

Bus Transformation Strategy Rollout – Press Release

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FASTER, MORE FREQUENT BUSES KEY TO REGION'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Report released by Washington Area Bus Transformation Project after 36 public events

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, the Washington Area Bus Transformation Project released a forward-thinking Strategy that guides the transformation of the region's bus future, with a focus on increased speed, frequency, reliability, and affordability for bus service in Maryland, Virginia, and the District.

The Bus Transformation Strategy will guide bus providers, road operators, and a regional task force over the next ten years as they take action to better serve the more than 620,000 people across the region who currently take the bus each day, as well as attract future riders with faster, more reliable, more coordinated, and more customer-focused service. Following the release of the Strategy, the project team and stakeholders will begin the next phase of the project to develop the 10-year Action Plan to help guide the Strategy's implementation. Completion of the Action Plan is expected by the end of the year.

"The Bus Transformation Strategy provides robust analysis and direction for the future of our region's bus transit service," said Rob Puentes, Chair of the Bus Transformation Project's Executive Steering Committee. "However, transforming bus service in the region requires leadership that can advocate for a travel mode that carries hundreds of thousands of people each day, but has often been seen as a low priority in big-picture regional thinking."

Since Fall 2018, over 8,800 people across the region participated in Bus Transformation Project surveys, and project staff held 36 public events to gather feedback on the region's bus transit needs and potential recommendations, in addition to over 80 stakeholder meetings and briefings, and 13 roundtables with bus operators.

Both bus riders and non-bus riders, across all demographics and parts of the region, resoundingly called for a firm commitment to delivering better bus service, with a focus on the fundamentals that improve bus speed, frequency, reliability, and affordability. In response, the Strategy developed will guide all organizations responsible for bus service and includes the following recommendations:

- **Bus Priority:** The way to increase bus speed, frequency, and reliability is to give buses priority on roads. The project found that on busy corridors across the region, which carry hundreds of thousands of trips a day, buses are already being dispatched every two to three minutes – but those buses get stuck or delayed behind single-occupant vehicles and parked cars, delaying and frustrating customers, and increasing the cost of service. The Strategy includes recommendations for coordination among state and local agencies that own the roads to give buses priority on roadways to move people faster and more reliably.
- **Integrated Fares:** The Strategy includes recommendations for free transfers between bus and rail, as well as reduced-price fare options for low-income riders. As one Bus Transformation

Project survey respondent wrote, “Free transfers to Metrorail is critical. The region’s transit system is built around being multi-modal. Why penalize people for using the system as designed?”

- **More Collaboration:** Nine local bus providers operate in the project’s study area – but riders need a seamless experience, because transportation needs don’t end at city, county, or state lines. The Strategy includes recommendations to better coordinate service, including regional standards for bus service and performance data, better maps and real-time service information, and new regional bus passes.

More details on the Strategy and recommendations can be found at bustransformationproject.com.

The Bus Transformation Strategy recommends convening a regional Task Force to oversee implementation, with members from across the region. By the end of this year, the Bus Transformation Project will release a detailed Action Plan for the Task Force to use in implementing the Strategy.

“We need to – and we must – build on this Strategy by developing a clear, implementable Action Plan for the next ten years,” said Puentes. “And that requires strong regional coordination, beginning with a regional task force that can provide the long-term leadership needed to oversee implementation. This task force should be convened as soon as possible in 2019 – we don’t have time to spare.”

The Task Force, in addition to providing critical regional leadership, would develop an annual progress report and performance scorecard to track implementation and level of service delivered to customers. It would also develop a platform for rider feedback, which would be incorporated into regular revisions of Strategy recommendations.

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