

September 21 Community Meeting Q and A

Metro has prepared the below Questions and Answers (Q&A) addressing comments raised at the September 21, 2021 community engagement meeting on the Northern Bus Garage Reconstruction Project. Several of these topics also have been addressed at prior community meetings for this Project.

Garage Design and Features

Q: Will the Design 2 package be consistent with an all-electric bus plan?

A: The current Design 2 package does not reflect the battery electric component. Since that was a recent development, it will have its own standalone design package. The intent is to integrate the construction components of the bus charging infrastructure into the new facility so that it will be electric bus ready on day one.

Q: Does the design of the new bus garage incorporate any on-site solar or battery storage?

A: Yes, the new garage will have solar panels on a significant portion of the roof, not including parts of the roof designated for employee parking or that are shaded from light.

Q: How will the design improve pedestrian safety along the walkway that connects 14th and Decatur streets?

A: The facility will be pulled back by 12-feet to the south, creating a 12-foot wide shared-use corridor for both pedestrians and bicyclists. Also, additional lighting will be included along the face of the building to improve lighting along the corridor.

Environmental Management

Q: Will the NEPA/Section 106 process be completed before results from Metro's environmental investigation are presented to DOEE?

A: Metro is committed to understanding and remediating any existing contamination related to or at the site. It is possible that Metro could continue its investigation of legacy environmental conditions even after the categorical exclusion is granted for the Project. The presence or remediation of such contamination is not expected to change the overall level of environmental or historic resource impacts from the Project.

Q: Will the results of the environmental investigation be shared with the community and local governments? When the memorandum of agreement (MOA) is submitted, shouldn't it contain the results of the investigation?

A: Yes, Metro will share the nature and extent of known existing contamination following its environmental investigation. Metro is committed to complying with federal and local regulations related to the remediation of any environmental contamination.

The MOA under Section 106 is separate from the environmental contamination. The MOA will only cover the measures taken to minimize and mitigate any adverse effects to the historic structure, focusing on impacts from 14th Street to the Decatur Street car barn.

Q: Why are the boreholes mostly focused within the garage?

A: Metro is starting the investigation with a review of the garage's footprint, and locations immediately adjacent to the facility where any environmental effects of the garage would be concentrated. Once those samples have been examined and the results analyzed, we will determine next steps to move forward with the investigation.

Q: What is the status of the Cat Ex report, and when will it be available for the public to review?

A: The Federal Transit Authority (FTA) is the lead agency for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and has advised Metro to not release any documents until FTA has completed its review. The Documented Categorical Exclusion report will be accessible once FTA approves its release.

Q: There is a significant incline that buses will need to climb as they exit the bus garage; how will Metro address the drain on buses' resulting energy needs and emissions to travel up that ramp?

A: Yes, there is a significant grade as buses go from the lower level up to the Decatur Street exit. About 20 years ago, a wall was built around the ramp to counteract noise complaints Metro received from the community. In the new garage, the ramp will remain enclosed. Regarding emissions from the garage, the garage's air filtration system, which will include mechanical filters and dry scrubbing technology, will significantly minimize the amount of emissions leaving the garage.

Art in Transit

Q: How much will it cost to install temporary artwork on the fence?

A: The request to add artwork to the construction fence was a direct request from the community with the purpose of improving community aesthetics during construction. Since the temporary fence is a component of the construction, the cost for the fence will be included in the overall construction budget. Metro is in the very early stages of planning for the Art in Transit project, and we cannot provide a cost estimate at this time.

Q: How will the art be installed on the fence? What material will the artwork be printed on?

A: Installation will depend on the type of fence. Typically, artwork is printed on a banner with grommets and the banner is either tied to a chain link fence or screws are used to attach the banner to wood panels. We are still in the early planning phases, so the material for the banner is under consideration. Options include mesh-like or vinyl materials. Metro will continuously monitor the artwork and make repairs as necessary.

Zero Emission Bus

Q: Regarding Metro's Zero-Emission Bus strategy, what concerns have your DC partner agencies raised related to its ongoing usage of diesel buses?

A: Metro is not aware of any concerns from DC agencies, such as DDOT or DOEE, regarding its zero-emission bus strategy or Metro's phased approach to converting to a 100% electric bus fleet.

Q: What are the key barriers preventing Metro from converting to an all-electric bus fleet sooner than 2045?

A: Metro is committed to meeting the goals outlined in its [zero-emission bus strategy](#), including taking steps to build the first all-electric bus facility at Northern Bus Garage. Important first steps to full conversion includes ensuring we have the infrastructure needed to support a 100% zero-emission bus fleet. That means transforming all of our bus garages to have the infrastructure to support zero-emission buses, converting our entire fleet, analyzing our route planning, and working with our energy partners to ensure there is capacity to charge and maintain operation of an electric bus fleet without disruption to Metro customers.

Q: When Northern Bus Garage reopens, what percentage of the buses will be electric? How many diesel buses vs. electric buses will be in operation at the garage?

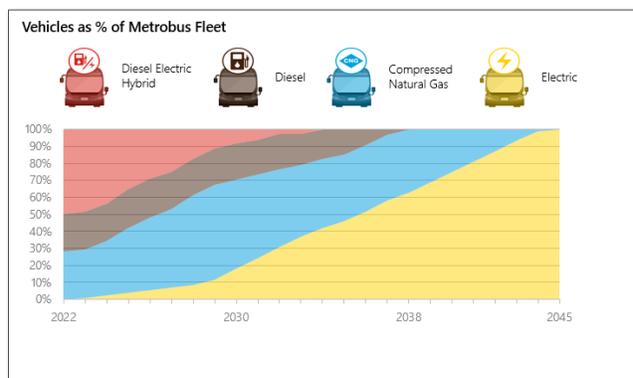
A: As Metro’s first electric built bus garage, Northern will open with a mix of Metro’s current fleet and new electric vehicles. The number of electric buses active on opening day will be informed by results of the Test & Evaluation Program and other Metro fleet planning strategies. At this time, we do not know what percentage of buses will be electric versus buses from the current fleet upon the reopening of Northern Bus Garage.

Q: Is Metro working concurrently on next steps, or are you waiting to complete the pilot before moving forward?

A: Yes, Metro is taking a holistic approach to implementing our zero-emission bus strategy. While testing and evaluations are going on, we will also be working on our broader transition plan, which includes meeting with our regional partners and continuing to focus on building infrastructure. All this work is happening simultaneously so that we can quickly and efficiently progress towards our goal of 100% zero-emission buses.

Q: On the phasing diagram, it shows that only CNG and electric buses will be purchased after 2038. Does this mean that diesel purchases are not continuing after 2023?

A: Yes, it is correct that Metro will no longer purchase diesel buses with our next procurement in 2023. Note that this phasing diagram is illustrative, and not a definitive procurement plan through 2045.



Project Impacts to Community

Q: Have you identified the retailers that will occupy the garage? How will that impact current small business owners in the community?

A: Metro remains committed to ensuring its projects are equitable and serve our diverse customers and communities. While it's too early in the construction process to know what retailers will occupy the business space, Metro is working hand-in-hand with top consultants to make sure the businesses selected offer the greatest benefit to the community and the building space. As the project progresses, we will be able to provide more in-depth details.

Q: What are the DBE goals and requirements for this project?

A: Metro assigns Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) participation goals on a contract-by-contract basis on eligible federally funded construction contracts. A 25% participation goal was established for Phase One of this Project. At this time and having recently received the Mayor's Agents clearance for our raze permit, future DBE goals have not been set but will be shared as it becomes available.

Q: What steps are you taking today to ensure that your employees adapt to the zero-emission bus strategy and are prepared to operate and maintain electric buses?

A: As an organization Metro is committed to transitioning to an electric bus fleet, our strategy has been approved by the Board and is the way forward for Metro. Workforce development will be an integral part of our transition plan. Today we are in the process of identifying what training will be necessary for our bus operators and maintenance staff – the safety and security of our employees and customers is a high priority in our planning process. Additionally, our Test & Evaluation Program will go through the WMATA Safety Certification Program, to make sure we address any operational or safety concerns during the pilot process, so that we are well-prepared to maintain and operate electric buses.

Q: Why is Metro continuing to invest dollars into CNG buses and infrastructure if it will become obsolete in the next several years?

A: Considering Metro's phased rollout of zero-emission buses, by 2030 Metro's fleet will be largely comprised of a mix of electric and CNG buses. To maintain uninterrupted service to customers, Metro needs to have the resources, such as fuel, to continue to operate CNG buses until we transition completely to electric buses.