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April 23, 2026

Chair Santos and Members of the Board:

It's my pleasure to present the Riders' Advisory Council's report for April 2026.

**All-Door Boarding:**

Metro's Vice President of Bus Transportation, Jewel Bell, and her team joined our April meeting to discuss Metro's planned roll-out of all-door boarding on Metrobus this spring. As we've noted previously, the RAC is supportive of Metro's move to expand all-door boarding systemwide. We believe that this is a low-cost, customer-friendly initiative that will speed trips and increase customer satisfaction. As Metro develops its outreach campaign to educate riders about all-door boarding, we encourage the agency to also include information about reduced fare programs, including Metro Lift.

We'd also like to commend Metro for hosting its Bus Townhall meeting on April 28<sup>th</sup>. Given the significant changes implemented last summer as part of the Better Bus Network Redesign, this event will give Metro's riders an opportunity to talk with staff, ask questions and share their feedback.

**Annual Report:**

Attached to this month's report is the RAC's 2026 Annual Report. This represents an informal survey of over 300 Metro customers from across the region to broadly gauge their impressions of Metro's service quality and identify areas of concern for the RAC to focus on in the coming year. The report shows a small overall improvement in riders' rating of Metro service and finds that riders' most frequent concerns are around frequency and reliability of service and the condition and cleanliness of Metro's facilities.

**RAC Leadership/Board Liaison:**

Lastly, the RAC held its annual leadership elections at our April meeting. In addition to electing me Chair, the group selected Lucas Habosky and Matthew Clark as its Vice Chairs from the District of Columbia and Maryland, respectively. We'd like to express our thanks to the previous leadership, especially our immediate past chair Cole Staudt, for their service and for keeping the RAC focused on its role as rider representatives and advocates.

I'm also excited to announce that Alternate Director Spring Worth has agreed to serve as the Board's liaison to the RAC. We're looking forward to working with her to maintain and enhance our collaboration with the Board.

Thank you and I'm happy to answer any questions the Board may have.

*William Way*

William Way, Chair

Riders' Advisory Council

# Rider's Advisory Council Annual Report FY26



Prepared for the WMATA Board of Directors

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# Letter to the Board and FY26 RAC Members

To the WMATA Board of Directors,

The Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) Annual Report intends to voice the concerns of riders across the region. The diverse sample of riders whose comments helped inform this year's report directly reflect the concerns of the thousands of people who use Metro everyday. We hope that members of the Board, WMATA staff, and relevant stakeholders can use this year's RAC Annual Report as a resource for addressing rider concerns in an impactful way. The RAC has historically had a strong partnership with WMATA that we hope to continue to foster in the long run through the publication of this year's report.

Sincerely,  
WMATA Riders' Advisory Council

## FY26 RAC MEMBERS

Solomon Chen  
Matthew Clark  
Eli Craveiro Frankel  
Lucas Habosky  
Alex Mendelsohn  
Brian Meyer  
Patrick Sheehan  
Thomas Shepard  
Ali Siddiqi  
Cole Staudt  
Irene Stephens  
Hendeke Tafesse  
William Way  
Brandon Wu

## RAC Approval

Multiple RAC members supported outreach and drafting efforts for this year's report. Annual Report Committee Chair Thomas Shepard presented a draft of the report on April 1, 2026, and the report was approved by the RAC under the leadership of Chair Cole Staudt.

# Executive Summary

The WMATA Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) FY26 Annual Report presents findings from a voluntary rider feedback survey conducted between January and February of 2026, which received over 300 responses. As in prior years, the purpose of this report is to identify and present the top concerns of riders to the Metro Board of Directors.

Section 1 includes a summary of the data collected and a census of riders based on their jurisdiction of residence and most frequented Metro lines and/or bus routes. Section 2 is an analysis of rider sentiment and observations of changes in the system. Overall, respondents expressed continued satisfaction with the WMATA, with an average rating of approximately 7.56 out of 10, which is a slight increase from 7.5/10 last year. Many riders gave positive feedback on frequency improvements, cleanliness, and expanded payment options. Responses regarding bus route changes and reliability saw a range of opinions while comments on federal law enforcement agency presence in the system were overwhelmingly negative.

Section 3 details the top concerns of respondents to the feedback form and also includes a section provided by the Advisory Accessibility Committee towards the end. There were five main areas of concern regularly brought up by riders, all which have their own dedicated subsection in this report. Each subsection also includes proposed solutions to the issues as well as relevant quotes from the feedback form relating to the topic.

The first major concern identified by riders was the frequency and reliability of bus and rail service. Twenty-eight percent and 29% of riders viewed reliability and frequency respectively as top concerns. While some customers noted improvements in frequency and reliability across bus and rail, many others wished trains and buses were more reliable and wait times were lower. The next major concern was system connectivity and routing, which accounted for 14% of responses, many of which expressed a mix of opinions on the new Better Bus network implemented in the summer of 2025.

The quality of facilities was also another commonly addressed topic, with 9% of respondents concerned about cleanliness and 14% of respondents worried about other issues pertaining to the state of buses, trains, stations, and stops. Crime,

safety, and law enforcement presence was another subject frequently brought up by respondents, who voiced a range of perspectives on the topic. Finally, there were several comments related to communications, headway information, and trip planning. The report also contains a section on other miscellaneous concerns brought up by riders, touching on subjects such as payment, equity, and long-term funding.

This report builds on these findings with detailed analysis, representative rider quotes, and targeted recommendations for each issue. The RAC offers this report to support continued improvements in service quality, rider experience, and system accessibility.

## Introduction

### Purpose

The founding mission of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Riders' Advisory Council (RAC) is to “serve in an advisory role and recommend possible solutions to the Board and staff, based on public input, so that WMATA can effectively address the diverse concerns of the riding public...”<sup>1</sup>

To fulfill this mandate, the RAC must engage in the following activities:

1. Aim to collect relevant data and information from a diverse cross-section of the riding public regarding matters and issues affecting riders and rider satisfaction;
2. Glean from the collected information possible solutions to resolve issues affecting riders and rider satisfaction; and
3. Effectively convey this information and proposed solutions to the WMATA Board of Directors, WMATA staff, and relevant stakeholders.

### Authority

Production and dissemination of the Annual Report is consistent with the WMATA RAC's Bylaws. The RAC Mission Statement articulates that “[t]he RAC exists to

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<sup>1</sup> See 2005-44, Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (September 22, 2005)

actively seek input from a broad range of riders and organizations with an expressed interest in public transit on operational and budgetary issues that affect Metrorail, Metrobus, and MetroAccess; advise the WMATA Board of Directors on ways to resolve such issues to improve Metrorail, Metrobus, and MetroAccess services; and recommend possible solutions to the Board, based on public input and informed deliberation, so that WMATA can effectively address the diverse needs of the riding public.”<sup>2,3</sup>

## Scope

In accordance with the RAC’s founding mandate and bylaws, RAC members gathered public input from Metrorail, Metrobus, and MetroAccess riders across the region between January and February of 2026. RAC members discerned riders’ top concerns as they pertained to Metro and solicited proposed solutions to the issues identified. RAC members also voluntarily solicited observations about changes in the system, quotes, numeric ratings, and home stations/lines/bus routes. For the purposes of informed deliberation in proposing and vetting solutions contained in this report, RAC members also engaged with WMATA staff—including those involved with rail, bus, safety, and technology—during regular RAC meetings.

## Findings

While riders have noticed some improvements in service and quality of facilities, there are still many concerns over issues of safety, law enforcement presence, communications, and reliability. Riders also responded to the form with proposed solutions to the issues they identified. Overall, respondents gave the system a satisfaction rating of 7.56/10.

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<sup>2</sup> Bylaws, Article II, A

<sup>3</sup> Bylaws Article II, B.1.a-e.

# Section 1: Data Summary and Rider Census

## Data Summary

These were the top concerns identified by respondents to the feedback form:

Frequency and Reliability of Service

- Frequency - 29% of responses
- Reliability - 28% of responses

System Connectivity - 14% of responses

Quality of Facilities

- Cleanliness - 9% of responses
- Other - 14% of responses

Safety, Crime and Law Enforcement Presence

- Safety/Crime - 14% of responses
- Law Enforcement Presence - 15.6% of responses

Communications and Access to Information - 13% responses

## Rider Census

The RAC received feedback from a total 341 respondents across DC, Maryland, and Virginia. Members reached out to their own personal networks as well as over 30 organizations throughout the region. This reflects an increase in rider responses by 95% compared to FY25. This year was also the first year we distributed a version of the form in Spanish, which received 7 responses.

We received responses from the following jurisdictions:

**Washington DC** - 66.5% (234)

**Maryland** - 19.5%

- 13.8% from Montgomery County (48)
- 5.7% from Prince George's County (20)

**Virginia** - 14%

- 6.6% from Arlington (23)
- 4.3% from Fairfax County (15)
- 2.3% from Alexandria (8)
- 1 respondent each from Falls Church and Loudoun County

The RAC aims to obtain feedback from all across the region while also remaining non-intrusive. Respondents were not asked for their names nor other personal information. Rather, they were only asked to state their jurisdiction of residence and their most frequented Metrobus line(s) and Metro stop(s).

We received contributions from regular riders of:

- All 6 Metro Lines
- 68 Metro Stations
- 52 bus routes

This reflects an increase in representation of most frequented Metro stations by 47% and most frequented bus routes by 27% compared to FY25.

## Section 2: Analysis of Rider Sentiment

### Observation of Changes and Effect on Experience Summary

Riders were asked to comment on any changes they observed in the system and how such changes have impacted their experience. Regarding service frequency and reliability, certain riders noted it was more difficult to reach certain areas or witnessed more bus bunching and longer walks to bus stops after Better Bus; other riders highlighted how Better Bus made travel less confusing and how stop consolidation has been helpful. Riders appear to want to provide additional feedback on Better Bus with regard to their routing; as noted in section 3, subsection B, the RAC encourages the WMATA Board to conduct more proactive feedback on the first year of implementation of Better Bus before June 29, 2026, such as through public town-hall style hearings, to ensure that the voices of more riders can be heard.

Focusing on Metrorail, many riders noted less wait times, improvements in service, and the benefits from the Yellow Line extension to Greenbelt. At Metrorail stations, riders noted cleaner fare gates, staff being more willing to help with wayfinding, cleaner metro cars, and better/new signage. There was also feedback on limited parking at stations like East Falls Church, the high amount of maintenance at

stations, and the closing of Metrorail station entrances making it difficult to enter stations.

## Notable Quotes

*“Maintain the progress. Metro has made leaps and bounds in improving headways, message clarity, and consistency. All these gains need to be maintained and approved.”*

*“One of the biggest differences has been the increased presence of staff and personnel at stations and on trains. Having someone available to answer questions or assist with wayfinding has made navigating the system much easier. It has also strengthened the sense of safety, particularly for evening and late-night travel. Seeing staff at kiosks and occasionally onboard vehicles provides reassurance and makes the system feel more attentive and responsive to rider needs.”*

*“The lengthening of routes such as D72 and 74 have seemed to result in more delays during rush hour. Do not like the bus platforms as a rider or walker. I do appreciate Metro and have been a rider since 1974.”*

*“I have noticed better consistency and higher frequency of red line trains, which is helpful and more convenient as a rider. However, I have also noticed a large increase in MPD and national guard officers in and around the station, which makes me nervous about potential escalation of violence.”*

*“The use of debit and credit cards to ride the train has been an amazing addition.”*

*“The C85 is new, and it's a great bus route. Our family is driving MUCH less because of it”*

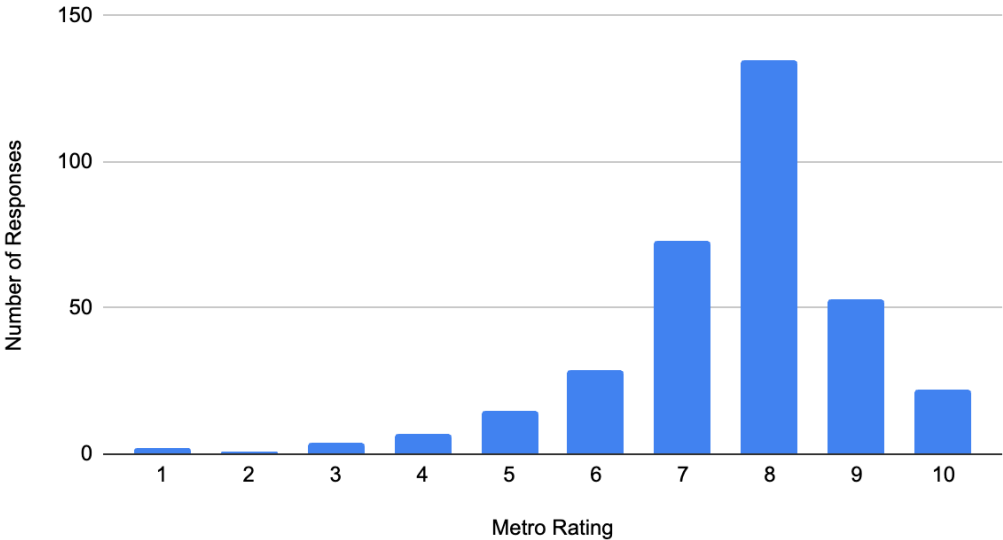
*“I absolutely LOVE the Metro and only listed my concerns above as ways to improve such a fantastic city-wide asset. Trains are running on time more often, trains are so much cleaner (2021-23 things were looking pretty rough!), technology is always improving/expanding (e.g. tap.ride.go, MetroPulse app), and love the new better bus routes -- took some time to figure out, but it's a great improvement. Thank you for your time and consideration!”*

*“Metro is AMAZING now. The safety officers (who walk through cars in orange vests) have helped a lot of antisocial behavior, the headways are awesome, there’s almost never fires, it’s very clean”*

## Rider’s Rating of WMATA

Riders were asked to rate Metro on a scale from 1 to 10, and of the 341 individuals who provided responses, the average response was a 7.56 out of 10—up from 7.5 in FY24 and 7.3 in FY23, even after nearly double the number of responses from last year. This rise in satisfaction demonstrates the importance of WMATA continuing to center riders in its outreach and strategic decision-making.

Rider Feedback: Metro Satisfaction on a Scale of 1-10



## Section 3: Top Rider Concerns

### A. Frequency and Reliability of Service

#### Metrobus

##### Issue Summary

In the summer of 2025, WMATA implemented the Better Bus network, the first major overhaul of the bus system in 50 years, aimed at efficiently consolidating service, increasing headways, and improving reliability.<sup>4</sup> Despite these changes, 29% and 28% of respondents still identified frequency and reliability respectively as areas where they thought WMATA could improve. Several respondents noticed issues with bus bunching, delays, or significant deviations from the schedule. Additionally, many riders said they wished certain routes came with more frequency, including during peak hours, the middle of the day, on weekends, early mornings, and late at night. Finally, there were several comments about how wait time information was often inaccurate at bus stops and on online platforms, though this will be discussed more in depth in Subsection E of Section 3.

Poor reliability and low frequencies have negative impacts on rider's abilities to reach their destination and may incentivize them to choose other modes of transportation. While the new bus network did boost frequencies on certain lines and improve reliability through consolidation and rerouting, many respondents indicated that reliability and/or low frequencies still impacted their trips negatively in some way. For instance, there were multiple comments about how the new network increased the amount of transfers between bus lines one had to make, which can significantly increase travel times if one or more of the bus routes is infrequent or comes unreliably. Transfers will be discussed more at length in Subsection B of Section 3. Even when transfers aren't involved, high wait times and unpredictable scheduling can potentially hurt ridership and by extension, the revenue WMATA is able to collect from bus passengers.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.wmata.com/initiatives/plans/Better-Bus/index.cfm>

## Rider Quotes

*“Crosstown bus frequency - I feel I am often waiting 20-30 minutes if I’m going across town.”*

*“Frequency of service during peak travel hours - buses are frequently overcrowded and it is typical to be passed by a bus that is completely full.”*

*“I appreciate the consolidation of the D80 stops in Georgetown to get through faster. I also appreciate the areas in Georgetown and downtown where stops for different bus lines are staggered rather than all being the same stop.”*

*“Ever since the bus system was changed last year, the frequency of buses along the routes I use has decreased drastically. Frequency and wait times are really the only things that concern me, but they’re pretty big concerns — I used to take the bus multiple times every day, but it’s not as reliable anymore, so I’ve had to start driving and taking scooters more frequently.”*

## Proposed Solutions

1. **Bus Priority Infrastructure:** One option to help improve reliability and frequencies on bus routes is to work with jurisdictions to implement bus priority infrastructure such as bus lanes and transit signal priority where possible, particularly on the highest ridership routes. Dedicated bus lanes increase reliability by allowing buses to avoid congestion and reducing the need to change lanes in mixed traffic when stopping.<sup>5</sup> When combined with transit signal priority, which allows buses to cross an intersection slightly earlier than other vehicles, bus lanes decrease travel times, improve reliability, and allow for reduced headways between buses due to less bunching. Comments on bus lanes were overwhelmingly positive, with many riders saying they wished they were more prevalent across the network. Some respondents also said they wanted better enforcement of vehicles illegally stopped in existing bus lanes. WMATA should continue to partner

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.transit.dot.gov/research-innovation/bus-lanes>

with municipalities across the region to expand and maintain bus priority infrastructure to improve service along its routes.

2. Increasing frequency: Another solution to improve the reliability and usability of the bus system is to simply increase frequencies, especially on high-demand routes. While the new Better Bus network reduced headways on many bus routes, most lines still see headways of 20 minutes or more. Through reducing headways, reliability will improve as wait times between buses go down, and travel times will decrease as people will have to wait less time for a bus to arrive. It's no surprise that the majority of Metro's highest ridership routes are high-frequency routes that come every 12 minutes or better – the less time people have to wait for a bus, the more likely they are to use it. While WMATA did propose minor additions to service for its FY27, only one line will be getting all-day headways of 12 minutes or better.<sup>6</sup> Increasing frequencies of bus routes will require WMATA to work closely with jurisdictions to procure extra funding as well as determine which corridors are best suited for frequency increases.
3. Hiring more bus drivers: Several respondents mentioned that they experienced bus delays or reliability issues due to operator availability. In 2025, around 2.7% of trips were canceled due to no driver being present.<sup>7</sup> A way to reduce the amount this occurs would be to simply employ more bus drivers, an initiative that Metro has already begun implementing. WMATA should continue to offer paid training for the job as well as competitive benefits and should find ways to increase the number of drivers it hires, such as improving benefits or potentially increasing salaries to offset the region's high cost of living.

## Metrorail

### Issue Summary

Metrorail functions as the backbone of the region's transit system and WMATA has made several improvements Metrorail to service the past year, including re-extending the Yellow line to Greenbelt<sup>8</sup>, splitting the Silver line<sup>9</sup>, and adding

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.wmata.com/initiatives/budget/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2025/12/23/metro-bus-operator-availability/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.wmata.com/about/news/Construction-on-Green-Line-concludes-tonight-Yellow-Line-extends-to-Greenbelt-Dec-31.cfm>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.wmata.com/initiatives/budget/service-changes.cfm>

extra-peak hour trips. However, many responses from the feedback form indicate that frequency and reliability of rail service are still major rider concerns for both peak and off-peak hours.

While some riders noted improvements in peak hour service, others reported long wait times, delays and overcrowding. Some riders felt that disruptions were increasing, with a few respondents pointing to the aging signaling system present on some parts of the network as a potential cause. Metro has pushed peak service to capacity on all trunk lines, but reliability issues still often lead to cascading delays, bunching, and worsened overcrowding. This may make riding Metrorail a less enjoyable experience for some riders and even push people to choose other modes for their commute. These issues have been discussed extensively during RAC meetings throughout the year and remain a persistent concern.

Respondents also commented heavily on the need for enhanced off-peak frequency and reliability. While rush-hour and weekday rail ridership hasn't fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels, weekend ridership was slightly above what it was before COVID, indicating that people are using the Metro more for purposes other than the typical weekday commute.<sup>10</sup> Some regular weekend users were frustrated at the regular track work being done on Saturdays and Sundays, which has often led to longer wait times and delays. WMATA should seek to balance the need for essential state-of-good-repair maintenance with providing as much frequent, reliable service throughout as much of the week as possible in order to maintain and grow ridership.

## Rider Quotes

*“Train frequency is my top issue area, it has gotten better, but there are still periods of long waits on the weekend.”*

*“Train capacity & frequency during rush hour peaks (particularly on Red).”*

*“Rail reliability can be sporadic at times with random delays being common. More 8 car trains during the morning commute.”*

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.wmata.com/initiatives/ridership-portal/daily-summary.cfm>

## Proposed Solutions

1. Modernizing the Rail Signaling System (CBTC Implementation): One of the most impactful ways to improve Metrorail reliability is to prioritize investment in modern signaling infrastructure, including the implementation of Communications-Based Train Control (CBTC). Metro currently uses an aging Automatic Train Control system, parts of which date back to the opening of the original network 50 years ago. While the system allows for efficient automatic train operation, which was just recently reimplemented on all lines<sup>11</sup>, signal-related issues have become more prevalent. CBTC systems are the gold standard for modern metro operations across the world, allowing for more precise train tracking, reduced spacing between trains, and fully automatic operations, which can improve both reliability and frequency. Additionally, CBTC would allow for the installation of platform-screen doors which could help improve safety, cleanliness, and minimize disruptions to service. WMATA has already expressed interest in implementing CBTC as well as platform-screen doors to maximize service efficiency and acquire long-term cost savings. Future upgrades to the existing signaling system may also make future network expansion more feasible in the long term.
2. Expanding Service Hours and Increasing Off-Peak Frequency: While current infrastructure doesn't allow for many near-term increases in rush-hour service, there are still some opportunities to increase frequencies and improve reliability off-peak. Many branch lines see wait times of up to 12 minutes during off-peak hours. Running shorter, but more frequent trains to match demand during non-peak times could encourage more people to use rail outside of commuting hours. Additionally, some riders said they wished the rail system opened earlier and closed later on weekends, mainly to be able to catch morning flights; notably, Metro did increase operating hours this summer by an additional hour earlier at 6am on weekends and an hour later until 2am on Friday and Saturday evenings.<sup>12</sup> WMATA should consider expanding the 24/7 bus network to give riders more transit options during late night hours when the rail system is closed.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.wmata.com/initiatives/plans/Automatic-Train-Operation-ATO/index.cfm>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.wmata.com/initiatives/budget/service-changes.cfm>

3. Running more 8-car trains during peak hours: To reduce overcrowding and enhance user experience on the rail network, WMATA should continue to increase the number of 8-car trains during rush hour. With the arrival of the 8000-series cars in the near future, which contain open gangways and a more efficient seating layout, the rail system should be equipped to handle ongoing ridership growth.

## B. System Connectivity/Routing

### Issue Summary

System connectivity and routing was identified by around 14% of respondents as a top concern, particularly in the context of recent service changes and the implementation of the Better Bus network. While some riders reported improvements in simplicity and frequency along certain bus corridors, others described increased challenges in reaching their destination efficiently due to increased transfers, reduced reliability, or new routings. Forcing riders to regularly change buses may not make a lot of sense when only 19 of WMATA's 126 bus routes come with headways of 12 minutes or better<sup>13</sup> – *when* they are operating reliably, which is not always the case. This could mean wait times of up to 20 minutes or more between most bus routes in the system, adding significant travel time to riders' trips and potentially discouraging them from using the bus in the future.

Riders also commented on gaps in crosstown and suburban connectivity. WMATA does provide some frequent crosstown and orbital suburban bus service through routes like the C61, P30, and F20, but some respondents still reported challenges traversing the outer areas of DC and its surrounding suburbs.

Changes to routing and stop locations were also frequently brought up by respondents. Some riders expressed concerns about longer walking distances to stops, particularly in areas where routes were consolidated or restructured. While these stop consolidation may improve efficiency and speed, they may also disproportionately impact older adults and those with mobility limitations. Walkability, bikeability, and last-mile connections were also mentioned as top

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<sup>13</sup> <https://wmata.com/schedules/maps/index.cfm?t=maps-Bus-wrapper>

concerns by multiple riders, with some noting unsafe conditions for pedestrians and cyclists around certain stations.

## Rider Quotes

*“I am personally struggling to relearn bus routes after the changes, especially for routes I take less frequently.”*

*“Pésimo servicio, quisiera que volvieran las rutas anteriores. Aquí solo pasa esa la D5x y hacen las paradas cada tres, y por eso uno tiene que caminar más hacia su lugar de origen donde va. Antes pasaba el 54 y 52 y el 59, uno tenía más opciones, pero así da decepción este servicio y las personas que manejan...”*

*(Service is terrible – I wish the old routes would come back. Only the D5X comes near where I am and it makes one stop every 3 blocks, meaning one has to walk more to from their point of origin. Before, the 54, 52, and 59 passed through here, which gave me more options. Nowadays, the service – and the people that run it – disappoint.)*

*“Increase intra-ward 1 connectivity. While the fact that the D74 bus now connects Adams Morgan to Columbia Heights is a great start in this direction, the cutting of the circulator, which provided a direct connection from Adams Morgan to Shaw through Columbia Heights, has been a great loss to the community.”*

## Proposed Solutions

1. Improving Transfer Coordination Across the Network: Some respondents to the survey described missed or poorly timed bus connections that significantly increased travel times. One solution to improve transferring would be to simply improve headways across the system. However, that is not always possible since much of the DC area is composed of sprawling, low-density suburbs not conducive to high-frequency bus service. A more tangible solution to improve transfers in suburban areas would be to implement what’s known as a “pulse” at major bus hubs such as metro stations and bus terminals when frequency increases are not possible. A pulse is a timed transfer between multiple routes where several buses would stop at a major interchange all at the same time for a few minutes to allow

passengers to switch lines.<sup>14</sup> While such a system could be thrown off by delays and could only be implemented at metro stations or bus transit centers, it would be an improvement from the current system where riders simply have to hope their connection is on time. WMATA should also work with other transit providers in the region to better coordinate bus connections. Metro also previously piloted bus transfer signal lights to delay a bus's departure to allow customers to transfer from Metrorail during off-peak hours; WMATA should consider re-adopting and expanding these signal lights across the system, especially if data showed it reduced missed connections.<sup>15</sup>

2. Continuing to Evaluate and Adjust the Better Bus Network: Respondents expressed a range of opinions regarding the Better Bus network. While certain corridors have benefited from more frequent and simplified service, some riders reported increased travel times or more complex trips. The RAC supports WMATA's ongoing efforts to monitor performance and incorporate rider feedback as the network evolves. To date, Metro has only implemented the year-one network, which did not include extra funding for new routes or improved service but instead depended on efficient reallocation of resources. WMATA should continue to proactively seek rider feedback on the new routes—such as the holding of Better Bus public feedback hearings—and undertake serious efforts to acquire funding to expand service and routes. Continued, data-informed adjustments are critical to ensuring that Metro can build a bus network that benefits everyone.
3. Walkability and Micromobility options: Another common concern regarding the connectivity of the system was pedestrian and micromobility access to stations and bus routes. Walking, biking and scootering are often the way that many people opt to reach Metro stations and bus stops. Though WMATA doesn't have authority over the streets owned by city or county governments, the agency should still work with local jurisdictions to ensure safe pedestrian and bike access from major nearby destinations to its facilities. Additionally, Metro should continue partnering with Capital Bikeshare, the region's bikeshare provider, to ensure rental bikes are available at all rail stations where possible. Information on which rail stops have bikeshare is already displayed on 7000 series trains, but WMATA should consider adding more signage at the stations themselves indicating

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<sup>14</sup> <https://humantransit.org/2010/11/basics-finding-your-pulse.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.wmata.com/about/news/Bus-transfer-lights.cfm>

which exits have Capital Bikeshare docks. Metro should also look into collaborating with private micromobility providers such as Lime or Veo to ensure that scooters and bikes are available at station entrances and are properly stored. Finally, WMATA should also keep working with developers and jurisdictions to create destinations within walking distance of or on station property through investments in transit oriented development.

## C. Quality of Facilities

The quality and condition of transit facilities play a critical role in shaping the overall rider experience. Around 23% of respondents commented on the cleanliness and quality of facilities across the bus and rail network. While there was some positive feedback on improvements to stations and vehicles, many riders had concerns regarding a variety of issues, including but not limited to, wayfinding, cleanliness, escalator and elevator reliability, shelter from the elements, and inadequate snow clearance.

### Bus Facilities

#### Issue Summary

Feedback related to Metrobus facilities was primarily focused on the condition and availability of bus stops and shelters, as well as the onboard experience of buses themselves. Some respondents noted that bus stops were often unclean or poorly lit, while many said they wished more stops included shelters and seating. Inadequate cover from the elements can make waiting for a bus unpleasant during unfavorable weather conditions while a lack of seating limits accessibility for older adults and riders with mobility challenges. In addition to stop conditions, riders frequently commented on the cleanliness and comfort of buses themselves. While some respondents noted improvements such as the change from cloth to vinyl seats on buses<sup>16</sup>, others reported issues such as litter or inconsistent cleaning.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.wmata.com/about/news/Metro-to-convert-all-bu. or providing guidance on how to clear snow.s-seats-to-easier-to-clean-vinyl.cfm>

## Rider Quotes

*“We need sheltered bus stations along with real time data.”*

*“[Metro could] work with DPW to have more cleaning of the snow/ice at bus stops. They are not ADA compliant if there is too much snow surrounding the path to get on the bus.”*

*“Smoking/smoke (tobacco and/or weed) on buses, at bus stops (especially bus stops — I have to walk blocks sometimes to find a stop that isn’t someone’s ashtray) and in some stations.”*

## Proposed Solutions

1. Increasing the number of shelters and seating at bus stops: Many respondents said they wished bus shelters and seating were more present across the network. Having to wait for several minutes in unfavorable weather conditions such as rain or snow may dissuade riders from choosing the bus and a lack of seating impacts reduced-mobility riders who disproportionately rely on transit. While local governments have the responsibility of building shelters and seating on city/county streets, WMATA should collaborate with these jurisdictions to ensure riders have access to cover from the elements across the system as well as a place to sit. Metro has already undertaken initiatives to renovate and increase access to shelters on its own properties, enhancing the experience of those transferring between bus and rail or multiple bus routes.
2. Collaborate with local governments to enhance snow and ice removal: In January of 2026, a severe snowstorm and prolonged cold temperatures left snow and ice on the ground across the region for several weeks. Many respondents commented that their bus stops were not properly cleared for an extended period. While it is not Metro’s responsibility to clear snow and ice on city or county streets and sidewalks, WMATA should collaborate with local governments to improve snow removal response time to ensure that the bus system is safe to use for all riders even, during inclement weather. This may look like identifying which bus routes and stops are the highest priority for snow removal or providing information on how snow should be cleared around bus stops to ensure enough space for riders to board and for the bus to stop.

3. Work with jurisdictions to ensure bus facilities are well-maintained: As previously stated, local governments have the authority to maintain bus stops and shelters on city or county property. However, WMATA should work with local governing bodies to ensure that the facilities where riders board Metrobuses are sufficiently clean and well-kept. There were several comments regarding how some bus stops or shelters were unclean or poorly maintained. Metro should hold local jurisdictions accountable for keeping stops clean and work with them to determine if improvements to stops are necessary such as rebuilding shelters, improving lighting, or adding waste bins to prevent litter. For bus stops on Metro property, WMATA should ensure that there are enough personnel to regularly inspect, clean, and pick up litter around those facilities. A similar approach should be taken with bus vehicles themselves, and Metro has already begun replacing cloth seats with easier-to-clean vinyl padding. WMATA should continue to replace older bus seats and update the RAC on its progress regarding this initiative.

## Metrorail Facilities

### Issue Summary

While Metrorail stations were generally viewed more positively by respondents than bus stops in terms of cleanliness and state-of-repair, several respondents identified areas for improvement related to maintenance, accessibility, and overall station conditions. Some riders noted improvements compared to previous years while others reported inconsistent maintenance across stations, including issues with trash, odors, and issues with heating/cooling. Additionally, there were many comments regarding the reliability of elevators and escalators, which are essential for accessibility. While WMATA has been undertaking a large escalator replacement project and has recently begun repairing elevators systemwide, some respondents were frustrated with the disruptions and wished there was clearer communication on repair timelines and alternative routes.<sup>17,18</sup> Finally, there were also several comments regarding wayfinding and in-station navigation. Poor

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.wmata.com/initiatives/plans/escalator-canopy-elevator/elevator-modernization.cfm>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.wmata.com/initiatives/plans/escalator-canopy-elevator/escalator-replacement.cfm>

signage can reduce the ease of using the system, impacting new riders in particular.

## Rider Quotes

*“...focusing on cleanliness of metro elevators, which are a real problem - they still look and smell like a biohazard.”*

*“include signs more visible from escalators/inside metro re: direction/exit streets”*

*“Escalators!!! Why are they constantly under repair?? Even at newly renovated stations! Just rip them out already and replace [them] with either a functioning escalator or stairs which req. minimal maintenance and repair.”*

## Proposed Solutions

1. Ensure cleanliness and a good state-of-repair: While WMATA already takes the cleanliness of its rail facilities seriously, having won the ISSA Spotless Spaces competition in 2025 for two of its stations,<sup>19</sup> riders still noted room for improvement. As the system approaches 50 years old, some signs of decay have begun to appear at some stations, such as leakages and broken heating/cooling systems. Metro should keep up its regular cleaning of stations and railcars as well as identify stations that are in particular need of repair. Improving lighting, adding waste bins, and addressing leaks are all tangible ways to make the system feel cleaner and more welcoming to all users.
2. Improve wayfinding: Another common concern among respondents was wayfinding. WMATA is designing and implementing improvements to signage, some of which can be seen at major stations. There was overwhelmingly positive feedback from respondents regarding the new “lettered exits” initiative. Metro should continue implementing this across the system and also consider including points of interest on signage in addition to street names to help riders more easily reach their desired destination. Elevator exits should also be more clearly marked to ensure accessibility across the system, especially as this was a concern brought up multiple times by respondents. Finally, WMATA should improve on-platform signage to more clearly indicate direction of travel and final destinations,

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.issa.com/industry-news/issa-announces-winners-of-inaugural-spotless-spaces-competition/>

especially to help users that are newer to the system. The RAC has already worked with WMATA to give feedback on station wayfinding improvements and supports the ongoing initiative to standardize and simplify signage.

3. Maintain and improve escalators and elevators: Metro should continue to repair and maintain escalators and elevators across its system as well as effectively communicate outages. There is already an initiative underway to replace aging escalators across the system, and WMATA has consistently delivered these repairs on-time and under budget. A similar program has begun for elevators, which also see consistent maintenance throughout the year. Still, respondents have noticed issues with broken or dirty escalators and elevators. Metro should continue to fix and regularly clean escalators and elevators as well as clearly communicate outages and alternative routes to enhance customer experience and minimize confusion. The agency should also keep marketing the initiatives in order to highlight the importance of these repairs to its customers. Issues relating to communication will be addressed in further detail in Subsection E of Section 3.

## D. Safety, Crime, and Law Enforcement Presence

### Issue Summary

Respondents expressed a wide range of opinions on safety, crime, and law enforcement presence. Responses regarding crime and security composed around 14% of all feedback, while concerns about excessive law enforcement presence, mainly federal agencies like the National Guard or ICE accounted for about 15% of all responses. Many riders reported concerns about disorderly behavior such as smoking, loud music, and panhandling, with some saying Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) did not do enough to remove unruly passengers. At least one rider said they felt unsafe due to regularly seeing weapons on their bus route.

Riders had mixed feelings about increasing MTPD and other local law enforcement presence throughout the system. Some said they felt safer when MTPD was near and wanted more officers across the network while others reported the opposite, with a few respondents even bringing up concerns about racial profiling. A similar range of opinions was expressed on the topic of fare enforcement – some thought it was an important issue worth addressing, whereas others thought excessive

policing of fares could lead to harmful situations. When it came to comments about National Guard, ICE and the presence of other federal law enforcement agencies, all feedback was extremely negative. Riders said they felt the presence of such agencies was either pointless or actively harmful to passengers. WMATA should continue to balance measures that reduce crime and disorderly behavior on the system, while ensuring that excessive law enforcement presence does not make riders feel unsafe.

## Rider Quotes

*“I’m very concerned about Metro police cooperating with ICE, other federal agencies, and out-of-state National Guard. This is making DC less safe and welcoming, especially for residents and visitors of color and immigrants.”*

*“Safety - better lighting at stations, entrance ways and bus stations. More transit, police presence on platforms and trains and buses.”*

*“I would like to see mental health and homelessness outreach teams in metro stations to help with deescalation of potentially unsafe situations rather than MPD, special police, or national guard.”*

## Proposed Solutions

1. Carefully Enhancing MTPD and Security Presence Where Needed: WMATA has recently seen the lowest crime rate in its history<sup>20</sup>, perhaps in part due to measures to increase video surveillance, police presence, and banning people who commit serious offenses from the system. Many riders indicated that increased MTPD presence made them feel safer, both on trains and buses as well as at stations and parking lots. However, some did express concerns that excessive police presence made them feel unsafe. WMATA should consider expanding security presence in targeted areas, such as busy stations or empty parking lots to enhance safety where most needed, while ensuring that all Metro law enforcement personnel are held to high

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<https://www.wmata.com/about/news/Metro-receives-TSA-s-Gold-Standard-Award-for-transit-security-for-a-record-fifth-time.cfm>

standards of conduct and that riders don't feel overwhelmed by excessive police presence.

2. Evaluate Partnership with Federal Law Enforcement Agencies: In August of 2025, the current presidential administration began deploying National Guard personnel across Washington DC. Riders have noticed their presence as well as the presence of other federal authorities such as Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in the system. Every comment we received regarding the federal agency presence was negative, and such responses accounted for 15% of all feedback. MTPD has actively collaborated with the National Guard<sup>21</sup>, following the lead of the DC government, though they have not worked with ICE or CBP. The RAC understands that this is a complex and sensitive issue. WMATA should carefully consider ways to distinguish local law enforcement from federal law enforcement in order to maximize rider comfort and safety. Above all, WMATA should take into account the opinions of riders and be transparent about its collaboration with other law enforcement entities, as some RAC members noted inconsistencies with MTPD responses regarding who it works with.
3. Expanding Non-Police Crisis Response Services: Some riders noted that police intervention may not be the right approach to de-escalating certain situations, such as mental health crisis or homelessness. WMATA already has a Crisis Intervention team, but it is composed of only four civilian squads across the entire network,<sup>22</sup> limiting effective response times. Additionally, the program does not seem to be well-advertised across the system. If Metro doesn't have the capacity to expand its own team of crisis specialists, it should consider partnering with jurisdictional initiatives such as DC's Community Response teams.
4. Enhancing Reporting Mechanisms: WMATA already has safety reporting mechanisms such as the MyMTPD number that riders can text if they see any suspicious or dangerous activity. Additionally, 911 works in the system and the MTPD has a number that riders can call in case of an emergency. Continuing to advertise the effective communications services WMATA already has on trains, buses, stations, stops and online will ensure that riders can effectively connect to emergency services when necessary.

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<sup>21</sup><https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/transportation/metro-transit-police-chief-talks-about-metro-crisis-national-guard-coordination/3984106/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.wmata.com/about/news/Metro-customer-safety-and-community-service-initiatives.cfm>

5. Improving lighting and visibility: Metro should also work towards improving lighting and visibility at its facilities in order to improve safety. Better visibility may deter crimes and make passengers feel safe in areas late at night. WMATA should improve lighting on its own properties such as Metro stations and bus bays as well as collaborate with local jurisdictions to ensure that bus stops on city/county streets are well-lit.

## E. Communication and Access to Information

### Issue Summary:

About 13% of riders reported trouble with accurate access to information on wait times, service disruptions, and station repairs. While WMATA has made significant strides in improving its communications, debuting the MetroPulse app and addressing issues with “ghost buses”, there is still room for growth. One common concern was the conflicting information on bus arrival times between different apps and digital displays at bus stops. Inaccurate headways can make using the bus exceedingly difficult for riders to reliably get to their destinations, particularly on routes with lower frequencies. Additionally, some riders noted frustration with communication about delays and outages. Though Metro has done a good job of announcing construction projects and associated service impacts well in advance, some respondents found that unexpected delays and bus detours were poorly communicated. Finally, some riders felt that they weren’t alerted sufficiently about elevator and escalator outages, something that disproportionately affects riders with mobility issues.

### Rider Quotes

*“My main area of concern is that neither the WMATA app, WMATA website, Google Maps, nor third party apps seem to be able to predict when the bus will arrive with any reliability. This has gotten significantly worse following the better bus system ‘improvements’. I can’t be a reliable bus rider if every app and website predicts a different ETA that leaves me waiting at stops for 30+ minutes.”*

*“Bus reliability - sometimes buses are listed on busETA, then right before they’re supposed to arrive they disappear off the list”*

*“Perhaps rider data that exists in Metro Wrapped :) could be used to segment audiences on alerts. Aka a push/text alert when there’s an issue at my most used station or route”*

## Proposed Solutions

1. Advertise and update MetroPulse: WMATA has put significant investment towards MetroPulse, its new app where riders can track buses and trains as well as stay alerted about any disruptions. However, a few responses indicated that some riders were either unaware of MetroPulse or had issues with it. The app sometimes has issues with wait time accuracy, particularly for bus arrivals. For instance, unlike its predecessor BusETA, the app only displays active buses, even if there is a bus scheduled to depart the terminal station in a few minutes. This means users may see deceptively long wait times or no buses in service at all, potentially encouraging them to use other modes of transportation instead. Metro’s development team should work towards fixing these issues to ensure riders can plan their trips with minimal confusion. A few responses also indicated that people don’t know about the app or are using other platforms such as Google Maps, which may have less accurate information. Metro should continue advertising the new app at its stations as well as on bus and rail vehicles.
2. Align headway information across platforms: Another major concern amongst riders was that headway information differed between different applications such as BusETA, MetroPulse, Google/Apple Maps, and the digital displays at certain bus stops. Conflicting information about when a bus will arrive can make using the bus system confusing and difficult, potentially pushing riders to find alternative transportation. WMATA should first work to enhance the accuracy and consistency of wait times between its own platforms and then collaborate with third-party platforms like Google Maps, The Transit App, etc. to ensure that no matter where a rider opts to check when their next bus or train is arriving, they will receive accurate information.
3. Optimize and amplify alerts communications: Through introducing MetroPulse, WMATA was able to put all of its communications about bus and rail service on one platform, streamlining user experience. However, many riders still found that they struggled to find information about alerts, delays, and detours. For elevator and escalator outages, there is a site listing current shutdowns, but it is separate from where one might find

information about train delays. Metro should consider adding escalator and elevator shutdowns to MetroPulse or at least better advertise the existing escalator and elevator status webpage in stations and on vehicles. Several respondents also noted the difficulty of finding bus detour information. While detour alerts do appear on MetroPulse, maps are rarely published showing which streets the route will travel on temporarily. Visual aids help users better understand the nature of the detour and how they can plan around it. Finally, in the case of unexpected service disruptions, WMATA should communicate with operators as quickly as possible to determine the cause and severity of the delay so that it can be communicated across Metro's own applications, station displays, and social media.

## F. Metro Access and Transit Accessibility

This section aims to highlight the accomplishments of the Advisory Accessibility Committee (AAC) throughout 2025 and was provided by AAC Chair Pat Sheehan.

### Mission Statement

The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) serves as an advisory body to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Board of Directors. The AAC's mission is to actively solicit input on operational issues affecting the accessibility of Metrorail, Metrobus, and MetroAccess services from seniors, persons with disabilities, and organizations representing these communities. The Committee advises the Board on strategies to resolve accessibility concerns, promotes WMATA's responsiveness to riders with disabilities, and recommends practical, data-driven solutions to enhance service delivery. This mission aligns directly with WMATA's commitment to encourage meaningful public engagement and deliver safe, reliable, and equitable transportation services to all customers.

### Executive Summary of 2025 Accomplishments

In 2025, the AAC achieved measurable progress across paratransit reliability, ADA policy reform, signage accessibility, bus network planning, and customer service transparency. The Committee advanced both operational improvements and long-term policy initiatives designed to enhance independence, dignity, and service quality for riders with disabilities.

## 1. MetroAccess Service Stabilization and Performance Improvements

One of the AAC's most significant activities in 2025 was supporting stabilization efforts within MetroAccess operations through evaluation, feedback, and improvement recommendations.

Key Outcomes:

- Stabilized MetroAccess call center operations
- Improved vehicle distribution hub coordination
- Enhanced contractor performance oversight
- Achieved 90% on-time performance, according to the most recent operational data
- Improved service reliability for approximately 36,000 registered MetroAccess customers

These improvements have strengthened customer confidence in safety, timeliness, and trip reliability—core components of ADA-compliant complementary paratransit service.

WMATA's ADA Program Leadership expanded its Abilities-Ride network to include:

- Total number of Abilities-Ride trips between January 2025 and December 2025 were 1,507,306
- Providers specializing in wheelchair-accessible vehicles
- Providers experienced in transporting riders with service animals
- Enhanced trip flexibility and customer choice
- This expansion reflects AAC's continued advocacy for a more diverse and responsive provider network capable of meeting complex mobility needs.

## 2. Streamlined MetroAccess Recertification Policy (Pending Board Action)

In 2025, the AAC formally recommended that WMATA adopt a streamlined recertification policy for MetroAccess customers whose disabling conditions are medically certified as permanent or unlikely to improve.

## Rationale

Customers with permanent disabilities have long expressed concerns regarding the burden of repeated eligibility verification. The AAC proposal seeks to reduce unnecessary administrative processes while maintaining full compliance with ADA and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidance.

## Goals of the Proposal

- Reduce administrative burdens on MetroAccess customers
- Improve efficiency for WMATA eligibility staff
- Maintain rigorous eligibility standards
- Align with ADA regulations and FTA guidance
- Reflect emerging national best practices in paratransit management

The resolution is currently before the WMATA Board for a feasibility study to evaluate operational impact, cost implications, and long-term effectiveness for both WMATA and the disability community.

## 3. Signage Accessibility Initiative – Bus & Rail Subcommittee

In early 2025, the AAC Bus & Rail Subcommittee prioritized station signage accessibility, with a particular focus on consistency and readability.

## Major Developments

- Formation of a dedicated signage focus group by December 2025
- Collaboration with WMATA program staff and professional sign developers
- Review of typography, contrast, placement, and information hierarchy
- Development of enhanced sign profiles to improve readability and cognitive processing
- The focus group will showcase improvements in a model station pilot project in early 2026.

## Following the pilot:

- Customer feedback will be analyzed
- Accessibility outcomes will be assessed
- Systemwide recommendations will be submitted to the Board

- This initiative represents a proactive, user-centered design approach and positions WMATA as a leader in accessible wayfinding innovation.

#### 4. Prince George’s County Transit Vision & Better Bus Network Collaboration

Throughout 2025, the AAC actively engaged with Prince George’s County planning efforts, including the County Transit Vision Plan and WMATA’s Better Bus Network proposal.

##### Accessibility-Focused Priorities:

- Improved sidewalk infrastructure
- Enhanced lighting near transit stops
- Accessible bus stop design upgrades
- Expanded fixed-route service coverage
- Increased network capacity

Additionally, the plan includes a micro-mobility strategy designed to connect riders—particularly individuals with disabilities—to:

- Medical services
- Employment centers
- Community resources
- The AAC emphasized that infrastructure modernization must incorporate ADA design standards from the outset to ensure equitable access.

#### 5. Rail Station Accessible Restroom Documentation Initiative

In 2025, the AAC worked with WMATA leadership to inventory and document accessible restroom availability across the Metrorail system. This initiative, which is currently pending WMATA final review and publication, will enhance transparency and provide:

- Identify which rail stations offer accessible restroom facilities
- Publish this information for public use
- Improve trip planning for riders with disabilities, seniors, and families

This initiative enhances transparency and provides an additional customer service resource that supports independence and informed travel.

## 6. Overall Impact

The AAC's 2025 work reflects a comprehensive approach to accessibility that integrates:

- Operational reliability
- Policy reform
- Infrastructure design
- Rider information transparency
- Regional transportation planning

Collectively, these accomplishments advance WMATA's mission to provide safe, reliable, and inclusive transportation while strengthening trust among seniors and persons with disabilities who rely on Metro services daily.

### Looking Ahead to 2026

Key priorities moving forward include:

- Completion and evaluation of the MetroAccess recertification feasibility study
- Implementation and systemwide deployment of improved signage standards
- Continued monitoring of MetroAccess on-time performance metrics
- Integration of accessibility principles into Better Bus Network rollouts
- Publication and maintenance of accessible restroom data

## G. Other Concerns

Feedback from respondents covered a variety of topics that did not fall in the categories above. First, there were many concerns about funding for the system, with a fear that service quality would decline without stable financing. Those who engaged in the survey showed support for finding long-term financial solutions for WMATA and addressing the perception that regional cost-sharing between Maryland and Virginia versus DC's contributions were uneven. Many riders want to see WMATA financially stable. Riders do not want to see service cuts or project

pullbacks which have been seen in the past locally<sup>23</sup> and are being faced by other public transit systems across the county. Respondents gave various proposed solutions, like a business tax near transit, land value tax, commuter tax, or congestion pricing to give WMATA steady revenue streams. There were also multiple calls for more transit-oriented development around stations and WMATA properties to generate revenue. Metro is already working with the surrounding jurisdictions to ensure stable long-term funding through the DMVMoves initiative, with a plan to add \$460 million in funding currently being proposed to state and local governments for approval.

Those responding to the survey also had concerns about equity among different populations of riders. Some riders felt they have experienced or witnessed racial profiling by WMATA employees or discrimination while in the system, which was particularly noted in the responses to the Spanish language version of the form. Additionally, respondents mentioned racial profiling in regards to fare enforcement and Federal police activity. Riders also noted inequities based on where people live or travel to, seeing disparities in service and attention between suburban and urban areas. Specifically, comments were made about lack of service to Georgetown, wider spread out stops in suburbs, and few suburb-to-suburb connections - especially when minimizing lengthy transfers. Additionally, some riders noted uneven implementation of Kids Ride Free programs across the various jurisdictions giving certain youth more access to transit than others. These concerns illustrate that equity issues extend beyond individual experiences to include differences in service availability, affordability, and usability across the region.

There were both positive and negative experiences by riders in regards to payment. Some riders noted the inability to reload their SmarTrip cards on the bus, showing disconnect between rail and bus rider experience. Additionally, there were some calls to lower the auto-load minimum as \$10 felt too high. A few riders also noticed reliability issues, with many seeing malfunctioning or inoperable fare machines on buses. There was also confusion around the fare passes as the benefits of the different programs or how they worked did not seem clear to riders. Some riders had issues with discount programs, not knowing they exist or having trouble accessing the program itself. There were also complaints about the cost of parking for riders at WMATA-owned facilities. Despite the issues faced, there was

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.wmata.com/about/news/Metro-faces-massive-budget-shortfall.cfm>

significant positive feedback regarding the introduction of credit/debit card payment for bus and Metrorail under the Tap. Ride. Go. program, showing appreciation for WMATA’s modernization efforts and rider education campaigns.

## Notable Quotes

*“WMATA creates billions of dollars in land value within its service area (both bus & rail. This transit-created land value should be returned to WMATA as an equitable and efficient funding source. Land value return was used to help fund the NOMA Metro Station. Not only was this an equitable source of funding, but it also prompted nearby landowners to develop TOD quickly.”*

*“I am uncomfortable with the high fares”*

*“I love that I can tap to pay with phone and/or credit card. Super convenient.”*

*“El método de pago – cuando no tiene saldo la tarjeta no podemos subir, no lo permite el conducto. Pero no es general, algunas personas no pagan y lo dicen nada, pero si un hispano. No paga hay si. No lo deja subir”*

*(Regarding the payment method – when I don’t have money on my card, they don’t let me get on the bus. However, it’s common for the bus driver not to say anything to other people who ride the bus without paying, but if a Hispanic person doesn’t pay, they often stop them.)*

## Conclusion

The RAC's Annual Report is meant to highlight the concerns of riders to the WMATA Board of Directors and senior leadership. This report is just a sampling of the most prominent issues identified by riders and is not inclusive of all concerns. Still, respondents shared a wide range of opinions on their experiences with Metro and offered a variety of creative solutions in response to the issues they saw on the system.

The RAC values the Board's commitment to listening to rider concerns, and we greatly appreciate how some of our recommendations from last year's report were implemented such as expanding all-door boarding and Metro's operating hours. We encourage the Board to continue to advocate for the interests of riders across the region and hope that some of the solutions proposed in this year's report see implementation as well.

Above all, riders of rail, bus, and MetroAccess want a transit system that gets them where they need to go reliably, safely, and efficiently. Thanks to continued investment in the network, WMATA has consistently seen ridership growth the past few years. More people will start using the system regularly if Metro continues prioritizing improvements to rider experience. The RAC looks forward to presenting the findings of the report to WMATA leadership in order to further its mission as a voice for the concerns and ideas of riders across the region.