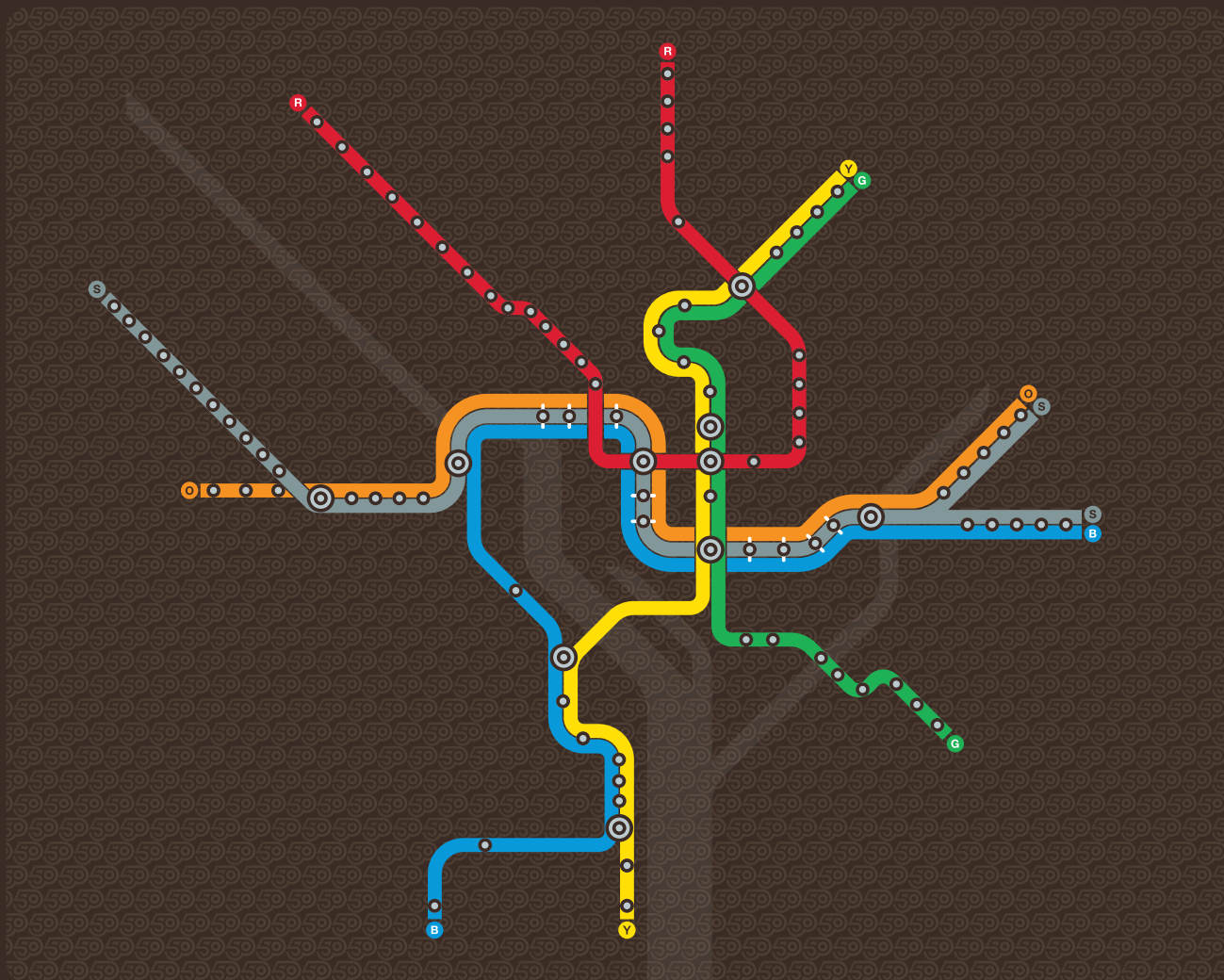


this is your

metro owner's manual



Washington Metropolitan
Area Transit Authority

50th Anniversary Edition



the history of the metro owner's manual

In 1976, Metro partnered with the *Washington Star* to publish an owner's manual introducing the region to its new rapid transit system and how to use it. Updated versions followed in local newspapers as the system expanded.

To celebrate Metro's 50th anniversary, we've recreated the "Metro Owner's Manual" as a tribute to those originals and for you to save as a keepsake.



Official Ribbon-Cutting Marks Metro's
Opening Day, March 27, 1976



Randy Clarke
General Manager and
Chief Executive Officer

America's Metro System is so woven into the fabric of the National Capital Region that it can be easy to overlook.

But when you take a moment to step back and consider how many people depend on Metro Access, Bus and Rail services for school, work, daily transportation, and special events, you realize how special our system really is. It helps hold our community together and sustains the spirit of the region.

Metro belongs to all of us. It was given to us by those who came before us. Our parents and grandparents made the decision to build it, and their investment endures.

As stewards of the system today, it is up to us to preserve and improve Metro for future generations.

The Metro Owner's Manual is meant to be more than a promotional piece. It is a practical guide and souvenir meant to help you get the most out of your Metro experience.

Keep it nearby, whether in print or online, so whenever you need it, like Metro, it's right there.

Enjoy your Metro. Be proud of its service to the region.
And keep riding.

We'll see you on board!

Onward!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Randy Clarke". The signature is fluid and stylized, with the first name "Randy" written in a cursive script and the last name "Clarke" in a more blocky, bold script.

what is metro?



Opening Day at Rhode Island Avenue
March 27, 1976

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA), known as Metro, is the National Capital Region's largest public transportation system. It includes Metro Rail, Metro Bus and Metro Access, providing mobility for a growing region of more than 6 million residents and millions of visitors each year.

In 2025, Metro was named the Transit Agency of the Year by the American Public Transportation Association.

Metro history at a glance

- 1952** Congress passes the National Capital Planning Act, signed into law by President Harry S. Truman.
- 1967** Metro is created through an interstate compact among the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia.
- 1969** Construction of Metro Rail begins at Judiciary Square on Dec. 9.
- 1973** Metro acquires the region's four private bus operators, creating Metro Bus.
- 1976** Metro Rail opens with five stations and 4.6 miles of track.
- 1994** Metro Access begins service, expanding mobility for customers with disabilities.
- 2001** Metro completes its originally planned rail system.
- 2014** The first phase of the Silver Line opens, extending rail service to Tysons Corner and Reston.
- 2022** The Silver Line reaches Dulles International Airport.
- 2025** Metro launches its first comprehensive redesign of the Metro Bus network since 1973.



Dupont Circle Construction, 1975



Union Station Under Construction, circa 1974

Critical to the Nation

The system plays a key role in federal emergency preparedness and continuity of government

Annual Ridership (2025)

139M	rail trips
124M	bus trips
2M	Metro Access trips

Reducing Congestion

1.2M	fewer vehicle trips daily
------	---------------------------

Moving the Region

>70%	of 2.5M jobs are near transit
Over half of the region’s businesses are within a half-mile of a Metro station or bus stop	

Metro Rail

2nd	busiest rapid rail system in the U.S.
128	miles of track
98	stations

Metro Bus

6th	busiest bus system in the U.S.
126	routes
7.5K	stops

Metro Access

Region’s largest shared-ride paratransit service
Provides door-to-door service for customers with disabilities

designed with customers in mind

In 1966, at President Lyndon B. Johnson's direction, Metro's architects traveled to 16 cities across Europe and Asia to study the world's best transit systems and bring back ideas and inspiration for building a world-class system in the National Capital Region. That early research helped shape America's Metro System from the start to be safe, accessible and easy to use.

Clear Information

Digital signs show line color, arrival times, train length and service alerts.

Station pylons and **signs** help you find exits, streets, landmarks and connections.

Built for Safety

Pulsing lights along the platform edge signal when trains are approaching.

Changes in flooring, from smooth terra cotta tile to textured tile and granite, signal the platform edge.

Open station design reduces hidden spaces.



Prototype pylon



Escalator Canopy



Platform Lights

Metro Bus vehicles can kneel for easier boarding, include wheelchair securement areas and offer priority seating.

Metro Access provides door-to-door paratransit service for customers who cannot use buses or trains due to a disability.

High frequency routes provide service every 12 minutes, or better, on key routes.

Courtesy stop requests can be made between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. on most routes.

Dedicated bus lanes and **camera enforcement help** keep buses moving quickly through traffic.

Escalators and **elevators** provide smooth, automatic access to stations.

Climate-controlled trains, buses and underground stations help keep customers comfortable year-round.



Smart Trip



Metro Integrated Command and Communication Center

transit terms to know

Experienced customers may already know the lingo, but Metro terminology has changed over time. For new, infrequent, or visiting customers, these key terms will help you navigate the system.

Wayfinding

Station pylons — The tall brown column with the Metro “M” marks every station entrance. Colored rail discs on the pylon show which lines serve that station.

Information pylons — Located throughout stations, these shorter pylons provide directions to platforms, exits, streets and transit connections.

Station-ahead maps — These maps show all stations on the line from your platform. They will soon be oriented with your current station at the bottom and destinations above it.

Bus stop signs — Red and blue signs identify bus routes and destinations. Each sign includes a seven-digit stop number you can enter online or in the Metro Pulse app to check arrival times.

ePaper signs — Some stops include digital displays showing real-time bus arrivals and service alerts.

Bus shelters — Shelters provide weather protection, lighting, seating and route information. New shelters feature translucent panels, LED lighting and improved UV protection.



Bus Network Terms

Following the Better Bus Network redesign (2025), route names begin with a letter indicating the service area:

- A** — Arlington / Alexandria
- C / D** — Crosstown or Downtown DC
- F** — Fairfax / Falls Church
- M** — Montgomery County
- P** — Prince George's County

Additional route types include:

X Routes — limited-stop service

24hr Routes — service operating around the clock

Express Routes — longer-distance commuter routes



Info Hub



Station Escalators



Navigating the Platform

Vertical Transit Too

Metro operates more elevators (320) and escalators (647) than any transit system in North America.

The Wheaton Station escalator, at 230 feet, is the longest in the Western Hemisphere.

Inside the Station

Fare Machines — Used to purchase or reload a Smart Trip card, one of the ways to pay your fare.

Exitfare Machines — Located near faregates. Use them to add money to your Smart Trip card if your balance is too low to exit.

Station Manager Kiosk — The large booth near the faregates where a Station Manager can assist customers.

A few basics about Metro can make your trip easier, save time and help you enjoy the ride.

Rail Hours of Operation

- Monday–Thursday: 5 a.m.–midnight
- Friday: 5 a.m.–2 a.m.
- Saturday: 6 a.m.–2 a.m.
- Sunday: 6 a.m.–midnight

Stations open **10 minutes** before the first train arrives. First and last train times vary by station. Schedules may change on holidays or during major events. Check station-specific times in the Metro Pulse mobile app or at wmata.com/stations.

Bus Service

Some routes operate 24 hours for late-night and early-morning travel. Like with train service, schedules may change on holidays or during major events.

Fares

Rail fares vary by distance traveled and time of day.

- Weekdays **before 9:30 p.m.:** \$2.25–\$6.75
- Weekdays **after 9:30 p.m. and weekends:** \$2.25–\$2.50
- Calculate your exact fare at wmata.com/tripplanner

Bus fares are simple and flat, with standard and express options

- Metro Bus regular fare: \$2.25
- Express bus fare: \$4.80

Transfers

Use the same payment method (Smart Trip or contactless card) to receive transfer discounts.

Rail to Bus: first bus trip free or discounted

From Bus to Rail: \$2.25 rail discount

From Bus to Bus: transfers are free

From Bus to Express Bus: transfers are discounted by \$2.25.



Shapes and icons help guide you:



rail lines



directions



ISA symbol:
accessible routes

Passes

\$13.50	7-day Regional Bus Pass
\$13.50	1-Day Unlimited Bus + Rail Pass
\$33.75	3-Day Unlimited Bus + Rail Pass
\$40.50	7-Day Short-Trip Rail Pass
\$60.75	7-Day Unlimited Bus + Rail Pass
\$33.75	3-Day Unlimited Bus + Rail Pass
\$72- \$216.00	Monthly Unlimited Bus + Rail Pass (Available only at wmata.com)

Unlimited ride passes are available at Metro stations, online at wmata.com, in the Smart Trip app, or through your smartphone’s mobile wallet.

Reduced & Free Fares

Children under age 5 ride free. Plus, DC students ages 5–21 may ride free through the Kids Ride Free program.

Half-price fares are available for:

- Seniors
- Customers with disabilities
- Low-income customers enrolled in SNAP



Smart Benefits

Smart Benefits allows employees of participating organizations to pay for commuting with pre-tax income, saving up to **\$1,800** per year.

Frequency of Service

Train frequency varies by line and time of day.

	Rush Hour	Daytime	Late Night
R	4-5 min	6 min	10 min
Y G	6 min	6-8 min	7-8 min
O S B	10 min	12 min	15 min

Bus Frequency

Bus routes operate at several service levels:

High-frequency — every 12 minutes or better

Medium-frequency — every 20 minutes or better

Low-frequency — every 30 minutes or better



Parking

72.5K	parking spaces
51	stations offer parking
\$3 to \$5.20	per day parking cost for riders

Visit wmata.com/parking for locations and availability.



Bikes

Bicycles are permitted on Metro Rail and Metro Bus. Buses have front-mounted racks that hold two bikes.

your guide to ride

If you've ridden Metro before, you already know why it's so popular. If you're new, you'll soon find out — it's simple. This section walks you through the basics of planning a trip, paying your fare and riding Metro Bus, Metro Rail and Metro Access.

Did you know?

In 1977, Metro introduced paper fare cards and fare-gates. Customers inserted the cards into a slot, and the remaining value was deducted with each trip.

Plan Your Trip

Every trip starts with a plan. If you know the system, simply locate the station or bus stop closest to your starting point and destination. System maps are available in this manual, online and at stations and bus stops.

The easiest option is Metro's Trip Planner at wmata.com/schedules/trip-planner.

On the website, enter your starting point and destination to find

- The fastest route
- The fewest transfers
- The least walking

You can also specify when you want to leave or arrive.

In addition to the website, the Metro Pulse mobile app combines trip planning with real-time train and bus information, nearby stops and stations, system maps and live service updates.



Limited-edition Cherry Blossom Smart Trip Cards

Pay Your Fare

Metro makes fare payment easy: Tap. Ride. Go.

You can tap:

- A contactless credit or debit card
- Your phone's mobile wallet
- A Smart Trip card

Just tap your payment method at the faregate (rail) or farebox (bus).

Smart Trip cards can be purchased at fare vending machines in stations or added to your mobile wallet.

Cash is not accepted at rail faregates.

On buses, exact change is accepted, but Smart Trip and contactless payment are preferred.

Each customer must have their own payment method.



Metro Rail



Metro Access



Metro Bus



Riding Metro Rail

Find the station by looking for the bronze Metro pylon with the illuminated “M.”

After entering the station:

1. Tap your payment method at the faregate.
2. Follow signs to the correct platform.
3. Check the digital screens to see when your train will arrive.

When the train arrives:

- Stand back from the platform edge.
- Allow passengers to exit first.
- Board through any open door.

Once on board, move away from the doorway so others can enter and exit easily.

Riding Metro Bus

To find a bus stop, look for the red and blue Metro Bus flag. Check the route number and destination to make sure you are on the correct side of the street.

When the bus arrives:

1. Allow passengers to exit first.
2. Board and tap your payment method.
3. Take a seat or hold a handrail.

When your stop is approaching, pull the yellow cord or press the stop button. Exit through the front or rear door once the bus stops.



Bus Display



System Map

During Your Ride

Inside the train you will find:

- System maps
- Station announcements
- Emergency call boxes

Announcements will identify the next station and when the train has arrived.

Exiting the Train

When the train reaches your stop:

1. Exit promptly.
2. Follow signs to the correct station exit.
3. Tap the same payment method at the faregate to leave.

Transfers and Connections

Metro Rail has 10 transfer stations, including these popular stops:

- Metro Center
- L'Enfant Plaza
- Gallery Place
- Rosslyn
- Pentagon

Metro also connects to regional rail systems including Amtrak, MARC and VRE, as well as both Dulles International Airport and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

Customer Etiquette and Safety

For everyone's comfort and safety:

- Eating and drinking are not allowed on trains or on buses.
- Smoking and vaping are prohibited.
- Use headphones when listening to audio or watching video.
- Keep clear of train doors and platform edges.

If an emergency occurs:

- **On trains:** Use the emergency call box.
- **On buses:** Speak with the operator.
- **In stations:** Contact the station manager.



Gallery Place



A Metro Access Vehicle



Circle Map

Metro Access

Metro Access provides door-to-door para-transit service for customers who cannot use the bus or the train because of a disability.

Eligible customers receive a Metro Access ID card and can schedule trips up to seven days in advance.

Reservations can be made:

- By phone
- Online
- Through Metro's digital reservation assistant

For eligibility and enrollment information visit wmata.com/service/accessibility.

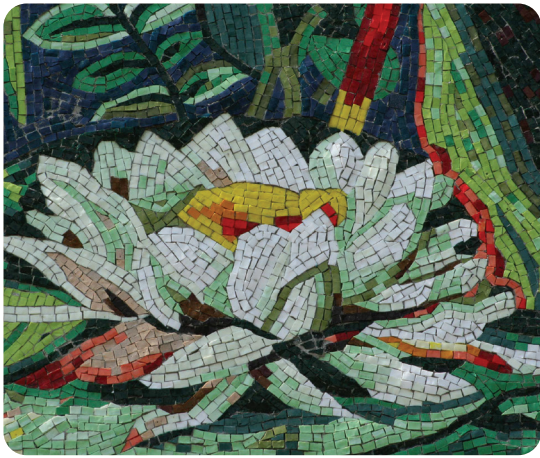
art & architecture



“Community Rhythms”

Metro’s architecture is one of the defining features of the system. Designed by Harry Weese and Massimo Vignelli, Metro was built with a striking modernist vision — from its vaulted station ceilings and monumental concrete forms to its clean, carefully ordered signage.

Art adds another layer to that experience. Through Metro’s Art in Transit program, works of art across the system reflect local history, culture and community identity while giving stations a stronger sense of place.



- At Anacostia, “River Spirits of the Anacostia” reflects the river’s winding course and enduring connection to the community.
- At U Street, “Community Rhythms” honors Romare Bearden and the neighborhood’s African American, Asian American and Hispanic communities.
- At Tysons, “Solar Sails” transforms glass, steel and natural light into a vivid, ever-changing display.

Together, Metro’s architecture and public art make the system a treasured symbol of reverence that is part of the rich cultural tapestry that makes the region unique.



Anacostia station: Multiple views of “River Spirits of the Anacostia,” by Martha Jackson Jarvis, 2004.



meet your fleet



Potomac Yard

A soft “whoosh” and the muted sound of steel wheels on steel rail are often the only sounds you’ll hear as a Metro train glides into the station.

Metro Rail

Metro Rail cars are designed for visibility, openness and simplicity. Large windows at the front allow train operators to clearly see the track ahead, while the uncluttered interior helps customers move easily through the car.



8000-series Railcar Prototype

\$100M	invested in Hitachi's railcar factory in Hagerstown, MD
64–68	seats on each railcar
160	max customers per railcar
600	riders on a typical 6-car train
800	riders on a typical 8-car train
500+	cars one 8-car train can replace

Metro will begin to replace some of its older railcars with the new 8000-series, currently under construction by Hitachi in Hagerstown, Maryland. The new cars will feature open passageways between cars, improved cameras and additional handholds.

Metro trains can reach speeds of up to 75 miles per hour. Automated train systems regulate speed and spacing, while on-board operators supervise operations and monitor the doors.

Metro currently operates three types of railcars:

- **3000-series;** Breda; Debuted 1987
- **6000-series;** Alstom; Debuted 2006
- **7000-series;** Kawasaki; Debuted 2015

Metro Bus

Metro operates a fleet of more than 1,500 buses, including standard 40-foot buses and longer 60-foot articulated buses, which are easily recognized by their accordion-style joint.

The fleet includes diesel, compressed natural gas, hybrid and fully electric buses.

Metro buses operate from eight bus garages across the region. The historic Northern Bus Garage, originally built in 1907 for streetcars, is currently being rebuilt as a modern facility designed to support a zero-emission bus fleet.

Metro Access

Metro Access operates a fleet of more than 600 vehicles, including vans, sedans and ramp-equipped minivans that provide door-to-door paratransit service for customers with disabilities.



Northern Bus Garage



Rhode Island Avenue



Track Inspections

Understanding Service Disruptions

Even high-performing transit systems occasionally experience disruptions. Knowing the basic types can help you understand what's happening and plan accordingly.

Delays

These can occur for many reasons, including track maintenance, police activity, medical emergencies, equipment issues or traffic conditions affecting buses.

Bus Detours

Buses sometimes follow detours due to road closures, emergencies, parades or other events.

Single Tracking

During maintenance or incidents affecting one track, trains may share a single track and alternate directions through the affected area. This reduces service frequency.

Shutdowns

In some cases, both tracks in an area must be closed for maintenance or emergencies. When this occurs, Metro always provides free shuttle bus service to help customers complete their trips.

Escalator and Elevator

Escalators and elevators may be temporarily out of service for maintenance, repairs or unexpected issues. Customers can sign up for Metro Alerts for updates on outages and closures.

For the latest updates, visit wmata.com/alerts.

designed with safety & comfort in mind



Metro was designed with two goals in mind:
comfort and **safety**.

The system's architecture, developed by architect Harry Weese, emphasizes openness, visibility and spaciousness.

Although stations may appear different above ground, they share a consistent design.

All stations are 600 feet long, allowing them to accommodate eight-car trains. Stations are also built on straight sections of track to minimize the gap between the platform and the train.



Metro Transit Police Department

Metro operates its own police force — the Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) — the only tri-jurisdictional police department in the United States. More than **450 sworn officers**, along with special police and civilian staff, patrol stations, trains and buses across the system.

Safety by the Numbers

67%	drop in serious crime since 2023
30%	robberies down
78%	pickpocketing down
2022	fare evasion down significantly since this year
5x	Gold Standard Award winner

If you need assistance, you can reach MTPD 24 hours a day by calling **202-962-2121**, texting **MyMTPD (696873)** or dialing **911**.

In 2026, Metro recorded **the lowest crime rate** in its history.

Designed for Safety

- Open sight lines that reduce hidden areas
- Lighting and station layouts that improve visibility
- Security cameras in stations, and on trains and buses
- Station Managers are in constant contact with the Metro Integrated Command and Communications Center
- Silent alarms on buses for emergencies
- Metro Transit Police Department patrols the system
- Crisis intervention specialists available to assist riders in distress

Stay clear of the third rail.
It carries **750 volts**.
Never enter the track area.

Designed for Comfort

- Large vaulted station ceilings
- Free-floating mezzanines
- Wide platforms
- Climate-controlled underground stations
- Indirect lighting in station vaults
- Large train windows
- Comfortable seating
- Air-conditioned train cars

what's en route



With Metro's first 50 years complete, leaders
continue to prepare for the future.



Metro Belongs to You and the Future

Metro connects people across the National Capital Region — to work, school, culture and each other. It is one of the region's most important public spaces. A little care from every customer helps keep it clean, safe and welcoming. Take care of it. Ride it often. Your actions help ensure its future for a new generation of ridership.

Major improvements planned or underway include:

- Communications-based train control, a **modern signaling system** that will allow trains to run closer together and reduce wait times.
- **Platform doors**, which will improve safety and prevent track intrusions.
- A **modernized wayfinding system** designed to make navigating Metro easier for today's customers.
- **New 8000-series railcars**, featuring improved passenger information and accessibility.
- Connections to **the Maryland Transit Administration's Purple Line**, a 16-mile light rail line linking Bethesda and New Carrollton.

Through the DMVMoves initiative, Metro is working with regional leaders to secure long-term funding to modernize and maintain the system.

Terminal stations

- R** Red Line • Glenmont / Shady Grove
- Y** Yellow Line • Huntington / Mt Vernon Sq & Greenbelt
- G** Green Line • Branch Av / Greenbelt
- O** Orange Line • New Carrollton / Vienna
- S** Silver Line • Ashburn / Downtown Largo & New Carrollton
- B** Blue Line • Franconia-Springfield / Downtown Largo

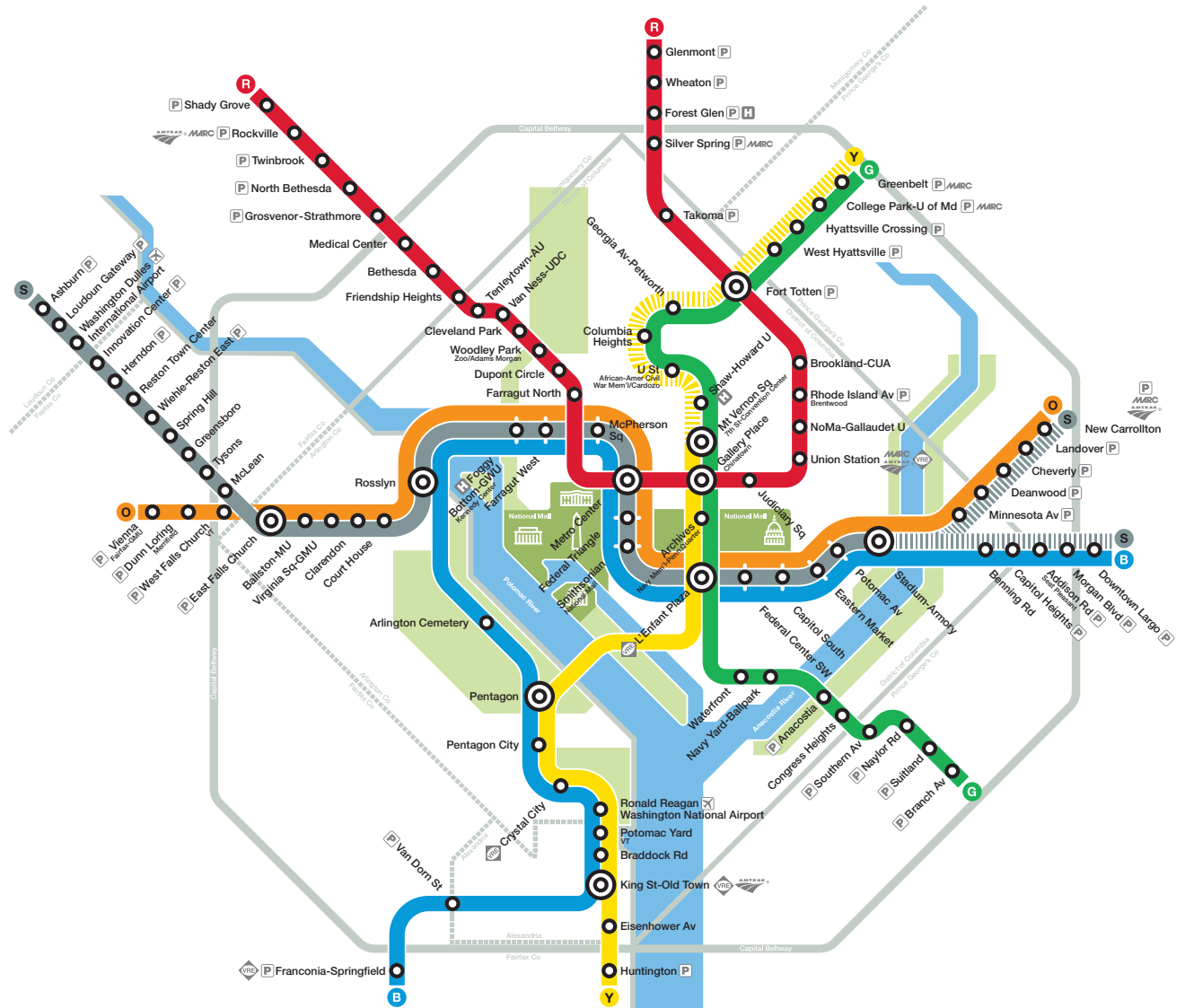
Station Features

- P** Parking
- H** Hospital
- A** Airport

Connecting Rail Systems



Served by every other train



Metro is accessible.

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY © 2015

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Map is not to scale

Scan the QR code to view the historic manuals
and learn more about Metro's history.



