use element of the Policy Plan also contains specific guidance in reference to transit-oriented development.

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Policy Plan, Transportation Element, amended through 3-20-2018; pages 6-12:

Objective 1: Provide for both through and local movement of people and goods via a multi-modal transportation system that provides transportation choices, reduces single-occupancy-vehicle (SOV) use and improves air quality.

Objective 2: Increase Use of Public Transportation and non-motorized transportation.

Objective 11: Ensure that land use and transportation policies are complementary.

Objective 12: Preserve land needed to accommodate planned transportation facilities.

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Policy Plan, Housing, amended through 3-14-17; page 7:

Objective 5, Policy d: Promote multifamily housing for the elderly and the handicapped that is conveniently located to public transportation and community services.

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Policy Plan, Environment Element, amended through 3-14-17; pages 3-4:

Objective 1: Preserve and improve air quality.

Policy a. Establish land use patterns and transportation facilities that encourage the use of public transportation and reduce trip lengths to reduce emissions of oxides of nitrogen, carbon monoxide, and hydrocarbons from automobiles. Consistent with other Land Use and Transportation objectives,

support and encourage the following during the reviews of development proposals, particularly for proposals in mixed use centers:

Policy b. Implement transportation strategies that reduce auto travel, minimize dependence on single-occupant automobiles and improve traffic flow, thereby reducing auto emissions. Consistent with other Land Use and Transportation objectives, support and encourage the following during the reviews of development proposals, particularly for proposals in mixed use centers and for development proposals with the potential to cause substantial increases in auto-related air pollutants:

One Fairfax Policy – Adopted November 21, 2017

One Fairfax is a joint social and racial equity policy of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and School Board. It commits the county and schools to intentionally consider equity when making policies or delivering programs and services.

It's a declaration that all residents deserve an equitable opportunity to succeed—regardless of their race, color, sex, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, disability, income or where they live.

One Fairfax Policy
IV. Areas of Focus to Promote Equity

1. "Community and economic development policies and programs that promote wealth creation and ensure fair access for all people.

11. A healthy and quality environment to live and work in that acknowledges the need to breathe clean air, to drink clean water now and for future generations.

14. A multi-modal transportation system that supports the economic growth, health, congestion mitigation, and prosperity goals of Fairfax County and provides accessible mobility solutions that are based on the principles associated with sustainability, diversity, and community health.

MVD/SSF

Distribution:
Tom Biesiadny, Director, Fairfax County Department of Transportation
Fred Selden, Director, Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning
Barbara Byron, Director, Office of Community Revitalization
Marianne Gardner, Planning Director, FCDPZ
Denise James, Branch Chief, Environment and Development Review Branch, FCDPZ
Karla Bruce, Chief Equity Officer, Fairfax County
Meghan Van Dam, Branch Chief, Policy and Plan Development Branch, FCDPZ
Sophia Fisher, Senior Planner, Policy

June 7, 2019

Bus Transformation Project Team
c/o NeoNiche Strategies
4501 Ford Avenue, Suite #501
Alexandria, Virginia 22302

Re: Comments on Draft Bus Transformation Project Recommendations

Dear Bus Transformation Project Team:

The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) appreciates the seriousness with which the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has tasked the Bus Transformation Project Team to transform the region's bus system and create a strategic framework to combat declining ridership and slower bus speeds. With over 150,000 riders on Northern Virginia's buses every weekday, we cannot underscore the importance of a bus network to transportation in Northern Virginia. As a regional entity tasked with coordinating transit policy and funding in Northern Virginia, NVTC is supportive of the project's effort but does share some words of caution on the strategies prepared to date.

We strongly support the study elements that seek to **prioritize buses** to make the bus system more customer focused and welcome the opportunity to support **ongoing coordination** between WMATA and jurisdictions to improve bus service in Northern Virginia. We also recommend that the project team and WMATA consider the development of a Virginia-specific roadmap for the implementation of the study.

We broadly support the study elements that seek to make the bus system more **customer focused**, provide **convenient bus service**, **streamline back-office functions** and **sharing innovation**. Many of these elements are consistent with NVTC's 2018 Regional Fare Collection Strategic Plan and policy recommendations contained in NVTC's 2018 Annual Report on the Performance and Condition of WMATA. In addition, NVTC and several Northern Virginia jurisdictions are already moving forward on components of these recommendations through such projects as Envision Route 7, the transitway extension to Pentagon City, Richmond Highway BRT, and the Alexandria Transit Vision Plan.

NVTC agrees that local transit operators are better equipped to respond to local needs when **balancing the responsibilities of local and regional providers.** However, we do not see a problem with the current balance of local and regional transit providers in Northern Virginia.

Local transit service across the region intentionally serves multiple purposes, whether it is to serve as a catalyst for economic development, to connect the most vulnerable to services and opportunities, or to efficiently move commuters to work every day. Essentially, bus service across the entire Washington, DC region is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor.

Northern Virginia localities have already voluntarily and gradually established bus services that reflect the priorities of their communities and rebalanced the responsibilities of local and regional providers over the last two decades. While we do respect the desire of individual jurisdictions to engage with WMATA on jurisdiction-specific delivery of service, given our experience, we do not see the need to significantly alter the policy framework around the role of Metrobus in Virginia.

We are also concerned that WMATA may see the rebalancing of local and regional provision of transit as a means to satisfy the three percent operating cap (imposed by the Virginia dedicated funding legislation) by simply moving the cost of service from one side of the ledger to the other instead of making fundamental changes to WMATA's unsustainable cost structure. We urge WMATA to engage with NVTC, the jurisdictions, and transit operators to ensure that any changes to how bus service is provided does no harm to our localities and ensures that jurisdictions' investment in WMATA-provided service is commensurate with the level of service being provided.

NVTC is the voice of transit in Northern Virginia and works closely with member jurisdictions and transit providers. We encourage the region's leaders to empower existing organizations and structures, including NVTC, in transforming or incorporating changes in bus service in the region and in Northern Virginia.

NVTC shares the goal of an affordable, reliable, equitable, and financially sustainable bus system that connects the region. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and we look forward to additional engagement in the study process.

Best regards,

Matthew F. Letourneau
Chairman

cc: Shyam Kannan, WMATA
       Allison Davis, WMATA
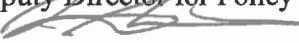
Marc Elrich
County Executive

Al R. Roshdieh
Director

MEMORANDUM

June 12, 2019

TO: Alison Davis, Project Manager
               Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

FROM: Christopher Conklin, P.E., Deputy Director for Policy
               Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: Comments on Draft Bus Transformation Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Bus Transformation Strategy. We thank the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) for beginning a conversation about the future of bus service in this region. Montgomery County has been working hard over the last several years to transform our own bus operations and to implement creative ideas to better match the services we provide with the needs of our community. We agree that improving the performance of our bus system and the increasing the return on investment in these systems is important for moving the region forward.

Many of the recommended elements of the strategy are valuable and important steps to take to make our systems more effective and to make them easier for travelers to use and we support these recommendations. We also feel that some of the recommendations are unlikely to deliver significant benefits and need to be reconsidered. The element of the plan related to reorganizing the delivery of bus services within the region does not, in our opinion, contribute directly to transformation and raises significant institutional questions that are not adequately addressed. Finally, we feel that the scope of the strategy is too limited. The effort does not address how the bus system will need to grow and adapt to meet the future needs of the region, does not address the substantial and critical commuter bus operations in the region, does not effectively address paratransit, and does not incorporate or reference the operations adjacent to the WMATA service area (Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC), Regional Transportation Agency of Central Maryland, etc.).

The remainder of this memorandum provides our detailed comments on the Draft Strategy. Thank you again and please feel free to let us know if our comments need clarification or if additional follow-up is warranted.

Office of the Director

101 Monroe Street, 10th Floor • Rockville, Maryland 20850 • 240-777-7170 • 240-777-7178 Fax
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcdot

montgomerycountymd.gov/311   Maryland Relay 711

Page 95 of 136

Introductory Materials

(Pages 4 – 8) We support the objective to improve the function, perception and efficiency of bus service in the region.

(Page 10) The statements regarding the current state of the transit system are exaggerated to the negative. This exaggeration undermines the substantial efforts across the region to provide quality service and to encourage use of transit. For example, many customers choose to use bus services and do not view them as a "last resort". The system is not "disjointed" as services are closely coordinated. There is not major "overlap", as each operator looks to make sure services are productive. The region is not "divided" as fare programs are integrated across jurisdictions, as an example. The final strategy should more fairly characterize the existing system.

(Page 14) The strategy does not fulfill its vision by ignoring commuter bus and paratransit. Also, note that the metro-Washington region does not have the same geographical limits as the WMATA-compact. Not including major systems in the rest of the region is a serious limitation of this strategy.

(Page 20) The sidebar that states the strategy is a "collective effort" is overstated. The work product is that of WMATA and its consulting team. Although there has been engagement during the study, only once a draft strategy was complete, was detailed input on the work product been sought.

(Page 21) We support this vision. We suggest the strategy touch on how the need for bus transformation is reinforced as the region needs to accommodate significant growth in population over the coming decades.

1) Customer-Focused Bus System

A: We agree that transit is under-marketed in this region and support efforts to expand marketing and communications about transit. The strategy should identify a "target" annual marketing level of effort in terms of percent-of-operating-cost. A marketing budget of 2 to 3 percent could be a starting point.

B: Conveying information to customers is important. However, it is not clear that maps, as described, will be of great significance to customers in the future. Route naming may be a more significant issue with alpha-numeric route designations being challenging for new riders in particular.

C: A consistent mobile application for travel by transit around the region would be very helpful. Coordinating the activities of individual operations to achieve this objective could be a high-priority recommendation for the strategy.

2

D: If Element C is achieved, it does not seem essential that Element D be included. These fare programs are important to local policy makers.

E: Regional pass products could be a valuable element of the strategy.

F: Regional reduced fare programs could be a valuable element of the strategy.

G: Free transfers could be a valuable element of the strategy. Understanding the financial implications of this measure and the mechanism for implementing this approach are essential to determine its viability. For example, does the rail system or the bus system absorb the revenue loss?

H: Increasing regional employer incentives could be a valuable element of the strategy.

I: Safe, convenient and accessible bus stops are important, but they are currently a local responsibility. It is unclear what regional initiative is implied by this element.

J: This is occurring naturally in each system at differing rates. What regional activity is proposed?

2) Prioritizing Buses on Major Roads

(Page 74) The context section says that bus priority is being implemented in a de-centralized fashion rather than taking an integrated regional approach. Is seems like de-centralized is represented as a problem without any substantiation of why a regional approach would be better or how it would be achieved. Given the complex jurisdictions in this region, de-centralized might result in more achievement in a shorter time.

A & B: Improving bus speeds will help to provide a more reliable service and increase ridership. Bus prioritization is a part of our adopted plans. Despite Montgomery County's enthusiasm for bus prioritization, it seems unlikely that the recommended approach will prevail on a regional basis. The strongest recommendation in this section is to incentivize implementation of bus priority though a regional funding program based on bus priority criteria. The criteria need to allow for variations within the transportation network (e.g. grid network vs. radial arterials) in addition to variations between jurisdictions (e.g. mix of state and local control of roadways). This program could be implemented as a competitive regional grant program.

C: Enforcement programs will need to be inherently local due to law enforcement jurisdiction and state laws. Efforts such as a "model code" could aid the legislatures in adopting consistent laws for enforcement. It is unlikely that regional police force, like Metro Police, will have sufficient resources to enforce bus priority systemwide.

3

D: Incentives will be necessary in order for this to become a regular and routine part of overall enforcement activities.

E: This is another example of where "model code" might help advance these programs in individual jurisdictions. It may also be useful to pilot some of these ideas in sub areas around the region.

3) <u>Convenient Bus Service</u>

In the context section, it states "Planning for bus service does not occur regionally". There is a role for regional bus planning, particular for commuter services and for the integration of regional services. The strategy does not provide evidence that regional planning for all bus services will yield better results for local passengers than coordinated local planning.

A: A regional bus network realignment may be warranted. This analysis must include services operated by MTA, PRTC and others. With a regional framework in place, it may be more appropriate for local jurisdictions to plan for their operations to complement the regional network.

B: The strategy must recognize that some services are provided for policy reasons, rather than data driven analysis about supply and demand.

C: It is possible that flex and other on-demand services will play an increasing role in the bus network. We support exploring options to provide different types of services and sharing results with other regional providers to see what works best.

4) <u>Balancing Regional Provider Responsibilities</u>

This element of the strategy does not seem transformational. We have serious concerns about the implications of this element on local providers' ability to meet customer expectations and the long-term sustainability of locally-operated transit. In the context section, it states that WMATA is operating routes that it may not be in the best position to operate. This statement is problematic in that WMATA is the agency with the facilities, fleet and budget to operate the services it currently operates. These resources have been accumulated through decades of regional funding to WMATA so that it has the resources to provide these services. No other agency is similarly positioned to operate these services.

A. As a general statement, it is logical that WMATA's core focus should be operating regional routes. It is not clear that the formulation of factors used is the best way to categorize regional and non-regional services.

4

B. It is not obvious that any of these changes will result in improvements to bus service. Much more information on the benefits of this element are needed to start this conversation. It appears that this strategy is focused on shifting a budget shortfall off WMATA's balance sheet and little else. Additionally, it does not appear to address short- and long-range service plans for BRT in place in Montgomery, Fairfax, Arlington and the District. Also, the analysis seems to show a significant subsidy shift from Virginia to Maryland. Generally, shifting operations to localities must be accompanied by shifting resources proportionally. Such a shift in Maryland will require a long-term commitment by the State to fund local transit operations at a much higher subsidy level and may require legislative changes to the State-code provisions related to WMATA funding. It is not possible to support this element of the strategy absent far more detailed information. Currently, it seems like many complicated transactions to achieve an outcome that has nothing to do with provision of better service.

C: If Element B is adopted, a 10-year plan seems far too long for bus operations to be in limbo. From a regional perspective, it is hard to understand a budgetary reason to transfer any locally-operated route to WMATA. For example, page 144 illustrates the regional savings by transferring WMATA bus operations to local operators and, if one follows this analysis to a further conclusion, the regional savings would be maximized if all WMATA services were transferred to other operations. WMATA should clarify what it means by "contracting out" in this plan. It is assumed to mean that WMATA will operate the service under contract to a local jurisdiction. What role does WMATA want to play going forward? Should the agency just be a contract-operator of services for the region?

5) Optimize Back-Office Functions

The strategy suggests that there are substantial benefits to be realized by consolidating support functions. This may be theoretically true, however, we do not think many of these benefits are likely to be realized due to the tri-state nature of the nature and statutory requirements within each locality.

A. Since the local jurisdictions back office functions are usually pooled with other local functions, it likely that "consolidating" back office functions will result in higher costs and longer timelines for actions since local jurisdictions will continue to have the vast majority of these functions in house and will need to demonstrate the "consolidated" organization is meeting all the local requirements. However, customer service is an area where a regional approach might be helpful, particularly considering the recommendations in Element 2 of the strategy.

B. Innovation is occurring at the local level and at WMATA. It is unclear how centralizing "innovation" will increase innovation. It may be better to emphasize and encouraging innovation by all operators. For example, an innovation challenge grant fund could be established to allow local experimentation. Additionally, tools to share

5

lessons-learned from local innovation could be valuable. The innovation lab concept could meet these needs, but it is important to keep innovation at the grass-roots level and not to create a regional bureaucracy that could hinder innovation.

C: Regional data sharing seems like a good idea. The standards should likely build from the NTD, MWCOG, SmarTrip and other established data management structures. All data sharing should be reciprocal.

6) **Regional Steward to Transform the Bus System**

A: It is not clear that another regional organization needs to be established regarding bus service. The Washington-region has an abundance of transportation entities as illustrated in the context section for this recommendation. More prudently, an existing organization should be empowered to advance this strategy. In particular, decision-making authority is unlikely to be vested in a new unelected body covering Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. Additionally, funding authority is likely to be limited ideas like the bus prioritization grant program and the innovation grant program described in these comments. MWCOG may be the most appropriate body to serve in this role given established arrangements with the states and municipalities for, and experience running, programs like the Transportation and Land Use Connections (TLC) grant program. If the plan is suggesting that an empowered regional entity be established, it should propose which authorities would be ceded by the states and local governments and the governance structure of such a group.

B: Aside from WMATA, most transportation agencies are accountable to elected officials. It is more important to establish a transit priority through policy within local and state governments and to reinforce implementation of the plans through budget actions and legislation. Prioritization of the strategy will be determined by elected officials. It will be ineffective to try to hold agency officials accountable for decisions that are beyond their authority.

C: Tracking results for the strategy is a good idea. The MWCOG Transportation Planning Board is well-suited to this activity. An annual scorecard may be a good approach.

Should you have any questions regarding our comments on the plan, please feel free to contact me or Mr. Gary Erenrich, at 240-777-7156.

cc: Al Roshdieh, MCDOT
    Gary Erenrich, MCDOT
    Dan Hibbert, MCDOT
    Phil McLaughlin, MCDOT

6

Government of the District of Columbia
Department of Transportation

d. ⭐ WE ARE DC ⭐ ⭐ ⭐

d. Office of the Director

June 17, 2019
Shyam Kannan
Vice President of Planning
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)
600 5th Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

Subject: District of Columbia's Comments on the Bus Transformation Project

Dear Mr. Kannan:

Thank you for taking on the commendable effort to improve bus transit in the region by initiating the Bus Transformation Project. We appreciate the opportunity to participate and comment on the study as members of the Strategic Advisory Panel and Technical Team. The following comments reflect DDOT's position on the recommendations presented in the Draft Report. DDOT broadly supports the vision and goals for the study. Specific comments for each strategy are below:

Strategy 1: The bus system should be customer focused and an easy-to-use option that people want to ride.
DDOT supports the recommendations in the study to make the regional bus network easier to use and understand, such as establishing a consistent route naming convention across all operators in the region. DDOT supports the creation of a low-income fare product and the elimination of the $1.50 cost to transfer between bus and rail which would allow both modes to work together as one network. Our region stands nearly alone in having this high barrier to multi-modal mobility, and we are ready to participate in discussions among WMATA and its jurisdictional funding partners to determine how this relatively expensive but positive action could take place. DDOT also strongly recommends the rapid adoption and deployment of technology, such as mobile fare payment that can be integrated across modes including taxis and Capital Bikeshare well as real-time service information.

In addition to the recommendations in the study, DDOT would like to bring to WMATA's attention that inadequate resources have been devoted to marketing and customer service for WMATA bus service, which carries roughly 35-40 percent of all weekday transit riders in the region, when compared with Metrorail service. Bus transit cannot overcome decades of stigmatization as a need-based service for transit-dependent riders as opposed to being a transit service of choice unless WMATA (and the region) begins to treat Metrorail and Metrobus services with similar attention to branding and advertising.

Strategy 2: Prioritizing buses on major roads moves the most people in the quickest, most reliable and fiscally-responsible way.

DDOT supports the recommendations to prioritize buses on roadways and has been actively partnering with WMATA to implement bus lanes, transit signal priority (TSP) and queue jumps for buses in the region. DDOT's FY 2021 budget also includes a proposal for congestion pricing, and DDOT is supportive of managing and prioritizing curb access including bus layover space, as well as parking limitations. However, it should be noted that there are significant challenges to achieving this goal. These include the availability of bus garages and maintenance facilities within the District to prevent wasteful deadheading of buses, layover space in downtown locations, and uncertain political will and public opinion when it comes to prioritizing bus service alongside other modes of transportation.

Strategy 3: Frequent, reliable, and convenient bus service is fundamental to offering equitable access to opportunities and improving quality of life across the region.

DDOT agrees with the recommendation to realign routes to create the most efficient and customer-focused bus system. Although the District, through DDOT's Bus Priority Program, is developing guidelines and thresholds that prioritize investment in roadway infrastructure for bus transit in the District, we believe that the recommendation for adopting consistent regional guidelines for the numerous jurisdictions in the WMATA Compact is unrealistic. Compact jurisdictions vary in their land use characteristics, population and employment densities, and reporting requirements to different stakeholders. Further, WMATA already has service standards to measure bus productivity that have been approved by the WMATA Board, and DDOT is requesting formally through this comment letter that instead of creating new guidelines, WMATA resume their annual reporting on bus productivity measures that has been discontinued since 2015.

DDOT agrees with the study's finding that portions of the region have low land use and population density which results in low bus ridership. Specifically, the study notes that 79 unidentified routes in the region costing $60 million annually have very low ridership. These routes should be considered for discontinuation and modification to improve performance with any savings in resources reallocated to bus routes that are overcrowded or to the initiation of new bus routes to serve growing markets. We support the recommendation that flexible, on-demand transit services with lower operating costs than traditional fixed-route service could replace buses at the same cost to customers and DDOT has begun to develop pilot microtransit alternatives for the District. DDOT recommends that these flexible, on-demand transit services should be ADA-compliant to avoid the loss of service area for MetroAccess and other federally-mandated paratransit.

Strategy 4: Balancing the responsibilities of local and regional providers will position local bus systems to meet their own jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits.

The study recommends a large transfer of local bus routes from Metrobus to local providers like the DC Circulator. DDOT is amenable to begin preliminary discussions to explore the benefits and disadvantages of this transfer in service, as well as impacts to capital and operating funding allocations, rolling stock, maintenance facilities, operator contracts, etc. However, we note that the potential impacts would be significant for all jurisdictions, and we are not prepared to endorse this strategy until a full accounting of costs and benefits resulting from any such transfer can be developed. Further, DDOT believes that the proposed 10-year timeframe for this transfer is too ambitious given the numerous considerations listed above. Finally, although the time may be ripe for a reconsideration of the criteria by which "regional" and "non-regional" routes are

defined, further discussion is necessary before the specific redefinitions proposed in the draft report can be endorsed.

Strategy 5: Optimize back-office functions and sharing innovation will help all operators and will allow more resources for operating bus services.
DDOT agrees that consolidation of back-office functions will generate cost savings due to economies of scale and consistency in a range of back-office functions from customer service to procurement and maintenance of rolling stock. We are willing to begin conversations with WMATA and other Compact jurisdictions to advance this strategy further.

The study also proposes the creation of a Regional Mobility Lab. DDOT is unsure what function the proposed organization would serve that is not currently being served by regional jurisdictions, bus systems, and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government (MWCOG). DDOT believes that MWCOG could take on this role of furthering regional innovation for bus transit, coordination on collecting and sharing productivity metrics from the various bus providers in the region.

Strategy 6: Customers in a region with multiple bus providers need a regional steward to transform the bus system.
DDOT supports the creation of a task force for coordinating between jurisdictions and their leaders and moving forward the recommendations of the study. However the recommendation to create a new regional steward is problematic given that WMATA is the current steward for the region's bus system. A new bureaucratic organization with no control over local roadways would have very little authority or ability to implement many of the recommendations outlined in the study. Also, the recommendation to hold transportation and transit agencies accountable for prioritizing bus cannot really be enforced when each agency answers to a different funder, Board or Council.

We understand that the Bus Transformation Project's Draft Report will be presented to the WMATA Board on July 25. We would like these comments entered into the public record at that hearing. Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment. We look forward to working with you to move the region towards improved and reliable bus service.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Marootian
Director

Alexandria Transportation Commission
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

www.alexandriava.gov

Phone: 703.746.4025

Bus Transformation Project Team
c/o NeoNiche Strategies
4501 Ford Avenue Suite #501
Alexandria, VA 22302

June 19, 2019

Re: Bus Transformation Project Strategy Feedback

Dear Bus Transformation Project Team:

On behalf of the Alexandria Transportation Commission, I am writing to you to express the Commission's support of the City of Alexandria and the Alexandria Transit Company's joint letter dated June 5, 2019 to the project team, and to emphasize the importance of Strategy 1 in making the bus system the mode of choice in the region by 2030.

In particular, the Transportation Commission discussed the importance of considering the needs of all current and future riders in making the bus easier to use. Making the bus the transportation mode of choice is of paramount importance. While flexible and user-friendly fare payment options (e.g., app based payment options) and marketing strategies to increase public awareness of bus transportation options are important, consideration should also be given to the configuration of the bus itself. There are opportunities to meet the needs of riders who may be trying to live car free or who may not be able to use alternative modes. Consideration should be given to the needs of riders who have children, strollers, groceries or other belongings in addition to persons with a range of incomes and abilities will ensure that everyone can benefit from a faster, more reliable, and better integrated bus system.

The Transportation Commission was created by Council to advocate and promote the development of balanced transportation systems in the City through oversight of the Transportation Master Plan, which seeks to ensure that people can travel into, within and out of the City of Alexandria by providing transportation choices that combine different modes of travel into a seamless, comprehensive and coordinated transportation system.

We commend the project team's efforts to make the bus a better mode of travel in a manner well aligned with the goals and principles of the City's Transportation Master Plan and thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback.

Sincerely,

S.J. Klejst
Chair, Alexandria Transportation Commission

cc: Alexandria Transportation Commission
        City Manager Mark Jinks
        Yon Lambert, Director, T&ES
        Hillary Orr, Deputy Director, T&ES

Public Feedback on Draft Strategy Summarized from Public Survey Comments and Open House Comments from Spring 2019

Introduction

This document summarizes and quantifies public feedback on the Bus Transformation Project Draft Strategy received at public open houses held in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia during the week of May 20-24, 2019, and through an online public survey open in May and June 2019. Feedback received at these events is grouped by strategy element and analyzed by comment topics and sentiment. In concert with quantitative survey data, these comments provide a nuanced understanding of public reaction to the Draft Strategy; a full understanding of the public's response to the Draft Strategy requires an analysis of both the quantitative survey data, provided in a separate presentation, and the public comments.

Several common themes were found throughout the comments:

- Overwhelmingly, commenters expressed a desire to improve the existing bus system by providing more frequent service and giving buses priority on the region's roads.
- Commenters broadly supported recommendations that focused on reducing the cost to ride.
- A more unified system was strongly desired, via passes and mobile apps that work across all agencies, consolidating back-office functions, and consistent data standards.
- Commenters were more interested in improving the quality of bus service than they were in who operates bus service.
- Broad support was expressed for better cooperation and accountability, with a focus on improving accountability and quality of service from currently existing entities, as opposed to establishing new ones.

Element 1: Focus on the Customer

- Many commenters were in favor of this element and its recommendations. Positive comments outnumber negative comments on Element 1 by nearly five to one (181 positive comments, 44 negative comments).
- Element 1 recommendations with the most comments:
  - Recommendations within the theme of reducing the cost to ride: free transfer between bus and rail, introducing low-income reduced fare product
    - Among commenters who specifically referenced transfer policies, there were 32 comments in favor of free transfers and no comments opposed to free transfers.
    - "Free transfers to Metrorail are critical. The region's transit system is built around being multi-modal. Why penalize people for using the system as designed?"
    - Ten commenters mentioned the possibility of lower fares for low-income riders, eight of which were in support.

- — Recommendations within the theme of making the bus easier, safer, and more pleasant to use: universal pass product, safer bus stops, mobile real-time info and mobile payment solution
    - Of the 18 comments about pass products that work across all bus systems, all 18 expressed at least partial support for this recommendation.
    - "Simplify, simplify, simplify. One pass should be good for every form of transit in the region: Metro, buses (including the bus between Dulles and Wiehle station), MARC, Baltimore light rail, VRE."
    - All commenters who mentioned bus stop safety were in favor of it (20 comments total specifically mentioning it), spanning a few different topics: providing better pedestrian connections to bus stops, improving lighting at bus stops, and increasing ADA accessibility.
    - Twenty-nine commenters discussed the importance of real-time information to their commute choices. A representative quote: "My highest priority is an app with ALL bus information in real time, so that when I have to transfer I can choose which route will be fastest and won't miss my bus!"
    - Improving real-time information was generally desired, but there was nuance in the comments about equity issues related to technology. A common sentiment was that real-time information should be rolled out to bus stops simultaneous with any improvements that are made to mobile apps, so that all potential passengers can benefit from the real-time information.
- A common sentiment was frustration with the element because it doesn't address bus level of service while the purpose of Element 1 is to improve the customer experience.
    - — Eighteen commenters specifically called for more bus service in their Element 1 comments. A representative comment: "Buses need to be more reliable and come more often. I can't wait 20 plus minutes for a bus when commuting especially when they aren't running on the timetable. On top of this the rides are extremely slow."
    - — People think that if more bus service was provided and service was more reliable, then more people would ride bus. Commenters also expressed that this is a simple concept and should be emphasized more in this element.
- Though it was not explicitly mentioned in the recommendations under Element 1, many commenters expressed a desire for dedicated bus lanes throughout the region when commenting on Element 1.
    - — Thirty-seven commenters specifically discussed the importance of dedicated lanes, and all comments were supportive.
    - — "The Metro bus system is already pretty easy to use. For me the higher priority issues are slow and unreliable service. Please prioritize dedicated bus lanes and making service run on schedule. It's maddening when buses show up 15 or 20 minutes late or don't show up at all."
- Thirteen commenters noted the need to consider the needs of older adults and disabled people in this element.
- A slim majority of comments that mentioned marketing were supportive (nine supportive, eight opposed). Those who were opposed saw marketing efforts as unnecessary and a waste of money, while several marketing proponents suggested that there should be an increase in promoting the point that you can travel virtually anywhere in DC for $2 on Metrobus.
- The recommendation to improve maps was mentioned by many commenters, but not all of them saw it as a top priority. Forty-eight comments mentioned better maps, the majority of which were in favor of this as a recommendation, while about one-fifth of those comments suggested that better maps were less important than simpler, straighter routes, or a more intuitive route numbering system.

- Some people felt that this element had too many recommendations and that BTP would be better suited to focus on a few specific recommendations which are of the highest priority.
- Recommendations which garnered the fewest comments (which could indicate less interest and/or fewer extreme reactions, either positive or negative) were:
  - "Make bus fares clear and consistent across the region"
  - "Modernize the region's bus fleet with advanced technologies that improve the environment,
  - safety, and the rider experience"
    - Eight commenters addressed modernizing buses. All eight were in favor, and all but one specifically referred to reducing emissions as their desired outcome. A representative quote: "Modernize the fleet of buses, less fossil fuel vehicles and clean modern vehicles will encourage moderate- and high-income citizens to use the bus."
  - Only five commenters addressed employer transit benefits, but all five expressed support for expanding the reach of employer transit benefits.

Element 2: Prioritize Buses on Major Roads

- Bus priority received wide support from commenters:
  - Over 69 commenters agreed that bus transit needs higher priority on the region's roads than it has now.
  - Twenty-two respondents explicitly expressed support for transit signal prioritization and 165 respondents were in favor of dedicated bus lanes.
  - Eleven commenters requested more limited stop or BRT-like service in the region.
  - Four commenters mentioned that high-frequency service is necessary in dedicated lanes to avoid the perception that the "lane is empty."
  - "I agree with this. If a bus is carrying 20 times more humans than a car, that bus should have 20 times more importance on the road since roads are about moving humans not cars."
- There were many comments about Element 2 being a higher priority than Element 1 to accomplish the goal of improving the customer experience, manifesting in a desire for Elements 1 and 2 to be flipped (renumbered).
- Commenters noted that coordination across the region in the form of agreements, policies, and guidelines would be essential to the success of this element.
  - Fifty-eight commenters noted that several aspects of this element would require regional prioritization and coordination, such as congestion pricing that is not restricted by jurisdictional boundaries, common standards for bus lane and priority infrastructure, and better region-wide enforcement from local authorities.
- Enforcing the proper use of bus-only infrastructure was raised as an important issue. Commenters noted that enforcement is required for success of the infrastructure and many commenters feel past enforcement efforts have been subpar.
  - Fifty-six commenters agreed that proper enforcement of bus infrastructure, including bus-only lanes and no-parking zones around bus stops, were crucial to improving bus service.
  - "Agree with all recommendations. Please emphasize the importance of enforcement - particularly automated. There aren't enough police available to patrol and deter violations - it needs to be automated."

- There was some confusion around Recommendation 2E (coordination with regional congestion mitigation efforts), as some people assumed that this was referring to charging peak-hour fare premiums on buses. However, 15 people who seemed to understand the intent behind congestion pricing supported its implementation.

Element 3: Make Service Consistently Convenient

- Comments focused on providing more and better bus service, with an overwhelming sentiment to make the existing system function better by providing more frequent service.
  - A desire for increased frequency was mentioned by 61 commenters as crucial to improving existing routes/corridors.
  - "Frequent needs to be reliably frequent. The bus needs to arrive when it's supposed to arrive. The failure to do so is probably the most frustrating thing about riding the bus, and the thing that keeps some people from doing it at all."
- There were many comments about the present lack of schedule coordination across the region, difficulty of having to use multiple apps, and not being able to pay with a single source across multiple modes and operators.
  - Fifteen commenters lamented that transferring between routes and providers was a deterrent to using bus due to non-coordinated schedules and/or fare penalties.
- There was support for a bus network redesign, aligning the routes with where people want to go, and making the entire system easier to understand and use:
  - Thirty-six people thought that a redesign was a smart idea and multiple people cited the Houston bus network redesign as an example.
  - Ten commenters noted that determining the right amount of service should not be based on existing ridership because if bus was better, then more people would ride (use transit demand measures instead of ridership).
- Commenters noted that better coordination between agencies is critical for this element to succeed.
- Commenters noted that consistent service planning guidelines could make the bus system easier to understand for users.
  - Thirty-eight commenters acknowledged that better regional coordination was crucial to this project, from setting common standards regarding frequency to creating a unified regional bus network.
- Nineteen commenters thought that bus service should provide more direct connections, with some thinking that Metro-to-Metro station routes are not efficient.
- A desire to have more late-night service was a major concern for 40 people and a desire for more off-peak service was expressed by 20 commenters. Late-night bus routes mimicking Metrorail lines was a common request.
- There was a mix of strong support for and concerns about recommending flexible service:
  - Fifty-seven commenters were optimistic about flexible service as an alternative to fixed-route service for serving specific populations/transit needs.
  - Commenters noted the following concerns with flexible bus service:
    - Fourteen respondents thought that flexible service may be a possible transit solution but that it should not be the main focus of the Strategy.

- Sixteen respondents said it may be difficult to implement flexible service and possibly not cost-effective.
- Fourteen respondents thought that subsidizing TNCs is not the best use of funding in general or that it would be hard to compete with the private sector.
- Six respondents wanted to make sure that if implemented, flexible service would be accessible to all people.

Element 4: Balance Local and Regional Responsibilities

- Commenters expressed support for consolidating service to fewer providers or fewer brand names:
    - One suggestion was to have a single "local" brand of bus for service within jurisdictions and that Metrobus would provide regional service across jurisdictions. Six commenters were in favor of a unified regional brand even if it were to be operated by local transit agencies and not a region-wide system.
    - There were many calls for a single system/single operator:
        - Nineteen comments were in favor of reducing the number of operators or moving to a single system/operator.
        - "In an ideal world, I think our region would be better off with a single provider for all bus service, rather than the balkanized system we have now."
        - "We should not go to the balkanized bus service that brought about WMATA…this would be a huge mistake"
- Concerns about jurisdictions taking on more service:
    - Eight commenters noted concern about local providers taking on more service because they were concerned with their local provider being able to handle more routes or they preferred a local provider to meet local needs.
    - "As a Prince George's County resident, I am nervous about transferring local routes to the county's TheBus network when TheBus still hasn't shown that it's capable of operating weekend and evening service."
- There was general support for WMATA operating regional needs, particularly inter-jurisdictional service:
    - Nineteen commenters were in favor of WMATA focusing on regional routes and travel patterns.
    - Commenters generally support the idea of regional bus service being defined as service designed to meet regional demand that crosses jurisdictions ("follow the demand, not boundaries").
- However, the public feels that it is more important to provide better service than to worry about who is operating that service.
    - Generally, commenters expressed concern that this element will ultimately result in less service being available, rising fares, or other undesirable side effects.
    - Thirty-six comments were explicit in saying that service provided is more important than who is providing it.
    - "Service quality and consistent branding are ore important than operator."
- Other Comments:
    - This element seems to have been difficult for public survey-takers to understand, and many people requested more information, context, and detail to understand what is being proposed.

- — Eighteen commenters were in favor of revising the cost model used to fund WMATA by local jurisdictions.
- — "10 years seems like a really long time. By the time you are done with the transition conditions are likely to be completely different."

Element 5: Coordinate Support Functions to Drive Innovation

- ■ Comments on the recommendation to consolidate back office functions:
  - — General support:
    - ▪ There were 116 positive comments about this element, as compared to 20 negative comments. A common theme was that consolidating back-office functions would reduce silo-ing and promote cooperation between agencies.
    - ▪ "Consolidation and cooperation across jurisdictions is important."
    - ▪ "There's no doubt that have 20 companies running individual bus services is not cost-efficient and enhances discrepancies and discordance in the system."
    - ▪ "While I understand the politics involved, consolidating operations and reducing administrative costs will free up more funding for transportation spending."
  - — Concern about the upfront challenges in bringing all the agencies to the table to work together constructively:
    - ▪ Twelve comments discussed the political challenges involved in getting all the agencies to work together, including comments about local bus systems potentially being opposed to this idea and transit workers' unions potentially being opposed due to the possibility of job losses.
- ■ Comments on the Innovation Lab recommendation range from strongly agree to strongly disagree:
  - — Twelve commenters expressed support for the Innovation Lab while 13 were opposed.
  - — Fourteen comments were neutral on the subject or expressed a need for more information about the Innovation Lab before passing judgment on it. Commenters noted that more clarity is needed in the Strategy about who will start and oversee operations; need greater detail on focus, metrics, and outcomes.
  - — Some who didn't think the Innovation Lab was a good idea thought that existing entities already fulfilled this role, some were concerned about "studying and analyzing issues to death," and some thought that diverting time and money from implementing more frequent buses and dedicated bus lanes would not be a good use of resources.
    - ▪ Twenty-seven comments addressed specific concerns with the Innovation Lab. The most common concern mentioned was that the Innovation Lab would divert resources from improving the bus system.
    - ▪ "Innovation isn't needed, the solutions are well-known but unsexy. More frequent buses, more routes, more dedicated bus lanes."
- ■ The recommendation for data standardization had the strongest support within this element. Most commenters on this topic (of which there were 33) thought this a 'no-brainer,' or were surprised it was not already in place.

Element 6: Strengthen Regional Cooperation to Transform the Bus System

- Overall, there were a mix of positive and negative responses, including multiple requests for more information and detail.
  - Of 286 total comments on this element, 24 requested a need for additional details on this recommendation.
  - "The devil is in the details."
- Comments on the recommendation to start a task force:
  - Overall general support for this recommendation.
  - There were many comments about how the task force needed to move quickly and credibly.
  - Some skeptics questioned whether a task force was a strong enough entity to get the Strategy implementation on-track and to ensure it is maintained.
  - There were questions and concerns about whether there is value in creating a new entity, as it may not be a necessary step, and could result in additional bureaucracy and inaction:
    - Eighteen comments expressed skepticism about the need for another transit planning agency in the region.
    - "Accountability is important but establishing another regional task force is not the way to go with this. We already have the COG/TPB Public Transportation Committee and TPB for regional coordination. In addition, with many of the routes being turned back to locals, there will be less need for regional coordination and reporting."
    - "Please don't create any more 'authorities' or governing groups. That is unnecessary bureaucracy. Hold the people in place now accountable or replace them. Do not add more layers...you have to show the public some progress quickly."
    - "Having a short-term regional task force could be successful, but they must make sure to engage all departments that could be involved in the project during the whole process and not silo off responsibilities/decisions."

- Comments on the recommendation to hold transportation agencies accountable:
  - General support, but most people wanted more details on what 'accountable' meant, and how this would be imposed on transportation and transit agencies.
    - Forty-three comments discussed accountability for transit providers.
    - "Performance management and accountability are key to long-term, sustainable success."
  - Some thought the focus should be on shared goals and creating incentives.
    - "The effort should be hands-on, driven by local knowledge, cooperative, market-based, and not driven by regulations and penalties."
- Comments on the recommendation for a bus scorecard:
  - General support for the scorecard as the best way to hold agencies accountable.
    - Twenty-nine commenters specifically mentioned the scorecard, with all but one offering at least partial support for the idea.
    - "Sounded like a necessity."
    - "I highly recommend publishing annual reports and scorecards and widely distributing them throughout the region."

BUS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Public Input on Draft Strategy:
Survey Results

July 2019

WASHINGTON AREA
BUS TRANSFORMATION
PROJECT

BusTransformationProject.com

DRAFT

Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Total respondents = 2,905

	Count	Share
Language of Survey Taken		
English	2,968	95%
Spanish	155	5%
Respondent Bus Usage		
Regular*	1,646	63%
Not-regular	964	37%
Respondent Household Income		
Low-income**	327	15%
Not low-income	1,876	85%
Respondent Race/Ethnicity		
White	1,407	47%
Non-white***	1,590	53%

Note: Language of Survey Taken is the only category that has a full count for every respondent – all the other categories were optional for respondents.

* Regular bus rider: Respondents who reported they ride the bus at least once per week. Across the region, 49 percent of bus riders are regular riders, and these riders take 91 percent of all bus trips.

** Low-income: Respondents who reported their household annual income as less than $30,000, which is WMATA's definition of low-income in its Title VI Plan. Fifty-two percent of Metrobus riders are low-income.

*** Non-white: Respondents who selected any race or ethnicity choice other than white, which includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African-American, Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Two or more races, or Other. Eighty-one percent of Metrobus riders are non-white.

Jurisdiction of Residence of Survey Respondents

Jurisdiction of Residence of Survey Respondents

	Count	Share	Share of regional bus ridership within jurisdiction
District of Columbia	1,087	44%	37%
Montgomery County	359	15%	23%
Prince George's County	244	10%	12%
Arlington County	242	10%	7%
Fairfax County	233	9%	10%
City of Alexandria	143	6%	5%
Other (outside of WMATA region)	122	5%	n/a
Loudoun County	20	1%	n/a
City of Falls Church	8	<1%	<1%
City of Fairfax	7	<1%	1%

Note: Respondents who did not share their zip code are not included in this table.

Overall Recommendation Preferences – Raw Count
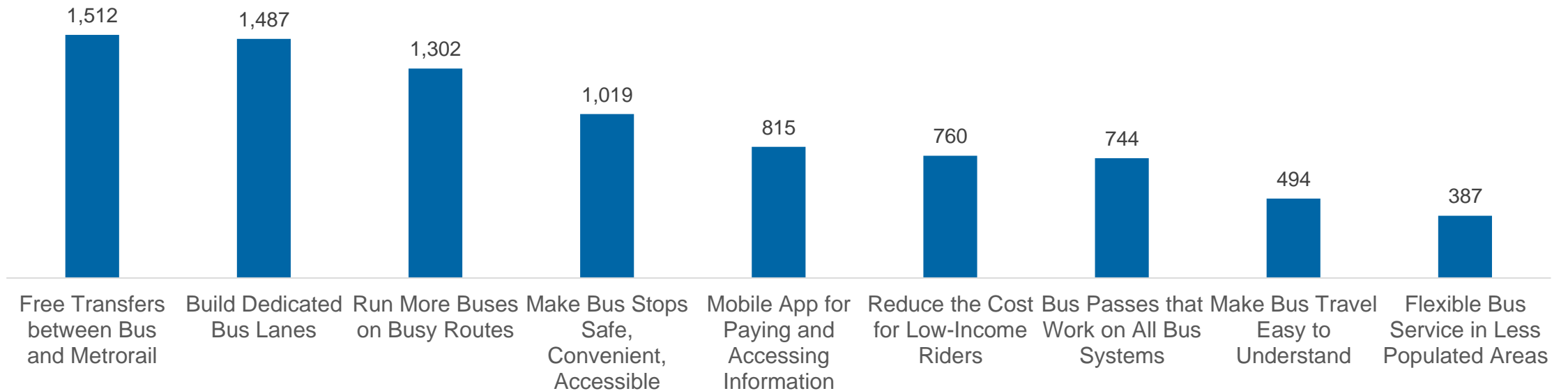
Respondents were asked to choose up to three recommendations out of nine provided. They were asked to choose the ones they thought were the highest priority for action. This graph shows the raw numbers of how many times each recommendation was chosen.

Overall Recommendation Preferences – Weighted Rank

Respondents were then presented with the recommendations they selected in the previous question (they could have chosen up to three) – and were asked to rank them in order of importance from one to three.

This chart shows the recommendations by weighted rank score (higher numbers of respondents and higher rank combined to create an overall score).*
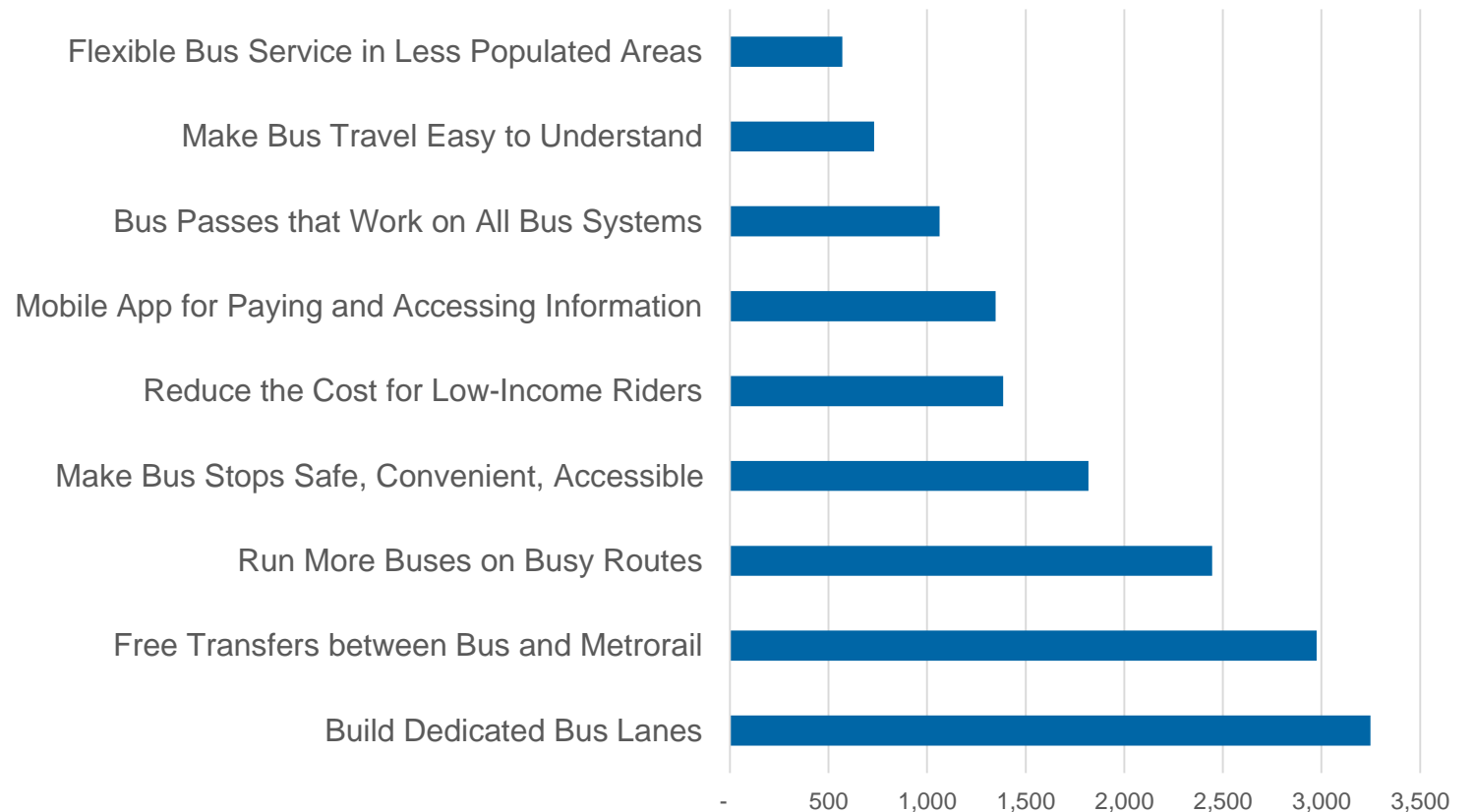
* Detailed methodology is shown in the appendix

Key Findings: Overall Recommendation Preferences

- The recommendations in the top tier of respondents' priorities, whether by raw count or ranked preferences are: "free transfers between bus and Metrorail," "build dedicated bus lanes," and "run more buses on busy routes."

- "Free transfers" edged out "dedicated bus lanes" on the raw count of recommendations, but when considering the respondents' weighted preferences, "build dedicated bus lanes" was the highest ranked.

- Overall, there is strong support for recommendations which would reduce the cost to ride the bus, whether through making transfers between bus and rail free or by reducing the cost to ride for low-income customers.

- Providing "flexible bus service in less populated areas" is the recommendation that was selected the least amount of times in both the raw count of preferences and in the weighted preferences.

Key Findings: Overall Recommendation Preferences (continued)

- "Making bus stops safer, convenient, and more accessible" is the fourth highest priority when considering the weighted ranked scores and the raw counts, meaning this is a notable priority among respondents.

- Respondents expressed middling preference for making it easier to find information about bus and paying for the bus: "bus passes that work on all bus systems" and "mobile app for paying and accessing information."

Recommendation Preferences by Income

The bar chart compares the weighted ranked scores of low-income (respondents who reported their household annual income as less than $30,000) and non-low-income respondents. Because these groups have different quantities of respondents, the pie chart is included to provide context – the number and share of responses to this question by group are shown (respondents were counted if they answered both the income and recommendation ranking questions).
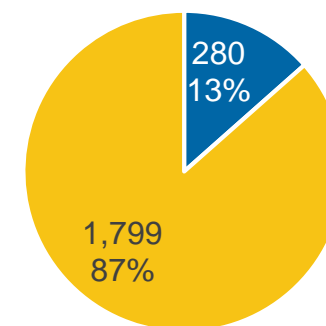
Key Findings: Recommendation Preferences by Income

- Recommendations to reduce the cost to customers have strong support across the income spectrum, although these recommendations are a higher priority for low-income respondents compared to non-low-income respondents:

    - "Free transfers" was the highest ranked priority for low-income respondents and for non-low-income respondents it was the second-highest priority.

    - "Reduce the cost for low-income riders" was the second highest priority for low-income respondents, compared to non-low-income respondents, for whom it ranked sixth.

- Recommendations to speed up buses and provide more bus service were relatively higher priorities for non-low-income respondents compared to low-income respondents, although the low-income respondents demonstrated that this is still an important recommendation ("build dedicated bus lanes" and "run more buses on busy routes").

Recommendation Preferences by Race/Ethnicity
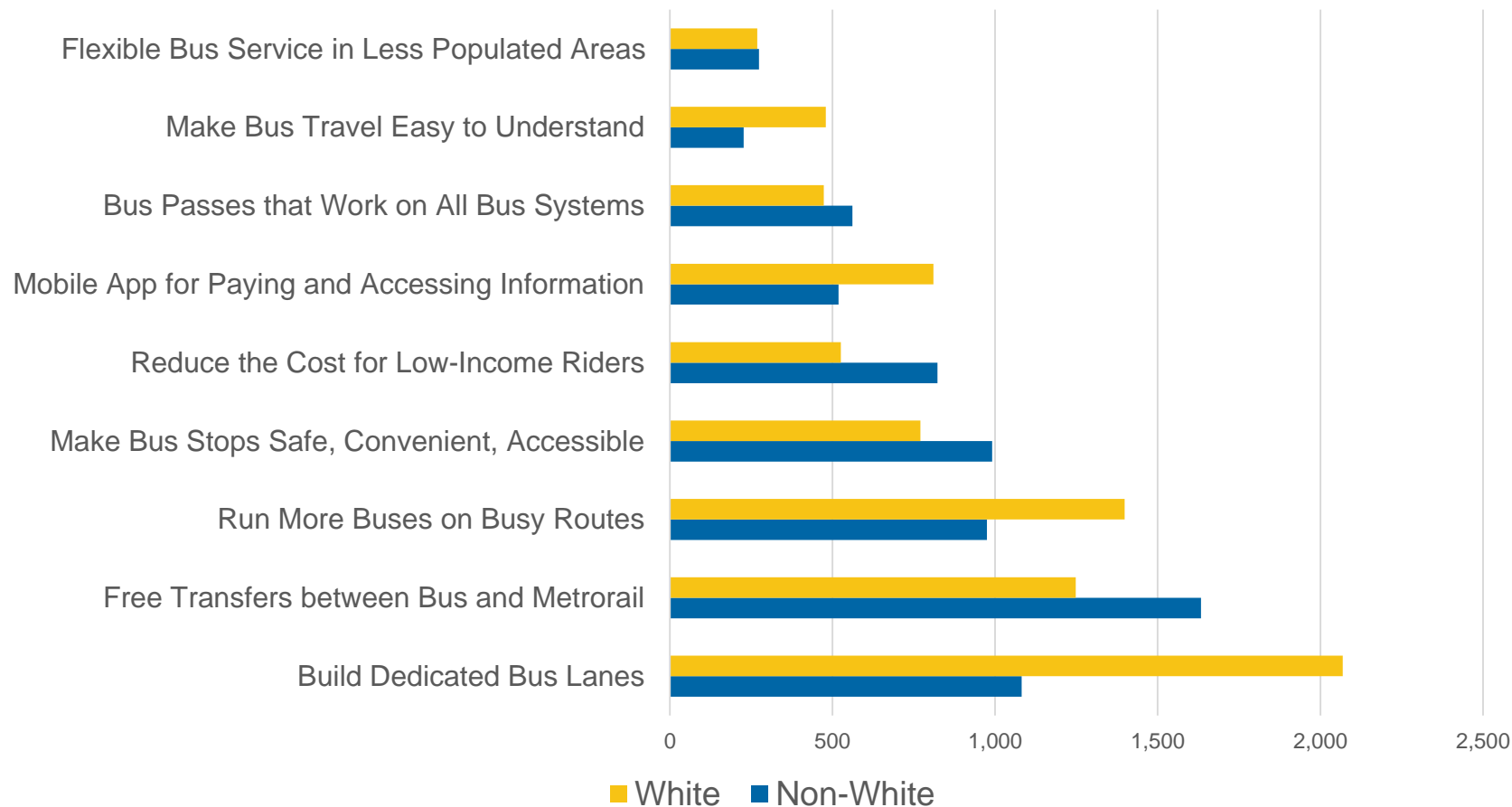
The bar chart compares the weighted ranked scores of white and non-white respondents. Because these groups have different quantities of respondents, the pie chart is included to provide context – the number and share of responses to this question by group are shown (respondents were counted if they answered both the race/ethnicity and recommendation ranking questions).


Flexible Bus Service in Less Populated Areas
Make Bus Travel Easy to Understand
Bus Passes that Work on All Bus Systems
Mobile App for Paying and Accessing Information
Reduce the Cost for Low-Income Riders
Make Bus Stops Safe, Convenient, Accessible
Run More Buses on Busy Routes
Free Transfers between Bus and Metrorail
Build Dedicated Bus Lanes

■ White ■ Non-White

1,235
48%

1,360
52%
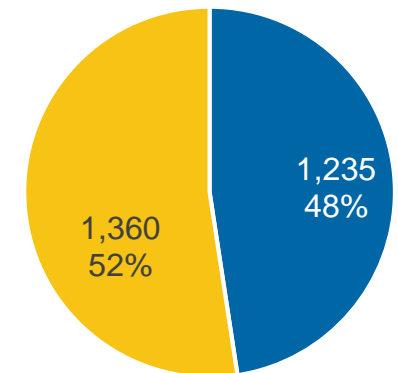
Key Findings: Recommendation Preferences by Race/Ethnicity

- White and non-white respondents indicated strong support for "dedicated bus lanes," "free transfers between bus and Metrorail," and "run more buses on busy routes."

- Recommendations to reduce the cost to the rider are a higher priority for non-white respondents compared to white respondents; free transfers rank first, and reducing the cost for low-income riders ranks fifth according to non-white respondents, while these recommendations rank third and sixth, respectively, for white respondents.

- Non-white respondents prioritized "make bus stops safe, convenient, accessible" more than white respondents did.

Recommendation Preferences by Frequency of Bus Use
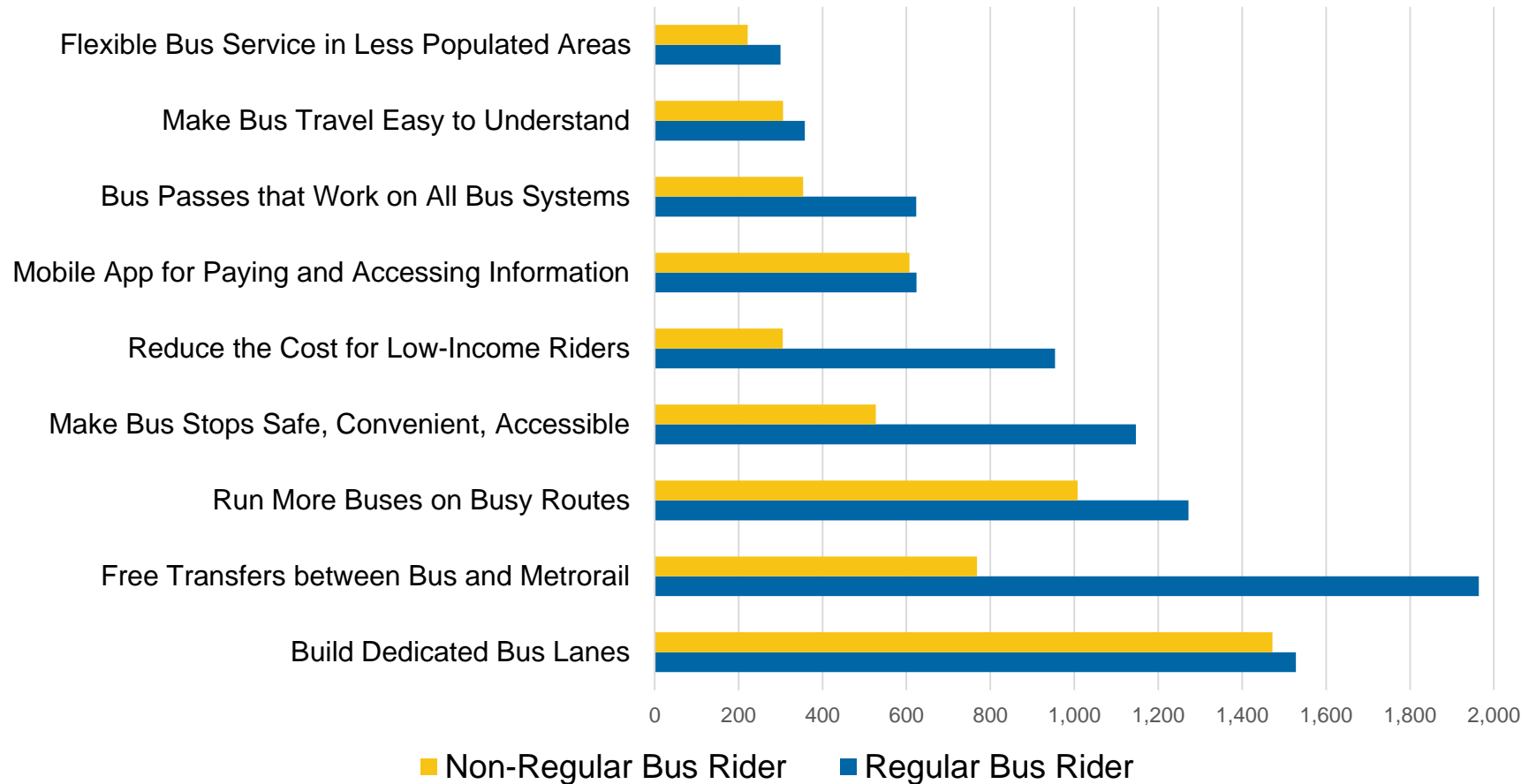
The bar chart compares the weighted ranked scores of regular bus riders (respondents who reported they ride the bus at least once per week) and non-regular bus riders. Because these groups have different quantities of respondents, the pie chart is included to provide context – the number and share of responses to this question by group are shown (respondents were counted if they answered both the bus usage and recommendation ranking questions).
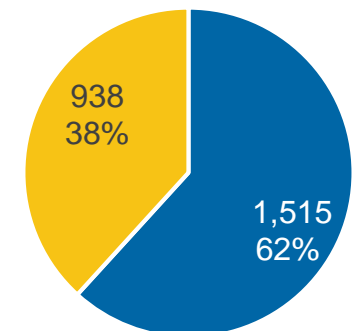
Chart categories (top to bottom):
- Flexible Bus Service in Less Populated Areas
- Make Bus Travel Easy to Understand
- Bus Passes that Work on All Bus Systems
- Mobile App for Paying and Accessing Information
- Reduce the Cost for Low-Income Riders
- Make Bus Stops Safe, Convenient, Accessible
- Run More Buses on Busy Routes
- Free Transfers between Bus and Metrorail
- Build Dedicated Bus Lanes

Legend: ■ Non-Regular Bus Rider ■ Regular Bus Rider

Pie chart:
- 938 / 38%
- 1,515 / 62%

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Key Findings: Recommendation Preferences by Frequency of Bus Use

- Within the regular bus rider group, free transfers between bus and rail is by far the highest ranked priority.

- Non-regular riders' top two priorities are "dedicated bus lanes" and "run more buses on busy routes," indicating that reliability, frequency, and time savings are important to attracting non-regular riders.

- Recommendations to reduce costs to the user and make bus stops safer were ranked as higher priorities for regular bus riders compared to non-regular bus riders.

- "Mobile app for paying and accessing information" was ranked as a higher priority by non-regular bus riders compared to regular bus riders.

Recommendation Preferences by Age
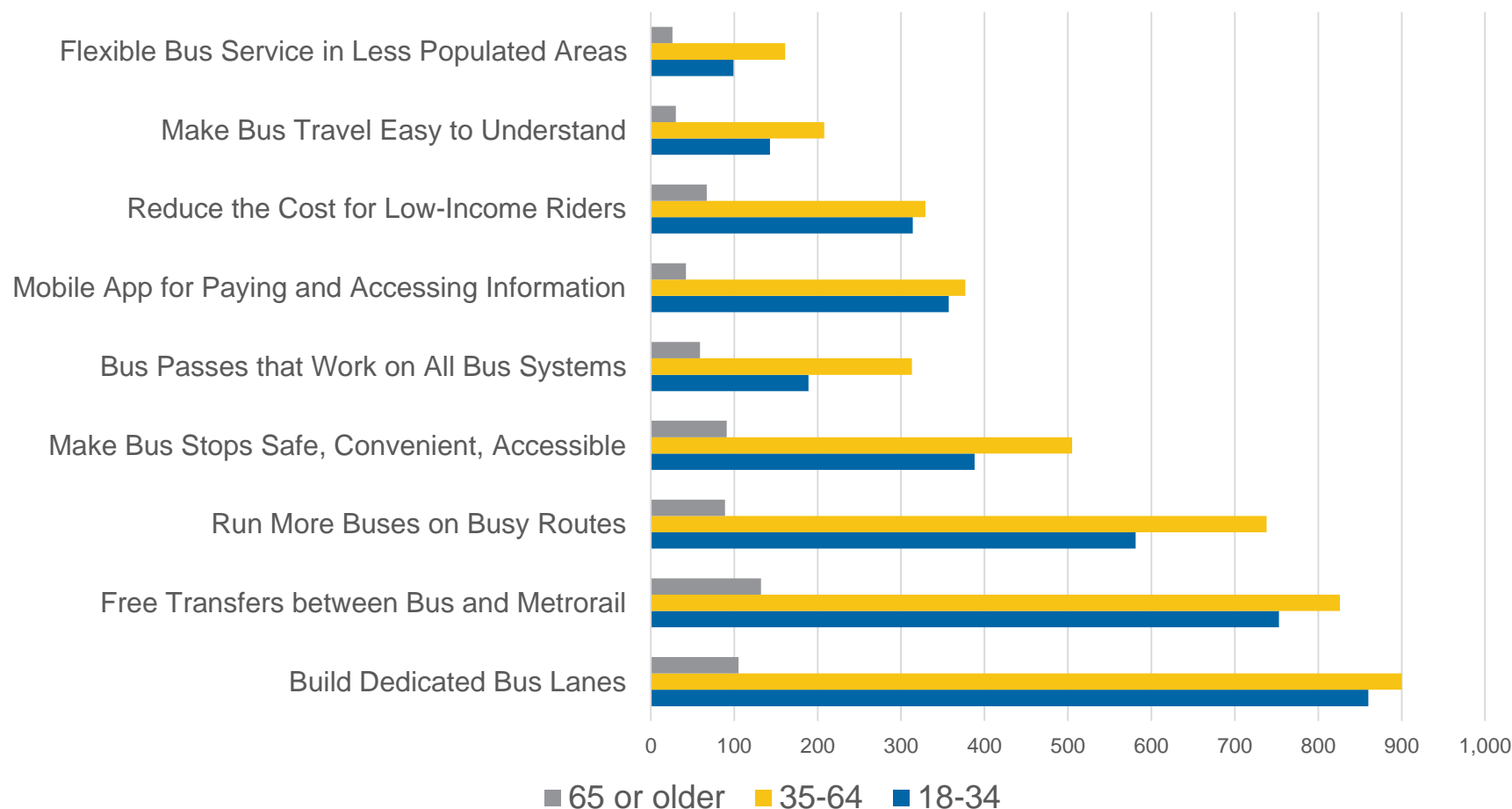
The bar chart compares the weighted ranked scores by age group. Because the groups have different quantities of respondents, the pie chart is included to provide context – the number and share of responses to this question by group are shown (respondents were counted if they answered both the age and recommendation ranking questions).

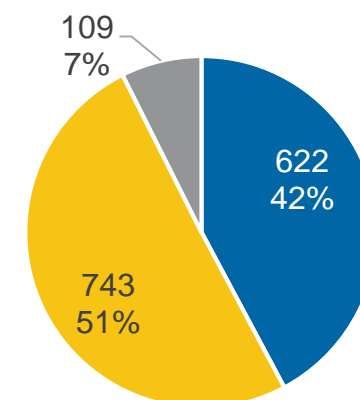Bar chart categories (top to bottom):
- Flexible Bus Service in Less Populated Areas
- Make Bus Travel Easy to Understand
- Reduce the Cost for Low-Income Riders
- Mobile App for Paying and Accessing Information
- Bus Passes that Work on All Bus Systems
- Make Bus Stops Safe, Convenient, Accessible
- Run More Buses on Busy Routes
- Free Transfers between Bus and Metrorail
- Build Dedicated Bus Lanes

Legend: ■ 65 or older   ■ 35-64   ■ 18-34

Pie chart:
- 109 / 7%
- 622 / 42%
- 743 / 51%

Key Findings: Recommendation Preferences by Age

- Age did not play a notable role in respondents' preferences for the recommendations.

- One small difference between age groups was that respondents age 65 or older said their highest ranked priority is free transfers between bus and rail whereas the other two age groups said building dedicated lanes is their highest priority.

- The 18-34 and 35-64 age groups prioritized the recommendations in the same order as each other.

Recommendation Preferences by Jurisdiction of Residence

	Washington, DC	Montgomery County	Prince George's County	Fairfax County	Arlington County	City of Alexandria	Loudoun County	Out of town*
Build Dedicated Bus Lanes	24%	19%	15%	17%	20%	21%	25%	21%
Free Transfers between Bus and Metrorail	19%	19%	21%	19%	19%	15%	16%	19%
Run More Buses on Busy Routes	18%	14%	14%	15%	15%	16%	12%	14%
Make Bus Stops Safe, Convenient, Accessible	10%	14%	15%	10%	11%	9%	11%	12%
Bus Passes that Work on All Bus Systems	6%	7%	8%	9%	7%	8%	9%	8%
Mobile App for Paying and Accessing Information	7%	10%	8%	12%	13%	14%	9%	8%
Reduce the Cost for Low-Income Riders	10%	9%	10%	6%	7%	5%	6%	10%
Make Bus Travel Easy to Understand	4%	4%	4%	7%	6%	6%	7%	5%
Flexible Bus Service in Less Populated Areas	3%	5%	5%	5%	3%	5%	5%	3%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* Out of Town includes those respondents who provided a home zip code that is outside of WMATA Compact jurisdictions and does not include respondents who did not indicate a home zip code. Analysis for this question was not included for City of Fairfax and Falls Church respondents due to their low number of respondents.

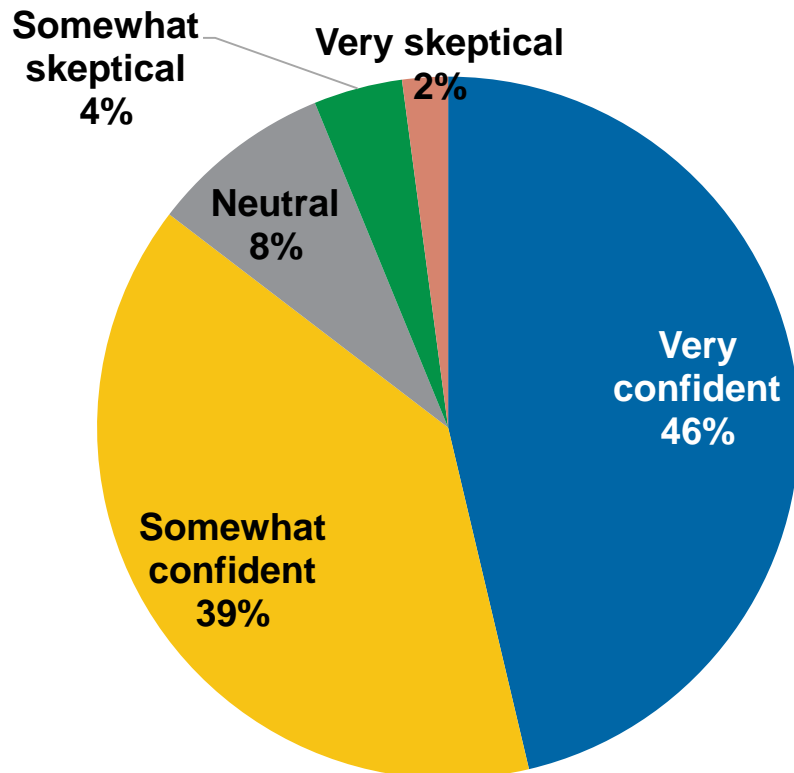# Key Findings: Recommendation Preferences by Jurisdiction of Residence

- The chart on the previous slide compares the weighted ranked scores of respondents by jurisdiction of residence, with the percentages indicating the share of weighted ranked scores for each recommendation from respondents within each jurisdiction. The highest ranked recommendation for each jurisdiction is highlighted in green.

- Respondents from Montgomery County equally prioritized building dedicated bus lanes and providing free transfers between bus and rail. Residents of Arlington County, the City of Alexandria, and Loudoun County all ranked building dedicated lanes as their top priority. Respondents from the remaining jurisdictions ranked free transfers between Metrorail and bus as their top priority.

- Fairfax County, Arlington, and Alexandria residents prioritized a mobile app for paying and accessing information at a higher rate than respondents from other jurisdictions.

- Reducing the cost to ride bus for low-income riders was a higher priority for out-of-town residents, and residents of the Maryland counties and DC, compared to respondents from Virginia.

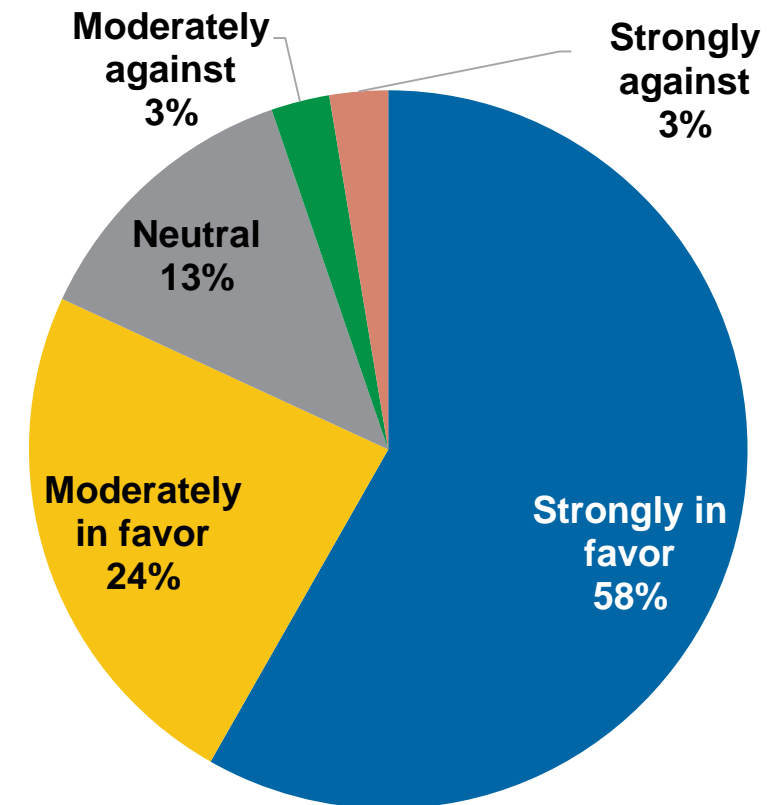# Key Findings: Recommendation Preferences by Language Survey Taken In

- The key findings comparing the weighted preferences by language the survey was taken in include:

  - The top priority for Spanish-language survey takers was free transfers between rail and bus, whereas for English-language survey takers it was building dedicated bus lanes.

  - Making bus stops safer and reducing the cost for low-income riders were tied for the second highest priorities among Spanish-language survey takers, while for English-language survey takers these preferences were ranked fourth and fifth, respectively.

Overall Support for Bus Transformation Project

How confident are you that the listed ideas will transform bus service in the Washington area?

Are you in favor of investing public dollars to implement the measures proposed by the Bus Transformation Project?

Somewhat skeptical 4%
Very skeptical 2%
Neutral 8%
Very confident 46%
Somewhat confident 39%

Moderately against 3%
Strongly against 3%
Neutral 13%
Strongly in favor 58%
Moderately in favor 24%

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Overall Support for Bus Transformation Project by Level of Bus Use

How confident are you that the listed ideas will transform bus service in the Washington area?

Regular Bus Riders
- 47 percent are very confident
- Only seven percent are somewhat or very skeptical

Non-Regular Bus Riders
- 45 percent are very confident
- Only five percent are somewhat or very skeptical

Are you in favor of investing public dollars to implement the measures proposed by the Bus Transformation Project?

Regular Bus Riders
- 54 percent are strongly in favor
- Only seven percent are moderately or strongly against

Non-Regular Bus Riders
- 67 percent are strongly in favor
- Only two percent are moderately or strongly against

Overall Support for Bus Transformation Project by Income Level

How confident are you that the listed ideas will transform bus service in the Washington area?

Low-Income Respondents
- 55 percent are very confident
- Only eight percent are somewhat or very skeptical

Non-Low-Income Respondents
- 46 percent are very confident
- Only five percent are somewhat or very skeptical

Are you in favor of investing public dollars to implement the measures proposed by the Bus Transformation Project?

Low-Income Respondents
- 50 percent are strongly in favor
- Only nine percent are moderately or strongly against

Non-Low-Income Respondents
- 62 percent are strongly in favor
- Only three percent are moderately or strongly against

Appendix: Weighted Ranked Score Methodology (1)

<u>Why?</u> Using the weighted ranked score allows for deeper analysis into how respondents prioritize the recommendations in the Draft Strategy.

<u>How?</u> Respondents were asked to rank their top three recommendations in order of priority. By assigning weights to each ranked recommendation based on the level of priority, we can then add up all the weighted scores and see the overall relative important of each recommendation in comparison to the rest.

The ranked score was calculated by summing the weighted scores as follows:

- Number one priority score = 3

- Number two priority score = 2

- Number three priority score = 1

Appendix: Weighted Ranked Score Methodology (2)

<u>Considerations</u>

When using the weighted ranked score to analyze the responses from different groups (such as low-income and not low-income respondents), the score numbers themselves cannot be compared between groups because each group has differing respondent counts. For example, if there are 500 low-income respondents and 1,000 non-low-income respondents, the sum of the weighted scores from the non-low-income respondents will be much larger quantities. This could potentially make the results appear to show that the responses from the non-low-income group have more weight or more importance, which is not the case. It could also cause incorrect interpretations that low-income respondents ranked the recommendations lower overall, which is not the case either – there are just fewer low-income respondents compared to non-low-income respondents.

The weighted ranked score is useful for comparing recommendation preferences within groups. For example, it is possible to say that for low-income respondents, a recommendation received a 40 percent higher weighted ranked score than another recommendation did. It is possible to determine the order of preferences for recommendations within groups, and to also compare the order of preferences for recommendations between groups (which does not require using the scores themselves, but the order of the recommendations based on the scores).